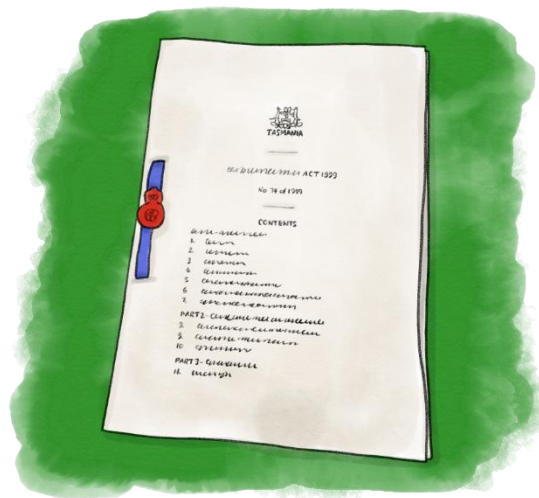# House of Assembly – Classroom role-play Facilitator Script

The Veterinary (Vet) Fees Bill

A Bill for an Act for Tasmanian veterinarians to receive government subsidies for the treatment of Tasmanian native animals

Note to teachers:

This script aims to guide and support teachers facilitating a class role-play. The script is a simplified version of the legislative procedures in the House of Assembly, with the background information outlining the rationale or history behind each procedure. Share the background information with the students when and where it is relevant to their learning.

THE VET FEES BILL

Speaker's Procession

> *Background Information: The House of Assembly begins every sitting day with the Speaker's Procession. In the three minutes prior to the Procession starting, bells ring all over Parliament House. The bells call Members of Parliament (MPs) to the House of Assembly Chamber. Once the bells start ringing, Members hurry to the Chamber.*

Action: The Clerk of the House or facilitator rings a bell for a few seconds.

Clerk *(standing)***:** Members of Parliament and visitors to the House of Assembly, please stand in silence for the Speaker's Procession.

Action: Everyone in the room stands. At the room entrance, the Sergeant-at-Arms announces the Speaker.

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Speaker.

Action: The Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying the Mace over their right shoulder, leads the Speaker to the Chair. Once there, the Speaker remains standing while the Sergeant-at-Arms sits the Mace in a central location (e.g. table in the middle of the classroom) with the head facing the Government Members. The Sergeant stands at their seat.

> *Background Information: In a Westminster-system Parliament, the Mace symbolises the authority of the Speaker. It remains in-situ while the Speaker or Deputy Speaker is in the Chair. In the House of Assembly, the Mace's cradle can roll into the cabinetry to conceal the Mace when required (e.g. if the House moves into Committee of the whole House and the Speaker leaves the Chair).*

Speaker *(standing)***:** We thank and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people for caring for this land on which we meet today.

Action: Speaker sits.

> *Background Information: The Acknowledgement of Country is made by the Speaker at the start of every sitting day and is followed by the Lord's Prayer or a moment of silent reflection. These actions are set out in the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly.*

Speaker: Everyone, please sit down *(pause while everyone takes their seat)***.**

Action: Everyone sits.

The Standing Orders are the written rules of the House of Assembly. The Clerk will now read some of them to us.

Background Information: The House of Assembly Standing Orders are a set of over 350 published rules, agreed to by the House itself. All Members must follow the Standing Orders, with the Speaker having the ultimate responsibility for applying the Standing Orders. Some Standing Orders reflect complex parliamentary procedures, and as experts on the traditions and procedures of Parliament, the Clerks guide the Speaker and Members on the interpretation of the Standing Orders.

Action: Clerk stands.

Clerk *(standing)***:**

1. Always act in a respectful manner and follow the Speaker's instructions.
2. Stand up to speak but only begin speaking when the Speaker asks you to.
3. All speeches are directed to the Speaker. Therefore, you need to begin your speech with Speaker.
4. Except for the Minister responsible for the Bill, during the Second Reading you may only speak once.
5. When you speak, you are speaking on behalf of the thousands of Tasmanians you represent.

Action: Clerk sits.

First Reading

Speaker: Thank you Clerk. The House of Assembly will now begin its work for the day. Does any Member of the House of Assembly have a Bill to introduce to Parliament?

Action: The Minister for Primary Industries stands and calls to the Speaker.

Minister for Primary Industries *(standing)***:** Speaker.

Speaker: I call the Minister for Primary Industries to introduce the Bill.

Action: In the House of Assembly, the Minister moves to the Government lectern but in the classroom simply standing in their place may be more practical.

Minister for Primary Industries: Speaker,

I present the Vet Fees Bill.

Action: The Minister reads the short title of the Bill, and in the House of Assembly, hands a paper copy of the Bill to the Clerk of the House. The Minister resumes their seat while the Speaker puts the vote to the House.

Background Information: In essence, the first vote determines if the House of Assembly agrees to allocate parliamentary time to debating the Bill. Up until this time, the Bill has been treated as a confidential document but by tabling the Bill at the First Reading, the Minister makes the proposed Bill a public document. Some Bills are circulated publically before tabling in Parliament, to seek stakeholders' feedback.

The first of two types of parliamentary votes used in the House of Assembly is the 'Vote on the Voices'. The second type of voting, a 'Division', is discussed later and is not commonly required on the First Reading.

During a Vote on the Voices, Members are asked by the Speaker to cast their vote on the Bill. Members indicate their vote by clearly calling out 'aye' (yes) or 'no'. Usually, on the First Reading there are no Members voting 'no' as all Members want to see the contents of the Bill to decide whether to support it or not.   A Bill must pass (have a majority support) the First Reading to move to the Second Reading.

Speaker: We will now have our first vote on the Bill. This vote determines if we wish to allocate time in the House of Assembly to debate this Bill. I remind Members it is a sign of a healthy democracy to debate issues, even if we disagree on them.

The question is, "Should the Bill be now read for a First time?"
Those who agree say 'Aye'   *(wait for Members to say 'aye').*
Those who disagree say 'No' *(wait for Members to say 'no').*
I think the 'Ayes' have the most votes *(pause).* The 'Ayes' have it.
Clerk, read the title of the Bill for the First time.

Background Information: The Speaker uses their judgement to determine the result of the vote but deliberately uses the words 'I think', opening up an opportunity for the minority to challenge their ruling. In the House of Assembly, a challenge to the Speaker's judgement on the outcome of the vote would be in the form of a Division vote. With no challenge, the Clerk stands to read the long title of the Bill.

Clerk *(standing reads long title***):** A Bill for an Act for Tasmanian veterinarians to receive government subsidies for the treatment of Tasmanian native animals.

Action: Clerk sits.

Background Information: The Clerk, reading the long title of the Bill, marks the end of the first step in the passage of legislation through the House of Assembly. The Bill now sits on the table to 'mature', giving time for all Members to consider their position on the Bill. Usually, there is a minimum of 6 calendar days for the Bill to mature before it can move the next stage, the Second Reading.

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Second Reading

Background Information: The Second Reading is a very important stage the Bill must pass to become an Act of Parliament. All Members can contribute to debate on the Bill, thus representing the views of the Tasmanian people in the lawmaking process. Debate focuses on the principles and goals of the Bill, as well as drawing attention to any missing or overlooked parts, and potential unintended outcomes of the Bill.

Speaker: Members, the Second Reading is the most important stage of debate. It is when we discuss the main ideas of the Bill. I wish to hear arguments supporting the Bill, arguments opposing the Bill and ways to improve the Bill. By participating in thoughtful debate, the House of Assembly will make the best possible laws for the people of Tasmania.

I call the Minster for Primary Industries to begin the Second Reading.

Action: Minister stands.

Minister for Primary Industries *(standing)***:** Speaker,
It is my pleasure to introduce this essential Bill to the House of Assembly. This Government wants to protect Tasmanian native

animals and we are taking steps to do so. This Bill is one of the many steps on our action plan.

Tasmania is home to thousands of native animals. Did you know that Tasmania has 8 different bat species, 5 species of possums, 3 species of snakes and 11 species of frogs?

Sadly, we know that animals sometimes need the care of a vet. However, the cost of caring for an unwell animal can be very expensive, so this Government is going to pay Tasmanian vets $500 for the treatment of a sick, injured or orphaned Tasmanian native animal. Under this Bill, vets can access some financial support while they treat these unique creatures.

A new government office will be established to oversee this important work. This office will be known as the "Office of Animal Affairs" and will be under the responsibility of the Minister for Primary Industries.

Tasmanians want to save Tasmanian native animals, so I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to vote for this Bill.

Action: Minister sits.

Background Information: The Minister remains in the Chamber and listens attentively to all the subsequent contributions. Once all Members wishing to speak have done so, the Minister will reply. The Minister will have prepared some talking points in advance, but may need to refine their speech as the debate proceeds. Government advisors sit at the front of the Chamber, also listening carefully to the debate, ready to assist the Minister with specialist subject matter knowledge or technical advice if required. However, the advisors are not elected Member of the House so cannot directly address (speak to) the House.

Speaker: I call the Shadow Minister for Primary Industries.

Action: In the House of Assembly, the Shadow Minister moves to the Opposition lectern but in the classroom simply standing in their place may be more practical.

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries *(standing)***:** Speaker,

The Opposition also wants to save Tasmanian native animals but we have some concerns about this Bill in its current form.

The Opposition wants to stop the growing number of animals listed on the extinct and threatened species lists. While we agree with the goal of this Bill, we do not think it goes far enough. The Opposition believes that $500 for each animal treatment is simply not enough money. It costs thousands and thousands of dollars to nurse an animal back to full health. We are calling on the Tasmanian Government to pay <u>all</u> the vet fees related to the care of Tasmanian native animals.

So while the Opposition agrees with the goal of the Bill, we call on the Minister to make some changes or amendments to it.

Action: Shadow Minister sits.

Speaker: I call the Member for Franklin.

Action: In the House of Assembly, a crossbench Member moves to the crossbench lectern but in the classroom simply standing in their place may be more practical.

Member for Franklin *(standing)***:** Speaker,

Tasmanian animals need laws that protect them. So the crossbench is listening very carefully to the debate to help us decide if this Bill does that. We want to protect all Tasmanian native animals, so we are pleased that the Government is taking this step to support vets caring for our precious wildlife, but we also agree with the Opposition. The Government should cover all the vet fees. $500 will not pay for an operation. $500 will not pay for medicines. $500 will not pay for animal food during treatment. What price can you put on the survival of a precious animal?

We will most likely support the Bill but would like to see the subsidy increased.

Action: Member sits.

Speaker: I call the Premier of Tasmania.

Action: Premier stands.

Premier *(standing)***:** Speaker,

It is pleasing to know that all Members of the House of Assembly want to save Tasmanian animals. The Government would like to pay vets more, but we need to be very careful with our budget. We still have to pay for schools, hospitals, libraries, national parks and other essential services for Tasmania.

As a compromise, the Government will calculate the cost of these vet fees over the next three years, and, if we can afford it, we will then increase the payments to vets. The Parliament of Tasmania can update Tasmanian laws when needed. Laws are not set in concrete! I encourage all Members of the House of Assembly to agree to the Bill now.

Action: Premier sits.

Speaker: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Action: Leader of the Opposition stands.

Leader of the Opposition *(standing)*: Speaker,

This Bill does not go far enough. The Opposition wants to do all we can to save Tasmanian native animals. There are many strategies we can put in place to help our native animals. If we were in Government, we would be looking at every possible way to save Tasmanian animals. We would:

1. Increase funding to animal breeding programs
2. Build barriers on road edges to reduce roadkill
3. Tighten laws to protect Tasmanian native animals
4. Expand Tasmania's national parks
5. Stop the excessive clearing of native habitat

Aside from this Bill, can the Minister please explain what other solutions the Government has to save Tasmanian animals?

Action: Leader of the Opposition sits.

Speaker: I call the Member for Braddon.

Action: Member stands.

Member for Braddon *(standing)*: Speaker,

I'm pleased the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the need for funding Tasmanian native animal breeding programs, because this Government is already doing exactly that. I would like to draw the House's attention to the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. There are less than 50 of these rare and beautiful parrots left in the wild, making it one of the most threatened species in Australia. Without captive breeding programs and the release of new birds into the wild, the Orange-bellied Parrot will not survive.

Every Member of this House wants to save Tasmanian native animals, so instead of arguing about this Bill, let's pass it so the new law can be put to work.

Action: Member sits.

Speaker: I call the Member for Clark.

Action: Member stands.

Member for Clark *(standing)*: Speaker,
I want the best possible outcomes for Tasmanian native animals, so I will support this Bill. I doubt $500 will completely cover the cost of the animal treatment, but it should help. Vets have enough to worry about when caring for animals, without having to worry about money too.

Action: Member sits.

Speaker: I call the Member for Lyons.

Action: Member stands.

Member for Lyons *(standing)*: Speaker,
Of course the Opposition supports Government funding of captive animal breeding programs, like the one for the Orange-bellied Parrot. If we win Government at the next House of Assembly election, we will continue this important program.

But let's focus on the Vet Fees Bill. If the Government is not willing to increase the subsidy, is there any way we could expand the subsidy to include wildlife carers? We know that there are hundreds of Tasmanians working as volunteers in the care of sick, injured and orphaned Tasmanian animals. Many of these kind volunteers have

to pay for animal food, blankets, heating and medicine. They may have to take time off paid work when caring for animals, so they also need the $500 subsidy.

I support the Bill but would like to see it expanded to include wildlife volunteers.

Action: Member sits.

Speaker: I call the Member for Bass.

Action: Member stands.

Member for Bass *(standing)*: Speaker,
It is quite clear from the contributions that I have heard so far, that we all agree with the goal of this Bill. That is, saving Tasmanian native animals. However, the Tasmanian Government has to provide other essential services like hospitals, schools, police, firefighters and ambulance officers. This all costs the Tasmanian Government millions of dollars each year. While the Government would like to spend more on the Vet Fees Bill, we must be financially responsible and not overspend on one project. I encourage all Members of the House of Assembly to vote for this Bill.

Action: Member sits. Then the Speaker invites other Members to join in the debate.

Background Information: Members quickly stand, known as 'getting the jump', to catch the Speaker's attention and be allocated the call (speaking turn). Under the Standing Orders, the Speaker should select whoever stood first, whilst aiming to keep the debate fair and inclusive of all. In the House of Assembly, each Member may only speak once and strict time limits apply. Members usually prepare a written speech or detailed notes to speak from.

Members are not required to make a contribution on every Bill before Parliament and it is not unusual for non-contested legislation to have one representative from each political party make a contribution on behalf of their party, with debate proceeding smoothly.

Speaker: Would any other Member of the House of Assembly like to speak about this Bill?

Stand if you wish to speak *(wait for Members to stand)*.

I call the Member for _____ *(say student name)*.

> *Background Information: In the House of Assembly, Members are identified by the electorate they represent or by their parliamentary position (e.g. Member for Braddon or Minister for Education). For convenience, classes could use student names. E.g. 'I call the Member for Jane' or 'I call the Member for Smith'.*

Action: Students wishing to speak stand in their place. To replicate House of Assembly procedures, the teacher should set a maximum time limit for each speech. As a guide, 1 minute would suit most primary school students. Technically each student should only speak once, however, teachers may find allowing repeated contributions subtly encourages any reluctant or shy students to generate the courage to participate. Brainstorming ideas in 'Party Meetings' either before the role-play starts or at this point, may help stimulate student ideas and encourage all students to participate.

Once the student contributions have concluded, the Speaker calls the Minister to conclude the debate.

Speaker: To conclude the debate, I call the Minister for Primary Industries to reply to the Members' speeches.

> *Background Information: During their reply, the Minister reaffirms the Government position on the Bill and addresses any questions or concerns raised by the other Members. On occasions, the Minister's reply may clarify any misunderstanding or confusion on the Bill, forgoing the need for the House of Assembly to move into Committee of the whole House.*

Action: Minister stands.

Minister for Primary Industries *(standing)***:** Speaker,
Thank you to all the House of Assembly Members who spoke during the debate on this important Bill. As Members of Parliament, it is our job to speak in this Chamber on behalf of the Tasmanians we represent.

I would like to start by thanking the hundreds of Tasmanians that care for sick and orphaned Tasmanian animals every single day. These wonderful people are real heroes.

During the debate, I heard some thoughtful contributions and I heard some good questions. Let me answer those questions. I was asked to increase the subsidy to cover all the vet fees, and I was asked to expand the subsidy to volunteers caring for sick, injured or orphaned animals. As much as I want to do both of these things, we could be overspending on the Bill. The Government must always be able to pay for essential services like schools and hospitals.

However, the Government is committed to reviewing the spending on this Bill in three years' time. Once we know exactly how much it costs, we can look at expanding it to include wildlife volunteer carers and increasing the payment.

Saving endangered animals is a complex problem but we can take positive action now by supporting this Bill.

I ask the House of Assembly that we now have our second vote on the Bill.

Action: Minister sits

Speaker: We will now have our second vote on this Bill.

The question is, "Should the Bill be now read for a Second time?"
Those who agree say 'Aye'   *(wait for Members to say 'aye')*.
Those who disagree say 'No' *(wait for Members to say 'no').*
I think the 'Ayes' have the most votes but I may need to check the result with a Division. Opposition Whip, would you like a Division?

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Division

Action: Opposition Whip stands.

Opposition Whip *(standing)***:** Speaker

The Opposition would like a Division because we want to know exactly how many Members, and which Members of the House of Assembly are voting for and against the Bill. Thank you.

Action: Opposition Whip sits.

Speaker: A Division is required.

Clerk, ring the bells *(pause for five seconds while the bell rings).*

Clerk, stop the bell.

Sergeant-at-Arms lock the doors *(pause while the doors are locked).*

Background Information: Due to some unruly events in the UK House of Commons in the 1600s, the Chamber doors are locked during a Division, to protect the Members from potential interference, including physical intimidation, when casting their vote. It is a vital aspect of a democracy that Members are able to vote freely.

Action: To replicate this historical practice, the Sergeant-at-Arms pretends to lock the main classroom door and 'guards it' while the vote proceeds.

The question is, "Should the Bill be now read a Second time?"
Those who agree with this Bill, move to the right of the Speaker's Chair *(pause while Members move)*.

Action: Members who support the Bill line-up along the Speaker's right hand side of the room, ideally against the far wall.

Those who disagree with this Bill, move to the left of the Speaker's Chair *(pause while Members move)*.

Action: Members who do not support the Bill, line-up along the left hand side of the room. The exact place where students line-up is not vital, instead aim to show a clear physical separation between the two votes.

Government Whip and Opposition Whip, count all the Members on your side of the Chamber, and then come and tell me the numbers.

Action: The Whips count all the Members on their side (including themselves) and whisper the results to the Speaker.

Background Information: In the House of Assembly, a written record of all Division votes is kept, with a Member appointed as a teller (official counter) for each side. The Clerks closely observe a Division and record the results. Ultimately, the Clerks are responsible for the accurate recording of the votes within the House of Assembly.

*Action: The Speaker announces the result with **one** of the following statements.*

Speaker:

The result of the Division is:

Ayes _____ *(say number)*   Noes _____ *(say number).*

Therefore, the 'Ayes' have it. So far, the Bill is agreed to.

Clerk, read the title of the Bill a Second time.
Clerk reads the title of the Bill.

OR

The result of the Division is:

Ayes _____ *(say number)*   Noes _____ *(say number).*

Therefore, the 'Noes' have it. The Bill is defeated.

As the Bill has not passed, the House of Assembly will no longer debate it. There is no change to the existing Tasmanian laws.
Clerk does not read the title of the Bill.

OR
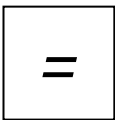
The result of the Division is:

Ayes _____ *(say number)*   Noes _____ *(say number).*

The result of the Division is a tie. Under *Standing Order Number 167*, to break a tie, the Speaker shall give a casting vote.

Therefore, with my vote included, the result of the Division is now:

Ayes _____ *(say number)*   Noes _____ *(say number).*

Therefore, the 'Ayes/Noes' have it.

The Bill is/is not agreed to.

(if the 'Ayes' win) Clerk, read the title of the Bill a Second time.

Clerk does/does not read the title of the Bill.

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*Background information: (If the Ayes win): With a **majority** Government the Ayes will usually win the vote as the Government has the most Members. While the Opposition or crossbench know they will lose, they may still vote against the Bill to show their dissent. When there is a **minority** Government, the Government needs the support of enough Members of the crossbench or Opposition to make a majority and to pass the Bill. Once the House has voted that is the end of step 2. In the real Parliament, the House may go into Committee of the Whole after the Second Reading has been agreed to. This is when the Bill is examined in detail and amendments can be proposed and voted on. If an amendment is successful, it becomes part of the Bill.*

*Facilitator (If the Noes win): With a **majority** Government, it is rather unusual for the Noes to win the vote, as the Government has the most Members and they would normally vote for their own Bills. If the Noes did win, it would mean that at least one Government Member has "crossed the floor" to vote against their own party and the Bill. In the modern Parliament, this is a rare event. When there is a **minority** Government, a Government Bill can be defeated if the Government does not secure the support of enough Members of the crossbench or Opposition to make a majority. If the Noes win, the Bill does not progress to Committee of the Whole or the Third Reading.*

In the real Parliament it is more likely that the "ayes" win the second vote and the House moves to Committee stage. This is when the Bill is examined in detail and amendments can be proposed and voted on. If an amendment is successful it becomes part of the Bill.

(If required) Clerk *(standing reads long title)*: A Bill for an Act for Tasmanian veterinarians to receive government subsidies for the treatment of Tasmanian native animals.

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Committee of the Whole House

> *Background Information: In the House of Assembly, after an affirmative Second Reading, the Members may opt to move into Committee of the whole House. The Committee stage allows the House to closely examine the details of the Bill clause by clause. Some other Australian Parliaments appropriately refer to this stage as 'Consideration in detail'. Members directly question the Minister to explain specific content of the Bill. The debate is often very technical with a sharp focus. During this stage, amendments are proposed and debated. Provided the amendments are agreed to by the House via a vote, they are included in the Bill. Committee stage is not an unusual occurrence and is important part of parliamentary scrutiny of legislation. In this role-play, the Committee stage is not required.*

Speaker: Members may wish to suggest some amendments or changes to the Bill. However, this can only happen during Committee stage of a Bill debate. Therefore, does the House of Assembly wish to go into Committee of the whole House?

Action: Shadow Minister stands.

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries (standing)**:** No thank you, Speaker, at the moment, we will accept the Premier's promise to review the cost of this Bill in three years' time. So the Opposition does not want to move into Committee because we do not want to make any changes to the Bill at the moment.

Action: Shadow Minister sits.

Action: Member for Franklin stands.

Member for Franklin (standing)**:** No thank you Speaker, like the Opposition, the crossbench does not want to move into Committee. We do not see the value in amending the Bill now but look forward to reviewing it in the future.

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Third Reading

> *Background Information: If the Bill passes the Second Reading, the House would read the Bill a third time. The Third Reading ensures any amendments that may have been agreed to during the optional Committee stage are accepted in the final version of the Bill. In the House of Assembly, the Third Reading usually occurs immediately after the Second Reading or Committee stage.*

Speaker: We will now finish our work on the Vet Fees Bill by voting on it for the third and final time.

The question is, "Should the Bill be now read for a Third time?"
Those who agree say 'Aye'   *(wait for Members to say 'aye').*
Those who disagree say 'No' *(wait for Members to say 'no').*
I think the 'Ayes' have the most votes *(pause).* The 'Ayes' have it.
Clerk, read the title of the Bill a Third time.

Clerk *(standing reads long title)*: A Bill for an Act for Tasmanian veterinarians to receive government subsidies for the treatment of Tasmanian native animals.

> *Background Information: If the Bill passes the House of Assembly it does not mean the Bill is now an Act of Parliament, as it also must pass the Legislative Council and receive Royal Assent from the Governor of Tasmania (His Majesty's representative in Tasmania).*

Speaker: The Bill has passed the House of Assembly. I will ask the Clerk to send the Bill to the Legislative Council for further debate.

Background Information: In the House of Assembly, the Speaker certifies (signs) the Bill and a Clerk physically delivers the Bill with a message to the Legislative Council. The message is addressed to the President of the Legislative Council and asks for Legislative Council agreement to the Bill.

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Adjournment

Background Information: At the end of the sitting day in the House of Assembly, a number of Members may make an adjournment speech, generally on a topic of their choosing. Commonly, these speeches reflect a celebration from their electorate, often highlighting an individual or community achievement. Alternatively, the speech may be a response to, or an update on, a matter debated earlier in the day. Adjournment debates are not included in this role-play.

Speaker: The House of Assembly has now finished our work for the day.

Action: Clerk stands.

Clerk *(standing)***:** Everyone stand up.

Action: Everyone stands. Carrying the Mace, the Sergeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker from the Chamber.