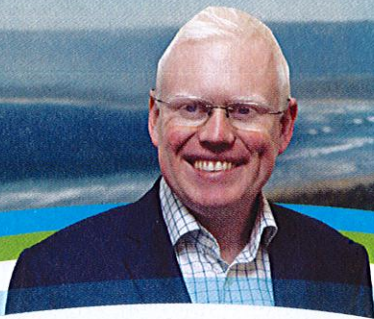




Gareth Ward MP

MEMBER FOR KIAMA



Wednesday, 14th July 2021

The Hon Jonathan O'Dea MP
Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Speaker,

I write to request that the NSW Legislative Assembly move to an on-line platform during COVID lockdowns.

I request that you seek either amendments to the Standing and Sessional Orders or seek to instigate discussion for the suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders to move to an on-line platform.

I note that other legislatures, including the House of Commons, have evolved during this pandemic to meet on-line.

As a regional MP, I believe it sends the wrong message to require regional MPs to come to Sydney only to return to their communities. I do not want to put my community at risk but I also don't want to be prevented from giving a voice to issues confronting my community.

As you know, I feel strongly about the traditions of Parliament and the preservation of this important democratic institution. But in these very different times, old rules and anarchistic procedures should take second place to giving MPs to the opportunity to give a voice to their local communities.

As Speaker of the House, I know you care deeply about protecting the rights of Members rather than the will of the Executive. COVID should not be used as an excuse to water-down the accountability of the Executive to Parliament. In fact, oversight over the Executive is even more important at this time.

I refer you to the maxim delivered by Speaker William Lenthall on 4 January 1642 when challenged by the Crown, "I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as this House is pleased to direct me'.

I ask you to reflect on this statement and do all that you can to give a voice to Members of Parliament who have an obligation to represent their communities.

Kind regards,

GARETH WARD MP
Member for Kiama