

TEMPORARY ORDER

Motion, as Altered

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [10.02 am] — by leave: I move —

That if, following agreement with the party leaders or members deputed, the Premier or one member deputed advises the house that it is necessary to pass urgent legislation or undertake any other immediate business arising from or in connection to COVID-19, the following temporary order shall apply —

- (1) bills to be introduced without notice and to proceed without delay between the stages;
- (2) messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received;
- (3) on any sitting day, and after first consulting with the party leaders or their representatives, the Speaker may dispense with —
 - (a) the requirement for giving notice for a motion;
 - (b) private members' business;
 - (c) matters of public interest;
 - (d) grievances; and
 - (e) members' statements;
- (4) after first consulting with the party leaders or their representatives, the Leader of the House or a member deputed may set time limits for debates on bills and motions;
- (5) standing orders are suspended accordingly to the extent necessary to effect these arrangements; and
- (6) this temporary order will expire when the Premier or a member deputed advises the house it is no longer required.

First of all, I thank the Leader of the Nationals WA and the member for Dawesville, who was representing the Leader of the Opposition, for the discussions that took place to prepare this temporary order. I want to go through a couple of things about the order so that members are well aware of the intent and practicalities of such an order if, indeed, it is invoked. However, I think all members understand the challenge that our community is facing, be they businesses or particularly vulnerable people in our community—seniors, people with disability, children and young families. Obviously, all of our community is anxious at this time about the COVID-19 challenge as, indeed, ongoing strategies and plans are being revealed by the national cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister of Australia.

In relation to the challenge, earlier this week this house passed the Supply Bill 2020, which of course was passed by the other place last night. That bill will sit unproclaimed and will be proclaimed only if the current circumstances interfere with the government's capacity to pass a budget in May. Of course, the Supply Bill will allow supply to continue for government agencies, government employees et cetera to be paid. Of course, in that respect, we reflect on those members of our community who currently are heavily engaged in ensuring that our community is safe and are responding to the medical challenges that COVID-19 presents to them. I think we all have those people very close to our hearts and minds as this COVID-19 circumstance unfolds.

That process is in place. Again, both houses of this Parliament have essentially ensured that supply will continue if the progress of Parliament is interrupted when the government frames its 2020–21 budget. That is in place. Of course, though, there may be circumstances with regard to the COVID-19 situation in which, for whatever reason, this Parliament and this chamber need to convene. In order for that to happen, we need to have in place a temporary order to allow the house to do that in those unforeseen circumstances. The framing of this temporary order will allow that to happen and, importantly—I refer to seeking leave to move this motion in an amended form—that would be through agreement. If we pass this motion—I am thankful that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party have demonstrated their willingness to do so—it is important that all members understand the implications of such a temporary order. The first is, of course, that through agreement with party leaders or members deputed, the Premier, or whomever the Premier has deputed, will advise the house that it is necessary to pass urgent legislation. That urgent legislation would need to be directly related to a circumstance around COVID-19. That is the reason such a measure would be required.

Members will be aware that under the standing orders of this house and, indeed, underpinned by the Constitution of Western Australia, there are some important elements that we need to understand and consider. The first is the standing orders and the operation of the house. In order for this house to operate, it requires a minimum quorum

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of 20 members, plus the Speaker. Of course, if a suspension of standing orders is moved, it requires an absolute majority, which of course is 30 members. In the normal operations of the house, an intended suspension of standing orders can be dealt with in two ways. One is to give notice, and the other is to seek an absolute majority, which requires 30 members to be present. If 30 members are not present, there is not an absolute majority.

The purpose of this proposed temporary order is essentially to ensure that if this chamber is required to meet to deal with any issues arising from or in connection with COVID-19, it will have the capacity to meet with a quorum of 20 members, plus the Speaker. That would mean that if, after agreement—as highlighted in the first item of the motion—that was deemed appropriate and important, the chamber would be able to be constituted with 20 members, plus the Speaker or a deputed Speaker.

If that situation were to occur, we would also practise appropriate measures in this place. For example, in an operational sense, we might not necessarily require all 20 members to be in the chamber at the one time. The debate might be relatively short. A matter might be agreed upon and debated, the business dealt with, and an adjournment take place immediately, hence item (2) and item (3) with regard to dispensing with the normal practices within the agenda for the sitting of the house. It would allow for the dispensation of the requirement to give notice of motions, private members' business, matters of public interest, grievances, members' statements, et cetera. It would also allow, if the situation became necessary, for the parties to discuss what the composition of the 20 members would be. That would be discussed in the lead-up to, and/or when, this temporary order was triggered. Item (4) of the motion essentially allows me, as Leader of the House, or someone who has been deputed for me, to set time limits for debates on bills and motions, in consultation with party leaders or their representatives. I envisage that would again be an agreed process.

Item (5) of the proposed temporary order relates to the suspension of standing orders to allow these arrangements to be delivered. Item (6) is about the temporary order expiration. On this point, when a temporary order is invoked or passed and operational, the normal period of that temporary order is 12 months. Because there is an implied agreement to the initial part of this motion, there has been agreement with the leaders of the opposition parties that that is also an appropriate item that should stand.

Members, do I envisage this being used? I do not know. I hope not, but it needs to be in place. I ask that members support this motion. It has been moved to allow for the extreme circumstance that this chamber is required to constitute a quorum to deal with an urgent matter relating to COVID-19. I commend the temporary order to the house and ask that we put this in place as soon as is practicable.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [10.15 am]: Minister, obviously, after negotiations, the opposition is in a position to support the motion for the introduction of this temporary order. I appreciate the work that has been done since in heeding the concerns of the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party in changing consultation to agreement. We understand that is consistent with what other Parliaments are doing with moving their own suspension of standing orders. However, I have to say that I am slightly disappointed that more government ministers are not in the chamber at this time. We are about to embark upon a significant moment. We know how much has been put into this. We understand how heavily this weighs on members of the opposition. I appreciate that this is now by agreement, and one of the players in that would be the Premier. We are about to embark upon a significant time, if the chamber does agree to this motion. Although there is no set expiration for this proposed temporary order, and I appreciate that a temporary order will expire after 12 months, that is a long time for something like this to be instituted. It indicates that the Parliament has never envisaged a situation like this before. The Leader of the Liberal Party will also be speaking on this motion. This is an extraordinary time, and, hopefully, we will get through this. However, given that what we are doing will require the unity of the house, I had hoped to see more ministers present, at the very least. This is significant. I hope there will be a similar situation and we will be able to facilitate other bills that may be required, similar to how we dealt with the Supply Bill. That was a remarkable effort. It was done with the unity of all parties, because we know how important this is for the future of our state. This is one of those measures. I agree with the Leader of the House that hopefully we will not need to implement this temporary order. However, if we do need to do that, consistent with where we have been the whole way through in this unusual and significant situation, the government will have the full support of all parties if it is done in consultation, as it has been in this case.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [10.17 am]: I rise to speak in favour of the adoption of this temporary order. However, as the member for Dawesville has said, I am very disappointed that the Premier is not in the chamber for this debate. I will give my reasons for saying that. This week we have introduced special legislation to ensure that should this Parliament not be able to sit to scrutinise the budget and go through the estimates process, a Supply Bill is in place that will authorise the government, by way of an appropriation through to 31 December, to continue to manage the affairs of state, pay all our public servants and ensure that it can keep the lights on.

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This temporary order contemplates the scenario that the Parliament may not sit for a long period. The responsibility of the opposition is to scrutinise and hold the government to account. The opportunity for the opposition to do that is in this chamber. If we are envisaging a situation in which the Parliament will not sit for an extended time, the opportunity for the opposition to do its job will be significantly hindered. Should this chamber be unable to sit because of COVID-19, I would seek from the Premier an assurance that the leaders of the opposition parties in this Parliament, namely me, the member for Central Wheatbelt, and the leader of the Greens in the other place, Hon Alison Xamon, will have regular briefings and updates so that we can understand exactly what is going on and question the Premier on the decision-making around the management of COVID-19 and the decisions the government is making without having to undergo the scrutiny of this Parliament.

The Premier is not here to give us that assurance, but that is my expectation. It is my strong expectation that if the Supply Bill 2020 needs to be enacted, the Premier will take it upon himself to convene regular meetings with the leaders of the opposition parties to provide us with financial updates. We have taken an extraordinary step to allow the government to continue in somewhat of a caretaker mode and have given it an extension of an appropriation without any scrutiny by Parliament of that spending. I would expect, and in fact it is incumbent on the Premier to assure the opposition parties and the community of Western Australia, that he will be transparent and provide us with financial reports and information about how agencies are managing COVID-19 and other government services at a time when we may have rolling lockdowns of services and public places. But the Premier is not here to give that assurance.

Mr D.A. Templeman: He is in a meeting with Senator Reynolds.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Well —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Members! We have now had that exchange, the ask and tell. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have been informed that the Premier is in a meeting and that is fine. I understand that Premiers need to have meetings with people; however, it is 10.30 am. We have an entire day of Parliament ahead of us and had I been made aware that the Premier would not be in the chamber for this debate, I would have requested that this debate be delayed until such a time as he was available. It is appropriate that the Premier is here to give me and the Leader of the Nationals WA an assurance that arrangements will be in place should we find ourselves in times when Parliament cannot sit and the opposition does not have an opportunity to challenge the Premier and his ministers on their decisions, that we would have the opportunity to challenge the Premier face-to-face or via video hook-up or whatever it might be, to ensure that there is some scrutiny of the government's decision-making. I do not think that that is unreasonable; I really do not. I have seen some of the members on the other side nod when I mentioned that there should be some scrutiny of decision-making of government. If members were standing in my place—the Minister for Transport might smirk at me—they would demand exactly the same thing. This is an extraordinary temporary order. It is saying that this Parliament can convene with a limitation on the standing orders and with only 21 members present. That is effectively what it says.

Mr D.R. Michael: We can do that now!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No; the government Whip is incorrect. It cannot convene in that way.

This temporary order basically establishes the extraordinary circumstances in which this Parliament can convene with only 21 members present and can debate and pass legislation with only 21 members present. There are 59 members in this place. This temporary order does not contemplate what the proportionate representation of that membership would be. Thankfully, we have those words “by agreement”, inserted into this temporary order, because if it had been by consultation only, the government could convene with 21 of its own members, and have no-one from the opposition here. That is why we sought to have this temporary order amended to include the words “agreement with the party leaders”, so that we know and are included when this Parliament convenes.

As I said, these are extraordinary times. I am really disappointed that nobody thought that it would be appropriate and important enough to delay this until the Premier could be here to give us an assurance of his very best intentions, which I am sure he has, to only use this in the appropriate fashion should it be required. It would be very gratifying and reassuring for me if I could have the Premier nodding and perhaps even standing in this place and giving his personal assurance to this chamber and to me that he will take those steps to ensure that there is transparency and accountability around the steps that he and his government will take during a potential period of prolonged non-sitting weeks of this Parliament, during which the opposition parties will not have the opportunity to scrutinise those decisions. I would like to move a motion to defer debate on this temporary order until there is an opportunity for the Premier to be present in the chamber.

Deferment of Debate

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I move —

To defer this debate on the temporary order until such a time as the Premier can be present for the debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Deputy Leader of the Opposition, would you like to stand and move that motion?

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.26 am]: I move —

To defer this debate on the temporary order until such a time as the Premier can be present for the debate.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [10.27 am]: I highlight to the Leader of the Opposition that the Premier has been meeting through teleconference with Senator Reynolds. I am not sure exactly the details of that agenda, and, as the Leader of the Opposition is aware, we are seeking information about the availability of the Premier at this point. I want to go through the information for everyone here. Before the house rose last night we had discussions with the Leader of the Nationals WA and the member for Dawesville, as the manager of opposition business in this place, with the purpose of framing a capacity for us to have a temporary order regarding COVID-19. This morning I met with the Leader of the National Party and the manager of opposition business to finesse and accommodate the intention of the agreement, rather than consultation. That allowed us to finesse the preamble, if you like, to this particular motion. I understand that the Premier will be present in the house in the next two minutes or so, so I will continue to speak with the forbearance of the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In the event that the Premier enters the chamber, I understand that the opposition will withdraw the motion that I am now speaking to. I see nods in agreement, which is pleasing.

It is important that we continue to have closed discussions and negotiations with all the parties represented in this chamber. I hope that I have demonstrated that in my record as Leader of the House. These are trying times; indeed, as I speak, the federal government is having discussions with the opposition parties to frame similar temporary orders. With the agreement of those political parties, the number of members required to be present at next week's sitting has been reduced. Federal Parliament is scheduled to sit next week before it adjourns until the federal May budget. Those processes are taking place in that Parliament. My understanding is that yesterday afternoon, Queensland Parliament determined to suspend its sittings. That decision was made by the Queensland jurisdiction.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is all right. I can talk!

I assure the house in good faith that in protecting the capacity of government to continue to pay public servants—our policemen and women, our frontline hospital service staff, teachers and assistants and other public servants working in important state government operations—the Supply Bill, which was passed by Parliament, was an important decision. As the Leader of the Opposition highlighted in her contribution earlier—I highlight this, too—that bill, having been passed in the upper house, sits unproclaimed until such time, of course, as it is needed. The intention is that we continue with business until such time that we are unable to continue with the business of this house. The Supply Bill will sit unproclaimed until it is required. As I explained earlier, and with reference to some of the comments that have been made, the intention of the COVID-19 temporary order ensures agreement between the parties. We cannot constitute a quorum of 20 members plus the Speaker or an Acting Speaker without agreement. That is what the temporary order will do. Hopefully, that will allay any fears that the government could seek to force a sitting for any reason. Members need to understand that; it is important and it is implied very clearly in the motion.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved to defer debate on the temporary orders motion until such time that the Premier could be present in the debate. As I speak, the Premier is on his way. This is really important. I commend all those in leadership positions across our community—they are across a range of fields, not just the political field—who are faced with very trying and challenging circumstances. As members would be well aware, the Prime Minister, the Premiers and the Chief Ministers formed a national cabinet, which is an unprecedented move. I know that the discussions of that cabinet are based on good faith. The commonwealth, the states and the territories will work with their priority being the best interests of Australians, whether they live in rural and remote Western Australia, our country towns, regional cities and centres or the metropolitan areas of the states and territories. I commend them. I commend the leaders from all sides of politics.

In my portfolio area, local government leaders across our state are also now charged with the responsibility of being a locally elected council or shire president or mayor. They have a very difficult role to play because they are dealing with a range of challenges in their community. I acknowledge the tremendous effort of so many of our local government leaders in that respect. We also have community leaders in other fields, not just the political field. I refer to the people who are making decisions in our hospitals and medical centres, the doctors and nursing staff; people who are making decisions in business and small business about the welfare of their workers; and, of course, people making decisions in the community, such as those in not-for-profit organisations and our schools. We all

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know the pressure that our principals, senior teachers, teachers and education assistants are under to meet the policy of ensuring that our schools stay open, which is an agreed and universal decision.

I commend the leadership across Australia as we face the challenge of COVID-19. I acknowledge that this is a combined and collaborative effort across Australia. I welcome the Premier on his arrival in the chamber. Just so that the Premier is well aware, I moved a temporary order motion, on which there has been some debate. Members opposite have raised queries and sought assurances, which resulted in the Deputy Leader of the Opposition moving to defer the debate on the temporary order until such time as the Premier could be present. I think there is agreement that when I sit down, the opposition will withdraw the deferral motion, which will then allow the debate to continue, to which the Premier can listen and respond.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Leader of the Opposition) [10.38 am]: Thank you very much, Leader of the House, for your consideration of our concerns.

I want to speak briefly on this motion to defer the Leader of the House's motion to adopt a temporary order, and when I sit down, my deputy leader will seek leave of the house to withdraw this motion to defer the debate, and we will go on with the original motion. I appreciate that the Premier changed his plans to be in the chamber for this debate. We are in uncharted waters here in Western Australia. As I was saying earlier, this week we passed legislation to allow for guaranteed supply and appropriation, extended through to 31 December, to ensure that the government can continue its business operations should Parliament not sit for the budget and budget estimates process and therefore be in a position in which it is not guaranteed supply. The opposition parties in this house and in the other place have unanimously agreed to support the Supply Bill in these unusual circumstances that we find ourselves in because, obviously, we need the government and its agencies to continue with their very important work as we battle the issue of COVID-19 in our community and the subsequent disruption to services, businesses and our community as a result of this virus outbreak.

I draw members' attention to the COVID-19 temporary order motion on which we sought to defer the debate. The adoption of such a temporary order in this chamber has, to my knowledge, never occurred in the Parliament of Western Australia. We have never had a situation in which this Parliament has agreed to adopt a temporary order of this nature to allow, by agreement with the two opposition parties, the Parliament to meet with a truncated series of standing orders and a quorum of 21 members, rather than with the full Parliament. It is, effectively, what this temporary order will allow for.

In those circumstances, the reason I wanted the Premier in the chamber for this debate was to seek assurances from him that should we find ourselves in the circumstances in which we are indeed going to convene by agreement under this temporary standing order, we would have proportional representation of all the parties as part of that convening of Parliament. I seek the Premier's assurance that that will be guaranteed. I seek the Premier's assurance that should we go through a period when the government is effectively operating in caretaker mode, under the provisions of the Supply Bill, the opposition parties would be kept informed of the spending decisions of the government. The reason I wanted the Premier in the chamber—what I am seeking from him—is that I am seeking some assurance that should we end up being in the position in which the government is operating under the Supply Bill, under caretaker conventions, the Premier would have regular meetings and updates with me, as the Leader of the Liberal Party in opposition, the member for Central Wheatbelt and the leader of the Greens, Hon Alison Xamon, from the other place. If the government is operating under caretaker provisions for an extended period when this Parliament cannot sit, the opposition will have no other opportunity to scrutinise or challenge the decisions of the government or, indeed, to even inform ourselves of the financial management and spending decisions that the government might make.

I do not know whether the Premier is even listening to what I am saying and whether he understands what I am asking for, because he is not listening to me.

Mr M. McGowan: I'm listening.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I really feel quite offended, Premier. I am just asking a few simple questions, and you are not listening to what I am asking you, which is exactly the reason that I wanted you in the chamber. I think I am wasting my time, members.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As part of this debate, I ask whether the Premier could please stand up and, in his contribution to the motion to adopt this temporary order, inform us of the arrangements for the opposition parties to be informed of the government's decisions and spending decisions during an extended period of the Parliament not sitting, and what opportunities the Premier will provide to the opposition for regular briefings and to challenge those decisions if indeed they need challenging. Will we be provided with financial reporting during an extended period of a caretaker convention if we do not sit for the estimates process and pass the budget? What arrangements does the Premier envisage will be put in place should we find ourselves in the extraordinary circumstance in which

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Parliament does not sit for an extended period and the opposition is not able to appropriately scrutinise the decisions of the government? I hope that the Premier has some ideas in his head about how this will be managed in the future, given the extraordinary times that we find ourselves in in adopting a temporary order that is unique and has never been contemplated by this Parliament in its history.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.45 am]: I moved a motion to defer the debate on the motion to adopt the temporary order because the Premier was not present. He is now present, so I seek leave of the house to withdraw my motion.

Deferment motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion Resumed

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [10.46 am]: I am speaking to the motion to adopt the temporary order, and I rise to add my support and contribute to what we are being asked to consider today.

I think we, on this side of the house, have been very accommodating in a very short time. We completely understand that this is a moving feast and a serious issue that needs to be dealt with by the government, which needs the flexibility to do that. I thank the Leader of the House for engaging us and reaching out last Thursday to the manager of opposition business and me, as the Leader of the Nationals WA, to start the conversation. Indeed, that was when the Supply Bill was mooted in terms of how we manage the functions of this house to ensure that if the government required it, it would be able to continue to pay the people we need to keep the state moving.

At that point, there were discussions around what would happen if Parliament was pared back or there was an inability to pull people in as a result of them needing to self-isolate, or simply if the government and the experts who we are taking advice from made the decision that we can no longer meet. At that point, it was a conversation very early on in the piece—that was last Thursday. Things have clearly escalated from then to now. Last night, we had a discussion with the same group of people about temporary orders, so I do not think that anybody on this side of the house can be accused of not trying to accommodate the government or be of assistance, and we are certainly not trying to take a political view on this. I would point out at the beginning of this debate, which was brought on by the government and the timing of which was chosen by the government, that some of this could have been avoided had there been some thought about the fact that we were being asked to do something unprecedented. This has not been considered by this place before and so it is right that we have a majority of members in the house and the leadership of the government, in particular.

As the Leader of the Nationals WA, I am bombarded by questions—I am sure members sitting on the front bench of that side are getting it as well—on a daily basis: What is going to happen? When is it going to happen? What happens if the government is unable to meet and Parliament is unable to form? How will we be informed and what role do we have? I acknowledge that the government needs to be able to act swiftly and responsibly to anything that is changing on a daily basis. I echo the concerns that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition. We would like to have that conversation about temporary orders outside of the debate, but there are limited opportunities for us to raise these issues. In the event that there is a pared-back meeting of the Parliament and we see fewer opportunities for us to raise these concerns, we would be looking for an ongoing mechanism to meet with the government to make sure that we are doing our duty and are able to assist. We genuinely want to assist to make sure that we can disseminate information accurately and provide feedback to the communities that are reliant on us. I am sure that all members of this Parliament are in the same position.

I go back to the point that when we started this debate, it was attended by the Leader of the House and the manager of opposition business, a majority of members sitting on this side of the house, and not many others. We understand that there are significant calls on the Premier's time, but this debate was brought on by the government, and it could have controlled its timing. I really do not want to hear that the manager of opposition business or we are trying to be difficult in this, because this is something that the government has control over, and we are at the mercy of the people who set the agenda for this place. That being said, we do not want to stand in the way of this temporary order being passed. We are very happy for it to go through. We acknowledge that the Leader of the House has been accommodating in moving from consultation with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals WA to agreement, and we thank him very much for that. We look forward to working collaboratively as we move forward.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [10.50 am]: I want to make a few comments in my contribution to this debate. This is a temporary order to allow changes to the standing orders of Parliament, meaning that, with agreement from the Leaders of the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA, if it is necessary to pass urgent legislation or undertake any other immediate business arising from or in connection with COVID-19, we can suspend some of the time periods around the introduction of legislation, and we can dispense with matters such as private

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members' business, matters of public interest and grievances from ordinary business, with agreement from the Liberal and National Parties. This is not something the government would do unilaterally; it would be with the agreement of members opposite. As I understand it, the Leader of the House spoke to the Leaders of the Liberal and National Parties yesterday, and they were in agreement with this approach.

Ordinarily, changes to the standing orders can be a long process, with the agreement of the houses and all the parties—sometimes they work; sometimes they do not—but this is just a temporary order in the circumstance that we need to pass something urgently. That is all it is. I do not personally think it is the most extreme of arrangements, simply because it would be with the agreement of the Liberal and National Parties. If they do not agree, it will not happen. That is all it is.

I have a short anecdote. When I first arrived here, every week there was a temporary order put in that whatever legislation was nominated for that week and on the notice paper would pass on Thursday evening irrespective of whether it was debated. That is what the Liberal government of Richard Court and the like did back in 1996 to 2000. They had a list of legislation at the start of the week; whether or not it was debated, it was passed in the house. I would have thought that was far more extreme than what we are attempting to do in the current circumstances.

Just to let members know, I have been dealing this morning with matters surrounding COVID-19. I have been in a teleconference as a member of the national cabinet whilst members opposite have been demanding my presence here, and I have been dealing with a range of other matters to ensure in particular that our charities and organisations are properly funded and supported during this crisis. They are some of the matters I have been dealing with this morning whilst members opposite have been requesting my presence. Obviously, considering the fact that the Leader of the House had the agreement of the Liberal and National Parties on this measure, we naturally thought that members opposite thought this was a sensible thing to do, because it requires their agreement.

I turn to other matters. The Leader of the Opposition asked that if people have to leave Parliament, it be proportionate. Obviously, the government is of the view that we need to be very generous with pairs if people are unwell or have issues of that nature, and that is obviously the approach we would adopt. In terms of being proportionate with the numbers in the house, we have to retain a quorum in the house, so proportionality could mean we go below a quorum. I just let members know that. Clearly, we have to retain a generous and fair pairing arrangement, which we are more than happy to do. Obviously, the government has a large majority, so it is not a particular issue to do that, but if we are required to be proportionate and we go below a quorum, the Parliament cannot sit, and clearly that is not something we can do.

The Leader of the Opposition asked that the opposition be informed about matters. I rang the Leader of the Opposition on Sunday and offered briefings. Briefings will continue to occur. Obviously, I need to be careful that senior people are not taken away from their day-to-day functions unnecessarily, but I am more than happy to provide briefings to the opposition, the Nationals WA, the Greens and the like if they require briefings. We will do that as required. All they need do is ask. I am aware that the shadow Minister for Health has been offered seven or eight briefings—I am not sure how many, but a whole range—that the Leader of the Opposition is more than welcome to attend. That is something the government has done for the opposition.

On the broader issue, my view is that Parliament needs to continue to sit. We need to sit. We need to lead. We need to set an example for our community. We cannot have everyone leave work in Western Australia. We cannot have government departments shut down. We cannot have essential services stop operating. We cannot have our schools and hospitals stop operating. We, as Parliament, need to lead and set an example for the community. We need to do it. We are elected representatives of the community. We need to keep our electorate offices open. We need to ensure that the Parliament continues to sit and provides that example to the community, because if we do not do it, how can we expect other people in the community to do it?

My view is that Parliament must continue to sit. We need to keep doing our jobs and set that example for the rest of the community. I want our agricultural industries, construction industry, factories, mining industry, government agencies, electricity utilities and water corporations to continue to operate. We need to set the example. I am as one with the Prime Minister on this. We as a country need to continue to operate and to work; and, if we do not, there will be bedlam in our community. I want kids in hospital to continue to receive medical attention. I want people going to hospital to continue to receive medical attention. I want kids to continue to go to school where they are safer than if they are not. That is what we need to do. Let us set the example in this Parliament. Let us make sure that we provide assurance to the people of our state.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [10.57 am] — in reply: I would like to close the debate by thanking all members for their contributions.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Does anyone else want to speak?

Mr R.S. Love: I wanted to speak.

Mr David Templeman; Mr Zak Kirkup; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Marmion; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love

The ACTING SPEAKER: I gave the Leader of the House the call, but I am told by the Clerk that I should give the member for Moore the opportunity to speak.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [10.57 am]: Thank you, Leader of the House, and Madam Acting Speaker. I want to reiterate the support of the Nationals WA for what has been put forward, but I point out to the Premier that the earlier notice of motion on the notice paper had “consultation” with the Leader of the Nationals WA and the party leaders, and that has now changed to “agreement”. That has changed, and I think it needs to be pointed out.

I refer to the statement the Premier has just made about keeping things open and working. There is no intention by anybody on this side to try to shut things down or to hold anything up. We will be keeping our electorate offices open and continuing to represent our communities and electorates as best we can throughout this very difficult period. It is not just on the Premier’s side of the house that that is the intent. We will certainly be working hard to represent our communities. All that the member for Central Wheatbelt and the Leader of the Opposition have asked for is that the information be disseminated to our people to ensure that they are getting correct, up-to-date information with which we can then assure our communities and take our part as leaders within our community. With that, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [10.59 am] — in reply: I simply thank all those who have contributed to the debate. This is an important temporary order that will now be put in place. We hope we do not need to use it, quite frankly, but if in some circumstance it is required, we now have provision for that in our standing orders, and I commend the motion to the Parliament.

Question put and passed.