

INQUIRY INTO THE RULES FOR QUESTIONS

Organisation: Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
Name: Mr Michael Tatham
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Clerk and Chief Executive

Ref: 10/48.72

Mr Stephen Frappell
Clerk Assistant – Procedure
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Frappell

I refer to correspondence from the Hon Don Harwin MLC, former President of the Legislative Council to the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the Hon Kezia Purick MLA. In that correspondence, the former President invited submissions to the Inquiry into the rules for Questions and the Inquiry into the rules for notices of motions.

The Northern Territory's submissions appear below:

Inquiry into the rules for Questions

No provision is made for a take note debate following Question Time in the Standing Orders of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. However, the Assembly adopted the following Sessional Order on Tuesday 25 October 2016:

'Notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders, during the conduct of Question Time on each Wednesday when the Assembly meets, no Government Member will ask a Minister or a Committee Chair a question without notice, but no single Minister may be asked consecutive questions without an intervening question being asked of a different Member who is a Minister, Committee Chair, Speaker or other Member who is able to be asked a question without notice pursuant to Standing Orders, however one Supplementary Question is permitted, in line with Standing Order 106, 4(b).'

The Sessional Order was introduced on the motion of the Leader of Government Business.

Standing Order 110 of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory provides that answers to questions without notice are to be concise and directly relevant to the question asked. Additionally, Standing Order 110 provides that no answer will exceed three minutes. While this Standing Order includes the phrase "directly relevant", Members of the Assembly have been instructed by the Speaker that the Standing

Order is to be read in conjunction with the practice that Ministers have three minutes to come to a conclusion in their answers.

Inquiry into the rules for notices of motions

Standing Order 76 of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory provides that a notice of a motion may not contain unparliamentary language or content which contravenes any Standing Order (see Standing Order 31), and provides that the Speaker may order the notice be amended or withdrawn from the Notice Paper. There are no restrictions as to the length of notices of motions in the Standing Orders, however Standing Order 70 provides that only a Minister may give two or more notices consecutively unless no other Member has any notice to give.

Members can also discuss matters which they believe to be of public importance by writing to the Speaker requesting that a matter of public importance be submitted to the Assembly for discussion in accordance with Standing Order 66. A matter of public importance is a discussion in the Assembly that must be within the Assembly's competence. There is no question before the chair so no vote is taken at the end of the discussion. The time available for a matter of public importance is 2 hours.

Yours sincerely



Michael Tatham
Clerk

2 February 2017