



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MOTIONS

Standing and Sessional Orders

SPEECH

Tuesday, 13 September 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 13 September 2016
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Questioner
Speaker Burke, Tony, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (17:50): I move:

(1) Insert proposed amendments to standing order 1:

1 Maximum speaking times (amendments to existing subjects, as follows)

subject

time (max)

Responses to Ministers' answers

Whole period 10 mins

Each Member 90 secs

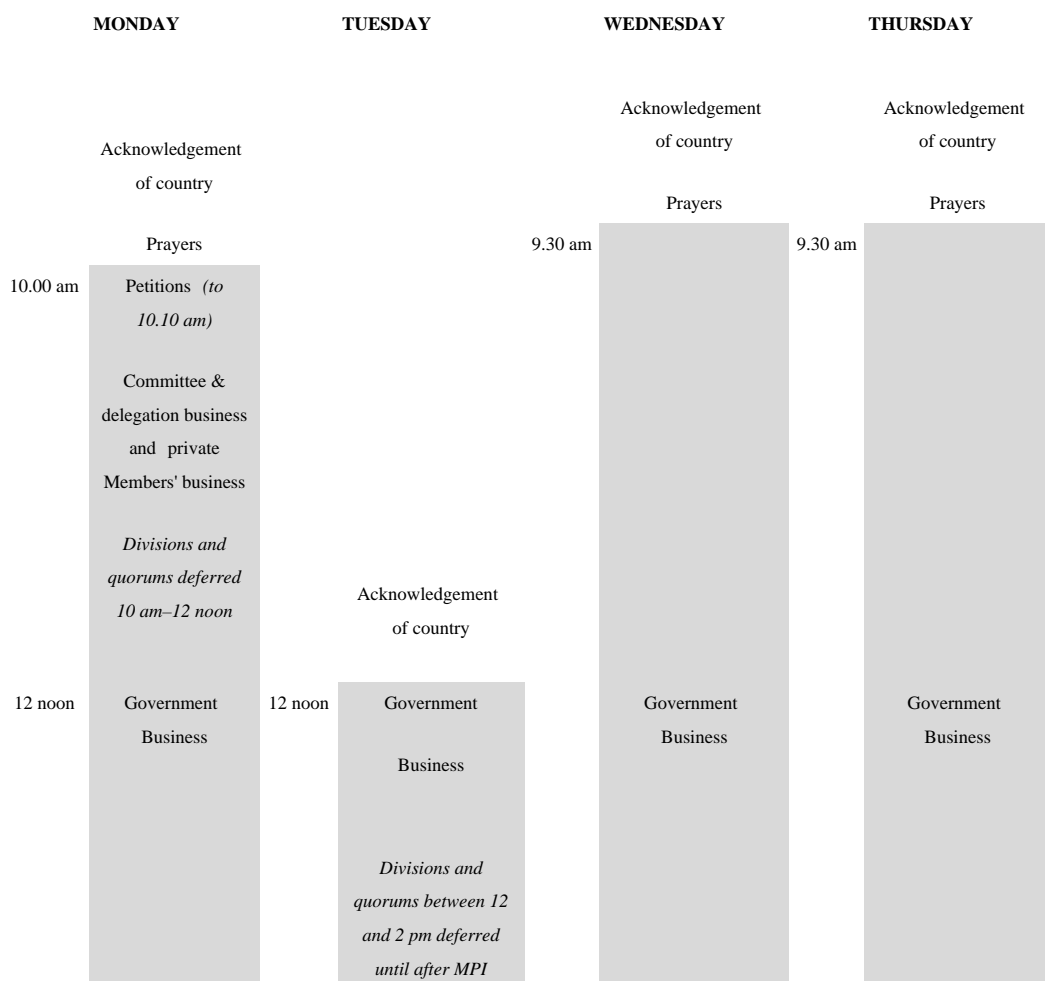
(standing orders 100 and 104)

(2) Amend standing order 34 as follows:

34 Order of business

The order of business to be followed by the House is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. House order of business



1.30 pm	90 sec statements	1.30 pm	90 sec statements	1.30 pm	90 sec statements	1.30 pm	90 sec statements
2.00 pm	Question Time	2.00 pm	Question Time	2.00 pm	Question Time	2.00 pm	Question Time
approx 3.10 pm	Responses to answers	approx 3.10 pm	Responses to answers	approx 3.10 pm	Responses to answers	approx 3.10 pm	Responses to answers
approx 3.20 pm	Documents, Ministerial statements	approx 3.20 pm	Documents, MPI, Ministerial statements	approx 3.20 pm	Documents, MPI, Ministerial statements	approx 3.20 pm	Documents, MPI, Ministerial statements
	Government Business	approx 4.10 pm	Government Business	approx 4.10 pm	Government Business	approx 4.30 pm	Government Business
						5.00 pm	Adjournment Debate
7.30 pm	<i>Divisions between 7.30-9.30pm deferred until after MPI on Tuesday</i>	7.30 pm	<i>Divisions and quorums deferred 7.30-9.30 pm</i>	7.30 pm	Adjournment Debate		
	<i>Quorums between 7.30-9.30pm deferred until 12 noon Tuesday</i>						
9.00 pm	Adjournment Debate	9.00 pm	Adjournment Debate	8.00 pm			
9.30 pm		9.30 pm					

(3) Insert proposed standing order 104(d):

104 Answers

(d)After Question Time, and after any questions to the Speaker, the Speaker shall ask if there are any responses to Ministers' answers. Each Member may speak for no longer than 90 seconds. The duration of the whole period for responses shall not exceed 10 minutes.

Everything that the Leader of the House just put is inaccurate for this simple reason: we changed the sitting hours last week. What the Leader of the House just implied is that what was there beforehand, in the previous parliament, is still in the standing orders. That is not true. Last week we changed the standing orders so that on Monday and Tuesday nights the dinner break begins not at 6.30, as the Leader of the House just said, but at 7.30. The Leader of the House is trying to appeal to his backbench by saying this means you can go home at 8 o'clock. Under the current rules, if you are not speaking in a debate, you can leave for the dinner break and not have to return at 7.30. It is not about what time people leave. We dealt with that last week in a change to standing orders that the Leader of the House just completely ignored when he misled us with information about what time the dinner break currently occurs. What he has just told the House is factually wrong because he moved the change the last time the parliament sat.

So why would he actually want this change? There are two things in front of us. One of them is that the adjournment question will never be put to a vote. Why do you reckon the Leader of the House might want to make sure that the adjournment question is never put to the vote? I do not think it is to do with the good health of members opposite. I think it is to do with the health of the Leader of the House, because he has had an absolute shocker ever since he became the first Leader of the House in half a century to lose votes on the floor with a majority government. That is what he has had, and now, instead of saying to the Prime Minister, 'It won't happen again, because I can make sure our members turn up for work,' or, 'It won't happen again, because we've got some party discipline back,' he is saying: 'It won't happen again, because I'll change the rules so that nothing gets put to a vote. I'll change the rules so that the parliament shuts down.'

If a school has a problem with truancy, it does not decide to fix it by just shutting the school down. They have a problem with truancy on the other side, a huge problem which caused humiliation for those opposite, and they have decided to try to deal with it not by fixing the actual problem but instead by providing false information to the House—pretending that it is something to do with the good health of members opposite and that the changes that passed through this House unanimously in the previous sitting week never actually occurred—and putting to the House a position which is about making sure that the adjournment is never voted on and that we lose another three hours a week of parliamentary time.

This parliament does not sit very often, but this is a government whose members do not like the concept that, when the parliament sits, they hear different voices. When the parliament sits, they do not like the fact that different points of view are put. What they really do not like is that, wherever they go, they hear an attack on the government. They come into the parliament; there is an attack on the government. They go to their party room; there is an attack on the government. They go to a cabinet meeting, and the government is being attacked as well. Everywhere they go it is the exact same situation. That is why we have a government that does not want the parliament to meet. It does not want to schedule weeks for the parliament to meet, and when we are here those opposite want to make sure that they can take off out of here as soon as they possibly can. That is not a new principle. Those opposite decided to not even wait for the end of parliament when we were last here on the Thursday. But I love that the Leader of the House presents this to the House as though nothing happened—as though that Thursday afternoon is just so yesterday.

What the Leader of the House needs to acknowledge, and what he will refuse repeatedly to deal with, is that this government, as I have said before, does not have a working majority. All it has is a majority that refuses to work, and that is what those opposite are delivering to this parliament. The Leader of the House should know this: every time you change the rules, every time you use that bare majority that you have to try to crunch through a change, do not think it will not come back another way. Last night—the spectacle of it! For more than an hour at the end of the day yesterday, the Leader of the House and the Chief Government Whip came into the House and just sat here watching in case something happened. They just sat here. They did not make contributions but just watched in case there was something that they had not quite thought of that suddenly took off in the parliament so that they were here on the spot, on the site. This was the same day that the Leader of the House had already briefed government staffers to let them know to cover all eight exits of Parliament House, to be there making sure that members of parliament could not escape the building.

Mr Husic: It's the Pyne Border Force!

Mr BURKE: That is right.

Mr Husic: They've got uniforms!

Mr BURKE: People at all eight exits getting their uniforms from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, making sure that they will decide—

The **SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will address the motion before the House.

Mr BURKE: which members of the parliament will leave this building and the circumstances under which they leave.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

Mr BURKE: I also have an amendment which I move. There is a boom mike over there, mate. Just calm down. I also move an amendment, which is seconded by the member for Grayndler, to establish a 'take note' debate at the end of question time. The Senate has a 'take note' debate. This amendment allows members of the opposition, sometimes government backbenchers when they have asked questions about their electorate, and certainly members of the crossbench to make 90-second statements in response to what has been said in question time. How many times have we seen answers given in this place that involve complete misrepresentation of the facts? But, because they do not involve a personal misrepresentation, there is no form of the House currently to be able to set the record straight.

The Leader of the House should support this amendment. Why? Because previously he advocated for it. When the Leader of the House held this job, when he made his speech at the Institute of Public Affairs and he went through the different changes that should happen to standing orders, one of the changes that those opposite promised to bring to the House on coming to government at the 2013 election was to establish a 'take note' debate at the end of question time. So I put it to the government. We are asking no more than for the government to support a change that they previously have advocated. We expect that the government will look at this. There is no shortage of issues where we have dealt with the government coming up with a position that is the opposite of what they previously argued, but this is one where the Leader of the House has something in the exact form that he personally had previously proposed, and not only proposed but put forward as an election commitment at the 2013 election. So I urge the government members to support the Leader of the House as he was in 2013. The incarnation of what he has become in 2016 is something that only he can answer for. There is no doubt that he is a diminished figure since what happened that Thursday afternoon, but at the very least, on this amendment, we are asking the government to support no more than what they have previously advocated.

Our objection to the substantive change being put forward by the government is very simple. People, when they come to Canberra, should be able to debate legislation. There is nothing about members being able to leave the chamber or leave the building that is in any way threatened by the current standing orders, because that issue was fixed last week. The only reason for the substantive amendment that has been put by the Leader of the House is this: the government is in chaos, its backbench is a shambles, and those opposite would rather abolish votes than risk having to rely on their own members to turn up for them.

The SPEAKER: Is the amendment seconded?