

CHARTER OF BUDGET RESPONSIBILITY AMENDMENT BILL 2011

SECOND READING SPEECH

Mr Speaker

The Tasmanian election in March 2010 was the first election to which the requirements of Part 5 - Pre-election Financial Outlook Report, and Part 6 - Costing of Election Policies of the *Charter of Budget Responsibility Act 2007* were applied by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

During the application of these Parts, minor definitional issues were identified by Treasury within the Act. The issues were administrative in nature and were associated with the term 'caretaker period' and the definition of 'days'.

Caretaker Period

Mr Speaker, the definition of the caretaker period has implications for the timeframes within which actions under the Charter of Budget Responsibility Act must be completed.

Under the Australian Government's *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*, upon which the Tasmanian legislation was based, the caretaker period commences when the writ for an election is issued.

In Tasmania, a writ for an election is issued one week after the dissolution of the House of Assembly. However, the caretaker period is deemed to commence at the time the House was dissolved, or, in Tasmania, one week earlier than the issue of the writ.

This difference in definition delays and reduces the time available under the Tasmanian Charter of Budget Responsibility Act to implement actions required by the Act.

Mr Speaker, the definition of 'caretaker period' requires amendment so that the caretaker period commences on the dissolution of the House of Assembly, rather than on the issue of the writs.

This amendment will ensure sufficient time is provided to implement the relevant actions specified under the Act.

Days Defined

Mr Speaker, the Act also specifies time limits in terms of days for the achievement of tasks specified under the Act.

When drafting the Act, it was intended that the number of days would relate to normal business days, again, to ensure adequate time was allocated for the achievement of tasks specified under the Act.

To ensure sufficient time is provided to action the requirements of the Act, the Act requires amendment to specify that a 'day' means a 'business day' and excludes the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) and public holidays.

To further clarify this issue, the amendment Bill also defines the terms 'non-business day' and 'polling day'.

Mr Speaker, as I have noted, these amendments are minor and are administrative in nature, but they will improve the future application of the Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.