



*Tabled 25/5/88.*  
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# Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

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**STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE**

**FOURTH REPORT**

**May 1988**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

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**MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE**

- 1.1 On 28 April 1987, the Standing Orders Committee was appointed with the following membership:

Mr Speaker  
Mr Bell  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Poole

- 1.2 At its meeting on 26 November 1987, Mr Speaker Vale was elected Chairman of the Committee.
- 1.3 On 17 May 1988, Mr Poole was discharged from further attendance on the Committee and Mr Coulter was appointed to be a Member of the Committee.

**SPEAKING TIMES IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

- 2.1 Your Committee has given consideration to the appropriateness of speaking times on Bills in Committee of the Whole and, in particular, to the overall length of the Committee of the Whole debate on the Appropriation Bill 1987-88.
- 2.2 It was noted that, in 1987, consideration of that Bill in Committee of the Whole was considerably prolonged when compared with the time taken on similar Bills in previous years. For example, in 1985, the total time taken in debate in Committee of the Whole was some

4 hours 10 minutes and in 1986 it was 5 hours 40 minutes. In 1987, the time taken nearly doubled. A total of 10 hours 10 minutes was taken in the Committee of the Whole debate.

- 2.3 Your Committee is of the view that this length of time is excessive. Your Committee believes that six hours should provide sufficient time for Opposition and other Members to question the proposed expenditure contained in an Appropriation Bill.
- 2.4 Your Committee therefore recommends - That the following be adopted as a Sessional Order:

**DEBATE IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WHEN CONSIDERING AN ANNUAL APPROPRIATION BILL -**

That, notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing Orders, during the present session of the Assembly, in the consideration of any annual Appropriation Bill, there shall be allowed six hours for the consideration of such Bill in Committee of the Whole, at the conclusion of which time the Chairman shall:

- (i) put the question or questions before the Chair;
- (ii) put any Government amendments, new Clauses and Schedules, copies of which have been circulated to Honourable Members at least one hour before the time for the expiration of the debate;
- (iii) if necessary, put the question - That the Remainder of the Bill be agreed to; and
- (iv) put the question - That the Bill be reported with or without amendment, as appropriate.

The questions to be put in paragraphs (i) to (iv) shall be put without amendment or debate.

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ASKED ON PREVIOUS DAYS**

3.3 On 3 March 1988, the Assembly passed the following motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Smith:

"That the practice of the Legislative Assembly whereby answers to Questions asked on previous days in either Question Time or on the Adjournment are, on occasion, given by Ministers during Question Time, be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration and that the Committee report on the matter to the Assembly generally and with particular reference to:

- (a) whether such answers should be given during or at the end of Question Time;
- (b) if Ministers desire to have such answers broadcast, whether such answers could be made at the end of Question Time and be included in an extended broadcast; and
- (c) whether any other arrangement would be more suitable to the needs of the Assembly and its Members."

3.4 Your Committee has considered the matter and is of the opinion that it would be of advantage to the effective operations of the Assembly if the present abovementioned practice were changed.

3.5 Whilst it is imperative that an opportunity be given to the Assembly to hear answers which Ministers may have to questions asked on previous days either at Question Time or during debate on the Adjournment, your Committee is of the view that it is preferable not to interrupt the orderly flow of questions and answers. However, as, very often, the original question may have been asked during Question Time on a previous day, which period is broadcast, your Committee is of the opinion that Ministers should similarly be given the opportunity to have the answers to such Questions broadcast.

3.6 Your Committee therefore recommends -

- (1) That the following Standing Order be adopted, on a trial basis, as a Sessional Order:

"119A. When Question Time has concluded, following the request of a Minister "that all further Questions be placed on the Question Paper", Ministers may answer or give supplementary answers to questions asked on previous days at Question Time or during the debate on the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly but the total time taken for the giving of such answers shall not exceed 10 minutes."; and

- (2) That radio stations 8-TOP FM and 8-CCC be authorised to broadcast direct such answers in accordance with the terms and conditions of the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 11 October 1983 as varied by the resolution of 12 November 1985.

  
ROGER VALE  
CHAIRMAN