



**MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE
LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

9 OCT 1996

Mrs Kathy Sullivan MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Sullivan

I write in relation to the Procedure Committee's report, *The Operation of Standing Order 143 - Questions to Members other than Ministers*, which was presented to the House on 16 September 1996.

I am pleased to advise that the Government accepts the Committee's recommendation that standing order 143 be retained in its present form.

As indicated in my letter of 8 August 1996 in response to the Committee's inquiry, there are no valid grounds for changing standing order 143 in the light of its usage to date. I note with interest that the Manager of Opposition Business, in his letter of 22 August 1996 to the inquiry, also expressed the same view, and took the responsible attitude that questions to members only be permitted occasionally, consistent with the terms of the standing order.

In accepting the Committee's recommendation, the Government also acknowledges and supports the Committee's concluding view that the limitations on the scope of questioning, as embodied in standing order 144, should be strictly enforced. In the event of any future abuse of these standing orders, the Government reserves the right to revisit the issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Reith'.

PETER REITH