

CLOSING DAYS OF SESSION - STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION

Motion

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [12.13 pm]: I move -

That on and from 26 November 2003 and for the remainder of this year, Standing Order No 146 in relation to grievances be suspended and so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to -

- (a) enable private members' business to have priority on Wednesdays from 4.00 to 6.00 pm; and
- (b) enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to proceed through all stages in one day and to enable messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received.

This motion is similar to motions traditionally moved towards the end of the parliamentary year. The first part of the motion suspends grievance debates for the last two sitting weeks of the year, as has been the practice for many years. Paragraph (a) reduces private members' business from three to two hours for today and next Wednesday.

Since 1994 it has been the practice to reduce the time allocated for private members' business for the last two, three or four sitting weeks each year. Prior to 1994 it was the practice to suspend private members' business completely for the last few weeks of each year. It is preferable to reduce rather than completely suspend opposition speaking time. If this motion is carried, it is envisaged that the House will sit on Wednesday evening after the dinner break. That will provide members with additional time to consider the Government's legislation. However, I remind members that the 90-second statements will continue on each Thursday under standing orders.

Part (b) of the motion will enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to proceed through all stages on the day. It will also enable messages from the Legislative Council to be dealt with on the day on which they are received. As has also been the practice in the past, this provision will enable the House to deal with all Council amendments on the day they are received should the need arise. I also draw to the attention of the House that because of the non-alignment of sitting weeks between the Assembly and the Council, if an urgent matter is amended in the Council it will create difficulties because there are currently no scheduled sitting days on which we can deal with it. At this stage of the year whatever day we choose will be of great inconvenience to a large number of members. However, in order to give at least some warning I give notice that Tuesday, 16 December is the most likely day on which the House will return for an extra sitting day. I hope it will not be necessary. If amendments are made to legislation in the other place, in most respects they can wait until next year. However, if the Crime and Corruption Commission Bill, which is urgently needed to address the major fight against crime in this State, is amended in the Council's last sitting week, the Assembly will have to return on 16 December to deal with it. It does not mean that we will accept the amendments, but we will need to consider them. There may be other urgent matters, but to my knowledge that is the only matter that would require the Assembly to return on an extra day. Although the proposed date of 16 December will be inconvenient for many members, it is the most appropriate date. I am happy to enter into discussions with the manager of opposition business to decide whether it will be a 2.00 pm or 4.00 pm sitting. Many members will be visiting schools on that day. It may be impossible for country members to attend; however, if the extra sitting is required, we can seek to inconvenience the least number of members.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [12.17 pm]: As always, the Opposition likes to help the Government deal with its legislation and cooperate to ensure the smooth running of this House. In this instance it does so willingly. I accept what the Leader of the House said about the reduction in private members' time and the omission of grievances during the next two weeks. That is quite reasonable. The Opposition will obviously still deal with private members' business in that two-hour period rather than the three-hour period. We do not see that as a great impediment. If this House must return to deal with amendments from the other place after the other place has finally risen, obviously it is in the interests of good governance of this State that we do so. That extra sitting could be very inconvenient to not only country members but also metropolitan members, because during that week there will be many school graduations and various other local community functions that, as members of Parliament, we are expected to attend and enjoy attending. As I said, we will support the motion moved by the Leader of the House. I hope that the situation does not arise in which the Assembly must return on 16 December. However, if it does, the Opposition will be present.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [12.18 pm]: This motion is standard procedure and the National Party also agrees with it. I also thank the Liberal Party and the Minister for Health. I had intended airing a grievance today but it has been scheduled to be heard during private members' time. I

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Mr John Kobelke; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Max Trenorden; Speaker

appreciate that. We are all prepared to do our bit to make sure business progresses. The National Party supports the motion.

Question put and passed.

The SPEAKER: I advise members that a dinner break will occur for the next two weeks between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Wednesday.