

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES —  
REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Statement*

**HON COLIN HOLT (South West)** [5.35 pm]: I am glad that the Leader of the House is in the chamber because I want to direct some comments to her and hopefully she will take them in the spirit in which they are delivered. Yesterday at the beginning of formal business, we had quite a debate about changing the standing orders and the right and wrong way of doing things. I will quote from the uncorrected *Hansard*. During the Leader of the House's contribution, she offered —

Although the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges may provide a consensus report, which everyone on the committee will have agreed to, the approach of this house has been and is now as we speak that that Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges report will not be proceeded with if it does not have the consensus of the whole house. I will give an example. The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges has considered e-petitions and has made certain recommendations. Despite that report suggesting that the house go down a particular path, there is not consensus across the house, so we will not be proceeding with that. That is the time-tested method that we use to make changes to the way we do our business. We bring everybody with us.

I have no problem with consensus; in fact, that is how I tend to operate. The fortieth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges has been tabled, but I do not think we have debated it, and I am happy to be corrected on that. I note that order of the day 31 is “Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges—Report No. 45—Outstanding Matters from the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament”, which is the order of the day for the debate on the report on e-petitions. I have never been asked my opinion on e-petitions. We have never had a debate in this house on members' views on e-petitions, yet, according to the uncorrected *Hansard*, the Leader of the House has made the decision that we will not bring that forward.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** No; I didn't make that decision by myself.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** That is why I am asking these questions. It seems to me that we have gone down the right path, according to the Leader of the House. A potential change to the standing orders has gone through the right channels in the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges, which has presented a report to the house for debate so that the house can come to some arrangement. We have not even had that debate yet, but it seems that there is consensus. I have not heard what the consensus is in the house. Does it mean that one member does not agree and 35 do? I do not know, because we have not had that debate in the house. How can there be a consensus of people's views if we do not have a debate? At some point I would like to debate e-petitions. It has gone through the right process.

Let us take the issue raised yesterday when someone gave notice of a motion to change standing orders. In the future, that motion might get referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges. That committee would give a report back, but what happens if someone does not agree with some of the recommendations in the report? Do we never get to debate it, because there is not consensus across the house? At some point in time, when a report is delivered, we must have a debate on it, at least to sort out who thinks it is a good idea or not. We often have votes in here, and maybe it will be a vote of 30–4 or 30–5; who knows? We have not had the debate, so we do not know. I would certainly like to see a different approach to the way we debate these reports on standing orders that have come through the right system. I guess my question to the Leader of the House is: how do we manage that in the future? I would be interested to know.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [5.40 pm]: I will respond to the not unreasonable issues raised by Hon Colin Holt. The practice has been that we try to reach consensus. Despite the fact that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges has reached a consensus and made a series of recommendations, it has not always been the case that those reports have gone on to be dealt with or agreed to. In the case that the member is talking about—the example that I used yesterday—the member knows that we have a meeting behind the Chair on the first Tuesday of each sitting block, with representatives of each of the parties. We talk about the things that we are able to proceed with, what the government's priorities are, and what issues we need to work out together, related to the business of the house. Five reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges went to standing orders. We had a discussion at one of those Tuesday evening meetings about how everyone felt about progressing the matters in those reports. I do not want to name names, but it was clear that at least one party, and perhaps more parties, had members who were not comfortable proceeding with that particular report. We agreed, behind the Chair, that we would proceed only with the reports for which we knew we had consensus from everybody, out of respect for the fact that different parties have to resolve internal issues in different ways. That is why it was done—out of respect for each party's ways of dealing with issues. As long as I have been here, whether or not it has been the right way on every occasion, from time to time the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges will produce a report that says that we should take path X, but

that causes a problem for one or more parties, so decisions have been made not to proceed. That is the circumstance that I was referring to. I get the point that the member is making.

**Hon Colin Holt:** We had a report presented to the house, and no-one has had a chance to debate it.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Correct; there are a lot of reports from the procedure and privileges committee that we have not had the chance to debate, but I want to assure the member that that is not because we have not talked behind the Chair about how we might proceed. We are not proceeding with that particular one because we have had an agreement behind the Chair that we will not proceed because one party has an issue.