



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Standing Orders Committee

First Report of the 11th Assembly
Including

Sitting and Adjournment of the Assembly, Speech Time Limits,
Sound and Vision System, Consideration of General Business and the
Conduct of Question Time

November 2008

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Standing Orders Committee

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE AS AT NOVEMBER 2008

The Honourable Delia Lawrie MLA - Chairman
The Honourable Jane Aagaard MLA
Mr Matt Conlan MLA
Mr Michael Gunner MLA
Mr Peter Styles MLA

COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT

Mr Ian McNeill, Secretary
Ms Vicki Long, Research Officer
Ms Jane Gunner, Research Officer
Ms Eva Scott, Administrative Officer

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
Standing Orders Committee

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AT THE TIME OF TABLING OF
THE REPORT:**

The Honourable Delia Lawrie MLA - Chairman

Appointed 9 September 2008
Australian Labor Party
Member for Karama: First elected 18 August 2001
Leader of Government Business
Treasurer
Minister for Planning and Lands
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

The Honourable Jane Aagaard MLA

Appointed 9 September 2008
Australian Labor Party
Member for Nightcliff: First elected 18 August 2001
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Other Committees: House, Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Mr Matthew Conlan MLA

Appointed 9 September 2008
Country Liberal Party
Member for Greatorex: First elected 28 July 2007

Mr Michael Gunner MLA

Appointed 9 September 2008
Australian Labor Party
Member for Fannie Bay: First elected 9 August 2008
Government Whip
Other Committees: Public Accounts, Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Subordinate Legislation and Publications, Environment and Sustainable Development

Mr Peter Styles MLA

Appointed 9 September 2008
Country Liberal Party
Member for Sanderson: First elected: 9 August 2008
Other Committees: Environment and Sustainable Development



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
Standing Orders Committee**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standing Orders Committee recommends:

1. That the following changes to Standing Orders be agreed to:

(1) 31. SITTING DAYS

Unless otherwise ordered, the Assembly shall meet each year in accordance with the program of sittings for that year agreed to by the Assembly, and unless otherwise ordered the Assembly shall meet on each day at 10.00 am.

(2) NEW STANDING ORDER 31A—CHANGES TO DAYS AND/OR TIMES OF MEETING

The Speaker or a Minister may initiate a change to the days and times of meeting in the following circumstances:

- (a) At any time a Minister may move without notice a motion to set the next meeting of the Assembly;
- (b) a Minister may move on notice a motion to set a future meeting or meetings of the Assembly;
- (c) when the Assembly is not sitting, the Speaker may set an alternative day or time for the next meeting and must notify each Member of any change.



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(3) NEW STANDING ORDER 41A—ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY

Automatic Adjournment of the Assembly—Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays

- (a) At 9.00 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays the Speaker shall propose the question—**that the Assembly do now adjourn**. This question shall be open to debate—maximum time for the whole debate should be one hour—and no amendment may be moved. If the Assembly is in committee at that time the Chairman shall leave the Chair and report to the Assembly and on such report being made the Speaker shall forthwith propose—**that the Assembly do now adjourn** and that question shall be open to debate. If this question is before the Assembly at the time set for the adjournment, 10.00 pm, the Speaker shall interrupt the debate and immediately adjourn the House until the time of its next meeting;

Adjournment—Wednesdays

- (b) At 9.00 p.m. on Wednesdays the Speaker shall propose the question—**that the Assembly do now adjourn**. This question shall be open to debate and no amendment may be moved. If the Assembly is in Committee at that time the Chairman shall leave the chair and report to the Assembly and on such report being made the Speaker shall forthwith propose **that the Assembly do now adjourn** and that question shall be open to debate.

- (c) The following qualifications apply:

Division is completed

- (i) If there is a division at the time set for the adjournment to be proposed in Standing Order 41A (a) and (b), that division, and any consequent division, shall be completed.

Minister may require question to be put

- (ii) If a Minister requires the question to be put immediately it is proposed under paragraph (a), the Speaker must put the question immediately and without debate.

Minister may extend debate

- (iii) Where the Speaker interrupts the adjournment debate under paragraph (a) a Minister may ask for the debate to be extended by



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10 minutes to enable a Minister or Ministers to speak in reply to matters raised during the debate. After 10 minutes, or if debate concludes earlier, the Speaker shall immediately adjourn the Assembly until the time set for the next meeting.

Question Negatived

- (iv) If the question is negatived the House shall resume proceedings from the point of interruption.

Unfinished business

- (v) If the business being debated is not disposed of when the adjournment of the Assembly is proposed, the business shall be listed on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

(4) NEW STANDING ORDER 41B—LIMIT ON BUSINESS AFTER 9.00 P.M.

No new business may be taken after 9.00 p.m., unless by order of the Assembly before 9.00 p.m.

(5) 77. SPEECH TIME LIMITS

Standing Order 77 to be amended to read as follows:

Subject	Time
Motion for adjournment of the Assembly to close the business of the day—Each Member	5 minutes

2. The adoption of the following Resolution relating to the Incorporation of Material in the *Daily Hansard* and *Parliamentary Record*

That, unless otherwise ordered, a Member may have material incorporated in the *Daily Hansard* and *Parliamentary Record* subject to leave granted by the Speaker in accordance with rules and guidelines which the Speaker shall table from time to time.



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- 3. That the following matter be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report during the April 2009 sittings:**

Consideration of General Business

Options for the programming of the consideration of General Business, taking into account the practice in other Australian parliaments

- 4. That the following Resolution be agreed to:**

That the Standing Orders Committee monitor the operation of the restructured Question Time in the Australian Senate and other Australian Parliaments for a period of 12 months for the purpose of reviewing the procedures for the conduct of Question Time by the Assembly.



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INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday 28 October 2008 the Chief Minister, the Honourable Paul Henderson, MLA, made a statement and issued a media release on proposed government reforms to the Parliament. The statement included details of a proposed additional three sitting days per year for the Legislative Assembly, changes to sitting times and a proposal for video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings.

In the statement the Chief Minister indicated that the above proposals would be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report with implementation proposed for 2009. A copy of the media release is at Attachment A.

On Thursday 30 October 2008, the Leader of Government Business, the Honourable Delia Lawrie, MLA, pursuant to notice moved that the Assembly refer the following matters to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report to the Assembly during the November sittings of the Parliament:

1. That the Assembly sit three extra days each year;
2. That the Assembly commence at 9.00 a.m. and adjourns no later than 10.00 p.m; and
3. That video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings be allowed for broadcast and rebroadcast.

The question on the Motion was put and passed after debate and the matters were accordingly referred to the Standing Orders Committee. A copy of the transcript of the debate from the *Daily Hansard* (unrevised issue) dated 30 October 2008, pages 16-27 inclusive, is at Attachment B.

In order to comply with the reporting deadlines imposed by the Resolution, the Standing Orders Committee met on two occasions—on Monday 24 November and Tuesday 25 November 2008.

At the first meeting on 24 November 2008 the Committee elected as Chairman, the Honourable Delia Lawrie, MLA, and recommitted a previous reference from the 10th Assembly on the broadcast and rebroadcast of Assembly proceedings before proceeding to commence the inquiry into the above matter referred to the Committee by the Assembly.

As well as the matters contained in the Terms of Reference, the Committee also discussed other matters raised by the Chairman and the Member for



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Greator, Mr Matt Conlan MLA. These matters were adjourned to enable consultation with relative party members for reporting back at the meeting of the Committee on Tuesday 25 November.

At the meeting on 25 November 2008 discussion ensued over a range of matters and which resulted in the recommendations contained at page 2 of this Report.

Details of the consideration of those matters are contained in the following summary of the Minutes.

The detailed Minutes are attached at Attachment C.

A briefing paper on the upgrade to the broadcasting and audio-visual system is at Attachment D.



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SUMMARY OF MINUTES

Meeting of the Standing Orders Committee 24 November 2008

The Standing Orders Committee held its first meeting on 24 November 2008.

Ms Delia Lawrie, MLA, was selected by the Committee for the position of Chair.

Broadcast and Rebroadcast of Assembly proceedings

The committee was advised by the Department of Legislative Assembly that the project to improve the audio-visual capabilities in the Chamber would not be completed until after the February sittings. The committee determined that any further resolution in relation to broadcast and rebroadcast would occur once the production capabilities of the upgrades were clear. The current rules for broadcast and rebroadcast already allow for vision to be included in the internet broadcast.

Proposed Changes to times and days of sitting

The Chairman proposed a number of changes to the times and days of sittings as follows:

- 3 extra days. It was proposed that these would be the Monday of the second sittings week when there is a fortnight of sittings.
- Adjournment debate commence at 9pm and the maximum time for the debate to be one hour for Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; that is, the House will adjourn at 10pm on those days. Any unfinished business at 9pm would go onto the Notice Paper for the next day.
- On Wednesdays the adjournment debate will commence at 9pm but will continue until the debate is concluded, with no maximum time limit set.
- Time limits for adjournment debate speeches as follows:
 - 5 minutes adjournment speech
 - capacity to have a further 5-minute speech incorporated into Hansard. There would be a requirement to submit this speech to the Speaker for approval prior to 9am on the day it is to be presented.



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The Chairman advised that the government had discussed with Members the proposal to commence sittings at 9am, but due to concerns about the need for preparation for the sittings and media interviews, and the impact on parliamentary staff, a decision was made for the commencement time to remain as 10am.

The Chairman distributed draft Amendments to the Standing Orders for sitting days and times, adjournment and speech time limits.

The Member for Greatorex proposed a number of changes on behalf of the Opposition members of the Standing Orders Committee:

- Removal of the dinner break to allow more time for parliamentary business
- General Business Days (currently one day every twelve sitting days).
 - First Proposal 2pm - 6pm on Monday of each sitting week
 - Second proposal 2 hours every sitting period
- Non-controversial Bills dealt with over lunch break
- Matter of Public Importance (MPI) debates moved to immediately after Question Time, and capped at one hour. Mr Conlan advised that this would put non-government business into one time period.
- Time limits for questions in Question Time
 - 30 seconds to ask question
 - 3 minutes to reply
 - supplementary question - 30 seconds
 - supplementary answer - 60 seconds
- 90 minutes for question time

The committee agreed to consider the proposed changes submitted by the Chair and the Member for Greatorex, and further consider these proposals at the meeting on 25 November 2008.



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Meeting of the Standing Orders Committee 25 November 2008

The committee considered the proposals before it with the outcomes as follows:

Three extra sitting days

This was agreed to by the majority of the Committee.

Adjournment debate commencement and finish times.

- That the Adjournment debate commence at 9pm and the maximum time for the debate to be one hour for Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; that is, the House will adjourn at 10pm on those days. Any unfinished business at 9pm would go onto the Notice Paper for the next day.
- On Wednesdays the adjournment debate would commence at 9pm but will continue until the debate is concluded, with no global time limit set.

The proposal was supported by a majority of the Committee.

Time limits for adjournment debate speeches and capacity to incorporate into Hansard

The proposal was for a 5 minutes adjournment speech with the capacity to have a further 5-minute speech incorporated into Hansard.

The majority of Committee members supported the proposal.

Proposals for changes to times and days of sittings

- **Removal of dinner break**

This was agreed to by all members of the Committee.

- **General Business**

The matter of consideration of General Business was referred to the Standing Orders Committee as a reference for inquiry and for report during the April 2009 Sittings of the Assembly as follows:

- Options for the programming of the consideration of General Business, taking into account the practice in other Australian Parliaments.



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▪ **Bills in lunch break**

The Committee did not agree to this proposal on the grounds of Committee meetings being held over the lunch break and the lack of Presiding Officers available to officiate over proceedings in the Chamber.

▪ **Timing of MPI debates**

The Opposition proposal was that Matter of Public Importance (MPI) debates be moved to immediately after Question Time, and capped at one hour, on the grounds that this would put non-government business into one time period.

The majority of the Committee did not support this proposal on the grounds that it would break up Government business.

▪ **Time limits for questions in Question Time**

The proposal was for time limits for questions in Question Time as follows:

- 30 seconds to ask question
- 3 minutes to reply
- supplementary question - 30 seconds
- supplementary answer - 60 seconds

The Committee agreed that it would monitor the operation of the restructured Question Time in the Australian Senate and other Australian parliaments for a period of 12 months for the purpose of reviewing the procedures for the conduct of Question Time by the Assembly. This review would also include a consideration of the global time allowed for Question Time.

The Senate Procedure Committee Report of November 2008, entitled "Restructuring Question Time" is attached.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
Standing Orders Committee**

The Senate

Procedure Committee

Restructuring Question Time

Third report of 2008

November 2008

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
Standing Orders Committee

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Senator the Hon John Hogg
President of the Senate

Senator the Hon. Alan Ferguson
Deputy President and Chair of Committees, **Chair**

Senator the Hon Chris Evans
Leader of the Government in the Senate

Senator the Hon Nick Minchin
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate

Senator the Hon Chris Ellison

Senator the Hon John Faulkner

Senator Annette Hurley

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PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

THIRD REPORT OF 2008

The committee reports to the Senate on the following matter that has been under consideration by the committee.

RESTRUCTURING QUESTION TIME

In its first report of 2008, the committee indicated that it has under consideration a proposal to restructure question time with the aim of making it a more effective mechanism for seeking the accountability of the executive government to the Parliament. The proposal was outlined in that report, with an indication that the allocation of questions under the proposal would be governed by informal agreements similar to those operating at present. The committee also indicated that it appreciated that the proposal would involve a major change to the operation of question time, and that the committee would consult with senators before making a recommendation.

Following that consultation, and discussions at some length in the committee, a majority of the committee has agreed to recommend to the Senate a trial, for the last two sitting weeks of this year, of a more limited change to question time. This modified proposal is as follows:

- no notice to be given of questions, as at present
- primary questions to be limited to one minute and the answers to them to two minutes
- two supplementary questions to be allowed to the questioner
- supplementary questions and the answers to them to be limited to one minute each
- answers to be required to be directly relevant to each question, as in the original proposal.

The committee therefore recommends that this report be adopted and the procedures as outlined operate as a temporary order for the two weeks of sittings beginning on 24 November 2008.

Alan Ferguson
Deputy President
and Chair of Committees
Chair of the Procedure Committee



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DISSENTING REPORT

Dissenting report on reforms proposed Regarding Parliamentary Sittings by Country Liberals MLA's Matt Conlan, Member for Greatorex and Peter Styles, Member for Sanderson

25 November 2008

Covering Remarks

While the Opposition accept that the intent of these reforms are to provide a more efficient sitting schedule, the Parliamentary reform proposed by the Northern Territory Government has been a missed opportunity to maximise the business of Parliament.

It is, in the view of the Country Liberals yet another attempt to avoid scrutiny while appearing to be strengthening Parliamentary structure.

If the Government was committed to improving the efficiency of Parliament they would have consulted widely and thoughtfully with all members of parliament and LA staff.

However the situation is that, the 2009 sittings schedule was announced by the speaker before the reforms were ratified by Parliament, Members adjournment debating time has been significantly reduced to an insufficient 5 minutes, and an extra sitting day has been added to already scheduled fortnightly sittings instead of a full extra parliamentary week.

While two suggestions by opposition members have been taken on board for consideration, they have been done so in a manner that sees no change and a further extended debate with no guarantees of any real change being embraced.

The changes to be considered are; restructuring Parliamentary Question time and changes to the structure of General Business Day. While the opportunity to review these is generally welcomed, it is disappointing that these suggestions will not be part of the initial reform.

Instead the Government's tokenistic reforms will be rammed through the house and will be in place for the start of the 2009 parliamentary year.



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Following are the changes proposed by the Opposition.

Daily Opening of Parliament

The Country Liberals believe that the opening of parliament remain at 10.00 am on sitting days

There is considerable work that is required of the parliamentary support staff to enable the parliament to function, from collation of papers, agendas, circulation of material and basic mechanics. The bringing forward of starting times to 9am for each day, is not practicable.

The Country Liberals therefore recommend that the opening of Parliament be kept at 10am. As a compromise we would be willing to accept an earlier start on Thursday, however, this would have to be following consultation with the parliamentary support staff.

A consequence of starting the chamber at 9am necessitates such things as MPI notifications being in the hands of the Speaker at 7am. The current arrangement is for 8am, and on almost all occasions this year, no Speaker's staff or the Speaker have been available to provide the paperwork to so as to meet the stipulated Parliamentary requirements. That was required at 8am, it is difficult to accept that there will now be staff in the office or for that matter the Speaker at 7am.

There is also no doubt that requiring a 7am drop off of the notification of an MPI will necessitate staff members being in the building outside of normal working hours. This has implications on budgets.

Sitting Day Numbers

The number of sitting days should be extended to 36 actual sitting days plus the estimates process and if this proves to be insufficient then this should be reviewed in 12 months to make necessary increases. The Country Liberals believe that these days should be incorporated in an extra week of sittings.

Finishing Times

The expectation from the public is that politicians will work while they are sitting for Parliament. To meet this expectation the Country Liberals recommend that there is a capacity for later finishing times earlier in the sitting week. As politicians are fresher and the capacity to work through a legislative agenda is greater than sessional orders should reflect the capacity for later sittings.



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Therefore the Country Liberals recommend adjournment debate begins:

- Tuesday no later than 11pm
- Wednesday no later than 10pm
- Thursday no later than 9pm

In accordance with provisions giving each member the capacity to participate in the adjournment each evening, the Country Liberals would accept a change to reduce the maximum length of contributions for adjournment to 10 minutes.

We do not support the proposal by the Government to reduce the adjournment times to 5 minutes is acceptable. We also view the capacity to incorporate speeches as a selling point from Government Members is a ruse as this capacity already exists.

Local members should be able to speak about local issues and should not be hindered by cut-off times which will have the effect of excluding such members from representing their people in this place.

The Country Liberals also oppose the cut off times for adjournment. An agreement for no divisions once entering adjournment is something we would consider.

Dinner Suspension

The Territory Parliament already sits the least number of days of any other major Parliament. The sitting times themselves are also not extreme and there continues to remain unfinished business. As members increasingly wish to engage in debate on issues and legislation, this will further add pressure on the times available for effective debate on these issues.

The introduction of a Dinner suspension takes time out of the sitting day, and as such the Country Liberals support the removal of the dinner suspension. Members are able to excuse themselves from time to time from the Chamber and each party is capable of operating a rostering system which would enable people to take time for dinner whilst parliament is operating.

General or Private Members Business

The current arrangement of General Business occurring every 12 sitting days facilitates a backlog of material as happened on the previous GBD. As a result of the Government shutting down the chamber a number of Bills were not introduced and will now not be seen until the middle of next year and then not debated until late 2009.



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The Country Liberals recommend an alternation of this approach. We recommend the removal of GBD and that it be replaced with either off the following:

- General Business from 4pm to 8pm Thursdays of each sitting week.

The provision of general business opportunities each week will remove the back log issue that currently exists, it allows government to conduct its work on the current Tuesday to Thursday sitting days and assists in non-Government members holding Government members to account.

General Comments

The Country Liberals recommendations will see a changed, simplified and considered compromise on the current approach by the Government. As unlike the Government the Country Liberals are happy to see the Parliament operate where Government is held to account. At the same time we recognise the need for Government to undertake its agenda, and additional time is afforded as a result of our changes.

The sitting days would look roughly as follows:

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
10am	Open / Prayers Question Time	Open / Prayers Question Time	Open / Prayers Question Time
11.35	CENSURE / MPI	CENSURE / MPI	CENSURE / MPI
1pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch / Non- Controversial Debate
2pm	Resumption – Notices / Reports / Petitions & Government Business	Resumption – Notices / Reports / Petitions & Government Business	Resumption – Notices / Reports / Petitions & Government Business
4pm	Government Business	Government Business	Private Members Business
8pm	Government Business	Government Business	Adjournment Debate
9pm	Government Business	Government Business	
10pm	Government Business	Adjournment Debate	
11pm	Adjournment Debate		



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The model gives the Government 19 hours of Government Business time each sitting week with an additional hour for non-controversial legislation. This also provides four and a half hours for questions each week and 4 hours for Private Members General Business.

The Country Liberals fully support the introduction of full time video streaming of the Chamber and recommend the expansion of the stream to include all cameras, or in the very least a chamber wide camera in addition to the members speaking camera.

Non-Controversial Bills

There are often pieces of legislation that are agreed to by all within the chamber and are seen as non-controversial legislation that are free of amendments and limited if any committee stage debate. To assist in freeing up parliamentary time, the Country Liberals support the introduction of non-controversial legislation debate for lunchtime on Thursdays. Sessional orders would preclude divisions during the operation of the Chamber at this time.

MPIs

The current arrangements have MPIs near the end of the day and as such it breaks up the process of Government Business. Our suggestion is that MPIs follow Question Time, and as below we are suggesting that the Parliamentary day begins with Question Time and with MPIs following this, it then frees up the remainder of the day for Government Business and allows this to dictate the operating times of the Chamber.

Therefore the Country Liberals recommend the MPI debate be moved forward to follow Question time. The debate for MPI would be capped at 1hr

Question time

Preceding the Labor Government taking office in 2001, Question time was conducted earlier in the day. The move to have it after lunch was no doubt an attempt to manipulate the media cycle and limit scrutiny of Government to play out in the media until late afternoon and evening news services.

The Country Liberals recommend bringing Question time back to the beginning of the day and for it to be the first item of business following prayers.



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The Country Liberals also recommend a change to question time to take up a model mix of the House of Representatives and the Australian Senate. The model would be as follows:

- A maximum 30 seconds to ask a Question
- A maximum of 3 minutes to answer a Question
- A maximum of 30 seconds to ask a supplementary question
- A maximum of 60 seconds to answer a supplementary question

Each question time would provide at least 9 questions from the non-Government members of the chamber and 9 questions from the government members of the chamber. More often than not this will see around 10 questions for each side of the Chamber. This will allow for greater scrutiny of the Government. The Government, and this Government in particular, are masters at not answering questions and the provision of a supplementary question may assist in bringing greater accountability or greater scrutiny to the Government.

It is also a process that has been in operation in the Senate for some considerable number of years.

This arrangement would seek to extend question time to a 90 minute maximum which is closely aligned to the practical reality of times for House of Representatives question time.

The application of time limits removes the incessant interjections of members such as the Leader of Government business interrupting questioners and keeps questions to a limit of time. It also removes the capacity to filibuster by Government members to avoid answering questions.

The introduction of a right to supplementary question assists in holding Ministers to account by allowing a further reference of Ministers to the original question or an issue that was raised by the Minister in his or her answer.

Ministerial Reports

The Country Liberals believe that Ministerial Reports are not a truly parliamentary activity. They are in-effect question time in reverse, where the opposition is provided with an issue and required or expected to give a response without notice. It is not the Opposition that is in Government and making decisions about Territory finances and laws.



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The Opposition has previously made representations to Government Ministers and Members about changes to the Ministerial Report system. Suggested changes have included giving notice the evening before so as to provide for a full and substantive response from the Opposition.

Ministerial Reports also enable the right for Ministers to raise issues in their portfolio area where at the same time they are reducing the capacity for members to raise matters in adjournment, by limiting both the number of adjournments and the time Members have to raise their issues.

In view of the concerns that time pressures will become greater as a result of increased scrutiny of government legislation and issues raised, the Country Liberals recommend the removal of Ministerial Reports from the daily programme. If Ministers are required to make a statement to the house, then a mechanism for this already exists, through Ministerial Statements, but if further time is provided, then this can be provided by the Chamber. Again Ministers, like the Opposition have the avenue of adjournment to raise further and other issues.



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ATTACHMENT A:



Tuesday 28 October, 2008

Henderson Government Reforms Parliament

The Henderson Government today released its plans for major reforms to increase the transparency, productivity and accessibility of the Northern Territory Parliament.

Chief Minister Paul Henderson has announced three extra sitting days per year and video streaming of Parliament.

"We want to make Parliament open and accountable – and these fresh ideas will deliver real results for Territorians," Mr Henderson said.

"The extra three sittings days every year will give the Government more opportunities to implement policies.

"It will also provide the Opposition with more opportunities to scrutinise the work Government is doing.

"This Government will also make improvements to the Parliament daily schedule.

"The day will start earlier at 9am and Parliament will not finish later than 10pm.

"This will make the Parliament more productive, accessible to the public, improve the quality of debate and hopefully encourage more people to enter politics.

"For the first time, there will also be video and audio streaming of Parliamentary proceedings.

"The Legislative Assembly will investigate what technology is needed to provide a quality service as quickly as possible.

"This will provide the public and media with the best access to the NT Parliament since Self-Government."

The parliamentary reforms will be referred to the standing orders committee for proposed implementation next year.

Today's announcement builds on the Henderson Government's parliamentary reforms to introduce four year terms, whistleblowers' legislation, a legislated code of conduct and a modernised register of MLAs' interests.

Contact: Geoff Fraser 0407360256

Fresh Ideas, Real Results





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ATTACHMENT B:

Debates - Eleventh Assembly, First Session - 21/10/2008 - Parliamentary Record No: 2

This is an uncorrected proof of the daily report. It is made available under the condition that it is recognised as such.

Topic: MOTION
Subject: MOTION - Standing Orders Committee – Reference re Sitting Hours
Date: 30/10/2008
Member: Ms LAWRIE
Other Speakers: Mr TOLLNER; Mr WOOD; Mr ELFERINK
Status: Leader of Government Business

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move – That, the Assembly refer the following matters to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report to the Assembly during the November sitting of the Parliament:

1. That the Assembly sit three extra days each year;
2. That the Assembly commence at 9 am and adjourns no later than 10 pm; and
3. That video and audio streaming of Parliamentary proceedings be allowed for broadcast and rebroadcast.

Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, the Chief Minister announced plans to improve the accountability and transparency of this parliament. The plans include: four year fixed terms, three extra sitting days, video and audio streaming of parliament, and parliament starting at 9 am and finishing no later than 10 pm.

These changes will make the parliament more productive, accessible to the public, improve the quality of debate - we can hope - and hopefully encourage more people to enter politics. The Leader of the Opposition put out a press release which whinged and whined as usual, but did not actually oppose any of these plans.

Quite appropriately, the government is referring these plans to the Standing Orders Committee to for inquiry and to report to the Assembly in the November sitting.

The extra sitting days every year will give the government more opportunities to implement policies. It would also provide the opposition and independent member with more opportunities to scrutinise the work the government is doing.

There will also be video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings. The Legislative Assembly, will investigate what technology is needed to provide a quality service as quickly as possible, I am advised. This will provide the public and media with the best access to the NT parliament since self-government.

Set finishing times for parliament is not unusual. The Commonwealth parliament has set finishing times. Sitting into the early hours of the morning is both irresponsible and highly unproductive. The new proposed hours will make parliament more efficient and productive and help to make a career in politics more attractive.

This motion proposes to refer the following issues to the Standing Orders Committee – that the Assembly sit three extra days each year; that the Assembly commence at 9 am, and



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adjourns no later than 10 pm; and that video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings be allowed for broadcast and rebroadcast.

Madam Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about this motion for the following reasons. First, government talks about openness and accountability, but does everything in its power to hinder openness and accountability. The shenanigans we have just seen from the government a minute ago were all about hindering debate, stopping debate, gagging debate. The Leader of Government Business is constantly standing up and gagging debate. The last thing this government wants is openness and accountability, and that is shown very clearly by their actions.

The Leader of Government Business says set times for the parliament to close happens in federal parliaments. I can assure the Leader of Government Business that is not the case. There is an expectation that parliament will sit to a particular time but, more often than not, that parliament is very flexible with the hours they sit in the Commonwealth. I distinctly recall one sitting period when I was down there, where the parliament sat for 37 hours straight. The reason for that was the House of Representatives was waiting for legislation to be returned from the Senate, which it desperately wanted to pass before the winter break. Consequently, it meant parliament had to sit for a period of time longer than normally expected. However, to suggest it was legislated or regulated to finish at a particular time, is complete and absolute nonsense.

Of course, we understand members have lives outside of the parliament but, as elected members of the parliament, we have an obligation, firstly, to the people of the Northern Territory. We have an obligation to debate those issues which they wish to see debated, and that their representatives in this place wish to see debated. We have seen, time and time again, that this government is not keen to debate issues; they constantly gag debate; they shut debate down; they do not allow questioning of, you, for instance, Madam Speaker. It was not more than half an hour ago that I asked leave of the House to ask you a question - a simple question, not a difficult thing.

The question - and I will note it now - is that I simply wanted, as a member of this place, access to the video footage of last night from the five cameras here. I wanted access to that video footage. The government's own motion talks about video and audio streaming and how they want that to occur. For the life of me, I cannot see a reason - given the fact the government supports, or says they support, openness and accountability - why anyone would find it distasteful for me to access the video footage from last night ...

A member: And get the video from last week as well. That would be good.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, I would not mind seeing that video from last week, or at any time, of debates in this parliament. As a member of this parliament, it should be a fundamental right that members of this parliament should be able to access video and audio footage of events which occur in this parliament.

I understand it is probably not television quality video footage we have here and, at times, it is very grainy and of poor quality. However, for my own personal needs, I would like to be able to access that footage.

Madam Speaker, I give you notice that I will be asking, in writing - as I cannot ask a question in this place; a harmless question like that. I will be writing to you to see if I can access video



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footage of events that occurred in this place.

Obviously, I believe this motion that the government has put up is absolutely nothing but window dressing. We have seen time and time again from the government where they put motions in place that never actually go anywhere, and before I was so rudely cut off in debate last night by the Leader of Government Business, before I was so rudely cut off, I was going to raise the motion that I put toward the House about a regulatory review advisory committee.

This is not the first time that this has been raised in the House. In actual fact, it was raised in October last year, during a debate, where the member for Araluen raised a very similar motion. During the debate on that motion 12 months ago, the then minister who had carriage of that, Syd Stirling, amended the motion that the member for Araluen put. Part of his amendment was that he requested that a reference be provided to the Public Accounts Committee to examine and report to the Assembly on business concerns about any unnecessary regulatory burdens, while ensuring the cost of establishing a large, specialised sub-committee is not incurred by Territory taxpayers. That is what the government minister of the time altered the motion to read.

Now, 12 months down the track, I ask the question, was this put to the Public Accounts Committee? Has the Public Accounts Committee made any sort of reference to that motion? The answer, of course, is no. The Public Accounts Committee has not done anything at all about the regulatory burden on business - nothing. That is a motion that was put more than 12 months ago, to this parliament, by the government themselves. And here we are now, expected to believe that this motion that they are going to send to the Standing Orders Committee is going to be jumped on, debated quickly, worked out, and then come back to the Assembly for some sort of debate.

I find it hard to take this government on their word. I find it incredibly hard to take this government on their word. They do not want openness, they do not want accountability. They talk about sitting an extra three days a year. We could sit an extra 50 days a year if it was in the government's best interest. If that is what the government wanted, there would be no problems at all in convening parliament and having issues debated, but they put up some nonsense that we are going to sit for an extra three days a year. Well, give us an extra 30 days a year so that we can belt out all the issues, we can actually have a proper informed debate.

Every motion last night was shut off. We had 20 motions on the notice paper, we got eight of them dealt with, maybe it was seven.

Ms Lawrie: Ten.

A member: Eleven and a half hours to get 10 done.

Ms Lawrie: Ten dealt with, and they were not shut off.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TOLLNER: This government is afraid of work.

Ms Lawrie: No we are not.

Mr TOLLNER: The Leader of Government Business says the reason we have to stop at 10 o'clock is to encourage more people into politics. What a ridiculous statement! The reason



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people get involved in politics and the parliamentary process is that they want to make a difference. They want to make a difference, and I would very much doubt that there is a single member in this place who is not here because they want to make a difference. Parliamentarians will make extraordinary sacrifices in order to try and make that difference - extraordinary sacrifices.

Goodness me, why could we not start parliament at 8 o'clock? Why cannot we work through the lunch break? You talk about the fact that you allowed us to work through the dinner break, through a half an hour dinner break last night, as some magnanimous gesture on behalf of government. Some magnanimous gesture! Oh, well, the opposition wanted to work an extra three quarters of an hour – and we let them! Come on.

The Leader of Government Business is a scandal, an absolute scandal. The way she railroads this parliament, the way she dictates and gets away with it in this parliament. We acknowledge we are in opposition, we acknowledge you are in government. I would hate to be the one independent member in this place, very difficult to get up on any issue - very difficult.

We understand the government has control, they have the numbers, they can get their way with practically anything; but it is complete abrogation to constantly shut down debate, constantly oppose people for the most innocent things, like asking the Speaker a question. What could possibly be so offensive to the government that a member of this place cannot ask the Speaker a question?

Dr Burns: Read the Standing Orders, you goose.

Mr TOLLNER: What is so offensive about asking the Speaker a question?

A member: You should learn the rules. They are the rules. You do not know the rules.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr TOLLNER: The minister says ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr TOLLNER: The rules are, and I will point out to you, minister ...

Members interjecting.

Mr TOLLNER: I asked leave to ask the Speaker a question ...

A member: That is the rules.

Mr TOLLNER: Who did not grant that leave, minister? The government did not grant that leave. The government did not allow a member to ask the Speaker a question.

Mr Vatskalis: I call a division on the special time.



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Mr TOLLNER: A question! An innocent question!

Ms Carney: Timing was of great importance to you blokes last night, wasn't it? And yet you are so hypocritical you seek an extension of time.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Carney: You have no idea what you are doing.

Mr TOLLNER: This motion is a complete and utter joke. Of course we are all keen to see video streaming and audio streaming coming out of the parliament. The opposition has been pressing for this for goodness knows how long. I find it absolutely ridiculous that here we are in 2008 and there is no live feed going to media. I find that absolutely ridiculous. I cannot understand how, after 30 or 30-odd years of self-government, we cannot even get video footage out to major media outlets. That is not just a shame on this government, it is a shame on all previous governments. It is a shame on everyone who has been in this place, because that should be an automatic thing.

It embarrasses the daylights out of me every time Question Time finishes, or a motion is put during Question Time, the cameras are asked to pack up and leave – like we have something to hide! Like we should be embarrassed about the fact the cameras are here and we want to have a debate. I find that alarming - incredibly alarming.! I cannot understand how a person who sits in the Speaker's Chair, or the government, or the opposition can allow that to happen every single Question Time – where the media are told to pack up and leave!

Mr Wood: Hear, hear!

Mr TOLLNER: We are talking about openness and accountability – openness and accountability. What a joke. Members on this side of the House have coined the Leader of Government Business as 'Gag Girl', for very good reason; because she is the girl who stands up and moves the gag motions, constantly. She stands up and moves the motions to gag the parliament.

Ms Lawrie: Sticks and stones, sticks and stones.

Mr Bohlin: And then talks slowly when she wants to drag it out.

Mr TOLLNER: Then gags the parliament. Exactly, member for Drysdale. She stands up in Question Time and talks for 25 minutes straight without taking a breathe – and then shuts the place down, because she suspects there could be a couple of nasty questions coming the government's way.

Ms Lawrie: No actually. You are very, very lame.

Mr TOLLNER: This parliament is an abrogation of everything a parliament should stand for. Madam Speaker, I hope you listen to my pleas during this speech. I do want to access the video footage this parliament has in archives. I know it is there. I have talked to some officials here. That information is stored away. It is there. I cannot understand any reason why this parliament would stop me accessing that footage, unless, of course, it has something to hide. Unless it has something to hide. Unless it is trying to be unaccountable. I mean why would during some of the most important debates we have here, I cannot think of a more important



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debate than the censure of a Speaker, or motion about lack of confidence in the Speaker, and yet we are cut off.

The Leader of Government Business stands up right at the start of debate and says: 'We will allow the debate', and then cuts it off before anyone has had a chance to speak. The Leader of Government Business gets a chance, the Independent member gets a chance, the Opposition Leader gets a chance, and that is it, like they are the only people who matter in this place. Well, it is not on. It is not on.

Members have a right to be heard. They have a right to make their point. They have a right to ask the Speaker a question.

Ms Lawrie: Is this your leadership challenge?

Mr TOLLNER: Here we go. This is the sort of nonsense that comes out of the mouth of the Leader of the Government Business, time and time again. Not only does she embarrass herself, but she embarrasses us all. We all come in here with goodwill, but it is very, very hard to maintain that goodwill when we see the constant trampling of rights, the constant trampling of voice, of the Territorians. As the Opposition Leader said during the last motion that we debated, Territorians expect the right for their members to be heard. As much as it might gall members of the government, people on this side of the House represent almost half of the Territory electorates, and probably more than half of the Territory constituency, when you actually take into account the vote.

Mr Vatskalis: Not true. Count the votes again.

Mr TOLLNER: Look, minister, I stand to be corrected on that. I stand to be corrected and I do not say that you are wrong. Maybe we do have the minority of the vote as well, and maybe you are spot on. I do not know. I have not analysed the Electoral Office figures. But there is a significant portion of the constituency of the Northern Territory that is represented on this side of the Chamber. And they have a right for their voices to be heard.

This parliament sits for 33 days a year and the government thinks that is adequate and that we are now going to have another three days, and we are going to shut down debate at 10 pm to compensate. That is ridiculous. There are 25 members here who want to have a say. There is absolutely no reason - talk to anyone out there in voter land and ask them what they think of a parliament that sits for 33 days a year. I understand that in the early days there might not have been that much to debate, that many issues, and the like. Thirty three days may well have been adequate. However, I would have thought that the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Minister and the Speaker could get their heads together and work out that we have a quite large program to run so let's run a few extra days.

What is so atrocious about coming back on a Friday, or starting on a Monday? There is nothing that prevents us from doing that. There is nothing unless the parliament prevents us from doing that. Nine o'clock to 10 o'clock. It is not a big day if you are only working 33 days a year, or 36 days a year. To sit there and suggest that we have to shut down at 10 pm in order to attract more candidates into parliamentary arena flies in the face of reality.

Even at the last Territory election, which was called in a snap and gave nobody much time at all to get out there and register and nominate to be a candidate, we had far more candidates than we had seats in this place, I can tell you that - far more. In any normal election campaign when people have adequate notice and there is time to get your act together and the minor parties - the Greens, the Democrats, One Nation, the Four Wheel Drivers Party,



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whoever they are - have time to get their acts together, they put forward candidates.

There is no lack of people who wish to have a career in the parliament. We can sit around and say: 'Well, with the axing of the parliamentary superannuation scheme, that will be a disincentive for people to get into a parliamentary career. Every now and again, you might have to sit until 2 am'. Well, goodness gracious me, every now and again, you might even have to do a 37-hour day. I have some sympathy for the view that people do not function particularly well after midnight. I have quite a bit of sympathy for that because I have been in that situation many times in the past. However, at times, you have to understand that the greater good is out there. We are working for the people of the Northern Territory. They deserve the right to have their members heard and debate heard. To run this silly motion that the Assembly is going to refer the matter to the Standing Orders Committee is just ridiculous. As if the Standing Orders Committee will run out and do something and come back?

We have seen it in previous motions that have just been completely ignored by the government - government's own motions. Government puts up these motions and says, 'We are going to do this', and it just conveniently forgets about it. As I say, 12 months ago they said they were going to make a reference to the Public Accounts Committee to have it investigate business regulations. I just happen to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I have talked to people who have been on the Public Accounts Committee for a lot longer than I have, and these people have absolutely no knowledge of that reference, or any debate or any interviewing of witnesses or anything of that nature, to do with the regulation of business and easing the regulatory burden on business. And yet, at the time, 12 months ago, I am sure, that Syd Stirling was the Deputy Leader. Am I right?

Members: Yes.

Mr TOLLNER: In any case, he was a senior member of the Labor Party and a senior member of the government. He was not just some little backbencher; he was a person with some authority.

Mr Conlan: He was in the end after the shaft job.

Ms Carney: Yes, after he was done over.

Mr TOLLNER: He was a person with some authority. You would think if a person like that places a motion in front of the parliament, which is supported along parliamentary lines, along party lines, that it actually would be acted on – government's own motions. But, no. I am sure there are countless other examples of that lack of attention, lack of desire, that can be shown by the government.

This motion, Madam Speaker, is a joke – it is an absolute joke. There is no detail in it. It calls for something that everybody has been calling for - the video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings to be allowed to be broadcast and rebroadcast. Well, goodness me. How long has that been called for? How long? As long as I can remember, people have been calling for access to parliamentary video and audio and, yet, for some reason finally now the government feels it is a bit under the pinch, a bit under pressure, they decide to throw this one out there and say, 'We are open and accountable. From this motion, we are open and accountable'. You tell the Territorians that you are open and accountable.

At the end of the day, what do you do? You shut down every opportunity that we wish to debate something. I stood up half an hour ago and asked the Speaker a question. I cannot see the problem in asking the Speaker a question. What is so offensive by that? What is so



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offensive about a member of this place asking the Speaker a question? For the life of me I can not understand that. I cannot understand what is so offensive about asking the Speaker the question.

But, no, the Leader of Government Business jumps up and says, no, no, no, standing orders say you cannot ask that question, you have got to ask leave, so then I ask leave, and what happens, the government does not approve it. The government will not allow a member of this place to ask a question. And this is the same mob who stand up there and walk straight out of here, after 12 o'clock, front the media and say, 'we are open and accountable. Look, we have passed this motion' that says that they are open and accountable. All these measures that say 'we are open and accountable'. It is not what you say, it is what you do.

I have often said, do not listen to what they say, look at what they do. Look at what they do. What an embarrassment. This place is an absolute joke the way it has turned out. Talk about open, and accountable and transparent. They know nothing about that, absolutely nothing about that. Time and time again we ask the ministers to be relevant to questions - oh no, we go and talk about something else.

The member for Nelson made a point the other day, the standing orders are particularly broad, you know, you can ask a question about cheese and the minister will stand up and talk about the moon because it looks like a lump of cheese, and that is damned relevant. There is stuff in the standing orders and the House of Representatives Practice, the whole idea of Question Time is to be accountable, for ministers to be accountable. You would think that there would be some sort of obligation that they would at least make the barest minimum of an effort to be accountable, and to try to answer the question.

All right, we all have a bit of fun from time to time, putting our own little political take on things, that is to be expected in a robust democracy. You want a bit of strong debate, you want a bit of loud debate. I often think that part of the problem with this place is that we have this microphone system that is constantly on. I know in the House of Representatives, at times you cannot hear yourself think. The place is absolute din, but the only microphone that is on is the person that is speaking.

I imagine it is difficult for people out there in listener land, in radio land, and listening to these things, for them to believe that we are having a robust debate, because, unlike federal parliament, where only one microphone is turned at a time, here, all of them are alive, where everything that you whisper to your friend next to you, or you say across the parliament, can be heard. People have the misinformation that this place is a rowdy rabble when clearly it is not. You sit in the gallery here, and you sit in the gallery in the House of Representatives in the federal parliament, you are quite amazed at the level of quietness, at the amount that you can actually hear here. The House of Representatives in the gallery, more often than not, it is just a din. It is a complete din. But the thing is what is going out to the public via video and audio is being clearly heard, because only one microphone is on at a time.

People can run around and say that this place is falling into chaos, because a couple of people make a couple of interjections here and there. Well goodness me, that is the idea of a robust debate. That is the idea of when a Speaker has the right to pull people up and order silence when you get a bit carried away. We all understand how easy it is to get a bit carried away in the moment, but the fact is, people have the right to have a say, and they should be afforded that right. The way this place is going, it is turning into a complete circus. There is a complete lack of information, debate, and opportunity to say what you want to say. For this government to stand up there and talk about accountability, openness, and transparency is complete hypocrisy.



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Mr WOOD (Nelson): I had forgotten that the Standing Committee is waiting to get a response from parliament about this particular issue as it stands today and of course that tends to cut this debate off and it is a very important debate. One thing that does concern me is that the Chief Minister put out a press release saying, this is on Tuesday: 'Henderson government reforms parliament'. That means the Henderson government reforms it and the rest of us do not, from that, appear to be part of that reform and I am a little bit disappointed that is the approach that has come. Reforms of this parliament, as was highlighted to me the other night, not only affects us, it affects the staff of the Legislative Assembly.

I hope that they have some way of putting in put in to some of these changes. The government I believe would have been far better to have made a much broader referral. There are some of the issues here that I believe are window dressing. The Chief Minister spoke about transparency, productivity and accessibility. Productivity is about using the time you have the best way you can and I can say that there are many times in this parliament when time is certainly filled up with unnecessary things. We do not go through a large amount of legislation.

We have had some sittings where you might have had two amendments or three amendments to a bill, the rest of the time has been statements and sometimes those statements I reckon I recall a couple of months ago could have come out again - they are repeats. To fill in the time there will sometimes be about eight, or five or six speeches from the government because we have got to fill that time in. Many of those speeches are very similar because the party putting forward these statements is going to ask their members to basically put out a similar reflection on that statement. They are not really going to let people vary too far from the policies that the government is putting out.

There are times, and I know when you sit here and people look at the clock to see, well yes, I have to go a few more minutes because there is someone else to say something and that should fill it in. I believe if we really are interested about productivity I would not be so concerned about worrying about the hours, I would not be so worried even about looking at extra days. Let us see if we can use the present system more productively and see where there are issues that need to be looked at. We have always got extra days as an option.

I mentioned before that we could have had General Business Day on Friday, we could have continued on Friday, as I was told that standing orders allow for that. We do have those options to go extra hours if we need to.

There are a whole range of issues that I think we should be looking at. The question the member for Fong Lim and I raised it before in standing orders, about the issue of relevance. That is a matter that perhaps could be raised as part of reform. Question time: maybe this side of parliament should have a right to ask more questions than that side, because the government is going to ask dorothy dixers, but the people out there in the Territory would like to hear a range of questions which actually question the government. Not ask the government for an answer which is a repeat of their policy, but they would like to hear the government being questioned. I believe question time is a very important part of parliament.

Also issues about answers being too long. Now I understand some answers have to be long if it is a complicated question, but I know a lot of those answers are inflated, far more than they need to be, and I think there is room there to look at changes to the length of the answers.

On the matter of reports: the matter is that the government has a five minute report, the opposition has two minutes to reply and I have two minutes to reply. Unless the Whip lets us know what those reports are going to be, they are a complete surprise when you get here. Now that does not occur with statements, so why should it occur with reports. It would make it



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better, it would make the government more accountable, it would make things more transparent.

Regarding the dinner break: I must admit I did not realise the dinner break was coming into the sittings of parliament. I do not particularly want them. I would just rather keep going. You know dinner is there. If we get a break we just go and have some dinner and back. I know that the Speaker is trying to have that dinner break as a way of bringing parliamentarians together and creating some peace and goodwill amongst parliamentarians, but I do think that can still occur and parliament can still operate. Sometimes we are doing statements at that time. People can hear it on the television anyway and perhaps we may go back to the old system.

General business days, as I said, perhaps some reform or maybe it does not need reform but just simply keep that option open that if we do go through late at night there is an option to finish off what is on the GBD agenda on the next day or the day after. Allow flexibility into the way we run parliament.

I was going to move a motion, but instead of moving that motion I will just state what I believe should be what the Standing Orders Committee should be looking at. If they are looking at reform, and reform means to make better by the removal of faults and errors, or if you use the noun, it means an improvement. So if we are to improve parliament, that is what the Henderson government is saying, then we need to ask the Standing Orders Committee to look at all other matters that involve ourselves, that involve the staff. We have to remember there are a lot of staff here who work so that we can turn up here at 10 am and operate. They should be allowed to be part of this. And you, Madam Speaker, should be part of this as well.

If we really believe that in reform it should not be the government driving it. It should be the government perhaps leading it but making sure we all have an equal opportunity to put input into this reform process. I do not think it should be rushed. We have to make sure this is not a case of window dressing, that the government has put up some views that might sound good – longer hours, extra days – that might sound good out in the public, but is it really going to make any difference or are we just going to fill in time? After all does cost come into this. How much does it cost every time we come to parliament? If we go three more days, what sort of cost is that going to be on the Legislative Assembly budget?

I agree with the video and audio streaming. I have always believed that parliament at the very least should be broadcast all the time to those people so Territorians can listen to it anywhere in the Territory. We have the radio facilities in most parts, but not all parts. I know the member for Fong Lim did promise, I think, something on radio towers, was it? No, that was mobile phones. I have always reckoned the ABC should make sure ...

Ms Scrymgour: He did not deliver much.

Mr WOOD: I will tell you what we should do, is he should make sure the ABC is heard right down the track and we have all those towers down there so I do not why there are gaps in the system still. We should be making sure as best we can that people can hear what happens in the Legislative Assembly, not just for Question Time and not just on computer. You cannot stick a computer on a tractor and you cannot use a computer when you are working. You can always put a walkman or you can have the radio going in the shop.

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me, member for Nelson. Do you have many more comments to make?



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Mr WOOD: I am going to finish up now.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, I ...

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I had indicated to the member for Nelson that we would try to deal with this matter before lunch because of the meeting. As I have advised you, this will continue so maybe the member for Nelson wants to continue his remarks when the debate continues. He has more time, is what I am saying.

Madam SPEAKER: Would you like to continue your remarks after Question Time, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: I can finish now, and then if people want to speak ...

Madam SPEAKER: Just bear in mind that there are a lot of things happening.

Mr WOOD: All right.

Mr Conlan interjecting.

Mr WOOD: I will, thank you, Mr 8HA. It sounds like the news coming up at 12 o'clock.

Madam Speaker, the Standing Orders should have more things reported to it if it is going to be effective. There are a lot more issues than just these three issues here. If we really believe in reform, make it much wider, make the terms of reference much wider and make sure we include all those people who will be affected by these changes.

Debate suspended.

MOTION
Standing Orders Committee –
Reference re Sitting Hours

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I have some reservations and trepidation about what is occurring in relation to this particular motion. However, before I speak on the motion itself, it is worthwhile making some more general observations about the amendment to standing order which are proposed.

We have heard much, from government benches particularly, about criticism of discipline. I hope that government members, in particular, would pass their mind to a particular discipline to which they seem to not want to subordinate themselves.

In a unicameral parliament - which means a parliament with one Chamber - there is a very strong chance that the party of the day will form government by way of an absolute majority. There is a profound temptation in such circumstances to use that majority to abandon the principles of Westminster parliamentary democracy. The principles of Westminster parliamentary democracy are a construct built on, if anything, suffering as much as anything else.



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One of the major problems I have with this motion is that the government has unilaterally announced this by way of media release and Dorothy Dixon in Question Time, without so much as tipping his hat to the direction of opposition or other members in this place, simply because he is now subordinating himself to a principle of, in every instance the spin is more important than the actuality of what is trying to be achieved.

I note - and I have quoted already from Nicholas Rothwell's speech in Parliament House on 24 October 2008. He also, in his speech, referred to spin. It is worth visiting this particular issue. I quote from Nicholas Rothwell:

Spin is now so familiar to us as to make the most sophisticated consumers distrust their media and discount the words of all their politicians. It is, in its current form, a new phenomenon. It dates from the Vietnam era, when the need for a countervailing weapon to control the press became plain. It seeks not just to control the news and limit freedom of information, but precisely to imitate it, to provide details that lead to preset conclusions, to manage the 24-hours cycle and, in this way, give to readers, listeners, and viewers not the froth and flow of real events, but false the true coin. Hence, it is, of course, in all ways the enemy of journalists and of truth. It is a key part of the new media domain - a domain that offers multiple diversions and delights, infotainment, the shimmer of immediacy of live voyeuristic, incontrovertible seeming images instead of reflection and analysis; sentiment and outrage instead of emotion and understanding. Above all, this new media realm breeds and depends on an uninformed, incurious public.

Content to feel the novelty it now receives, it is in this environment that spin can thrive. It brings the promise of information control, but at a cost. For great effort is required to counter the standard news media - to influence it, to direct it, to lead it. This is what political and corporate planning has become; a constant battle for media and through the media for hearts and minds. There are probably more people in western society trying to manipulate the media than there are people working in the mainstream media. The consequences for the contemporary political and business class are profound. To succeed by this new set of measures, you are inclined to follow and pander to public opinion, rather than seeking fair and square to win popular backing. You foreground certain facts and shadow others. You suppress, you classify, you silence, you experience at every turn the deep temptation to reach for the convenient, truth glancing lie. The form, the look of things, increasingly is what matters. The message, the impression, but not the substance.

Madam Speaker, if there was ever an example of how spin has come to dominate the mind of government over the importance of this House, then it is the motion that is before us now. It is betrayed not by the motion itself but, rather, by the mechanisms used to attempt to bring this motion into this House for consideration.

At the heart of the Westminster parliamentary democratic system, I said earlier that it is a construct of many years of growth and blood. Probably the most stark example of that was when England, in its earlier centuries, suffered a profound and ugly, and devastating Civil War between the Crown and the parliament which existed uncomfortably beside each other. The parliament won that Civil War, and the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, ruled, not as King but as Lord Protector for several years, and although his son was unable to maintain his rule, and finally Charles II returned to the throne, reasserting the divine right of Kings. Upon the passage of Charles II, the parliament became resurgent and has never looked back.

I am always mindful that when I stand in this place, it is, in many ways, built metaphorically, if not literally, on the bones and the blood of people who died trying to establish this system. And, through the centuries since that time, the system by which we have governed ourselves



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within the Empire, and ultimately within the Commonwealth, has reflected what was bequeathed to us as a result of those dangers, and many, many, many more people have perished in defence of this particular system of government.

Consequently, when this system of government finds its expression in a unilateral Chamber, unlike the Palace of Westminster, which holds still two Houses of Parliament, we find ourselves at a disadvantage when there is a government which has an absolute majority. It uses that majority ruthlessly and without a forethought to the principles that brought us to this place.

It is a great discipline, if it can be exercised by a Chief Minister, and by a government, that they take on the mantle of that history of this system, and still, in such an environment of a unicameral parliament, who choose to subordinate themselves to the place because they believe that it is worthwhile to protect a system which has served the English speaking world, and many other languages, I might add, so particularly and fundamentally well.

However, let us now look at the methodology that the Chief Minister has chosen to engage in to bring this particular issue to the House. Madam Speaker, was there, as so often is required in the Westminster system, a notification given to members other than government members that this motion was being brought forward? No, Madam Speaker, there was not. One of the fundamental principles of our democratic system is that there is some sort of parlay or discussion prior to matters being brought into the House, or some sort of notice being given, and that the government has chosen to abandon, essentially, for the process of adhering to the media cycle, that all important 24 hour media cycle.

Madam Speaker, I am glad, in some respects, that the government has heeded the suggestion that I made last week in this House that there should be more sitting days. However, to arbitrarily dictate that it shall be three sitting days, before it is even given consideration by a committee, already takes out of the committee the capacity to make a decision. Why does it necessarily have to be three sitting days, why cannot it be six or 12? Why cannot the committee have a reference that says that the committee examines the amount of sitting days required and report back? Surely, that would be a far more sensible approach than to merely dictate from the Chief Minister's chair that this is the way it is going to be – three sitting days. But, no, that option will not be given the committee.

The committee will have to consider three sitting days. And that is a shame, because the government itself, through its business days, has kept us into this Chamber until one o'clock and two o'clock in the morning last week. And whilst the government is anxious to point out that we had a very busy schedule last night, and they were not inclined to keep the schedule going beyond one o'clock in the morning, an hour earlier than they were inclined to adjourn the House last week. However, that being an aside, the fact of the matter is, this committee should be given greater latitude to examine the necessities of how many sitting days are required.

What, pray tell, makes the Chief Minister the better judge than other members of this parliament of how many sitting days are required? I have heard no justification from the Chief Minister to say that three days is better than four, or two; it is simply an announcement. It reeks of the lack of discipline to which I referred earlier. He now seems to think that parliament is merely a vehicle upon which he can enforce his will.

Ms Lawrie: Not true.

Mr ELFERINK: Using his numbers, and the numbers of the Australian Labor Party, jam



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through anything they please.

Ms Lawrie: Not true.

Mr ELFERINK: The same applies to the Assembly commencing at 9 am and adjourning no later than 10 pm. Once again, what is the committee being asked to consider? The determination has already been made for them, by a Chief Minister who implacably does not want to divest himself of any authority, no matter how minor. A simple issue like that, a suggestion to the committee that it should go out and actually look at how many extra hours or less hours are appropriate but, no, the will of the Chief Minister is imbedded in this, as etchings are in the side of a monument. There is no opportunity for this committee to enjoy any flexibility.

Such a timetable raises more questions than it answers. What is the adjournment debate going to look like if there is a stopwatch running? Is the one debate which enables members of this House complete freedom, to touch on any topic they see fit, by way of convention, going to be truncated? Is that going to be taken away, or in some way reduced, so the dead hand of the undisciplined Chief Minister falls across this parliament like the hand over the mouth of someone trying to breath? Is that really what the Chief Minister would ...

Ms Lawrie: No it is not, and you know it.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, stand up and argue the case.

Ms Lawrie: Come on, you are alleging he is smothering, hand across the face ...

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ELFERINK: The one part I am entirely comfortable with is that the video and audio streaming of the parliamentary proceedings be allowed for broadcast and rebroadcast. The Leader of Government Business is fully aware that when we initially spoke, subsequent to the last general election, one of the very first orders of business which I raised with her was the suggestion that video and audio broadcast be made available for broadcast and rebroadcast.

The Leader of Government Business said there would have to be a delay to allow the new technology to come into place, I expressed to her I would be happy to see the current technology be used should the current media choose to stoop so low as to actually use that for the purposes of broadcast quality recording. I am aware the current media is not up to a certain standard, in fact, as I understand it, it is analog system in a world of digital technology.

However, it is not impossible to transfer that medium to the broadcast environment, the quality would just be very poor. I was told that was not going to happen, fairly unilaterally. I accept that because it did come with a guarantee, which is going to be met by this motion, and that is video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings be allowed for broadcast and rebroadcast.

I return to the principle to which I was critical before: that determination has now been made and made, not in consultation with us, or even by way of advice to us, by press release. It seems the 24 hour media cycle and the media organisations are of much more concern to the operation of this government ...

Ms Lawrie: Not true.



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Mr ELFERINK: ... than this House.

Ms Lawrie: Not true.

Mr ELFERINK: The government has become used to, in the last parliamentary term, a small opposition and running roughshod over this House. That environment is now changed. Whilst I appreciate the government through its processes still wants to maintain its death grip on the throat of this House, and wants to continue operating in a way that it has become accustomed, the fact is that the balance of power in this House has shifted. And it has shifted radically against the government which occupied this House immediately prior to the last general election.

The continual use of this House as a vehicle for the Chief Minister to make bold statements emblazoned in media releases with the single view of capturing the 24-hour media cycle is, to me, the true offence to this House.

The discipline to which I referred earlier, the discipline of a Chief Minister who is prepared to subordinate himself in a unicameral system to a parliament of which his supporters have the great majority is a great discipline indeed. It would show humility and it would show decency. It would show a commitment to the philosophies espoused by the Chief Minister. Those philosophies are the beliefs that government should be open, honest and transparent. But we do not have that in this motion, Madam Speaker. We have dictate and we have *fait au complet* being presented as the absolute position of this House and of the committee prior to the committee even being able to review this particular reference.

Madam Speaker, it is a great shame that the government has not taken the opportunity to show the discipline and fortitude that is required by a government which should be subordinating itself to this place, and not come here and dictate terms as they are outlined in this statement, but to send a reference to a committee such as the Standing Orders Committee, three suggestions for consideration and for potential amendment. That is really what should be occurring. To see the first announcement, the first I ever heard of these changes, was not a communication or a letter from the Chief Minister or from the Leader of Government Business. It was a dorothy dixer as the Chief Minister stood up and answered a question that he took on notice.

Ms Lawrie: Oh, it is all about you.

Mr ELFERINK: I pick up on that interjection. It is about this place. It is about respecting this place. It about respecting the principles that drive this place. It is about respecting the history of this place and not using it as a plinth upon which you stand to grandstand and push your own opinion without reference to other people, without reference to the people of the Northern Territory who put us here.

Madam Speaker, I have found the continual gag motions run by this government an offence to this very House. This House by its very definition is a place where we talk. A parliament, *parlay* from the French, to speak. That is what we are here to do. And to find ourselves continually being gagged by motions of this House, having matters of great import adjourned off simply because the government is not inclined to debate the matters, and to have motions being put simply because the government is no longer inclined to listen to critical voices, is a great travesty. And it occurs in a unicameral system where you have a single party in power.

I urge the Chief Minister to show fortitude, to show discipline, and to show some humility, and



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when he comes into this place to treat it with the respect it demands. The parliament to this day remains the supreme law making body of the Northern Territory to which the government should be subordinate. Their desire to not show any subordination is an ill discipline that ill behoves this government and ill behoves this Chief Minister.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, we are speaking to a motion to refer reform of parliamentary hours to the Standing Orders Committee. I remind members that the Standing Orders Committee not only has members of government on it but it also has members of the opposition. That Standing Orders Committee will need to meet out of session between the sittings here in October and the November sittings because, as members would be aware, the reference does have the Standing Orders Committee reporting to this parliament, which we are subordinate to as we have just been reminded, in November. It is a process of referring the extra sitting days for the Assembly - that is the three extra days - to that Standing Orders Committee. Very clearly, the government has announced its intent to reform parliament. It is not unusual. Governments right around our nation, indeed, have announced their intent to reform parliament and how parliament operates and, indeed, they have gone down that process.

It is time we modernise our parliament, and we have seen very good reason why we should be doing that. We have seen every reason why we should be doing that. We have seen opposition members who behave like a rabble, who have come in here and taken one stunt after the next, and really tried to make a mockery of this parliament. We have found that disgraceful and, so, very clearly the Chief Minister, quite appropriately, has announced reforms which will provide for sensible ways, as parliamentarians, we can go about the business of parliament.

The reference includes the Assembly commencing at 9 am in the morning instead of 10 am in the morning. I know that means the member for Port Darwin might have to get out of bed a little earlier, but it also means that we would adjourn no later than 10 pm. That is a fair working day. As we all know, we will be all starting work a lot earlier than 9 am if we are actually in this Chamber at 9 am, as government members meet beforehand. I know the member for Nelson does a lot of research in the morning for matters that arrive overnight for his consideration.

Importantly, the Chief Minister has been very clear that he wants to open the parliament to the people of the Territory; that is, we were the first government to introduce cameras into the parliament of the Northern Territory. They come in here at Question Time. We were the first government of the Northern Territory to provide for the broadcast of Question Time to Territorians. We have live Internet streaming of the Assembly and we are certainly going further in this reference in saying that we will provide for video and audio streaming of parliamentary proceedings.

The member for Port Darwin is pretty good at verballing and, yes, we did have a conversation. He indicated that they quite like the idea of the audio and video streaming. I indicated, not that we would have to wait, but that we would have to consider the technical aspects of that because, whilst we could proceed with streaming on the current quality that we have, it is not of the perfect quality we would want for broadcast.

Madam Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

Motion agreed to.



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The Assembly suspended.



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ATTACHMENT C:

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting No: 1

Date: 24 November 2008

Present: The Honourable D Lawrie MLA
The Honourable J Aagaard MLA
Mr Michael Gunner MLA
Mr Matt Conlan MLA
Mr Peter Styles MLA
Mr I McNeill (Secretary)

1 Meeting

The Secretary, Mr Ian McNeill opened the meeting at 1.50pm.

2 Appointment of the Committee

The Secretary advised that on Tuesday 9 September 2008 the Legislative Assembly approved the appointment of the following Members to the Standing orders Committee:

- The Honourable D Lawrie MLA
- The Honourable J Aagaard MLA
- Mr Michael Gunner MLA
- Mr Matt Conlan MLA
- Mr Peter Styles MLA

3 Election of Chairman

The Secretary called for nominations for Chairman.

Mrs Aagaard nominated Ms Lawrie as a candidate for the position of Chair of the Standing Orders Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr Conlan and was carried.



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4 Correspondence In and Out

The Chairman drew the attention of the Committee to the Report of the Queensland Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee on the Queensland Parliament Video Broadcast system.

The Committee noted the correspondence.

5 Broadcast and Rebroadcast of Assembly proceedings

The Clerk provided a briefing on the background to the development of a project to improve the sound and vision in the Chamber. He advised that the project could not be completed by the February sittings but the April sittings would see considerable improvement in the sound and vision system.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for his briefing. Discussion ensued.

It was agreed That once the new system is in place and its production capabilities are clear, the Committee will then decide how the new technology will be utilised. The current rules for broadcast and rebroadcast already allow for vision to be included in the internet broadcast.

6 Proposed Changes to times and days of sitting

The Chairman proposed a number of changes to the times and days of sittings as follows:

- 3 extra days. It was proposed that these would be the Monday of the second sittings week when there is a fortnight of sittings.
- Adjournment debate commence at 9pm and the maximum time for the debate to be one hour for Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; that is, the House will adjourn at 10pm on those days. Any unfinished business at 9pm would go onto the Notice Paper for the next day.
- On Wednesdays the adjournment debate will commence at 9pm but will continue until the debate is concluded, with no maximum time limit set.
- Time limits for adjournment debate speeches as follows:
 - 5 minutes adjournment speech



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- capacity to have a further 5-minute speech incorporated into Hansard. There would be a requirement to submit this speech to the Speaker for approval prior to 9am on the day it is to be presented.

The Chairman advised that the government had discussed with Members the proposal to commence sittings at 9am, but due to concerns about the need for preparation for the sittings and media interviews, and the impact on parliamentary staff, a decision was made for the commencement time to remain as 10am.

The Chairman distributed draft Amendments to the Standing Orders for sitting days and times, adjournment and speech time limits.

The Member for Greatorex proposed a number of changes on behalf of the Opposition members of the Standing Orders Committee:

- removal of the dinner break to allow more time for parliamentary business
- General Business Days (currently one day every twelve sitting days).
 - First Proposal 2pm - 6pm on Monday of each sitting week
 - Second proposal 2 hours every sitting period
- Non-controversial Bills dealt with over lunch break
- Matter of Public Importance (MPI) debates moved to immediately after Question Time, and capped at one hour. Mr Conlan advised that this would put non-government business into one time period.
- Time limits for questions in Question Time
 - 30 seconds to ask question
 - 3 minutes to reply
 - supplementary question - 30 seconds
 - supplementary answer - 60 seconds
- 90 minutes for question time

It was agreed That members consider the proposed changes submitted by the Chair and the Member for Greatorex, and further consider these proposals at the meeting on 25 November 2008.

7 Other Business



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There was no other business raised.

8 Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee to be held at 12 midday in the Office of the Speaker on Tuesday 25 November 2008.

9 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2.45pm.



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MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting No: 2

Date: 25 November 2008

Present: The Honourable D Lawrie MLA (Chair)
The Honourable J Aagaard MLA
Mr Michael Gunner MLA
Mr Matt Conlan MLA
Mr Peter Styles MLA
Mr I McNeill (Secretary)

1 Meeting

The Chair opened the meeting at 12 midday.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The motion that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as a true and correct record was moved by Mr Conlan and seconded by Mrs Aagaard. The motion was carried.

3 Business Arising from the Minutes

The Member for Sanderson raised the question of why the Speaker had announced in the Chamber that morning the additional three sitting days when it was his belief that this matter was still before the Standing orders Committee for consideration. The Speaker advised that the considerable enquiry in relation to the Alice Springs sittings dates had prompted the announcement, and that it was her understanding that the three additional sitting days had been agreed to by all members of the Standing Orders Committee at yesterday's meeting, and that the announcement was made on the advice of the Clerk. The Speaker apologised if this had caused any embarrassment to the members of the Committee.

4 Correspondence In and Out

No correspondence had been received since the last meeting.

5 Government proposals for changes to times and days of sitting



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5.1 Three extra sitting days

Mr Styles advised that the Opposition was proposing that there be an additional week of sittings. Discussion ensued on this issue. The proposal of three extra sitting days on Monday 16 February, Monday 17 August, and Monday 19 October 2009, was agreed to by the majority of the Committee.

5.2 Adjournment debate commencement and finish times.

The Government proposal was as follows:

- That the Adjournment debate commence at 9pm and the maximum time for the debate to be one hour for Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; that is, the House will adjourn at 10pm on those days. Any unfinished business at 9pm would go onto the Notice Paper for the next day.
- On Wednesdays the adjournment debate would commence at 9pm but will continue until the debate is concluded, with no global time limit set.

Mr Styles advised that the Opposition proposed a finish time for Government business of 10pm with a minimum time for one hour for adjournment on all days. Discussion ensued on this issue. The Government proposal was supported by a majority of the Committee.

5.3 Time limits for adjournment debate speeches and capacity to incorporate into Hansard

The Government proposal was for a 5 minutes adjournment speech with the capacity to have a further 5-minute speech incorporated into Hansard. There would be a requirement to submit this speech to the Speaker for approval prior to 9am on the day it is to be presented.

Mr Styles advised that the Opposition was proposing a ten-minute limit to adjournment speeches, with no capacity to incorporate into Hansard. Discussion ensued on the issue. The majority of Committee members supported the Government proposal as outlined above.



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6 Opposition proposals for changes to times and days of sittings

6.1 Removal of dinner break

This was agreed to by all members of the Committee.

6.2 General Business Days

The Opposition proposals consisted of two options: the first being 2pm - 6pm on Monday of each sitting week, and the second proposal being 2 hours every sitting period.

The Chair advised that the following matter was proposed to be referred to the Standing Orders Committee as a reference for inquiry and for report during the April 2009 Sittings of the Assembly:

- options for the programming of the consideration of General Business, taking into account the practice in other Australian parliaments.

The committee agreed to this recommendation.

6.3 Bills in lunch break

The Committee did not agree to this proposal on the grounds of Committee meetings being held over the lunch break and the lack of Presiding Officers available to officiate over proceedings in the Chamber.

6.4 Timing of MPI debates

The Opposition proposal was that Matter of Public Importance (MPI) debates be moved to immediately after Question Time, and capped at one hour, on the grounds that this would put non-government business into one time period.

The majority of the Committee did not support this proposal on the grounds that it would break up Government business.



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6.5 Time limits for questions in Question Time

The Opposition had proposed time limits for questions in Question Time as follows:

- 30 seconds to ask question
- 3 minutes to reply
- supplementary question - 30 seconds
- supplementary answer - 60 seconds

The Chair proposed that the Committee monitor the operation of the restructured Question Time in the Australian Senate and other Australian parliaments for a period of 12 months for the purpose of reviewing the procedures for the conduct of Question Time by the Assembly.

Mr Styles asked that this review also include consideration of Agenda Item No. 5.6, the global time allowed for Question Time.

The proposal by the Chair and the request by Mr Styles were both agreed to by the Committee.

The Senate Procedure Committee Report of November 2008, entitled "Restructuring Question Time" is attached to these minutes.

7 Draft report

Discussion centred around the proposal that the report to Parliament include the recommendations as in the draft revised Standing Orders, with the additions of the references to the Standing Orders Committee in relation to General Business and Question Time, and the removal of the dinner break. This was agreed to by the majority of the Committee.

Mr Styles advised that the Opposition members of the Committee would be submitting a dissenting report.

8 Other Business

Mr Styles proposed that Ministerial reports should be removed from parliamentary proceedings.

This was not agreed to by the Committee. The Clerk proposed that this could be included in the Opposition's dissenting report.



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9 Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held during the February 2009 sittings, date and time to be advised.

10 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1.00 pm.



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ATTACHMENT D

BROADCASTING AND AUDIO VISUAL SYSTEM

BRIEFING NOTES

The current audio/visual system was installed some 15 years ago and is no longer providing an adequate level of service. The system uses outdated analogue technology which is increasingly difficult to maintain and funding of \$475,000 (GST incl.) was allocated in the Legislative Assembly Repairs and Maintenance Program for 2008-09 for the upgrade project.

These funds have been allocated to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) to initiate the project and engage appropriate qualified consultants to carry out project specifications and design works.

In September of this year a Tier 1 level consultancy was issued to ICE Designs (Rod Louey-Gung). A Stage 1 report was received by DPI in October 2008. This report was distributed to the Legislative Assembly staff for comment. The report addressed the replacement of cameras and the control panel (see Appendix 1).

The Report did not address the additional components required for a fully integrated system to allow for storage, retrieval and audio and video streaming in digital format.

As a result it became apparent that all the additional components in Stage 1 would be required for a "state-of-the-art" Audio Visual System. On 27 September 2008 a Project Team was established. The Deputy Clerk is Project Sponsor and other members include an officer from DPI, (Project Director) an Officer from Department of Business and Employment for IT advice and the Director of Building Management from Legislative Assembly as Project Supervisor and Liaison Officer.

From the above information DPI was asked to seek a Certificate of Exemption to "fast track" the program. On 8 November 2008 DPI obtained this approval. DPI then engaged TCM Consulting who engaged ICE Designs as a specialist consultant to incorporate all the necessary technology to enable the completion of Stage 1.

On Tuesday 11 November 2008 a video conference was held at Parliament House with Rod Louey-Gung and the Project Team. It was



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explained to Rod Louey-Gung that the project specification for the scope of works had expanded to include the following:

- Recording of Parliament
- Storage of recorded images
- Retrieval of information as requested via FTR
- Additional camera for ABC and Channel 9 with phase override capabilities
- Distribution of digital audio/visual to the Internet
- Local Streaming of digital audio/visual to the CBD of Darwin
- Possible replacement of all analogue television sets (approximately 140)
- Development of a three year maintenance schedule (paid for out of R & M Budget)
- Revised cost estimate

As a result of the video conference and given the urgency of the project, Rod Louey-Gung and his team have given the Project Team an undertaking to be in Darwin the first week in December. This date will be confirmed later this week. The revised cost estimate is to be broken into two pricing schedules: one for the completion of Stage 1 in its entirety and another for the completion of Stage 2 (see Appendix 1).

The projected timelines of the Project are as follows:

Delivery of Project Specification	3 Weeks
Project Team Review	1 Week
Tender Period	4 weeks
Tender Assessment	2 Weeks

Taking the above timelines into consideration the Contract would not be let until the start of February 2009. The estimated delivery time of equipment is six to eight weeks and this can be confirmed during the tender assessment.



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To fast track this project to tighter timelines, the Legislative Assembly could ask DPI to seek a Certificate of Exemption to allow for a select tender process. It is advised that the project costing is likely to be above the current financial commitment of \$475,000 (GST Incl)

Office of the Clerk
24 November 2008



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