



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 18 March 2004

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Proposed New Standing Orders; Proposed New Sitting Program

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.12 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to table draft proposed standing orders, which I do. Each member will receive a copy shortly. As all members would be aware, the standing orders along with sessional orders govern the conduct of parliament. It is essential that they be enforced, as they are in this parliament, to ensure the effective operation of parliamentary business.

As I said in debate on this matter in August 2001, the current standing orders work well. It is timely to look at this issue because most standing orders have been in place since early last century and some are even older. There are no major changes proposed. The main focus has been to modernise the language to make it more user friendly; make standing orders more accessible by including all standing orders relevant to members' conduct in the same chapter; include various matters arising from Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee report recommendations; include some longstanding sessional orders; and clarify ambiguity. An example of ambiguous—in fact, baffling—language is standing order No. 169, which states—

When a blank is to be filled up, and there comes a Question between a greater and lesser sum, or between a longer and shorter time, the least sum and the longest time shall first be put to the Question.

There are some confusing things in this life but that defies logic or understanding. The language definitely needs—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** No, it is not a question from the opposition. The language definitely needs modernising to suit a parliament with 31 women members because the word 'she' does not appear once in relation to members.

An example of where longstanding sessional orders are proposed to become standing orders is the estimates committee process. All of these sessional orders have been incorporated with the exception of detail such as the proposed dates for committee hearings and allocation of portfolios, which is sensible enough. This document will be much more accessible, relevant and valuable to members and to you, Mr Speaker.

A meeting of the Standing Orders Committee will be convened as soon as possible to further discuss the proposal—obviously after people have had a chance to consider it. The current standing orders and sessional orders which will be moved by the Leader of the House this morning are in use until the proposed orders have been confirmed, after consideration by the Standing Orders Committee members.

I thank the Clerk and you, Mr Speaker, and other members of the Parliamentary Service who have invested time and energy in this draft proposal. The Leader of the House will move sessional orders containing a new sitting program which will be subject to a 12-month trial. I want to underline this: this is a 12-month trial. It has been devised to limit the number of very late sitting nights by having slightly longer but more regular hours. It will allow more time for debate. Lunch and dinner breaks have been reduced from one and a half hours to one hour, giving us more time for parliamentary business—roughly an additional two or so hours, because hopefully on Thursday nights we will finish at the dinner break.

I understand that members may have a range of views about the changes, but I encourage members to work with them. They are designed to make this place more family friendly, to facilitate better time management and to improve the productivity of our work for the people of Queensland. I refer them to the attention of members.