

Motion negatived.

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS
Intervening Business be Postponed

Dr BURNS (Leader of Government Business): Madam Acting Speaker, I move - That intervening business be postponed so we can debate the Constitutional Convention on Statehood ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Acting Speaker! The member with carriage of that, being the Leader of the Opposition, is not currently in the room. We have had no notification in relation to this particular motion. I am sure we are happy to accommodate the government, but it would be unreasonable for the government to expect the presence of the Leader of the Opposition when it does not occur in that order on the Notice Paper.

What I simply ask, Madam Acting Speaker, is if that is what the government wants to do, the House be adjourned for a short period enabling the member with carriage on this side of the House to be ready.

Madam ACTING SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please. I am seeking advice from the Clerk.

Ms LAWRIE: Speaking to that ...

Madam ACTING SPEAKER: Please pause, minister.

Members interjecting.

Madam ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, resume your seats, please. I am going to suspend sittings for three minutes to resolve this matter. When the bells ring in three minutes time, I ask members to resume their seats.

The Assembly suspended.

The Assembly reconvened.

Madam ACTING SPEAKER: Honourable members, the House does now resume. The Leader of Government Business had put the question with regard to the reordering of government business. Are there any further speakers to this motion?

Motion agreed to.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION
(ELECTION) BILL
(Serial 178)

Continued from 27 October 2011.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Acting Speaker, the Chief Minister and I have been in this parliament for 12 years. Most of my time in this parliament has been spent in opposition. The committee I have spent the greater part of my time on has been the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Being on the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and then being given an opportunity - and, in fact, a privilege - to be involved in the Statehood Steering Committee, has been an experience I recognise as being an historic involvement.

It has given me access to this aspiration for the Northern Territory to be the seventh state. It has given me access to the underlying narrative that this is a place which is going somewhere; that we want to be standing shoulder to shoulder with our colleagues who are already recognised through the Australian federation as fully-fledged states. The Australian Constitution provides that capacity and the ball has been put into our court to prepare another stage of this journey towards that destination.

It has given me opportunity to hear stories of those who have been involved in this for a very long time: members of this Chamber, members representing the Territory interests both here and federally. Sadly, their desires for this destination live on, but they have left us – one being Bernie Kilgariff. He was often quoted as saying he got on a bus and wanted to see where it would take him. He wanted that bus to take him to the place where we were recognised as being the seventh state. I had the fortune to be able to speak at his passing, and made reference to the obligation we now have to continue on that journey. The same story with Sam Calder, a man who participated and provided leadership in this debate to take us to that destination. In many ways, just mentioning those two and others, we know we are just part of this story. It is a long and arduous task, but each of us must be faithful to the obligations we have along that way. It has befallen us now to take that next stage.

For anyone who has considered the Australian Constitution and the decision for Australia to become a Commonwealth, it is easy to conclude that occurred quite swiftly and efficiently. Hindsight provides that view but, if you take a closer inspection, you see there were many hiccups. In fact, at the time of the decision, it was still not certain whether Western Australia would, in fact, be a part of the Commonwealth. That is just a little glimpse into the challenges a group of