

**Submission  
No 2**

**INQUIRY INTO SUSPENSION OF A MEMBER FOR  
DISORDERLY CONDUCT IN QUESTION TIME**

**Name:** The Honourable Mark Latham MLC

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## **Submission on the Proposed Change to Standing Orders for the Suspension of a Member for Disorderly Conduct in Question Time**

I proposed this change to the House after Budget Week when, in the cycle of crossbench questions, the Hon John Ruddick did not receive a question, denying his right to scrutinise the annual government expenditure in Question Time.

Overall this year, the number of crossbench questions has fallen away. We have become accustomed to asking just one per week in Question Time, whereas previously it was two, sometimes even three.

One of the problems has been an Opposition tactic of disruption, with a lot of time taken up with the President trying (unsuccessfully) to bring the Opposition to order and also points of order on related matters.

While our President is liked and respected across the chamber for the role he plays, he hasn't been able to impose the necessary discipline in Question Time to overcome the Opposition tactic. Conflict is not his cup of tea. Even if it were, the current 'three strikes' system takes up too much time, often with disputes around each call.

This is why a new Standing Order is required. 94(a) has been effective in the House of Representatives in finding a middle ground between the full suspension of a member and allowing them to deliberately disrupt the chamber. The immediate one-hour suspension is seen as a fair and efficient way of dealing with members who do the wrong thing.

Its application in our Question Time is likely to solve the current problem, either by removing disruptive MLCs or acting as a deterrent against their disruptions. We know the obvious tactic in which they are engaged, so this new power will assist the President in dealing with them. Endless demands for members to be heard in silence, and points of order taken therein will be avoided.

Crossbench MPs will be able to fulfil more effectively in Question Time their basic responsibility in holding the Executive Government to account. All MLCs will be more likely to follow and abide by the Standing Orders.

I don't see any downside to this change and would urge its introduction.

Hon Mark Latham MLC