



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURE
Speaker Ms Joy Burch MLA (Chair), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Deputy Chair),
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Submission Cover sheet

Review of the Standing Orders and
Continuing Resolutions of the Tenth
Assembly

Submission number: 003

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Ms Joy Burch MLA
Speaker
Attn: Secretary Administration and Procedures Committee
ACT Legislative Assembly

ACT Greens MLAs proposed changes to ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Orders

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee for Administration and Procedures Review of Standing Orders and Continuous Resolutions.

The ACT Greens MLAs have outlined a range of proposals for consideration by the Administration and Procedures Committee. A key outcome sought by these changes is to provide sufficient notice to enable timely, accurate and informed debate matters before the Assembly. The proposals are listed below in rough order as they would appear in the Standing Orders (appearing in brackets where applicable).

Gender Neutral Language (throughout)

Canberra is an inclusive and welcoming community. The use of language to refer to members of our diverse communities can be important, and powerful. Using inclusive language can help to reduce gender stereotyping, promote social change and contribute to achieving gender equality. We would welcome a change to the language of our Standing Orders to reflect an accepting and inclusive Canberra. References in the Standing Orders to 'he' or 'she', 'his or her', and 'him or her' should be deleted in favour of 'they', 'their', 'them', or the relevant noun.

Physical signatures (throughout)

Many Standing Orders make specific reference to signatures to certify or indicate a Member's endorsement of the contents of the document to which the Member has signed. Despite many changes arising from COVID it is not clear if this must be physically signed by the Member or whether an electronic signature is sufficient. The Greens would support a clarification that electronic signatures are sufficient for the purposes of the Standing Orders. This will prevent issues arising when Members are required to isolate.

Petitions (98)

It is important for Members to be able to make informed contributions to debates on issues raised in petitions. Currently out of order petitions may be presented by leave of the assembly without notice to other members. We propose that Standing Order 98 be amended so members who propose to table an out of order petition must provide notice via the daily program prior to presentation in the assembly. Notwithstanding this notice, there should be no change to the process relating to out-of-order petitions.

We would also like to propose that the Standing Orders and the e-petition be amended so as to allow Members to co-sponsor petitions to help demonstrate Member unity on issues raised by the community.

Matters of Public Importance (99B)

The ACT Greens propose providing a more direct path for citizens to raise community concerns for Assembly discussion and consideration as Matters of Public Importance (MPI). MPIs, whilst not utilised this term have demonstrated value in raising policy issues that would not normally be debated in the normal course of Assembly business. A citizens MPI would also strengthen our

democracy through greater civic engagement in parliamentary processes, and allow citizens to discover their representatives' (and parties) views with respect to issues that are important to them.

The Greens do not propose to duplicate the petition process which is fundamentally and historically based on a specific call to redress a personal, local, or Territory-wide, grievance. There are existing mechanisms for petitions to be created, tabled, inquired into (should a committee so desire), and responded to. Instead the greatest value would arise where citizens' MPI topics focus on creating discussion and/or consideration of topics that:

- are policy centric and that do not seek specific redress of a grievance; and
- have not arisen in the normal course of Assembly business (whether via debate or committee inquiry).

The Greens propose Administration and Procedures Committee as part of the Standing Orders review examine a process that enables citizens to submit topics for the Assembly to discuss as MPIs. This process will need to be managed by Administration and Procedures Committee, set a limited number of MPIs per sitting (including time allocated), and following discussion, allow the topic to be referred to a Committee for possible inquiry and/or the relevant Minister for a response if appropriate.

Petition Responses (100)

To ensure adequate notice and if necessary, timely and informed debate, on a Petition Response; it is proposed that petition response be made available electronically to Members at least two hours before they are presented in the Assembly.

Papers presented (211)

The current process has a number of shortfalls that precludes informed or timely debate on papers presented. Members are required to decide on short notice based purely on the title as to whether a paper should be noted or debated. Where noted, it is reliant on the Manager of Government Business agreeing for an item to be brought back for debate. Any subsequent debate can also be severely delayed whilst waiting for next sitting day. The inability for Members to debate papers in a timely-fashion delays and reduces the level of scrutiny, accountability and oversight.

Therefore, the ACT Greens propose that Standing Orders be amended so as to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Papers shall be made available electronically to Members at least two hours before they are to be debated.
2. A Member may move a motion to adjourn debate on long and/or complex papers to another day. This will then be coordinated as part of Assembly business.

Government Response to Committee Report (254)

Government responses to Committee recommendations may be unclear as to what (if any) action is planned by the Government in its response to a Committee's recommendation. To provide greater clarity and transparency about the Government's position to the Assembly, it is proposed Government responses provide greater clarity on what has, or has not, been agreed.

Broadcasting Guidelines - Continuing Resolution 3

The current Broadcasting Guidelines unnecessarily restricts the use of broadcast material, which may limit community understanding and awareness of Assembly proceedings. It is recommended that these guidelines be reviewed and loosened to allow greater use of this material. During this review care should be taken to ensure all use of Assembly broadcast upholds the integrity of the

Parliament, respects Assembly process, and be conducted in accordance with the Members' code of conduct.

We are happy to provide further information on any of these proposals.



Andrew Braddock MLA
ACT Greens Whip on behalf of the ACT Greens MLAs