



ACT
Government

2019

Government Response to Recommendation 7 from the
Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure's
Review of the Standing Orders and Continuing Resolutions of
the Legislative Assembly

Use of the honorific 'The Honourable' in the
Legislative Assembly

Presented by Andrew Barr MLA

Chief Minister

Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the recommendation on the use of Honorifics within the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure's Review of the Standing Orders and Continuing Resolutions of the Legislative Assembly. This Government Response specifically addresses.

The Report noted the submission to the Review made by the Office of the Legislative Assembly, which discussed the use of the honorific 'The Honourable' and how it may be introduced for members of the ACT Executive and the Speaker.

The Committee made one recommendation in its report regarding Honorifics:

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government seek advice on the legal and protocol issues associated with the use of the honorific 'The Honourable' through its Strategic Communications, Media and Protocol Branch within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and provide that advice to the Assembly.

Response

Since the establishment of self-government in 1988, the Legislative Assembly has not used the honorific 'The Honourable' to address ministers or its presiding officer. The Legislative Assembly is unique in this respect, with Federal, State and Northern Territory parliaments using the honorific 'The Honourable'. The Assembly has instead adopted a more egalitarian approach to addressing members, with Members referred to as Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr/etc.

In response to the recommendation of the Standing Committee, the ACT Government, through the Communications and Engagement Division of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, has sought advice on any legal or protocol issues associated with the use of the honorific 'The Honourable'.

Legal advice

It had been thought that because the ACT does not have a vice-regal function within its system of government and therefore no Executive Council to advise it, use of the honorific 'The Honourable' was not applicable.

Following legal advice provided by the ACT Government Solicitor, it has been established there is no legal barrier to the ACT adopting the honorific title 'The Honourable' for members of the ACT Executive during their term of office.

Across Australia, apart from a few instances where the issue is addressed by law, the use of the honorific 'The Honourable' is determined by convention and courtesy in accordance with practices that vary from one jurisdiction to another within Australia.

Protocol advice

The existing protocol is to not use the honorific 'The Honourable' for Members of the Legislative Assembly. Whilst there is no impediment to introducing the honorific 'The Honourable' into the Legislative Assembly, there is currently no evidence to suggest support for this change.

Recommendation

The advice received has confirmed that there are no legal or protocol barriers associated with the introduction of the honorific 'The Honourable' in the ACT.

However, the ACT Government will not introduce the use of 'The Honourable' into the Legislative Assembly.

The existing approach to titling for Members of the Legislative Assembly has now been in place for 30 years and is consistent with the egalitarian, modern nature of the ACT.

Members of the Legislative Assembly need to be accessible to the people who elected them and introducing a title such as 'The Honourable' could create a perceived barrier between Members and the community they represent.

There will be no change to the existing approach to addressing Members of the Legislative Assembly, and no change made to how they are titled.