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Your Ref:

Our Ref: 8.1.25

6 May 2016

The Honourable Don Harwin MLC  
President  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr President

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2016, inviting a submission to the Procedure Committee's inquiry into young children accompanying members into the House.

The Legislative Assembly of Queensland has two Standing Orders (SO) relating to the exclusion of strangers from the floor of the Chamber while the House is sitting. The first, SO 284(4), specifically prohibits members from bringing strangers on to the floor of the Chamber on any day while the House is sitting. The second, SO 286(a), is a general prohibition against strangers being on the floor of the Chamber while the House is sitting.

Persons who would be classified as strangers have, on a small number of occasions, been permitted on the floor of the Chamber while the House is sitting. On two occasions General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) was invited to address the House from the floor of the Chamber. On 16 March 2000, the sitting of the House was suspended to allow General Cosgrove to address the House on the Australian Defence Force's operation in East Timor. On 24 May 2006, the House agreed to a motion to suspend Standing and Sessional Orders to allow General Cosgrove to address the House on the following day to provide a report on the rebuilding and recovery program following Cyclone Larry.

On 28 October 2008, the House agreed to a motion to suspend Standing and Sessional Orders to invite the Right Honourable Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to address the House. The Legislative Assembly was conducting a Regional Parliament in Cairns at the time.

The Legislative Assembly has in the last two decades had a number of members who have had small children. I understand that in no instance has a member sought to bring their young children or babies onto the floor of the House or requested permission to do so. In the last two decades there have also been a small number of members who are nursing mothers. I understand that none of those members sought permission for their children to be with them on the floor of the House.

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However, a number of special facilities have been made available for members with small children or nursing Mothers.

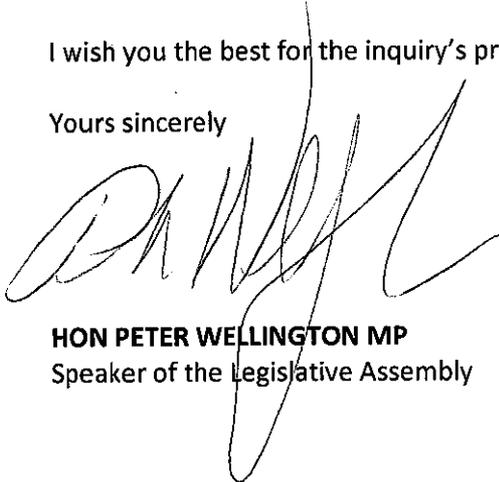
- There is corporate memory of access to rooms close to the Chamber being made available for nursing Mothers who are members and other rooms in the precinct for nursing Mothers who are staff – as required.
- The Queensland Parliament has onsite accommodation for Ministers and regional members. Members with very small children have been given access to accommodation even though they would normally not be eligible for that accommodation. This accommodation is often used by carers (nannies, grandparents etc.) whilst the member attends to parliamentary duties.
- A family flat (lounge, 3 bedrooms) is located on the precinct and available to members that have a need for members of their immediate family to attend the precinct. The family flat was purpose built so it can be shared if required and has facilities for smaller children not in other accommodations on the precinct (eg baths). On occasions when there have been more than one member with a very small child or baby, the flat has been used by both members for their children and carers etc. whilst the member attends to parliamentary duties.

In the current parliament, informal pairing arrangements are frequently used. Pairing arrangements are most commonly used to facilitate a member of the government and member of the opposition to attend an event or during an absence associated with an ill family member or the passing away of a family member.

To date there have been no requests for changes to the Standing Orders, or for consideration of mechanisms within the Standing Orders, to allow members to bring a child onto the floor of the Chamber or to have their vote recorded when the care of that child prevents the member from attending the Chamber during a division.

I wish you the best for the inquiry's progress and await the Committee's report with interest.

Yours sincerely



**HON PETER WELLINGTON MP**  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly