

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS — ATTENDANCE IN CHAMBER

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [3.00 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for failing to take the Parliament seriously and ensure an adequate number of members are in the chamber for important debates that impact all Western Australians.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I urge the house to support this suspension. I believe the government will do so, with some amendment.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [3.00 pm]: I move —

To insert after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [3.01 pm]: I move the motion.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It might surprise some members of this place, but they are paid by the people of Western Australia to be lawmakers and participate in the functions of the Parliament.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: They are paid to show up, be here and be heard.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Ms S.E. Winton: She was in Canberra.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr S.A. Millman interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mount Lawley, was that you? Thank you. We have a point of order and points of order will be heard in silence, thank you.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I simply cannot hear the golden words of the Leader of the Opposition with all the noise from the other side.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Look, two things. Firstly, points of order will be heard in silence. I will be not upholding that point of order; however, I will ask everyone to be quiet, because the government will get the opportunity to respond to what the Leader of the Opposition is contributing.

Debate Resumed

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 19 September 2024]

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Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Five times today alone, the opposition has had to call for a quorum in this place under standing order 22.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is indicative of a government that has lazy backbenchers who are not committed to work.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Dr A.D. Buti: What a ridiculous motion!

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! There is other business that the house needs to carry on with. This was meant to only take 20-odd minutes to get through. The way you are going, it is going to take the rest of the afternoon.

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, points of order will be held in silence.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The loud interjections from ministers, and from other members, is making it impossible for me to hear the debate from the Leader of the Opposition.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members and minister! This is the final warning. I will start calling people. Just to remind members of what the process is, you will get three calls and then get kicked out on the fourth one. It is up to you to decide your own destiny. It is not a great look when you get kicked out of this place.

Debate Resumed

Ms J.J. Shaw interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr R.S. LOVE: All the backbenchers who have been in Parliament for nearly four years still seem to be ignorant of the fact that it is their job to sit here to learn the process of Parliament, to provide and maintain —

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We are not in government; you are!

Ms C.M. Rowe: You are a failure as a leader!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: And you are a failure as a Whip! You are supposed to be making sure that your ministers are supported from the backbench.

Mr Y. Mubarakai interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Jandakot!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Instead of that, I have seen the Deputy Premier trotting in and trotting out five times today because the government Whip could not keep the numbers in this house. This government's lack of transparency is demonstrated through its approach towards all aspects of this Parliament, not least the disrespect shown by the backbench towards making sure that the processes of Parliament are respected. It is their job to sit there and learn how to be members of Parliament. Thankfully, many of them will not be back to have to go through any further inconveniences —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: — of having to come in from the courtyard to sit in here for, like, 30 seconds before they drift off again. They take no notice of any of the important debates that are happening in this Parliament.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I think the people of Western Australia deserve better. Let us look at what you people are costing.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Extract from Hansard

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Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam

Dr D.J. HONEY: Once again, including interjections from the Leader of the House, I cannot hear the Leader of the Opposition's debate.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Education, I call you to order for the first time.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: For their value for money, the Western Australian taxpayers are getting people who spend their time out in the courtyard and in the members' bar rather in here listening to the process of Parliament. What are they being paid to do that? A backbencher who does not have any other role is paid \$173 000 a year, a base allowance of \$88 000, a car allowance of \$27 500, 30 nights' accommodation wherever they like, two staff members at about a quarter of a million a year, and an office here and an office in their electorate. They are costing Western Australian taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, probably in the vicinity of \$800 000 each, and they cannot even be bothered to show up to work. It is an absolute disgrace on their part.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It was five times today and twice during the matter of public interest on Tuesday.

Ms S.E. Winton: What about —

Mr R.S. LOVE: Stop pointing! That is not an argument.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Ms S.E. Winton: She is smirking behind you.

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is not an argument. You are as bad as the rest of them. You are in and out of here as soon as a quorum is called. You come in and then wander off again. I do not think the minister realises that a couple of minutes after those bells stop, Parliament shuts down.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is a member's job to be here and listen. They are not doing their job.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Mr R.S. LOVE: The people of Western Australia will make their judgement of all of you.

Mr M.J. Folkard interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach, I call you to order for the first time.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I do. Carry on, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: For that circa \$800 000 each year, what are the people getting? They are getting people who cannot even be bothered listening to the arguments. They come in here and vote on stuff, but they have not even read the bills or bothered to listen to any of the debates.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: You are a disgrace. You are the laziest bunch of backbenchers there have ever been in the Parliament of Western Australia. You are absolutely lazy. You do not understand your role. You have a Whip who does not seem to understand that her role is to maintain the numbers in the house, and the Leader of the House is giggling and carrying on as though it is a joke. It is not a joke.

Mr S.A. Millman: You're a joke!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mount Lawley!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Tens of millions of dollars are going out every year to maintain government members sitting around in the courtyard thinking: "It's too hard if I've got to come in from the courtyard while I'm out there texting in my phone or having a drink in the sun."

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr R.S. LOVE: No; that is their role—to be in here, not there. On Tuesday night, the Leader of the Liberal Party and I were here until late in the night. Where were you guys? There was a quorum in the members' bar, not a quorum in here. We did not call a quorum because we wanted to get on and get business done. We have had enough.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: We are not going to allow members to just slink off and not take part in Parliament. If the government wants to get all these bills through in the dying days of this Parliament, knowing it will not get them through the other house anyway—it is all just for show—members can at least show up to their job. They can at least be here, because we will keep on calling for a quorum every time they are not here. Do not go too far from the chamber in the next sitting weeks, because you will be walking back in and back out. What does that mean, lazy backbenchers?

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It means your ministers are not able to get on and do the work that they normally do outside, because they have to come in here to maintain the house. You are not supporting your ministers, you are not supporting your government and you are not supporting the Western Australian people. You are not even interested in any of the matters that we talk about here. You think this is all a joke, but it will not be a joke when you go to the election in March, because we will be telling the people in your electorates just how lazy and ineffectual you are. You will not be back. You think it is all a joke, but I can tell you that people do not like to see people being paid hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in wages and many more in entitlements who do not even think it is important to come in here and do their job!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.10 pm]: It is a hard act to follow but I have to say that, as the manager of opposition business, this has been one of the most disappointing weeks. There has been disappointing attendance —

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is not good enough. The other day, we had a matter of public interest and the government told us how important biosecurity is to it. What did we have? We had two people in the chamber from the government. In our debates, we quite often have them telling us how important biosecurity and these other matters are. We have six members of the opposition and a lot of the time we actually have more people in the house. It is a disgrace. We saw it today. We had to call five quorums this morning—four from me and one from the member for Central Wheatbelt. “Turn up” is the motto. This is the first time that we have actually seen some interest from the government today in this house.

Over the last couple of years, we have had the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Legislation. What has it done? It has met once. Those committee members are paid to consider legislation. They had one piece of legislation to consider. What did they find? It was put into the wrong house, if you do not mind. Then they had to go back to square one. Then we had the former Premier and Attorney General at the start of the term ramming through legislation for no representation for the regions in the upper house. We have now come to a situation in which they cannot even be bothered to turn up to the chamber. It is not good enough. The motto is: turn up and represent your constituents. You get paid; come out of the courtyard and sit in the chamber.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.11 pm]: I rise to add to and support the motion led by the Leader of the Opposition, which goes to the core of the importance of Parliament. Many issues have been raised on behalf of the people of Western Australia. What we have here is a very unique Parliament. It has an extraordinary number of government members. In fact, it is the most resourced government we have seen in Western Australian history not only in its number of members in Parliament, but also in the extraordinary resources it has enjoyed thanks to a GST fix and a mining boom. What do we have? We have a number of significant issues right across the state in regional WA and in metropolitan Perth as well.

We have a housing crisis, a broken health system and an extraordinary situation with family and domestic violence. More women have been murdered per capita in Western Australia than in any other state in the country. There is a very real need for issues to be raised and heard and for questions to be responded to.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Landsdale!

Ms L. METTAM: We have seen a complete disrespect for Parliament and a lack of transparency and accountability.

We spoke last night about that particular issue. We have seen this government repeatedly use section 82 notices. In fact, under this government, there have been more section 82 notices or non-answers than there were in two terms under the previous government. This government had an extraordinary opportunity to deliver for Western Australians, yet we have seen no-shows and the guillotining of important debates such as on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, which was a chaotic mess. This government believes it is above accountability. In the delivery of non-answers and no-shows, this government shows a lack of respect for very real issues such as matters of public importance, which have been raised on behalf of the community, whether it is biosecurity, health or violent crime. We have members of Parliament who, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, have all the resources in the world but cannot be bothered to show up.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I will just remind you that it is the government's turn to respond. We would like to hear the contribution from the Leader of the House.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [3.15 pm]: I am very happy to respond to this. What a ridiculous motion. A couple of late nights have obviously upset the Leader of the Opposition. Isn't it interesting that there is criticism of people's attendance in this place? I might remind members that there are a range of conventions that address and relate to issues around that, and I will come to that shortly. But we only have to remember that Hon Martin Aldridge, a member of the Leader of the Opposition's party in the other place, accused the Leader of the Liberal Party in March this year—as you might remember. I will quote from *The West Australian* online on 9 March. This is from your own side. It is not from us. It is from this alliance that exists. He accused the Leader of the Liberal Party of—

... prioritising “media stunts” over her parliamentary duties and freezing the country party out of her decision-making.

I mean, come on! Do not come in here and feign crocodile tears. The reality of the matter is simply this, member. I am refuting your criticism of my magnificent Whip. Your criticism of her is particularly wrong. I tell you what: you have come into this place, Leader of the Opposition, on a couple of occasions and started to debate legislation that was not even the legislation that we were actually debating. He has a history of that. The energy debate is just one example.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Do you know who you should really be asking why they were not in the chamber? I know why you are tetchy. It is because over the last two days, the member for North West Central has been absent. She is cultivating in your future electorate. Have you been having a go at her? She has been out there undermining you, sunshine! You have been undermined. Have a go at her!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Minister!

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: This is a debate about the government and its inability to keep members in this house. The opposition is not responsible for the numbers in the house. The government is.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Opposition, that was not a point of order. If you continue to abuse the point of order system, I will call you to order as well.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have already used an unparliamentary word earlier this morning. I could use it again, but I will not. But I will tell you this: I want to remind you how much this government holds your hand, sunshine. How many times have we come to you and said, “How much extra time do you want to make sure that we address the bills? What do you want if you are going to be away at a function during Parliament and debate is being carried on, so I will change the order to accommodate your need to be out of this place?” You have come to me a number of times saying, “I'm not available because I'm at some sort of function” and we have accommodated that, so do not come into this place and start taking about accountability, sunshine! If you want to play that game, you are going to have to be here all the time from now on because I tell you what: as everybody knows, this chamber is where

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Mr Shane Love; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam

debate takes place, questions are asked and procedural motions are addressed. But is every single member at every single time involved? Of course not, and you know it.

What you have tried to do with this stunt sets a very dangerous precedent, my friend. I tell you what: there have been occasions in this place over the last little while when none of you have been present. Why have none of you been here? None of you have been here because you have not been talking to each other. We know that quite often, you do not know what the Liberals are doing, and the Liberals do not know what you are doing! This so-called alliance is so shaky, so false and such a fraud that you have to pull stunts like this!

Let me tell you again that the member for Belmont bends over backwards to help you, mate. She bends over backwards. She works with you to make sure that your needs are accommodated, whether it is extra time or time to be away. How many times have I stood up to support your motions to give you the numbers so you can do it? Do you want me to not do that anymore? How many times have you come and said to me, “Look, we haven’t got enough, and we need you to stand up and support our matter of public interest so that our MPI can proceed”? How many times has that happened? Many times, and we have done it, because we understand the circumstances that you need to operate; we understand and support it. But you have pulled a stupid stunt today. You have gone and talked about allowances and a whole range of things.

I am going to be watching very closely over the coming parliamentary weeks. I will be watching your friend, who used to be your very good friend but changed sides; she probably saw the light in many respects in your leadership capacity. We will be watching very closely the pair requests that might come in, which we always grant. I do not think that the member for Belmont has knocked back any pair request for this mob. You have done a stupid thing, member—and you call yourself the alternative Premier! This house operates according to a range of procedures under the standing orders and a range of conventions. I have to tell you that a quorum is required in the chamber for votes and for procedural motions. The government must always maintain that quorum. They are not necessarily present—get it! You do not even understand the conventions or the procedural orders of this place. The government of the day must always maintain a quorum in the Parliament. What does that mean? It means that members are in their offices or having guests at lunch or dinner. Goodness gracious, we actually accommodated that this week for you! You said this week that you wanted to accommodate some lunch guests in the chamber, so what did we do? We changed the times so that you could have your guests and then the debate could continue. We have bent over backwards to accommodate the needs and the understanding that, yes, the opposition has a smaller number in this place. But do not dare accuse this Whip of being incompetent. She is the most competent Whip since I was the Whip!

Speaking of that, if you want to go back in history, as a former opposition Whip, I am proud to have been the only opposition Whip to have closed this chamber down, because your mob in government had no-one here—and they were the government! I will tell members what: I have never forgotten that. While I am Leader of the House and while this Whip is here, there will never be a situation whereby there are no government members in here, because I saw what happened that day. I have to tell you that it was a beautiful day. I remember! I claim that it was the beginning of the downfall of the Barnett government. This is what happened. I was sitting over there in the opposition Whip position. Everyone had gone. The Barnett government members, including all the backbenchers, had gone from the chamber. There was no minister on duty. It was defunct. In fact, one of your former colleagues, the then member for Kalgoorlie, Hon —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, no. The wonderful female member.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Wendy was in the chamber. Margaret Quirk, the member for Landsdale, was sitting over here; the then member for Albany, Peter Watson, was on his feet giving a report. I noticed there were no members of the Barnett government sitting in their seats—none. I simply stood up and said, “I move that the house do now adjourn.” The Acting Speaker at the time looked around and had to put the motion. There were no “nays”, there were only “yeses”, and a very loud one from the member for Landsdale, I can tell members, and the shop was closed—why? It was because it was a Liberal–National government that failed to provide the numbers.

The Leader of the Opposition has done a stupid thing today, but I tell members what: it demonstrates why the state of Western Australia is in such good hands under a Labor government. It would be in a hopeless situation under him and anyone from the Liberal Party.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Ms M. Beard
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle
Ms M.J. Davies (*Teller*)

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Noes (39)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Mr G. Baker
Ms L.L. Baker
Ms H.M. Beazley
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms E.L. Hamilton

Ms M.J. Hammat
Mr T.J. Healy
Mr H.T. Jones
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms A.E. Kent
Dr J. Krishnan
Mr P. Lilburne
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael
Mr S.A. Millman

Mr Y. Mubarakai
Mrs L.M. O'Malley
Mr P. Papalia
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms R. Saffioti
Ms A. Sanderson
Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Ms J.J. Shaw

Ms R.S. Stephens
Dr K. Stratton
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.