



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

VOTING IN THE CHAMBER

Determining the vote

Most votes in the Assembly are determined on the voices. The Speaker puts the question, Members vote by calling 'Aye' or 'No', and the Speaker declares the result based on an assessment of whether the ayes or noes are in the majority. This assessment is based on knowledge of how many Members vote either way, not which side is the loudest. The Speaker's call may be challenged by Members calling for a division.

Divisions

If more than one Member challenges the Speaker's decision by calling 'Division', the Speaker informs the Chamber that a division is required and orders that the bells be rung.

A division called by the Chief Minister or Leader of the Opposition does not require the Speaker to hear a second voice of support.

The bells are rung for three minutes to allow Members to assemble in the Chamber. At the completion of the three minutes, the Speaker orders that the doors be locked. Although the doors are not physically locked, no Member may enter or leave the Chamber.

The Speaker is entitled to vote, and also has a casting vote. This means where there is a tie on any question the vote of the Speaker could decide the matter.

Members cast their votes by moving to the right of the Speaker if they wish to vote aye and to the left if they wish to vote no. Once the doors are locked, all Members in the Chamber must vote, except for the Speaker who may choose not to vote. Other Members have the option of abstaining by not attending the division.

The Government and Opposition Whips assist the Clerks at the Table to record the names of the Members voting aye and the names of those voting no. When all names have been recorded, the Clerks

SUMMARY

- Questions are decided by a majority
- Most votes in the Assembly are determined on the voices
- Suspending Standing Orders without notice must be passed by an absolute majority of the Assembly
- Standing Orders provide for ballots to be taken whenever the Assembly chooses

provide the lists to the Speaker who announces the result.

The result of the vote is recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings and the Parliamentary Record.

Pairs

Pairing is an unofficial arrangement managed by the Party Whips to preserve the balance of numbers in the House. A Member who is expected to vote on one side but is absent is paired with a Member who is expected to vote on the other side and is also absent or refrains from voting.

Questions determined by absolute majorities

A decision to suspend Standing Orders without notice must be passed by an absolute majority of the Assembly. This means such votes require more than half of the Assembly to vote in the affirmative for it to be passed. That means at least thirteen Members of the Assembly must vote for the motion.

Ballots

Most questions in the Assembly are determined openly. However, the Standing Orders provide for ballots to be taken whenever the Assembly chooses. The ballot is usually conducted by the Clerk. Each Member present in the Chamber casts their vote by placing a ballot paper into a box. The Clerk counts the votes and announces the result.