



Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee

Inquiry into including sessional orders and ongoing resolutions in the standing orders

Interim report 2

June 2025

Published by order, or
under the authority, of the
Parliament of Victoria
June 2025

ISBN 978 0 908262 28 1 (print version)

ISBN 978 0 908262 29 8 (PDF version)

This report is available on the Committee's website:
parliament.vic.gov.au/la-standing-orders

Committee membership



CHAIR

Hon Maree Edwards
Speaker of the
Legislative Assembly



Hon Ben Carroll



Matt Fregon
Deputy Speaker



Sam Hibbins
(30 April 2024 to
30 November 2024)



James Newbury



Danny O'Brien
(from 27 November 2024)



Dr Tim Read
(from 26 November 2024)



Pauline Richards



Ellen Sandell
(until 24 April 2024)



David Southwick
(until 3 February 2025)



Hon Mary-Anne Thomas



Bridget Vallence
(from 4 February 2025)



Hon Peter Walsh
(until 26 November 2024)



Belinda Wilson

About the Committee

Functions

The role of the Committee is to review the standing orders (procedural rules) of the Legislative Assembly and make recommendations for change.

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Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends that the House amends the standing and sessional orders as detailed in Appendix B.

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Inquiry into including sessional orders and ongoing resolutions in the standing orders

1. On 7 February 2023, the Legislative Assembly referred a matter to the Standing Orders Committee. The referral set out that, subject to the proposed sessional orders being agreed, the following issues be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration, inquiry and report:
 - (1) the possible inclusion of the sessional orders and ongoing resolutions in the standing orders; and
 - (2) any other identified improvements to the standing orders.
2. On 17 August 2023, the Committee formed a subcommittee to examine which procedures in sessional orders should be incorporated into the standing orders, and which required further consideration by the Committee.
3. The subcommittee reported to the Committee on 2 November 2023. The subcommittee recommended that sessional order Nos 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16 and 18 be included in the standing orders with consequential changes made to the sessional orders.
4. The Committee agreed to the recommendation and tabled the interim report on the *Inquiry into the inclusion of sessional orders and ongoing resolutions in the standing orders* on 28 November 2023.
5. On 29 November 2023, the House agreed to the following:

That, as recommended by the Standing Orders Committee's Report on the inclusion of sessional orders and ongoing resolutions in the standing orders, November 2023, this House adopts the proposed amendments to standing and sessional orders as detailed in Appendix A, to come into effect from 1 January 2024.
6. The subcommittee continued its analysis of which practices should be included in the standing orders, and which required further consideration by the Committee.
7. The subcommittee reported back to the Committee on 17 October 2024. The subcommittee recommended that sessional order Nos 12 and 17 be included in the standing orders with consequential changes to the sessional orders.
8. The Committee agreed to the recommendation and produced this report.
9. The Committee will continue to work on the terms of reference and will report to the House as it resolves to make further recommendations for changes to standing and sessional orders.

Chair ordering member to withdraw — application during oral questions without notice and ministers' statements

10. Sessional order 12 modifies the application of SO 124 during question time. If question time ends before the end of the member's suspension period, they may return to the Chamber after question time but serve the remainder of their suspension during the next question time. This sessional order was first adopted in February 2019 for the 59th Parliament and was adopted again in February 2023 for the current Parliament.
11. The Committee believes the sessional order has worked effectively and recommends it be incorporated into standing orders.

Electronic petitions

12. Sessional order 17 allows the tabling of electronic petitions (e-petitions) and sets out arrangements to start, publish online, and table an e-petition. The sessional order requires e-petitions to comply with SOs 45 to 52 except the requirement to provide physical signatures.
13. This sessional order was first adopted in June 2021 for the 59th Parliament and was adopted again in February 2023 for the current Parliament.
14. The Committee recommends this sessional order should be incorporated into standing orders. For clarity, the Committee recommends combining petitions and e-petitions standing orders into a single chapter. This will avoid repetition as many of the existing petition standing orders also apply to e-petitions.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends that the House amends the standing and sessional orders as detailed in Appendix B.

**Adopted by the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee
Parliament of Victoria, East Melbourne
15 May 2025**

Appendix A

Table showing how sessional orders 12 and 17 have been incorporated into draft standing orders

Standing order ^a	Sessional orders which affect the standing order
44	17(1)(8)
45	17(7)(10)
46	
47	17(8)
48	17(1)(3)
49	17(5)(6)(7)
50	17(4)(9)
51	
52	
124	12

- a. The combination of petitions and e-petitions into proposed Chapter 7 of standing orders will make sessional order 17(2) redundant.

Appendix B

Recommended amendments to the standing orders and sessional orders

Recommended amendments to standing orders

Chapter 7 — Petitions

44 Petition definitions

In this Chapter:

Petitioner means the person who signs a petition to show their support.

Publish means publish an e-petition on the Parliament's website so that petitioners can sign it.

Sign means a petitioner:

- (1) signing a paper petition; or
- (2) electronically providing their name and address and signifying their intention to join an e-petition; or
- (3) if incapable of signing, another person signing on their behalf; or
- (4) if a corporation, adding the corporation's common seal.

Sponsoring member means the member in whose name the petition is presented to the House.

Sponsoring petitioner means the person who initiates an e-petition.

Terms of the petition means the details set out under SO 45(1)(c).

~~44 Procedure for presenting petitions~~

~~(1) Every petition must:~~

- ~~(a) be presented by a member who has not signed the petition; and~~
- ~~(b) be given to the Clerk at least one day before the meeting of the House at which it is to be presented; and~~

- ~~(c) be examined by the member to ensure that the petition is not offensive in its language or tone, and that it complies with the rules of the House; and~~
- ~~(d) be signed by the member at the top of the front page.~~
- ~~(2) The Clerk must certify that the petition is in accordance with the standing orders and procedures of the House.~~

45 Format and content of petitions

- (1) All petitions must:
 - (a) be legible;
 - (b) be addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Victoria;
 - (c) include:
 - (i) a description of the petitioners;
 - (ii) the petition issue; and
 - (iii) the action or remedy sought from the House.
- (2) A petition must not have supporting material attached to it.
- (3) A petition may request an action or remedy that has been sought by another petition, however e-petitions may not simultaneously request the same action or remedy.
- (4) Once published, an e-petition cannot be altered.

~~45~~ ~~Content of petitions~~

~~A petition will:~~

- ~~(1) Be legible.~~
- ~~(2) Be addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.~~
- ~~(3) Be in English or accompanied by an English translation certified to be true and correct by the member who presents it.~~
- ~~(4) Be respectful and temperate in its language.~~
- ~~(5) State the action or remedy sought from the House on the top of every sheet.~~
- ~~(6) Contain at least one signature.~~
- ~~(7) Contain the original signatures, names and addresses of the petitioners. Only a petitioner incapable of signing may get someone else to sign for him or her.~~
- ~~(8) Not contain signatures which have been pasted or in any other way transferred or attached to the petition.~~
- ~~(9) If from a corporation, be made under its common seal.~~

46 Language of petitions

Petitions must be:

- (1) In English or accompanied by an English translation certified to be true and correct by the sponsoring member.
- (2) In respectful and temperate language.

~~46 Attachments to petitions~~

~~A petition must not have letters, affidavits or other documents attached to it.~~

47 Signatures on petitions

- (1) Petitions must contain at least one signature.
- (2) Petitions may only be signed by Victorian residents.
- (3) Paper petitions must:
 - (a) contain the original signatures, names and addresses of the petitioners;
 - (b) state the terms of the petition, as required under SO 45(1)(c), on the top of every sheet of signatures;
 - (c) not contain signatures that have been pasted or in any other way transferred or attached to the petition.
- (4) It is a breach of privilege of the House for a person to add the name of any other person to a petition, except as provided for under SO 44.

~~47 Offence to add names of others~~

~~It is a breach of privilege of the House for a person to add the name of any other person to a petition to be presented to the House, except with the consent of a person who is incapable of adding his or her own name.~~

48 Sponsoring petitioner

A sponsoring petitioner may lodge a request to start an e-petition with the Clerk for publication on the Parliament's website. The sponsoring petitioner must include in the request:

- (1) the issue (maximum 200 words) and action or remedy requested (maximum 120 words);
- (2) their full name and address; and
- (3) the name of the sponsoring member, having confirmed their agreement.

~~48~~ — ~~Time for presenting petitions~~

~~Unless a member reads the terms of a petition under SO 49, a petition must be presented during formal business at a time when no debate is taking place.~~

49 Sponsoring member

- (1) The sponsoring member must examine the petition to ensure it is not offensive in its language or tone, and that it complies with the rules of the House.
- (2) A member must not table a petition they have signed as a signatory.
- (3) For paper petitions, the sponsoring member must:
 - (a) sign the top of the front page;
 - (b) give the petition to the Clerk at least one day before the sitting of the House at which it is to be presented.
- (4) For e-petitions, the sponsoring member:
 - (a) must nominate a period (the posted period) that the e-petition will be published and:
 - (i) the posted period must be a minimum of one week and a maximum of six months from the date of publication;
 - (ii) if the Assembly is due to expire under s 38(1) of the *Constitution Act 1975* within six months from the date of publication, the Clerk will determine the maximum posted period;
 - (iii) the sponsoring member may request that the Clerk change the posted period before it ends, provided the maximum period is not exceeded.
 - (b) may request that the Clerk withdraw the petition.

~~49~~ — ~~Reading of petitions~~

- ~~(1) A member may read the terms of a petition and the number of signatures during statements by members under SO 40.~~
- ~~(2) Prior notice of not less than one day must be given to the Clerk and the Clerk's confirmation received that the petition complies with standing orders.~~
- ~~(3) After reading the details under paragraph (1) the member must give the petition to the Clerk and cannot later move that the petition be taken into consideration under SO 51.~~

50 Clerk's role in petitions

The Clerk must:

- (1) Before a paper petition is presented, review the petition to ensure it conforms with the standing orders and procedures of the House.

- (2) Before the e-petition is published:
 - (a) review the wording of the e-petition to ensure it conforms with standing orders and procedures of the House;
 - (b) confirm that the sponsoring member has agreed to sponsor the petition.
- (3) After the posted period for an e-petition has ended, arrange for the petition to be presented under SO 51 on the next sitting day.

50 — Clerk announces petitions

~~The Clerk, subject to SO 49, announces to the House the petitions lodged for presentation stating, for each petition, the name of the member who lodged it, the identity of the petitioners, the subject matter and the number of signatures. The terms of each petition must be printed in Hansard.~~

51 Presenting a petition

A petition may be presented in the House during:

- (1) Formal business:
 - (a) the Clerk will present the petition and read the name of the sponsoring member, a summary of the action or remedy sought, and the number of signatures;
 - (b) the Chair proposes the question ‘that the petition be tabled’; and
 - (c) the terms of the petition must be printed in Hansard; or
- (2) Statements by members under SO 40 — the sponsoring member will present the petition and read the terms of the petition and the number of signatures and give the petition to the Clerk.

51 — Dealing with petitions

- ~~(1) When a petition is presented, the only questions the House can consider are ‘That the petition is tabled’ and ‘That it be taken in consideration’ (on a stated future day). These questions must be decided without amendment or debate.~~
- ~~(2) The House may consider a petition immediately if it concerns a personal grievance which may require an urgent remedy.~~

51A — Petition order of the day lapses

~~If an order of the day for the consideration of a petition has remained on the notice paper for 30 sitting days without debate, the Speaker will announce it will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who moved that a petition be taken into consideration may write to the Clerk and require the order of the day to remain.~~

After a petition is presented

- (1) After a petition is presented under SO 51(1):
 - (a) a member may move 'That the petition be taken into consideration' (on a future stated day) and this question must be decided without amendment or debate;
 - (b) the House may consider a petition immediately if it concerns a personal grievance which may require an urgent remedy.
- (2) If an order of the day for the consideration of a petition has remained on the notice paper for 30 sitting days without debate, the Speaker will announce it will be removed from the notice paper on the next sitting day. A member who moved that a petition be taken into consideration may write to the Clerk and require the order of the day to remain.
- (3) After a petition is presented under SO 51, the Clerk will send details of the petition to the minister responsible for the administration of the issue that is the subject of the petition.

Chapter 13 — Disorder

Chair ordering member to withdraw

Where the Speaker or Deputy Speaker considers the conduct of a member to be disorderly:

- (1) The Speaker or Deputy Speaker may order the member to withdraw from the House for up to one and a half hours. That order is not open to debate or dissent.
- (2) The member, whilst suspended, may still return to the Chamber to vote in a division.
- (3) If a member is ordered to withdraw under paragraph (1) and the House adjourns before the end of the suspension period, the member, subject to paragraph (2), will not return to the Chamber on the next sitting day until the remaining time has expired. Time is calculated from the end of the ringing of the bells.
- (4) If a member is ordered to withdraw under paragraph (1) during question time, and question time ends before the end of the suspension period, the member is allowed to return to the Chamber after question time and must serve the remainder of their suspension during subsequent question times subject to paragraph (2).

Recommended amendments to sessional orders

1 Days and times of meeting

Unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet each Tuesday at 12.00 pm, and each Wednesday and Thursday at 9.30 am.

2 Interruption of business for adjournment

Standing Order 32 be suspended and the following to apply:

- (1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Speaker will interrupt the business before the House at:
 - (a) 7.00 pm each sitting Tuesday and Wednesday;
 - (b) 5.00 pm on any other sitting day.
- (2) If a division is taking place when the time for the interruption arises, the division will be completed and the result announced. If the division is on a closure motion, and the motion is agreed to, the question or questions then required to be put to close the issue before the House will also be dealt with. The Speaker will then interrupt business.
- (3) If the time for the interruption arises:
 - (a) at the same time as the completion time set by the government business program; or
 - (b) after the interruption for the completion time of the government business program, but before all business on the program has been dealt with —

all business on the government business program will be completed first. The Speaker will then interrupt business for the adjournment.

- (4) After the interruption:
 - (a) before a motion for the adjournment is proposed by the Speaker, a minister may move that the sitting be continued. That motion must be put immediately without amendment or debate. If it is agreed to, the House will resume debate at the point at which it had been interrupted; or
 - (b) if a motion is not moved, the Speaker will immediately propose the question 'That the House now adjourns'. Any business under discussion and any other business not concluded at the time of the adjournment will be listed on the notice paper for the next sitting day. Any member speaking at the time of the interruption may, when debate resumes, continue his or her speech.

Order of business

- (1) So much of SOs 36, 38, 39, 41 and 55 be suspended so as to enable the following order of business on:

Tuesdays

Formal business
 Statements by members
 Government business
 Question time and constituency questions (2.00 pm)
 Government business continued
 General business

Wednesdays

Formal business
 Disallowance motions
 Statements by members
 Statements on parliamentary committee reports
 Government business
 Question time and constituency questions (2.00 pm)
 Government business continued
 Matter of public importance or grievance debate (4.00 pm)
 Government business continued
 General business

- (2) So much of SOs 38 and 39 be suspended so as to enable:
- (a) at 4.00 pm on Wednesday, unless a division is taking place, the Chair interrupts the business before the House and the bells are then rung for one minute;
 - (b) if a division is taking place at 4.00 pm:
 - (i) it will be completed without interruption and result announced;
 - (ii) if the division is on a closure motion, and the motion is agreed to, the question or questions then required to be put to close the issue before the House will also be dealt with;
 - (iii) business is then interrupted following the procedure in sub paragraph (a);
 - (c) the Chair announces the grievance debate or matter of public importance, whichever the case may be;
 - (d) any business under discussion and not completed at the interruption will be resumed immediately at the end of the grievance debate or matter of public importance, whichever the case may be, and any member speaking at the time of the interruption may then continue his or her speech.
- (3) In SO 39(9) for 'statements on parliamentary committee reports under SO 41' read 'government business'.

Sessional order 4 deleted 29/11/2023

5 Who may ask oral questions without notice

Only non-government members may ask questions without notice under SO 55.

Sessional order 6 deleted 29/11/2023

7 Ministers' statements

After each oral question without notice and any related supplementary questions, any minister may seek the call to make a statement of up to two minutes.

Sessional order 8 deleted 29/11/2023

9 Duration of question time

Standing Order 55(2) is suspended and the following to apply:

Question time will last until five oral questions and related supplementary questions have been answered and up to five ministers' statements have been made and where a question is ruled out of order it is, for the purposes of this sessional order, deemed to have been answered.

Sessional order 10 deleted 29/11/2023

11 Content of answers

Standing Order 58(1)(a) is suspended and all answers to questions must be direct, factual, succinct and relevant.

~~12 — Chair ordering member to withdraw — application during oral questions without notice and ministers' statements~~

~~Where:~~

~~(1) — a member is ordered to withdraw from the House under SO 124 during question time; and~~

~~(2) — question time ends before the end of the suspension period —~~

~~the member may return to the Chamber after question time but must serve the remainder of their suspension during the next question time, subject to SO 124(2).~~

Sessional order 13 deleted 29/11/2023

14 Notices of motion

Standing Orders 140(1) and 141 are suspended and the following to apply:

- (1) A member may only move a motion to discuss a subject if he or she has given notice of that motion on a previous sitting day.
- (2) Copies of all verbal notices must be provided to the Clerks at the table before notices are called on by the Speaker.
- (3) Copies of all written notices must be provided to the Clerks at the table before the conclusion of formal business.
- (4) All notices given by ministers must be verbal.
- (5) Verbal notices must be read to the House. They can only be given before the House proceeds to the business of the day as set out in the notice paper.
- (6) All notices, except notices given under paragraph (7) given by members who are not ministers, must be given in writing. Members may give notice by lodging a copy with the Clerks in accordance with paragraph (3).
- (7) A motion by a member expressing no confidence in the Premier and ministers, in the terms set out in s 8A of the Constitution Act 1975, may only be given verbally.
- (8) The Clerk must notify the Speaker of a notice of a motion by a member to disallow a statutory rule to which SO 151 applies, and the Speaker will report details to the House at the first convenient opportunity.

Sessional order 15 deleted 29/11/2023

Sessional order 16 deleted 29/11/2023

17 ~~Electronic petitions~~

- ~~(1) A person (the sponsoring petitioner) may lodge a request to start an electronic petition (e-petition) with the Clerk for publication on the Parliament's website.~~
- ~~(2) Standing Orders 45 to 52 apply except in relation to the requirement for a petitioner's signature.~~
- ~~(3) The sponsoring petitioner must provide the following information to the Clerk:
 - ~~(a) the issue (maximum 200 words) and action requested (maximum 120 words);~~
 - ~~(b) their full name and address; and~~~~

- ~~(c) the name of the member sponsoring the e-petition;~~
- ~~(4) Before the e-petition is published, the Clerk will review the wording of the e-petition to ensure it conforms with standing orders and confirm that the sponsoring member has agreed to sponsor the e-petition;~~
- ~~(5) The sponsoring member must nominate a period (the posted period) that the e-petition will be available to sign on the Parliament's website and:~~
 - ~~(a) the posted period must be a minimum of one week and a maximum of six months from the date of publication;~~
 - ~~(b) if the Assembly is due to expire under s 28(2) of the Constitution Act 1975 within six months from the date of publication of an e-petition, the Clerk will determine the maximum posted period;~~
 - ~~(c) the sponsoring member may request the Clerk to change the posted period before it ends, provided the maximum period is not exceeded;~~
- ~~(6) A member must not sign an e-petition they have sponsored;~~
- ~~(7) Once published, an e-petition cannot be altered but the sponsoring member may request the Clerk withdraw it;~~
- ~~(8) Residents of Victoria may become signatories to an e-petition by electronically providing their name, address and signifying their intention to join the e-petition;~~
- ~~(9) The Clerk will table the e-petition on the next sitting day after the posted period has ended;~~
- ~~(10) E-petitions about the same issue and requesting the same action are not allowed simultaneously. However, once an e-petition has been tabled, a new e-petition can be started;~~

Previous sessional order 18 was deleted on 29/11/2023

Current sessional order 18 came into operation on 01/04/2025

18 Order of government business

So much of SOs 146, 148(1) and 150 are suspended to allow, on days on which government business has precedence, ministers to list government notices of motion and orders of the day at the head of the list on the notice paper in whatever order they wish. Government notices and orders are then dealt with in the order they are listed on the notice paper. After a government notice or order has been disposed of, the Speaker will either call the minister to move the next notice of motion or direct the clerk to read the next order of the day, as appropriate.

