



**Speaker's response to the
Select Committee on Estimates 2014-15 Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2014-15
and the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2014-15**

Recommendation 36

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Legislative Assembly's community engagement and outreach program be continued and, if possible, be expanded.

Agreed. The Office will continue delivering a community engagement and outreach program and will examine opportunities to expand the reach of these activities as part of its normal planning arrangements. Assembly members will be engaged in this process, particularly by inviting them to nominate community organisations for the Speaker to invite to visit the Assembly.

The Office currently is undertaking a number of initiatives to broaden community engagement: for example, through the introduction of an in-house video production capability for website publishing, development of teacher resources, and expanding the Speaker's citizenship evenings.

Recommendation 37

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Legislative Assembly give due consideration to holding an Open Day prior to any reconfiguration of the Assembly building should the proposed changes to the size of the Assembly proceed.

Agreed. The Office is planning to conduct an open day prior to the end of the 8th Assembly.

Recommendation 38

The Committee recommends that the ACT Legislative Assembly provide a research facility for Members along the lines currently provided by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library to Federal Members of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Agreed in principle. The office will explore models for a research service along the lines provided by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library. This will include scoping Members' requirements; consideration of whether engagement of specialist researchers will be required; and an assessment of the costs. A pilot program will be considered as a possible means to assist in assessing the feasibility of such a service.

The proposal could be included in OLA's planning for a larger Assembly and I will raise this matter with the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure for further consideration.

The office also will explore opportunities for better collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, perhaps through the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library.

The Assembly Librarian advises that the Library currently subscribes to Commonwealth and New South Wales parliamentary library research papers and economic indicators provided by the Queensland Parliamentary Library. These reports are distributed through the *Parliamentary Library Research Papers RSS Feed*. All members will be encouraged to subscribe to this feed if they have not already done so.

The new Library Intranet also offers rss feeds on particular subjects and Library staff are planning to promote these and other targeted services more proactively.

Research papers from other states are also available on request although Library staff recognise that research from other parliaments may not always have specific relevance to the territory.

Recommendation 39

The Committee recommends that the ACT Legislative Assembly investigate purchasing a research facility for Members from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

Noted. This will be considered in the context of an expanded Assembly (see response to recommendation 38).

The Office has raised this possibility with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, most recently with the Parliamentary Librarian on 5 August. The Librarian advised that the prospect of such an arrangement was likely to be impractical given its service is already operating at capacity.

However, this matter could be explored through the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library in the context of developing a contractual arrangement with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

Recommendations 40 and 41

The Committee recommends that the Manager of the Committee Support Office should not be a Secretary of a Standing or Select Committee.

The Committee recommends that resources be provided to the Committee Support Office to allow for an additional Committee Secretary, thereby allowing the Manager of the Office to be unencumbered by also being a Committee Secretary.

Noted. The Clerk, who is responsible for staffing arrangements in the Office of the Legislative Assembly, will consider these recommendations in the context of an expanded Assembly.

I am advised that, in the past, the occupant of the role of Director Committee Support (and its predecessors) has been a Secretary to one or more Assembly committees and that this has not unreasonably interfered with the secretariat support provided to committees, nor has it unreasonably interfered with the management of the functions of the Committee secretariat.

I am advised that an independent root and branch review of the organisational structure of the office, in concert with extensive staff consultation, conducted in 2012, resulted in the current staffing structure for the committee support function and that the Clerk considers the structure appropriate to the current needs of the Assembly.


Vicki Dunne MLA
Speaker

14 August 2014