

# Helen Haines MP

Mr Shayne Neumann MP  
Committee Chair  
Standing Committee on Procedure  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House Canberra, ACT 2600



By email: [procedure.committee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:procedure.committee.reps@aph.gov.au)

## Submission to Standing Committee on Procedure

### **Inquiry into the maintenance of the standing and sessional orders**

Dear Mr Neumann

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry.

I make the following recommendations for your consideration:

#### **1. Time allowed to debate Private Members Bills**

Standing Order 41(c) requires that the Member who has presented a Private Members' Bill may speak to the second reading for no longer than 10 minutes at the time of presentation.

This means that only the Member who has presented a Private Members' Bill speaks on the Bill, noting that Member often cedes a few minutes of this time to the Member seconding the Bill.

For comparison, the mover of a Government Bill and a member of Opposition is allowed 30 minutes speaking time, with any other Member allowed 15 minutes.

Private Members' Bills often raise important national issues. 10 minutes is not adequate time to explain the Bill, and fulsome debate is prevented by not allowing time for other Members, including Members of the Government to respond to the Bill.

#### **Recommendation:**

***That Standing Order 41(c) be amended to increase the speaking time for Members who have presented a Private Members' Bill, and allowing speaking time for a member of the Government or Opposition in reply.***

#### **2. Absolute majority requirement for suspension of standing orders**

Under Standing Order 47(c)(ii) if a suspension motion is moved without notice it can only be carried by an absolute majority of Members, or by a majority of Members present if agreed by the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business.

The definition of absolute majority is a majority of the membership of the House (including the Speaker). By comparison, Standing Order 47(b) requires that if a suspension order is moved on notice, it shall appear on the Notice Paper and may be carried by a majority of votes.

On 25 November 2021 I moved a motion to suspend standing orders to debate my Australian Federal Integrity Commission Private Members Bill. A majority of voters (66) in the House supported this motion, however because of the absolute majority requirement under Standing Order 47(c)(ii), the motion was defeated.

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A suspension motion is often moved without notice as it is about an urgent matter, and therefore should not fail due to a technicality requiring an absolute majority.

***Recommendation:***

***That Standing Order 47(c)(ii) be amended so that if a suspension motion is moved without notice it can be carried by a majority of Members.***

Thank you for considering this submission, and my best wishes for your important work on this committee.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Helen Haines MP  
Independent Federal Member for Indi

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