

- 3 MAY 2016



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Presiding Officer
Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP

The Honourable Don Harwin MLC
President
Parliament of New South Wales
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney
NSW 2000

20 April 2016

Dear Honourable Don Harwin MLC

Thank you for your letter about the Procedure Committee inquiry into young children accompanying members into the House.

It may be helpful if I set out some background information on the rules on this subject in the Scottish Parliament.

The Parliament's Standing Orders set out the circumstances in which non-Members may gain access to the Debating Chamber during parliamentary proceedings. I attach a copy of these rules at the annexe to this letter.

The decision on whether or not to permit a Member to bring a child into the Chamber during a meeting of the Parliament is a matter for the Presiding Officer. Although several Members have had young children whilst serving as an MSP, I am not aware of an occasion where a Member has asked to bring their child into the Chamber.

Although it is not current practice for children to be present in the Chamber during parliamentary proceedings, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has provided facilities for children to be present on the parliamentary campus. For example, the Parliament operates a crèche, which can be used by Members as well as members of the public and staff. The Parliament has also made available a private mother and child room which is set up for use for breastfeeding.

I hope this information is helpful and I wish you well in your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

TRICIA MARWICK

ANNEXE

Rule 15.3 Access to the chamber

1. Subject to paragraph 2, no person other than a member may enter the chamber during a meeting of the Parliament except—

- (a) the Lord Advocate or Solicitor General for Scotland (if not a member);
- (b) a person authorised to do so by the Presiding Officer;
- (c) a person addressing the Parliament in accordance with paragraph 5;
- (d) any other person required, invited or permitted by the Parliament to attend a meeting of the Parliament; and
- (e) the Clerk or any person authorised by the Clerk.

2. If the person holding the office of Presiding Officer or deputy Presiding Officer as mentioned in section 19(2) is not a member of the Parliament, that person may enter the chamber during a meeting of the Parliament but only for the purpose of chairing proceedings for the election of a new Presiding Officer.

3. Any person mentioned in paragraph 1(b), (d) or (e) may be required to leave the chamber or prevented from entering the chamber by order of the Presiding Officer.

4. During a meeting of the Parliament, only a member, or the Lord Advocate or Solicitor General for Scotland (if not a member), may sit in any seat in the chamber which is reserved for members.

5. Any person may, on the invitation of the Parliament, address the Parliament.