



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES

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1. PREFACE

- 1.1. This guide is intended to outline the basic information that you will need if you become a member of a committee of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT.
- 1.2. It is intended to help you to gain an understanding of how committees work and what you need to do to prepare for meetings and inquiries so that you are able to successfully contribute to the accountability and representative functions that are performed by the Assembly's committees.
- 1.3. If you have particular queries that are not covered by this guide, or need advice on procedural matters relating to committees, you should speak to the secretary of the relevant committee or the Manager, Committee Support, within the Parliamentary Support Branch of the Office of the Legislative Assembly (OLA).

2. BACKGROUND

WHY DOES THE ASSEMBLY HAVE COMMITTEES?

- 2.1. The Assembly appoints and delegates certain powers and functions to committees. Committees are able to undertake detailed inquiries and scrutiny that the Assembly itself is not able to perform and therefore assist it in the detailed scrutiny of complex matters. Committees also undertake inquiries into issues which may be of importance to the public or which a committee decides warrants further investigation.
- 2.2. Committees also provide a less formal forum for investigations that are of benefit to the work of the Assembly. By participating in committees, members can gain detailed knowledge of specific portfolio areas and matters of public interest. Committee involvement also provides an opportunity for members to work collaboratively.

HOW ARE COMMITTEES APPOINTED?

- 2.3. Standing committees are appointed by the Assembly as soon as practicable after the commencement of each session. Committees generally have three members (and may not have more than five). During the Eight Assembly, Committees had four members, with two members from the Government and two from the Opposition. Overall membership of committees is as near as is practicable proportionally representative of the composition of the Assembly. **[SO 215, 220, 221]**
- 2.4. While each Assembly has had a different set of standing committees, the following committees form the core of the committee system:
 - administration and procedure;
 - scrutiny of bills and subordinate legislation;
 - public accounts; and
 - planning and environment.
- 2.5. Previous Assemblies have had a number of general purpose standing committees, with responsibility for education, community services, health and legal affairs matters. The Assembly also has the power to establish select committees to investigate matters such as budget estimates (which usually has more than three members) or specific issues. For example, a Select Committee on Regional Development was established in the Eighth Assembly.

STANDING ORDERS APPLY TO COMMITTEES

- 2.6. Both standing and select committees conduct their business according to the rules set out in the *Standing Orders and continuing resolutions of the Assembly* (the Standing Orders). There are orders which apply specifically to committees and you should familiarise yourself with them (chapters 20 and 21).
- 2.7. The Standing Orders are rules prepared by members and based on practical experience. A

comprehensive understanding of these rules will enable you to be an effective member of a committee.

- 2.8. Where appropriate, this guide refers to the relevant standing order [**SO**]. Please be aware that this refers to the Standing Orders which were adopted at June 2016. Standing Orders may be accessed at http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-the-assembly/standing_orders
- 2.9. If a situation arises where there is no specific committee procedure, then the procedure followed in the Assembly should inform committee practice. However, it should be noted that one of the objectives of the committee system is to establish less formal forums for members to investigate matters of importance.
- 2.10. Where the standing orders or practice of the Assembly (including its committees) do not provide for a procedure of the Assembly, the practice of the House of Representatives should be followed. Your secretary should be able to advise you when this applies [**SO 275**]. Copies of the *House of Representative Practice* are available for all members and can be accessed at [http://www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/House of Representatives/Powers practice and procedure/Practice6](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/Powers_practice_and_procedure/Practice6).

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 2.11. The Legislative Assembly's resolutions of appointment define the areas of responsibility for each committee.
- 2.12. Business can be referred to a committee by the Assembly, can stand referred by statute (such as the consideration of appointments to certain boards), or can be self-referred by the committee itself. Select committees do not have the power to self-refer inquiries.
- 2.13. Some committees have a significant workload referred to them by the Assembly, such as the Auditor-General's Reports which are referred to the Public Accounts committee, or by statute, such as planning variations which are referred to the Planning and Environment committee.
- 2.14. When self-referring inquiries, committees must ensure that the terms of reference fit within the resolution of appointment as defined by the Assembly. Committees must also ensure that inquiries are not too technical or wide-ranging to be completed effectively, given the available resources.
- 2.15. If you intend to propose an inquiry, you should always seek the advice of the relevant secretary to draft the referral and terms of reference. It may be necessary for the secretary to undertake some preliminary research prior to development of terms of reference. Sometimes there may be other effective ways of addressing an issue (such as departmental briefings) which will be more achievable for the committee.
- 2.16. Committee workloads can be heavy, particularly for members who are on more than one committee. It is therefore important to consider what you want to achieve in each meeting and in the longer-term to ensure that the workload is manageable.

3. BASIC COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE FIRST MEETING?

- 3.1. After standing or select committees have been established and members appointed by the Legislative Assembly, the secretary will arrange the first meeting. This meeting will be held within seven days of the committee's formation. **[SO 219]** You will receive a notice of the time and place of the meeting from the secretary. The secretary will chair the meeting, with the first item of business being the election of a Chair. Once the Chair is elected by a majority of members s/he will conduct the meeting from that point. **[SO 219, 225]**
- 3.2. The committee will then elect a Deputy Chair. The Deputy Chair performs the duties of the Chair whenever the Chair is absent. **[SO 226]**
- 3.3. The committee is then able to consider other items of business and should resolve to establish a regular meeting time and to agree on other matters relating to the general conduct of committee business. The committee may also discuss any topics of interest that members may wish to pursue or matters that have been referred to the committee. In the case of a select committee, the conduct of the inquiry will be discussed.
- 3.4. At any stage, the secretary is available to provide information or advice about usual committee practice and any other matters that may be of concern to members.

SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

- 3.5. Once the committee has decided on a regular meeting time, you should ensure that this time is always blocked out in your diary. It is suggested that a 2-hour period be allocated in case the committee schedules a hearing or deliberative meeting during that time. Regular meetings may be of a shorter duration, however.
- 3.6. You will generally receive a meeting agenda some time before a scheduled meeting – the times will vary depending on the type of meeting and the urgency of any matters under consideration. The meeting agenda and papers are prepared by the secretary in consultation with the Chair.
- 3.7. Additionally, meetings may be called with very little notice if there is urgent business. In such cases the secretary will inform you or your office directly at the earliest opportunity to determine your availability. The secretary relies heavily on the cooperation of your office staff and their willingness to prioritise your committee work.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR MEETINGS?

- 3.8. Committee proceedings can often move quickly, particularly when there is a lot of business on the agenda, so it is important to prepare in advance and be clear about what you would like to achieve at a particular meeting. The secretary can provide clarification on agenda items if necessary.
- 3.9. To assist you in this task and ensure that you are able to read all relevant papers prior to the

meeting, the Secretary will always attempt to have the agenda and papers to you at least two days in advance. Once the papers are delivered to your office, management of these papers becomes your responsibility and you should ensure that your office staff are aware of your organisational requirements. You should ensure that you bring all relevant papers with you to the meeting as the secretary will not provide spare copies of papers unless requested in advance.

- 3.10. There will be time during each meeting for you to raise any matters of general business, including matters you would like included on the agenda for the next meeting. You may also advise the Chair or the secretary, directly or via e-mail, of any business you wish to raise at a future meeting so that it can be included on the agenda.
- 3.11. Minutes of meetings are recorded by the secretary. Minutes are not verbatim recordings of the discussions at the meeting, but are a record of matters discussed and decisions made. You will receive a copy of the minutes for confirmation with the papers for the next meeting. As soon as is practicable, and following consultation with the Chair, the secretary will circulate the minutes to members via email.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

- 3.12. A majority of the members of a committee constitutes a quorum, which must be present in order to conduct private meetings. If no quorum is present after fifteen minutes then the meeting cannot proceed. **[SO 230, 232]**
- 3.13. A committee cannot make decisions unless it is meeting. While the Chair has a limited capacity to make some decisions independently of the committee, substantive decisions must be agreed by the committee at an appropriately constituted meeting.
- 3.14. In particular, the agreement of the committee should be sought before any of the powers of the committee are exercised. For instance, in calling for persons, papers or records **[SO 239, 240]** the agreement of the committee must be sought prior to a letter being signed by the Chair.
- 3.15. If you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting, you should inform the secretary as soon as possible in order that your apology can be recorded in the minutes or, if necessary, the meeting can be rescheduled. Generally, a meeting will only be rescheduled if the secretary is aware that a quorum will not be present. When deliberating on a draft report it is advisable for all members to be present.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 3.16. In the case of taking evidence at a public hearing, two members of a committee constitute a quorum regardless of the membership of the committee. Other members of the Assembly may be present when the committee is examining witnesses in a public hearing but are not counted towards a quorum. Other members may question witnesses with the leave of the committee but at the request of any Member of the committee they must leave the hearing. They must

never be present when the committee is deliberating in private. **[SO 234, 235]**

- 3.17. The Standing Orders provide the procedures for questioning witnesses, with the Chair having precedence over all others. **[SO 245]** It is a matter for the Chair to determine the equitable management of questions from members and other MLAs attending while bearing in mind the outcomes desired from the Inquiry. The secretary can provide advice if required.
- 3.18. The committee decides who it needs to hear from to fully inform their inquiry and committees should consider carefully the best use of their time. It is not necessary to hear from every individual or organisation that has made a submission. Although the secretary may prepare briefing papers on submissions, members should also spend some time thinking about potential questions that will clarify or extend the evidence already provided.
- 3.19. Public hearings are generally conducted in Committee room 1 or Kiribati room which are located at the front of the building. These rooms are fully equipped for transcription and broadcasting services. Committee proceedings are also webcast. Members should be mindful of the status of the green, red and amber light indicators in the rooms. Committees can also conduct off-site hearings using video link technology. **[SO 229B]**
- 3.20. A few days after a public hearing, members will receive draft transcripts for review and correction if necessary, just as they do for sittings of the Assembly. In reviewing this transcript, members should consider whether additional information is required from a witness and advise the secretary as soon as possible
- 3.21. On occasion, committees take evidence *in camera*. This means that evidence is transcribed but remains confidential unless the committee resolves to release it. *In camera* hearings run counter to the general role of committees as a mechanism of public scrutiny and should be reserved for hearings with particular privacy or confidentiality issues. Committees should consult with witnesses prior to publication of *in camera* evidence.

TRAVEL

- 3.22. Committees often find it necessary to conduct site visits or attend public meetings as part of an inquiry. Committees also can travel to conferences or meetings outside the ACT. The information gathered at these meetings is not considered formal evidence, but can be of significant benefit to the committee.
- 3.23. Members are expected to arrange their own travel to meetings within the ACT. Where the Committee is travelling interstate, arrangements will be coordinated by the secretary in consultation with members' office staff. Alternative travel arrangements will not be arranged by the secretary. Related administrative tasks, such as the calculation of travel allowance, are the responsibility of members' office staff. Business Support can advise you further on these matters.
- 3.24. It should be noted that travel beyond the ACT requires a resolution of the committee and the approval of the Speaker.

4. INQUIRIES

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN INQUIRY IS REFERRED?

- 4.1. After an inquiry is referred committees will generally seek public submissions. This is principally done through provision of all relevant information about an inquiry on the Legislative Assembly Committee website and advertising in the print media and by contacting community organisations, businesses and other organisations that may have an interest in the matter. These organisations are encouraged to include the information in a newsletter or mailing list, and for larger inquiries the secretary will liaise with the relevant stakeholders in order to encourage more community interest. It also is general practice to ask the relevant government agency for a submission through their minister. The Chair may also promote the inquiry through the print and electronic media. **[SO 241]**
- 4.2. A guide to making a submission or appearing before a committee of the Legislative Assembly is available from the Committee Support area and is published on the committee section of the Legislative Assembly website.

RECEIVING SUBMISSIONS AND OTHER EVIDENCE

- 4.3. The evidence received by a committee is confidential until the committee authorises it for publication. While in some circumstances it may not be appropriate to authorise submissions and other evidence, evidence is generally authorised for publication. The Committee Support area will make submissions available on the committee website once they are authorised for publication. **[SO 241]**
- 4.4. In pursuing an inquiry, committees have the authority of the Assembly and have the power to send for persons, papers and records. As inquiries progress committees may use this power to obtain the evidence needed to produce a comprehensive report. **[SO 239, 240]**

PRIVILEGE ATTACHES TO COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

- 4.5. Parliamentary privilege attaches to committee proceedings in the same way that it attaches to proceedings in the Chamber. This means that the rights and immunities accorded by parliamentary privilege, and principally the freedom to speak without prosecution in the courts, are enjoyed by committee members and witnesses giving evidence to committees.
- 4.6. It should be noted that privilege does not extend to those things said publicly beyond a committee hearing, nor does it apply to documents that were produced for another non-parliamentary purpose.
- 4.7. Members may not disclose committee evidence, documents, proceedings (including committee deliberation on reports) or reports until and unless the committee has authorised them for publication **[SO 241]**. Disclosure may constitute a contempt of the Assembly and members may be asked to explain their actions before a Privileges Committee. **[SO 276 – 280]**

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT

- 4.8. The committee can authorise a Member (usually the Chair) to make media and social media comment on behalf of the committee. This comment should not pre-empt any conclusions of the inquiry or disclose any unauthorised committee materials. **[SO 241(d)]**
- 4.9. From time to time, a Member of a committee may wish to make comment on an area of government activity that is the subject of inquiry (for instance, during the Estimates process). On these occasions, the Member should avoid referring to the committee or their membership in publicising their views.

5. REPORTING

CHAIR PRESENTS A DRAFT REPORT

- 5.1. When all the evidence has been received the secretary will prepare a preliminary draft report for the Chair. The Chair will present their draft report for the committee to consider. **[SO 247]**
- 5.2. Towards the end of the inquiry, the committee should discuss the issues raised and possible recommendations. If a member disagrees with anything in the draft report, it should be raised in the deliberative meetings. Reports should, as far as possible, reflect the collaborative labours of the committee.

COMMITTEE DELIBERATES ON A REPORT

- 5.3. The Standing Orders provide for deliberation on draft reports. **[SO 248, 249, 250, 250A & 250B]** If there is additional material that you want included in a draft report, you should draft this and circulate it to other members of the committee and the secretary prior to the first deliberative meeting so that they have an opportunity to consider it.
- 5.4. The secretary will be able to help clarify any questions you may have about evidence received.
- 5.5. You should keep in mind that when you are considering a draft report, your role is to assess the presentation of the evidence and recommendations. It is not necessary for you to make changes of an editorial nature as all reports are edited by the Committee Support area before the report is finalised, and it can waste the committee's time to become focussed on consideration of items of an editorial nature.
- 5.6. Generally all reports will be written in plain English following commonly accepted style practice.
- 5.7. It is important to let the committee know when you disagree with aspects of the report or certain recommendations as often a compromise can be reached. If you disagree with the draft report in its entirety or have fundamental problems with a particular section, you have several options. You can present an alternative draft report to the committee; you can move an amendment to a specific paragraph in the report; or you can dissent from the report. **[SO 248, 249, 251]**
- 5.8. A Committee must give final consideration to a draft report following this process and must consider a Chair's motion for the report adoption. **[SO 250A]**. If the Committee cannot agree on adoption its report, the committee Chair must report that matter to the Assembly **[SO 250B]**.
- 5.9. A dissenting report or comment does not need to be considered by the committee but it must be signed by the dissenting member. The dissenting report will be included as an appendix to the Committee's final report, which means you must provide an electronic copy to the secretary in adequate time for the report to be printed. **[SO 251, 252]** The Committee Support area does not assist in the drafting of dissenting reports.

REPORT IS PRESENTED TO THE ASSEMBLY

- 5.10. Once a report has been adopted by the committee, it is tabled in the Assembly by the Chair of the committee along with extracts of the minutes relating to the inquiry. All members will then have an opportunity to speak about the report. **[SO 253, 254]**
- 5.11. The tabling of a report is not an opportunity to dissent from the report or disagree with specific recommendations if you have not already done so. To do so discredits the committee, erodes confidence in the committee process and also reflects poorly on you as an individual Member.

6. COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- 6.1. The Chair of a committee is responsible for the orderly conduct of the committee's business and has various roles as representative of the committee. This section sets out the roles of committee Chairs.
- 6.2. If you are the Chair of a committee, you should arrange to meet with the secretary on a regular basis as it is important for you to be involved in planning each meeting. It is also important for you to build a good working relationship with the secretary.

MEETING PROCEDURE

- 6.3. Committee Chairs have the power to call meetings, although in practice the committee will have a meeting schedule for the year and additional meeting times are agreed to through consultation with members. **[SO 219A]**
- 6.4. Chairs have the same voting powers as other members; they do not have a casting vote. **[SO 228]**
- 6.5. The Chair's role during a meeting is analogous to that of the Speaker in the Chamber. The Chair should ensure that business is conducted in an orderly manner, that members are given an opportunity to air their views and that witnesses are treated appropriately. A Chair has the power to adjourn or suspend a sitting in the case of grave disorder. **[SO 229A]**

CHAIR'S AUTHORITY

- 6.6. The Chair signs the approved minutes of proceedings, correspondence (except for correspondence of an administrative nature that the Secretary may sign), and tabled reports.
- 6.7. Chairs need to be sure that correspondence, and particularly correspondence that uses the committee's power to send for persons, papers and records **[SO 239]**, has the authority of the committee. Committees do not need to approve the final wording of all correspondence but should have agreed on its general contents.
- 6.8. The Chair makes media announcements on behalf of the committee although formally the authority is determined by the committee **[SO 241(d)]**. Releases are drafted by the secretary for initial consideration by the Chair and are factual and strictly impartial. Many committees institute the practice of having media releases endorsed by all members of the committee before release.
- 6.9. On any occasion where a member is identified as the Chair they must ensure that their comments reflect the position of the committee as a whole. At all times, members must be careful not to release committee material unless the committee has authorised them to do so **[SO 241, 242]**.

REPORTS

- 6.10. It is the Chair's duty to prepare a draft report for each inquiry conducted by their committee **[SO 247]**. In practice the secretary writes a draft drawing on guidance from the Chair and the Chair then directs the secretary to make changes as necessary. Chairs should strive to include the views of other members and create a draft around which the committee can form a consensus.

REPORTING TO THE ASSEMBLY

- 6.11. It is the Chair's duty to inform the Assembly of important information about the committee, such as decisions to undertake new inquiries or variations in the terms of reference for an existing inquiry **[SO 246A]**. Chairs may be asked questions in the Assembly about committee business but such questions may not refer to unpublished committee proceedings or anticipate the outcome of a committee inquiry **[SO 116, 117(e)]**.
- 6.12. Chairs sign reports once they have been adopted by the committee. The committee secretary will provide the Chair with the copies of the report and extract of minutes on the day the report is to be tabled in the Assembly.

CHAIRS MEETINGS

- 6.13. Usually twice a year, the Speaker calls meetings of the Chairs of all the standing committees. While this is not considered a formal committee meeting it is a useful forum to discuss the management of committees and potentially to resolve challenges or difficulties encountered.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

COMMITTEE SECRETARIES

- 7.1. Each committee has a secretary who is responsible for assisting the Chair in the management of committee business, provision of procedural advice, research and report writing and administrative support. You should be aware that your secretary may also have other responsibilities within the Committee Support area and as such will not always be in a position to devote all their efforts to your committee.
- 7.2. Committee secretaries build considerable expertise in subjects of inquiry and are a valuable resource for the committee in the conduct of the inquiry and the development of draft reports and recommendations.
- 7.3. Chairs generally meet with the secretary on a regular basis but it is important that all members build a good working relationship with the secretary. Informing the secretary of issues you may wish to raise in meetings allows the secretary to provide you with procedural advice or background information that can assist the committee's decision making.

SPECIALIST ADVISORS

- 7.4. For highly technical or complex inquiries, the Speaker has the ability to appoint persons with specialist knowledge. For instance, the scrutiny of bills committee is advised by specially appointed legal experts. If you feel that this is warranted for a specific inquiry, you should discuss this with the committee in the early stages of the inquiry and your secretary will advise you how to take further action. **[SO 238]**

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM THE COMMITTEE SUPPORT AREA?

- 7.5. The Office employs secretaries and administrative staff to support committees of the Assembly.
- 7.6. You can expect your committee secretary and other members of the Committee Support area to be professional, courteous and non-partisan. Advice and research will be balanced, accurate and thorough, and reports will reflect evidence and research gathered by the committee during the course of an inquiry.
- 7.7. The committee secretary will assist the committee in the discharge of its responsibilities to the fullest extent possible; however responsibility for the 'output' of the committee (for example the content of reports, the conduct of public hearings, and speeches in the Assembly and media) rests with members.
- 7.8. Committee staff are not employed by, nor are they responsible to, individual members and as such cannot undertake work to serve the political or electoral interests of individual members.
- 7.9. If you are unhappy with the standards of service provided you should speak to the relevant committee secretary in the first instance, followed by the Manager, Committee Support.

WHAT CAN THE COMMITTEE SUPPORT AREA EXPECT FROM ME?

- 7.10. Committee staff work hard to develop good relationships with members and their office staff. It is helpful if you encourage your staff to work with the secretary of your committee, who will be able to advise them on the best way to manage your committee commitments. An information sheet to be provided to your staff is attached as an appendix to this document.
- 7.11. It is also helpful for you to designate one person in your office as the main contact for committee business (such as arranging meetings) and inform the Committee Support area of any staff changes.

8. MORE INFORMATION

- 8.1. For more information on being a successful and effective committee member, refer to the *Member's Guide* which is available on the intranet, or speak to the Committee Support area.

CONTACTS

- Committee Support Office Manager (02) 620 50199
 - Administrative Assistant and Secretaries(02) 620 50127
- 8.2. The secretary of your committee will give you direct contact details. All secretaries are on the internal e-mail (*Last name, First name*) and telephone systems (*e.g. x50127*).
- 8.3. Committee Support is located on the ground floor of the Legislative Assembly building. Copies of reports, transcripts and papers from this and previous Assemblies are located on the Internet at <http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees>

9. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adjournment

To put off, postpone or defer to another time or place. Committees can only sit when the Legislative Assembly is adjourned [SO 229]

Adverse mention

A comment made during the taking of evidence which reflects adversely on a person [SO 246A]

Business of Committees

A document, similar to the Notice Paper, about Assembly committees that includes details of membership, terms of reference and current inquiries

Contempt

Disobedience to the authority or orders of the Legislative Assembly, or interference with or obstruction of the work of MLAs [SO 277]

Committee

A small group of members of the Legislative Assembly, usually drawn from all parties, which examines, reports on, and makes recommendations about a particular subject

Discussion paper

A paper concerning a matter of inquiry and presented to the Legislative Assembly

Estimates

The sums of money which the government proposes it will need to provide works and services during a financial year

Exhibit

A document or item (such as a photograph) which is provided to the committee to assist in their inquiries but has not been produced specifically for that purpose.

Hearing (of a committee)

A public or in camera meeting of a parliamentary committee for the purpose of taking oral evidence

Immunity

The protection of members of Parliament and others from civil or criminal action in relation to their participation in parliamentary proceedings, and the protection of parliamentary proceedings from impeachment or question in the courts

In camera

A hearing conducted in private for reasons of confidentiality

Minutes

The official record of the matters discussed and the decision taken during a meeting [SO 237]

Motion

An idea or proposal put forward at a meeting for consideration, debate and decision

Order for production of documents

An order of a house of Parliament requiring that specified documents be laid on the table

Pair

An arrangement between parties whereby two members from opposing sides of a house do not vote on a particular occasion, so that one or both can be absent without affecting the result of the vote. Pairing arrangements do not apply in committees.

Parliamentary procedure

Rules for and methods of carrying out the business of a house of Parliament

Point of order

A question to the Chair as to whether proceedings in a meeting accord with the standing orders or are in the correct form (committee proceedings do not generally require this level of formality)

Portfolio

The area of responsibility or duties of a minister in a government

Powers

The authority imparted by the Legislative Assembly to committees to call for person, papers and records [SO 239]

Privilege

The immunity of the Legislative Assembly and its members and their powers to protect the integrity of parliamentary processes

Public interest immunity

A special exemption claimed by ministers which may allow some papers to be kept secret

Question

A request for information of a minister.

Question on notice

A written question asked of a minister which is answered in writing at some later time

Question taken on notice

A question taken by a minister or government official during a hearing that is answered in writing at some later time

Quorum

The minimum number of members, specified by the standing orders, who should be in the committee room before it transacts business (a majority of members when conducting business or two when taking evidence [SO 230 and 231])

Reference

A matter that has been referred to a committee for consideration and report; a subject being considered by a committee

Report (of a parliamentary committee)

A statement, usually in writing and containing recommendations, of the results of an inquiry by a committee [SO 247 -252]

Resolution

A motion which has been agreed to expresses the will or opinion of the members of the committee

Resolution of establishment

The resolution of the Legislative Assembly establishing various standing committees and the scope of their reference [SO 215 and 216]

Chair's ruling

A formal decision made by the Chair usually on a matter of procedure over which the Chair has authority (rarely required in committee proceedings)

Secretary (of a parliamentary committee)

A parliamentary officer who looks after the support arrangements for a committee, including correspondence, record-keeping, research, and arrangements for meetings where witnesses give evidence, and who often prepares the first draft of a committee's report

Select committee

A committee established to inquire into and report on a particular subject; a select committee ceases to exist when it has made its final report to the house or houses

Separation of powers, doctrine of the

The notion that, in a free society, the Parliament, the executive government and the courts are separate and act independently without interference from each other

Standing committee

A committee appointed to inquire into and report on certain matters set out in the resolution of appointment passed by the Legislative Assembly; a standing committee continues to exist for the duration of the Legislative Assembly

Standing orders

A collection of rules agreed to by a house which govern the way it conducts its business

Statement, or 246A statement

A committee may resolve to make a statement to the Legislative Assembly about a matter within its resolution of appointment [SO 246A]

Submission

A written representation to a committee of an individual or a group's views about the terms of reference of an inquiry

Table

To present a document or other item to the Committee. The paper then becomes part of the committee's records

Terms of reference (of a committee)

The scope for activity and investigation defined by the committee or the Legislative Assembly regarding a matter referred for inquiry

Unparliamentarily language

Words used which the Chair judges to be offensive or disorderly, and which are usually required to be withdrawn

Witness (before a committee)

A person who gives evidence to a committee

10. APPENDIX A: INFORMATION FOR STAFF OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

You should know who the secretary of each of your Member's committees is and their contact details. General information about the committees of the Legislative Assembly can be found in the publication *Business of Committees*. This publication is updated prior to each Assembly sitting period and can be accessed via the publication section of the Intranet or the Legislative Assembly website.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Committees will generally schedule a regular meeting time and place. Please ensure that this schedule is entered as a recurring appointment in your Member's diary. A two hour period should be allocated to accommodate the scheduling of deliberative meetings or public hearings. Regular meetings are generally of a shorter duration however. The secretary will provide your office with an up-to-date schedule of meetings as the committee determines its activity. Staff may not attend deliberative meetings.

MEETINGS AT SHORT NOTICE

The secretary will rely on your willingness to prioritise your Member's committee work when meetings are called at short notice. While efforts are made to keep this to a minimum, your assistance in establishing a suitable time will be appreciated.

MEETING PAPERS

You should discuss suitable arrangements for meeting papers with your Member and advise the secretary accordingly. The secretary will provide copies and an agenda listing all papers required for the meeting. Please make sure that your Member has the necessary papers ready to take to each meeting. Many committee documents are confidential (unless authorised for publication by the committee) and you should ensure that you are familiar with and aware of the implications of **Standing Orders 241 and 242**.

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence to the committee should be forwarded immediately to the secretary of the committee. Please do not date stamp committee correspondence.

OTHER ISSUES

Other matters you might like to discuss with the committee secretary when the need arises include committee travel arrangements, media releases, tabling of reports, annual estimates inquiry.

Further information about any committee processes can always be sought from the Committee Support area on ext 50127 or from the relevant secretary.