



The Hon. Shelley Hancock MP
Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly
Member for South Coast

The Hon. Don Harwin MLC
President of the Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Ref: D16/11680 (A16/412)

15 April 2016

Dear Mr President,

Re: Inquiry into young children accompanying members into the House

I note the Procedure Committee's inquiry into the issue of whether infants accompanying a parent into the Chamber of the Legislative Council should be considered as "strangers" under the Standing Orders.

As you would be aware there have been a number of occasions when Members of the Legislative Assembly have brought their babies/toddlers into the Chamber. No point of order was taken, as these occurrences were one-off, and usually in the course of a division, or a valedictory speech. Members exhibited good judgment in ensuring that the infant or child did not disturb proceedings, and with the exception of one member, no special attention was drawn to the child's presence either by other members or in the media.

As Speaker, I have enjoyed welcoming babies and their parents, but most parents have had to give consideration to long-term care arrangements for infants on sitting days, as common sense dictates that the Chamber, similar to a court of law, is not an arena conducive to quality child care.

While hesitant to comment on procedures in The Other Place, I accept that on the odd occasion parents may need to bring their babies into the Chamber but would encourage Members of the Legislative Council to ensure where possible alternate child care arrangements are made during a division or when they are required to attend proceedings in the House.

Yours sincerely,

The Hon. Shelley Hancock MP
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