
Standing Orders of the General Assembly

Before the General Assembly 2006

- 1 All reports of committees, associated bodies and Assembly officials, with any recommendations shall be sent to the Assembly Clerk no later than eight weeks before the date of the General Assembly. All such reports and recommendations shall be printed and circulated to all those commissioned to attend the Assembly so as to arrive before the Assembly opens.
- 2 Late reports may deal only with matters that arise after the closing date above, such late reports to be in the hands of the Assembly Clerk no later than two weeks before the opening of the Assembly.
- 3
 - i Overtures, petitions, and memorials from Presbyteries/UDCs or sessions/parish councils and any other papers from these courts shall be in the form of certified extracts (signed as such) from the records or minutes of the court with a suitably worded notice of motion and be in the hands of the Assembly Clerk no less than eight weeks before the meeting of the Assembly. Late overtures, petitions or memorials may deal only with matters that arise after the eight week closing date, such late overtures, petitions or memorials to be in the hands of the Assembly Clerk no less than two weeks before the opening of Assembly.
 - ii Appeals, complaints or references from Presbyteries/UDCs or sessions/parish councils and any other papers from these courts shall be in the form of certified extracts (signed as such) from the records or minutes of the court and be in the hands of the Assembly Clerk no less than two weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The procedure to be followed in any judicial proceeding shall be recommended by the Assembly Business Work Group after consultation with the Book of Order and Judicial Reference Group.
 - iii Notices of motion received by the Assembly Business Work Group earlier than two weeks before the opening of the Assembly will be printed with late reports. The Assembly Business Work Group will advise the time by which all notices of motion must be presented. Thereafter only motions arising from dialogue or debate will be accepted.
 - iv Any amendment to a recommendation or any notice of motion requiring a change to the *Book of Order* regulations shall be referred to the convener of the Book of Order and Judicial Reference Group (or their nominee) before it is considered by the Assembly; and the Convener, on request, will be granted reasonable time to consider the proposed changes and report to the Assembly before it is debated.
- 4 The records of Presbyteries/UDCs and committees of the Assembly shall be examined by auditors appointed by the Presbyteries. Auditors shall return to the Assembly Clerk their report on these records not less than two weeks before the Assembly, and the Clerk shall report to the Assembly on these returns.
- 5 All commissions shall be sent by Presbyteries/UDCs to the Assembly Clerk not less than one month before the Assembly. In exceptional circumstances commissions for representative members unable to attend Assembly may be replaced by Presbyteries/UDCs up to one week before Assembly, after consultation with the Assembly Clerk.

- 6 The Clerk shall prepare a list of ministerial changes for reporting to the Assembly and a list of those names submitted by Presbyteries/UDCs for the Act of Commemoration.
- 7 The Assembly Business Work Group shall prepare and circulate a programme of business for the first full day of the Assembly.
- 8 All applications for persons to be received by the Assembly shall be made to the Assembly Business Work Group, which shall make the necessary arrangements, if approved.

Opening of General Assembly

- 9 The retiring Moderator, or, in the retiring Moderator's absence the immediate past or any past Moderator, shall open the Assembly with worship, including the constitution of the Assembly. The roll is tabled and accepted, the new Moderator elected who shall then address the Assembly.
- 10 The opening shall include the Act of Commemoration and a celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, presided over by the newly elected Moderator or the Moderator's nominee.
- 11 It will be normal practice following the opening service of worship as above, for the Assembly to meet over a fellowship meal or similar gathering during which members attending their first Assembly will be welcomed.

Procedure and Business

- 12 The ordinary hours of meeting shall be from 8.30 am to 9.30 pm. Business being discussed at 9.30 pm may be completed, but no new business may be started unless by agreement of the Assembly at the time.
- 13
 - i Most recommendations/notices of motion shall be considered by Assembly through the following procedure:
 - 1) Presentation
 - 2) Clarification
 - 3) Debate
 - 4) Decision
 - ii Some items of business and their recommendations may be selected by the Assembly Business Work Group to be considered through the following procedure:
 - 1) Presentation
 - 2) Clarification
 - 3) Discussion in Dialogue Groups
 - 4) Facilitation
 - 5) Debate
 - 6) Decision

- iii For other items, the procedure may be “study” (see para 15.2)
 - iv Reports to the Assembly, matters from Presbyteries/UDCs, and notices of motion shall be presented in the manner described by the Assembly Business Work Group. Reports of committees and matters from Presbyteries/UDCs in overtures, petitions, memorials, appeals and complaints shall normally have precedence over other notices of motion.
 - v In relation to reports, only those that require a decision of the Assembly, other than “That the report be received,” may be allocated time for presentation in the plenary sessions. The Assembly Business Work Group may allow other presentations in exceptional circumstances.
 - vi The Assembly Business Work Group can recommend which of the procedures outlined above should be used to deal with an item of business. The Moderator, in consultation with the Assembly Business Work Group, may seek leave of the Assembly to trial making decisions by consensus. (See appendix in the Users Guide to the Assembly.)
- 14 At the first business session of the Assembly, the Assembly Business Work Group shall move that the reports of committees, the recommendations, the overtures, petitions, memorials, appeals, complaints, references and notices of motion which have been printed, be received, and be the working documents of Assembly.

15.1 Procedure for Matters for “*discussion in Dialogue Groups*”

- i Matters for discussion are referred to dialogue groups as arranged by the Assembly Business Work Group. These groups will be chaired by a nominee of the Moderator. Prior to the issues being discussed in dialogue groups, presenters of committee reports, matters from Presbyteries/UDCs and notices of motion will move the recommendation/motion in Assembly, may briefly address the Assembly and may answer questions by way of clarification. If called upon to answer questions, the presenters may also be available to dialogue groups.
- ii There will be a facilitation group consisting of the Immediate Past Moderator, Moderator, Assembly Executive Secretary, and a member of the Assembly Business Work Group or their respective nominees.
- iii Dialogue groups will decide how they will handle the issue and come to agreement on the answer to one of the following questions:
 - a) Has general agreement been reached to support the recommendation?
Yes/No
 - b) Has general agreement been reached not to support the recommendation?
Yes/No
 - c) Are there any amendments to the recommendation that our Dialogue Group as a whole wishes to be considered by the Assembly? These are recorded.
 - d) Are there any new recommendations/notices of motion concerning this issue that our Dialogue groups wishes to move? These are recorded.
 - e) Are there any comments our group wishes to be fed into the facilitation process? Recorded.

- iv When the dialogue group moderator puts the questions, only the answers of commissioners must be considered, and the answers will be reported to the facilitation group to process the responses
- v In the event that there is agreement from all dialogue groups on one of the questions in (iii) the facilitation group shall report this to the next decision session of the Assembly.
- vi The facilitation group shall consider the amendments/new notices of motion and comments received from dialogue groups and take one of the following actions:
 - a) Refer the issue back to the movers of the motion concerned, for a new proposal to be considered by the Assembly
 - b) Formulate a suitable amendment or a new recommendation in the light of comments, consult the movers of the motion concerned and submit the amendment or new recommendation to the Assembly
 - c) Recommend to the Assembly a way for the matter to be further considered, or
 - d) Place the recommendation before Assembly as a matter for debate under 15.3.

15.2 Procedure for Matters for “Study”

- i The Assembly Business Work Group, the Moderator or the Facilitation Group, under 15.1 (vii) (c), may present recommendations, issues or motions for study by the Assembly in either plenary or dialogue groups. During study, no motions may be put. The Moderator shall exercise discretion as to when and if to move from study to debate and decision
- ii At any time a voting member of the Assembly may ask that the Assembly move into ‘study’. The Moderator will exercise discretion as to when to move into study.

15.3 Procedure for Matters for “Debate”

- i Recommendations/issues/motions are presented for debate by the Assembly Business Work Group, the Moderator or by the facilitation group under 15.1 (vii) (d), or by the Assembly itself.
- ii The convener of the group bringing the issue or the convener’s representative or, in the case of overtures, the Presbytery/UDC representative, shall move the motion in terms of the recommendation or the notice given. The Assembly Business Work Group will have advised the speaker of time limits. Several recommendations may be grouped, presented and debated together. Such a grouping will be arranged by the Assembly Business Work Group.
- iii Amendments to a recommendation must be given in writing as a notice of motion, unless in the view of the Moderator, it has arisen in the debate, in which case the Assembly will be asked, if leave is given, to allow the presentation of the amendment, in which case it shall be given to the Clerk in writing as soon as it is read to the Assembly.
- iv When a recommendation or amendment has been seconded it may be debated. The Moderator has the right to call speakers alternately for or against the recommendation or amendment.

- v The following procedural motions will normally be relevant when Assembly is in debate or decision mode, but may be moved in order to move out of study mode. Procedural motions that may be moved, seconded and voted on are:
- a) Leave sought to introduce an amendment (or a notice of motion)
 - b) Leave sought to withdraw a recommendation or motion given on notice
 - c) Leave sought for extension of speaking time
 - d) Leave sought for extension of normal business hours
 - e) That the debate be adjourned
 - f) That Assembly now move to study
 - g) That Assembly now move to decision
 - h) That Assembly pass to the next business.
- vi All procedural motions will be lost unless there is a 60% majority of those voting in favour. All the motions are moved and seconded with no speeches and there is no debate. (e), (f), (g) and (h) can only be moved by someone who has not spoken in debate. In the case of (h) being carried, the Assembly moves to the next business without any further discussion. (The effect of the motion in this case is that the Assembly simply does not complete the business.)
- vii When the procedural motion 'That the debate be adjourned' is carried the mover of that motion has the right to speak first on the debate being resumed.
- viii When a motion is being debated and an amendment is moved and seconded, normally the vote is taken on this amendment before any other amendment may be moved.
- ix When a recommendation or motion is given on notice, it may only be withdrawn with the leave of the Assembly.
- x The time limit for all speakers shall be two minutes, except that a mover of a motion may negotiate with the seconder to use part or all of the seconder's time. If a presenter of a number of recommendations groups those recommendations, time limits may be negotiated with the Assembly Business Work Group.
- xi The length of time spent in debate on any issue is in the hands of the Moderator, who may rule at the end of that time to continue the debate, refer the matter to study or decision. The decision of the Moderator may be challenged by the Assembly in the normal manner.
- xii **Rights of Reply**
When a motion is referred from the debate mode for decision (except when part of a comprehensive motion), before being put to the Assembly, the mover of the motion has the right of reply. When an amendment is to be voted on, the mover of the motion being amended may exercise a right of reply if the mover has not spoken to the amendment in the debate. The mover of an amendment does not have a right of reply.
- xiii The motion or amendment is then put to the Assembly. Following debate procedure, where a number of motions are being proposed together, any member of the Assembly has the right to request that the motions be voted on separately.

xiv Voting

The Moderator or any member may call for a ballot. Each voting member of Assembly will be issued with a 'yes' voting card (orange) and a 'no' voting card (blue). Normally, voting will be by the showing of these cards when called by the Moderator. At any stage during the debate, the Moderator may call for an indication of the mind of the Assembly by the use of the voting cards. The Clerk reports the voting in a ballot or count of cards to the Moderator. Twelve or more voting members may require the calling of the roll – in which case the names of the members arranged in Presbyteries/UDCs are called one by one by the Clerk, each member's vote being recorded. The votes are then totalled and announced by the Moderator.

xv Members may ask for their dissent to a decision to be recorded as provided for in regulations 426-430, 433-434 of the *Book of Order*.

xvi To be carried by the Assembly a motion or an amendment to a motion must be supported by at least 60% of those voting. (*see also* 15.4 (viii)) If less than 60% of those voting support the motion or amendment, the motion or amendment is lost. To be valid, a vote must indicate a clear preference for or against a motion or amendment. Informal votes and abstentions are not valid votes.

xvii Whenever it is proposed that a matter under the Barrier Act be adopted *ad interim*, such a proposal shall be considered as a motion separate from, and after that, which refers the issue under the Barrier Act. This motion will be lost unless there is a 60% majority of those voting in favour.

15.4 Procedure for “Comprehensive Motions”

i Recommendations/issues/motions are presented for decision by the Assembly Business Work Group at the commencement of Assembly, by the facilitation group (*see also* 15.1 (v) and (vi)) and by Assembly itself following debate. (*see also* 15.3 (v) and (x))

ii Some recommendations or motions that the Assembly Business Work Group is presenting for decision may be formulated into one or more comprehensive motions. Any member of the Assembly having first shared any views or concerns and sought explanation and clarification from the convener or presenter, and still being of the view that the matter should not proceed as proposed, may ask for the matter contained in any of the reports, recommendations, overtures, memorials, petitions and notices of motion to be reserved and withdrawn from a comprehensive motion. The comprehensive motion, except matters that have been reserved, is then put to the Assembly. The Assembly Business Work Group will make arrangements for items that have been reserved to be dealt with by the Assembly.

16 In the presentation of a petition, memorial, appeal or complaint, the parties to the case are identified, heard, and may answer questions but may not take part in the discussion or the vote on any resolution arising from the proceeding. Where a party is a Presbytery the prohibition on taking part in the discussion or the vote applies to all members of that Presbytery. Where there are one or two parties, two speeches are allowed from each. Where there are more than two parties involved, only one speech from each is allowed. In the case of a complaint, where two or more complainants enter complaints on distinctly separate grounds, each may be considered separate parties. The

provisions of this paragraph are subject to the provisions of paragraph 13 in regard to judicial proceedings.

- 17 A member may raise a point of order or may challenge the ruling of the Moderator. In doing so the member simply states the point without discussion. The matter is determined by the Moderator, or may be referred by the Moderator to the Assembly for decision by debate and vote. If the ruling of the Moderator is challenged the question is referred to the Assembly.
- 18 A motion carried may be rescinded on the same day only with the unanimous consent of members present. Otherwise notice of motion must be given.
- 19 Between debates, the Moderator may lead the Assembly in worship or reflection. Any such request from a member of the Assembly is to be addressed to the Moderator who shall decide whether to so lead the Assembly.
- 20 The minutes shall be printed and distributed to members and, subject to corrections, shall be taken as read and confirmed before the Assembly closes, except the minutes of the last three sessions which the Assembly may ask the Council of Assembly to confirm.

Close of Assembly

- 21 The Moderator shall announce the time and place of the next Assembly and close the Assembly with worship.
- 22 Travel expenses shall be paid only to those who attend the Assembly for its duration unless leave of absence is granted. Applications for leave should be given to the Clerk immediately the need arises, who shall submit them to the Assembly Business Work Group.

Te Aka Puaho and Decision Making in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

In 1998 the General Assembly agreed to guidelines which enable the decision making process of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to reflect more truly the Church's bicultural nature described in the preamble to the Book of Order. The 1998 guidelines seek to give Te Aka Puaho freedom to contribute cultural wealth to the wider church consistent with the Gospel and with the practices of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The guidelines are as follows:

- 1 Te Aka Puaho representatives may meet at any time during meetings.
- 2 Te Aka Puaho may either before or during the meeting, give notice of their request to make a statement with the following provisions:
 - (a) In making their statement the number of speakers and the time allowed will be determined by Te Aka Puaho and the Assembly Moderator, and the Assembly Business Work Group advised.
 - (b) If possible the statement shall be made after the motion is moved and seconded and before any general debate or discussion.
 - (c) The rights of those who have spoken on behalf of Te Aka Puaho to speak in general debate or discussion is reserved.
 - (d) If, after making such a statement, an amendment or motion of which no notice has been given is introduced, any member of Te Aka Puaho may require an adjournment to allow Te Aka Puaho representatives to meet.
 - (e) Te Aka Puaho may advise the Assembly that, because of a distinctive Maori perspective or value on a matter affecting Maori, it wishes to stand aside from the decision-making process for a time in order to undertake full consultation amongst the Maori people, the results of which will be reported no later than at the next General Assembly.

The Assembly Business Work Group was asked to present changes to Standing Orders to allow for this policy. However, because there are constitutional implications arising from this policy the matter has been referred to the Book of Order Re-write Group, for preparation and for changes to be brought to the General Assembly when the re-write of the Book of Order has been completed. In the interim the guidelines state the policy of the Church, so the Assembly Business Work Group would ask this Assembly, in its decision-making processes to be informed by the policy so far as it does not conflict with Standing Orders.

David Brown and Don Hall
Co-Conveners
Assembly Business Work Group

