

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

**REPORT ON THE
APPROPRIATION BILL
1990 - 91**

NOVEMBER 1990

RESOLUTION OF APPOINTMENT

(Agreed to 18 September 1990)

That—

- (1) an Estimates Committee be appointed to examine the expenditure proposals contained in the Appropriation Bill 1990–91;
- (2) the Committee consist of five members;
- (3) the Committee report to the Assembly by 5 November 1990;
- (4) if the Assembly is not sitting when the Committee is ready to report, the Committee may send its report to the Speaker, or in the absence of the Speaker, to the Deputy Speaker who is authorised to give directions for its printing and circulation; and
- (5) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the Standing Orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing Orders.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP¹

Mr Norm Jensen (Presiding Member)

Mr Terry Connolly (Deputy Presiding Member)

Ms Rosemary Follett²

Ms Carmel Maher³

Mr Michael Moore⁴

Mrs Robyn Nolan

Mr Bill Stefaniak⁵

Secretary: Ms Karin Malmberg

Inquiry Staff: Mr David James
Mr Greg McIntosh
Ms Judy Starceвич
Mr Bill Symington

Keyboard/Clerical: Mrs Kim Blackburn

¹ appointed 19 September 1990.

² to 20 September 1990.

³ to 17 October 1990.

⁴ from 20 September 1990.

⁵ from 17 October 1990.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On Tuesday 11 September 1990 the Chief Minister and Treasurer introduced the Appropriation Bill 1990–91 to the Assembly and presented the 1990–91 Budget.

1.2 On Tuesday 18 September 1990 the Legislative Assembly established an Estimates Committee consisting of five Members to examine the expenditure proposals contained in the Appropriation Bill 1990–91. The Committee was required to report by 5 November 1990.

1.3 On Wednesday 19 September the following Members were appointed to the Committee: Mr Connolly, Ms Follett, Mr Jensen, Ms Maher and Mrs Nolan. On 20 September Ms Follett was discharged and Mr Moore appointed in her place, and on 17 October Ms Maher was discharged and Mr Stefaniak appointed in her place.

1.4 The Committee recognised the importance of the Estimates Committee process and, to ensure that other Assembly Members had the opportunity to participate in the public hearing process as provided under Standing Orders, resolved prior to the hearings commencing to give leave to any Member, other than the Executive, to question witnesses at the public hearings.

1.5 The Committee was pleased that a number of other members took the opportunity to participate in the hearings.

1.6 The 1990 Estimates Committee held 11 public hearings (totalling some 65 hours) and examined the Appropriation Bill on a portfolio basis and within that framework, on a program by program basis. The Committee also met privately with officers from the Treasury.

1.7 The principal witness for each portfolio was the responsible Minister who was supported by the agency heads and other senior public servants. In relation to Program 1, Support to the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker was the principal witness supported by senior Legislative Assembly officers.

1.8 A list of hearings held and agencies examined is at Appendix A.

2 ACCOUNTABILITY

Scrutiny

2.1 One of the most important tasks undertaken by a Westminster type parliament is that of holding governments to account for their economic and financial decisions. Scrutiny by an elected legislature of the expenditure and revenue of a body politic is a fundamental democratic principle.

2.2 Estimates committees are a common feature in Westminster parliaments and are one of the main means by which the Parliament can hold the Executive to account for its expenditure proposals.

2.3 The key function of an estimates committee is to examine, in detail, the particulars of proposed expenditure for the forthcoming year as put forward by the Executive. An important feature of this examination is the effective assessment of expenditure by drawing comparisons with previous years expenditure.

2.4 In the ACT, the Estimates Committee process provides the only forum at which Ministers, as well as public officials, are publicly questioned at length on matters related to finance and expenditure. Detailed scrutiny of this kind is not possible in the formal deliberations of the Legislative Assembly.

2.5 The Committee has not undertaken a program by program critique of the Budget. It is not the Committee's role to debate Government policy. It does, however, wish to emphasise that the Estimates Committee hearings and report should not be interpreted as support or concurrence with the Government's Budget nor its strategy. The Committee's principle function has been to examine major issues such as accountability.

2.6 It is important to note that reports of estimates committees vary widely in their form and content. The Senate Estimates Committees' reports are not detailed reports and rely on the transcripts of evidence to provide the background information.

2.7 As the ACT Legislative Assembly is a new form of government, the Committee considers it important that its report is detailed and concentrates on the major issues that will provide a basis for the future.

2.8 Scrutiny is essential to fundamental accountability. Accountability is an incentive for Ministers and public officials to stay within the bounds of propriety. The Committee believes that the Estimates inquiry this year has reinforced the concept of accountability by the Executive and officials to the Assembly and the public.

2.9 The Committee is of the view that, prior to self-government, the ACT Administration, as part of the Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, did not receive as thorough an examination of its estimates as has occurred this year. The Committee believes that the process is part of the adjustment to the changed circumstances arising from self-government.

2.10 The Committee was aware of differing views as to the usefulness and cost effectiveness of the Estimates Committee process. The Committee has no doubt that, on accountability grounds alone, it is seen by most to be a justifiable and worthwhile exercise.

2.11 For example, the Committee notes the statement made by the Chief Minister at its last public hearing where he advised the Committee that, as a result of matters arising from its inquiry, the Chief Minister's Department discovered it had provided incorrect advice regarding travel allowances to Ministers for overseas travel. This resulted, on the evidence of the Head of Administration, in Ministers, acting on Departmental advice, receiving payments which were unauthorised in terms of section 73 of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988. The Committee was advised of revised arrangements that are to be implemented in respect of overseas travel by Ministers which will comply with the law. Further comment is at paragraphs 5.66 – 5.69 but it is significant that this only came to light as a result of the Estimates Committee hearings.

2.12 As well, the Committee also noted the difference between the procedures for provision of motor vehicles and believes that the Committee's inquiry has led to a review of procedures that would result in a more cost-effective provision of vehicles. Further comment is at paragraph 5.46 – 5.52.

Misleading evidence

2.13 During the course of the inquiry the Committee formed the view that one senior public servant had misled the Committee when giving evidence.

2.14 The Committee views this with great concern. Whilst Assembly Committees do not swear witnesses prior to evidence being taken, nonetheless, there is an obligation on all witnesses to give accurate and complete evidence. Potential witnesses should be aware that to give misleading evidence could be a contempt of the Assembly.

2.15 The Committee has discussed the matter and has decided not to pursue it further. However, the Committee does put all future witnesses to Assembly Committees on notice as to the seriousness of the proceedings and the probability that future instances such as this will be referred to the Assembly for its information and action.

3 PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Budget Papers

3.1 During the course of the inquiry the Committee used the Budget Papers and the Supplementary Budget Information Papers as primary source documents supplemented by additional information provided by agencies.

3.2 This year, unlike the 1989-90 Budget Papers, there was no financial information at the sub-program level contained in the Budget Papers. In general, the Committee found the Papers difficult to follow although Budget Paper number 2, Budget Overview 1990-91, was considered helpful.

3.3 The Committee strongly believes that the provision of sub-program information in the Budget Papers is of particular importance.

3.4 The Committee recommends that:

- future Budget Papers contain financial information at the sub-program level.**

3.5 In last year's Estimates Committee report, the Committee stated that it believed that the Budget Papers could be presented "... in a clearer and more "user friendly" format.". The Committee suggested that the Treasury consider including in the 1990-91 Budget Papers a survey form similar to those included in Commonwealth Budget Papers in previous years so as to receive feedback from users.

3.6 The Committee notes that in Budget Paper number 5, Program Information and Estimates 1990-91, sub-program 23.2, Budget Management, Finance Bureau, states as part of its Performance Review (1989-90):

Development of Budget documentation has continued, to ensure a comprehensive coverage of ACT financial data while at the same time concentrating on making the papers more "user friendly". Progress can be seen in the publication of the Forward Estimates Report in March 1990.¹

¹ Budget Paper No. 5, p. 344.

3.7 The Committee questioned the Finance Bureau on the "user friendliness" of the documents and was advised that a general review of all papers had been undertaken. In connection with Budget Paper number 5, work was undertaken to identify at the beginning of the Program all the sources and disbursements of funds and the financial framework that the program operates under, such as through a trust fund, its own bank account or through the consolidated fund.

3.8 The Committee considers that this summary table at the beginning of each Program in the Budget Paper is an improvement over the way information was presented last year.

3.9 Included in the Budget Papers are references to the restructuring of the ACT Gaming and Liquor Authority (GALA) during 1990–91. However, there is no indication in those documents as to what will happen to the reserves of GALA at that time.

3.10 The Committee was advised that the reserves are approximately \$14 million but, as the availability of the funds is dependent on legislative action, the figure has not been included in the Papers. The Committee was told that when the funds are available they will be paid to the capital budget.²

3.11 The Committee has some concern that the Budget Papers foreshadow a change to GALA, but do not indicate financial implications of that decision. The Committee believes that this information should have been included as all readers of the documents may not be aware of the full effects of the decision.

3.12 The Committee was also advised by the Finance Bureau that a questionnaire was not included in the Budget Papers as previous experience in the Commonwealth had shown little response and that publicity seeking comment from the community was not being considered. This was despite other comment from the Bureau that it is very difficult to make the documentation totally understandable to the lay person and retain the critical information.

3.13 The Committee is concerned that, although the Budget Papers are sold both in sets and separately, the public is generally not aware that they are available, and, if aware, has difficulty in understanding them. It would appear that although sales figures are not available, a large number of the 800 copies printed are still in stock.³

3.14 As previously mentioned, the Committee found Budget Paper number 2 helpful as a basic document that provided a good overview of the Budget, the process and the major initiatives. The Committee believes that the Budget Papers are not widely promoted and the general community perception would be that the documents are not relevant to the day to day lives of Canberra citizens.

² Transcript, p. 1347.

³ Transcript, p. 99.

3.15 The Committee does not support this view and considers that it would be worthwhile for the Finance Bureau to promote Budget Paper number 2 in the community as a readable and informative document with the other Papers providing the greater detail.

3.16 The Committee also believes that the Treasury should examine the distribution and sales of the first two sets of Budget Papers with the aim to avoid large stocks of surplus Budget Papers remaining in future years.

3.17 The Committee was also advised by the Finance Bureau that some agencies have expressed the view that they find Budget Paper number 5, in particular, confusing.⁴

3.18 The Committee recommends that:

- **the Finance Bureau seek comment from Members of the Legislative Assembly and all agency heads concerning the Budget Papers and possible changes that could be made to the Papers to make them more "user friendly"; and**
- **a questionnaire be included in the Budget Papers, accompanied by publicity to encourage users of the Papers to complete the questionnaire.**

3.19 The Committee believes that it would be of benefit to all parties if shortly after the tabling of this report a Select Committee, comprising the same membership as the Estimates Committee, is formed. The Select Committee would be able to examine in greater detail than possible in the course of this inquiry matters relating to future Estimates Committees, including the form that the revised Budget Papers may take.

3.20 This suggestion has been made to ensure that a full examination of the information and documentation required next year is completed. The Committee is recommending the establishment of a Select Committee because of the restricted timeframe that this Committee has been working to. As this report needs to be available to the Assembly and the Government prior to the passage of the Appropriation Bill, and the Committee is required to report by 5 November, the Committee has not had the time to consider the additional issues in any detail.

3.21 In the course of the proposed inquiry, the Committee believes it would be necessary to meet with all agency and bureau heads.

3.22 The Committee welcomes the comments of the Under Treasurer during the hearing of the 11 October when he said:

⁴ Transcript, pp. 93-99.

... the Budget Papers are set out according to the level of budget control that is exercised over agencies. They are not set out as Estimates Committee notes and I guess in the first two budgets of the ACT the Treasury has been trying to meet through Budget Paper number 5 both the budget control requirements and the Estimates Committee requirements in the one document. And I think the point that is coming out is that with the benefit of two years experience we probably have not managed to achieve that happy compromise. So the possibility of looking at some concise form of Estimates Committee notes I think to give some greater detail at sub-program level is probably the sort of solution to the Committee's requirements.⁵

3.23 The Committee recommends that:

- . **a Select Committee be established, comprising the same membership as the Estimates Committee, to examine and report on matters relating to future Estimates Committees including the form the revised Budget Papers may take.**

Programs

3.24 During the inquiry the Committee found that the program structure was, at times, too broad to be relevant. For example, Program 15, Community Services, covers the following sub-programs:

- . Community Programs;
- . Disability Services;
- . Community Welfare;
- . Youth Advocate; and
- . Sport and Recreation.

3.25 Included are areas as diverse as adult corrective services, the provision of services to people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, respite care, child protection, adoption/substitute care, the Racecourse Development Fund and administering recreation development programs.

3.26 The Committee is of the view that this, and other programs, need to be reviewed by the Office of Public Sector Management and the relevant agency to make them more meaningful.

⁵ Transcript, p. 1175.

3.27. The Committee notes that the Office of Public Sector Management is encouraging each agency to complete the corporate planning process through which functional relationships within the agency will be clarified.⁶

3.28 The Committee recommends that:

- the Office of Public Sector Management in conjunction with agencies review the program and sub-program structure of each agency to ensure relevant programs and consistency across the ACT Government Service, and that the Justice and Community Services Department receives priority attention.**

Performance indicators

3.29 The introduction to Budget Paper number 5 defines key performance indicators as "criteria by which the program can be assessed for effectiveness and efficiency in delivering results to the community".⁷

3.30 The Committee believes that, in general, the performance indicators included in Paper number 5 either cannot be used for this purpose, or are not.

3.31 Accountability has two elements – accounting for the dollars spent and measuring the performance of the program. During the course of the public hearings the Committee asked all agencies a number of questions concerning the use of performance indicators.

3.32 The 1989 Estimates Committee was critical of some senior public servants' understanding of performance indicators and/or how to use them to measure performance. This Estimates Committee has the same concern.

3.33 The Committee believes that the performance indicators included in the Budget Papers are, in many cases, more rhetoric than substance and are often non-measurable and non-accountable.

3.34 Much of what was said to the Committee in answer to questions on the performance indicators and their ability to be used as a measure of performance supported this view.

⁶ Transcript, p. 1271.

⁷ Budget Paper No. 5, p. 1.

3.35 If, in the Chief Minister's words, the managers are to manage, then to have accountability those goals have to be measurable.⁸ The higher the level of manager the more accountable he or she should be. If the manager knows what they are attempting to achieve, they should be able to set long-term goals and specifically measure short-term goals.

3.36 The Committee notes the Chief Minister's comments during the public hearings, particularly during the examination of sub-program 2.4, Public Sector Management, concerning performance indicators. He said that some of the statements included as performance indicators are more properly statements of objectives from which could be derived a quantitative measure of performance.⁹

3.37 The Committee considers it essential that performance indicators do provide a quantifiable measure of performance, and that there be consistency within programs and sub-programs so as to be able to draw comparisons. As an example, the performance indicators for Program 17, Tourism, used different statistical sources for its performance indicators but this was not clearly identified.

3.38 The Committee questions whether some performance indicators at the program level are valid. The Committee believes that indicators are often poorly designed and, at the program level, are too broad and are possibly not appropriate. At the lower sub-program level, indicators can be made more specific and therefore measurable.

3.39 The Committee considers that it is also necessary to include indicators which would give program managers and the Executive additional information on the lack of performance of a program or initiative and provide a means of identifying whether to continue with that particular project or program.

3.40 The Chief Minister indicated to the Committee that he considered that the issue of objectives and performance indicators was one that the Public Sector Management Board may address as part of the restructuring of the Government Service. He was of the view that there is still a long way to go before precise performance indicators are available.¹⁰

3.41 The Committee agrees that a service wide review of performance indicators, their relevance and measurability should be undertaken.

3.42 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Public Sector Management Board undertake a review of program and sub-program objectives and performance indicators, including the measurement process.**

⁸ Transcript, p. 1166.

⁹ Transcript, pp. 1266-7.

¹⁰ Transcript, p. 1266.

3.43 Last year's Estimates Committee suggested that the results of the measurement of agencies performance be included in annual reports of agencies. It also suggested that if these reports are unavailable for the Estimates Committee, a separate report on performance measurement be made available to the Estimates Committee.

3.44 This has not occurred and this year the Committee strengthens its remarks by making that suggestion a recommendation.

3.45 The Committee recommends that:

- **agencies measure the performance of their programs and sub-programs and report the results each year in their annual reports. If the reports are not available for the Estimates Committee, a separate report on the results of the performance measurement should be provided to the Committee.**

3.46 The Committee believes that despite agencies having had a further year to refine "... their approaches to program budgeting, developing better performance indicators and performance monitoring systems" there has not been a noticeable improvement in the use of the indicators.¹¹

Supplementary information

3.47 As stated earlier, the Committee used as its basic source documents the Budget Papers and Supplementary Budget Information Papers. However, as the 1989 Estimates Committee noted in its report on the Appropriation Bill 1989-90, the information included in those documents is so broad as to be almost meaningless. As a result of the inquiry last year, the Committee in its report recommended as its first recommendation that:

- agencies provide additional supporting information to future Estimates Committees at the time of introduction of an Appropriation Bill;

¹¹ Budget Paper No. 5, p. 2.

- . this information must, at a minimum, include detailed breakdowns of the following items:
 - . grants
 - . repairs and maintenance
 - . minor new works
 - . minor plant and equipment
 - . other operating costs
 - . major plant and equipment
 - . other capital acquisitions; and
- . this information must also be available at a sub-program level.

3.48 It should be noted that these comments were made in respect of the 1989-90 Budget documentation which in fact contained some financial information at the sub-program level. However, it did not include the detail necessary when considering the large amounts and broad categories such as minor new works and other operating costs.

3.49 The Committee was disappointed to find that even this amount of information was not included in the Budget documentation this year. This, together with problems with the provision of supplementary information, was the main reason for the long sittings of the Committee.

3.50 Following the establishment of the Estimates Committee, the Chairman wrote to the Speaker and the Ministers concerning the (initial) hearing dates and the supplementary information that the Committee was seeking. The information sought was consistent with the recommendation of last year's Committee, with the qualification that the detailed financial breakdowns at sub-program level be provided where amounts were over \$50,000. This qualification was added to ensure that the Committee was not provided with every small item of expenditure and that time of public servants was not wasted on excessive detail.

3.51 In addition, the Committee also sought detailed information in two specific areas, travel and consultants/contractors. It sought, for information purposes, a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants/contractors and travel for 1989-90 plus indicative figures at sub-program level for those items for 1990-91.

3.52 The Committee is aware that the timeframe in which the agencies had to provide the information following the Committee's request was short. The Committee, however, believes that agencies should have been aware of the 1989 Estimates Committee's difficulty during the hearings when the Committee had to continually seek further information.

3.53 The Committee also believes it is incumbent upon agency heads and program managers to be familiar with the recommendations of Assembly Committee reports that impact on their areas of responsibility. The Estimates Committee inquiry and report impacts on all portfolios and agencies. To assist managers the Committee will formally send each agency a copy of this report.

3.54 The Committee believes that the majority of agencies should have been better prepared for this year's inquiry. The Committee was concerned that some agencies provided information late, in an incomplete format requiring several amendments or in a difficult to use format.

3.55 The Committee was forced to postpone the commencement of the examination of two portfolios, that of the Ministers for Finance and Urban Services and Health, Education and the Arts, as a result of the late provision of detailed information in the first instance and the incomplete provision of information by the Education programs.

3.56 The Committee accepts that agencies have differing financial management systems and accordingly it is easier for some agencies to produce additional information in a restricted timeframe than others.

3.57 However, the Committee is of the view that by advising agencies in advance of the type of supplementary information the Committee seeks, agencies should be able to institute procedures to ensure that the information can be provided at minimal effort. This view was supported during the hearings by at least one agency head.

3.58 The Committee believes that it would be appropriate for the Select Committee recommended earlier in this Chapter also to consider both the form that the supplementary information should take and when it should be made available to the Committee.

3.59 Again, consultation with agencies is essential to ensure that the requirements of Estimates Committees are balanced with the ability of agencies to provide extra information. The revised form of the Budget Papers will also need to be taken into consideration.

3.60 The Committee is of the view that a standardised, although not rigidly prescriptive, format should be advised to agencies in order to obviate the difficulties experienced by some agencies this year, and also to make reference easier for the Committee.

3.61 The Committee recommends that:

- the Select Committee (recommended in paragraph 3.23) also consider the format that the supplementary information should take, including recommending a standard form, and when it should be available.**

3.62 The Committee found the provision of one annual report and two draft annual reports by agencies as part of the supplementary information helpful. In particular, the Committee found the 1989-90 annual report of the Office of Industry and Development and Business and Employment Bureau of great benefit.

3.63 Some general points in connection with the supplementary information that the Committee wishes to make are (although it should be noted that not all agencies were at fault in many of the following areas):

- . conciseness
- . completeness
- . page numbering
- . cross-referencing to the Budget Papers
- . avoid duplication of the Budget Papers in the supplementary information
- . consistency of information (no "apples and oranges")

3.64 Despite these comments, the Committee was better informed in relation to ACT Government Service activities and proposed expenditure in 1990-91 as a result of receiving the supplementary information and believes that the questioning of officials was more productive.

Hearings

3.65 The Committee held 11 public hearings. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly appeared at the first hearing of the Committee and was questioned in relation to the expenditure proposals of the Assembly. Each Minister appeared on more than one occasion and were also subjected to detailed questioning by the Committee in relation to expenditure proposals contained in the Appropriation Bill.

3.66 The Committee is aware that some criticism has been voiced regarding the length of the public hearing process and the wide ranging nature of the questioning.

3.67 The Committee rejects any suggestion of irrelevancy or time wasting, as it believes that public accountability and all that is associated with it is an underlying and fundamental principle of democracy. The Committee believes that the Executive and officials are dealing with public funds and are responsible and answerable for their decisions.

3.68 Despite some problems in public administration coming to light, for example ministerial travel, the hearings are also an opportunity for positive suggestions to arise. For example, during the hearing into sub-program 15.5, Sport and Recreation, the Committee heard that there was no direct link or liaison between the ACT Tourism Commission and the ACT Office of Sport, Recreation and Racing. The Committee was advised that the ACT Statistician has estimated that sport contributed \$7.39 million to the tourism industry in the last twelve months with little assistance from the Tourism Commission.¹²

¹² Transcript, p. 1563.

3.69 The Committee recommends that:

- the ACT Tourism Commission and the ACT Office of Sport, Recreation and Racing develop a co-ordinated process to increase the benefits to the ACT from tourism arising from sporting events.**

Questions taken on notice

3.70 The number of questions taken on notice was less than last year, which reflects the benefits of the provision of the supplementary information in advance. During the hearings the Committee asked for the information to be provided within three days of the hearing. This allows for examination of the material by the Committee and, if necessary, the recall of a Minister and a particular agency.

3.71 In general, the Committee received the responses to the questions taken on notice in a prompt manner. However the Committee was disappointed to receive some information that was either late or incomplete.

3.72 In particular, the Committee sought responses to a number of questions on Health programs at the hearing on 10 October. The responses were not provided until 19 October and, in relation to the ambulance service, were not complete. Following a further request from the Committee, the Minister for Health, Education and the Arts provided additional information to the Committee just prior to the close of that day's proceedings. Some aspects of the information were not provided until 2 November.

3.73 Another concern was the provision of information relating to school closures by the Interim Territory Planning Authority. At the hearing on 16 October the Committee sought information relating to the social impact of the school closures. Despite this document being readily available and not one that was required to be specially produced for the Estimates Committee, having been provided to the Government on 26 July 1990, it was not made available to the Committee until the closing moments of the hearings into the Ministry of Health, Education and the Arts programs, and after the completion of the Education component, on 19 October. This is of concern to the Committee as questioning on the material was not able to be undertaken without the recall of at least one, if not two, Ministers.

4 FUTURE ESTIMATES COMMITTEES

Timing

4.1 The timing and intensity of Estimates Committees hearings each year will, by necessity, be compacted into a short period between the introduction of the Appropriation Bill and the need for the passage of the Bill prior to the cessation of Supply. The sittings of the Legislative Assembly also limit the time available to the Committee.

4.2 The Committee believes that there were a number of difficulties arising out of the timing of the establishment of the Committee.

4.3 In particular, Ministers and agencies received short notice of the timetable for the hearings, plus the details of the request for extra information.

4.4 The Committee is of the view that the Estimates Committee should be formed as early as possible. The Committee can be formed prior to the Assembly agreeing in principle to the Appropriation Bill as the Bill can be referred to the Committee for examination at that stage. This would allow the Committee to undertake preparatory work.

4.5 The Committee believes that the latest the Committee should be formed is at the time of the introduction of the Appropriation Bill by the Treasurer. If this had occurred this year, an additional week would have been added to the total time of seven weeks from formation to reporting date and, most importantly, allowed hearings to commence in the first available non-sitting week. The Committee could even be formed prior to the winter adjournment.

4.6 The Committee believes that Ministers and agency heads should be aware that each year Estimates Committee hearings will generally be held in the first block of non-sitting weeks following the introduction of the Appropriation Bill and be prepared to attend hearings at that time. Difficulties were caused to the Committee's timetable this year by the unavailability of some Ministers and program managers.

4.7 The Committee is of the view that there is no barrier to the establishment of a Standing Committee on Estimates to which the Appropriation Bill would be referred each year, a matter that should be considered, if not next year, in the second Assembly.

4.8 The Committee believes that the formation of the Committee well in advance would allow the development of a timetable for hearings giving more than a few days notice to Ministers and public servants as well as Committee members. In addition the earlier formation would allow the scheduling of hearings on every second day rather than a number of consecutive days.

4.9 A longer lead time would also allow Committees to advise individual agencies of areas of particular interest and which could require some research prior to the hearing.

4.10 The Committee recommends that:

- **future Estimates Committees be established at the time of introduction of the Appropriation Bill into the Legislative Assembly by the Treasurer at the latest.**

Approach

4.11 The Committee believes that the recommended Select Committee's examination of requirements for future supplementary information and Budget Papers will be of great benefit to future inquiries.

4.12 The Committee considers that its approach this year to choose at least two areas, travel and consultants, for a detailed examination was particularly beneficial.

4.13 The Committee believes that it would be useful to continue this practice in future years and choose possibly different areas for inquiry, eg travel/motor vehicles, indoor plants/personal computers.

4.14 The Committee also believes that it would be appropriate for the Estimates Committee each year to select its own areas for examination at its first meeting, giving agencies as much notice as possible to provide the detailed breakdown of information that will be required.

4.15 The Committee recommends that:

- **future Estimates Committees consider selecting at least two areas service wide for detailed examination each year.**

4.16 In addition, the Committee considers that it would be of value for each Estimates Committee to select one sub-program per portfolio to examine in detail.

4.17 The Committee recommends that:

- **future Estimates Committees consider selecting one sub-program in each portfolio for detailed examination each year.**

5 ISSUES

Accommodation

5.1 During last year's Estimates Committee's public hearings, that Committee was advised that the rent for the majority of agencies was included in the (1989-90) Program 23, Planning and Resource Management for the Office of City Management, rather than included as part of individual program costs.

5.2 The Committee was also advised that it was proposed to allocate rent to the responsible agencies for future Budgets.

5.3 The Committee recommended that rent and associated costs be allocated to the relevant agency, and where possible, to particular programs.

5.4 The response of the Follett Government, tabled in the Assembly on 21 November 1989, to the Committee's recommendation was:

Arrangements are in hand to identify ongoing rent of office space and associated accommodation costs against specific programs for inclusion in the 1990-91 Budget. However, once-only expenditure for any major relocation work impacting on more than one program will continue to be shown against the Agency Planning and Resource Management Program (Program 23) for the Office of City Management.

5.5 The Committee noted that in this Budget the transfer of funds had not occurred.

5.6 The Committee sought comment from the Department of Urban Services as to the status of the proposal to allocate rental costs.

5.7 The Committee was advised that the property and accommodation group managed the rental of property to accommodate the personnel for the Department of Urban Services, the Department of Environment, Land and Planning and the Chief Minister's Division. Statutory authorities such as health and education had historically managed their own accommodation.¹³

¹³ Transcript, p. 427.

5.8 The Department advised the Committee of the current co-ordinated strategy managed by the Department with the plan to devolve funds for the next Budget.¹⁴

5.9 The Department considers that by devolving the funds agencies will be more cost conscious.¹⁵

5.10 The Committee notes that Budget Paper number 5, sub-program 21.3, Purchasing and Property Policy and Accommodation Services, Outlook for 1990-91, states:

The main priority in 1990-91 will be to raise the awareness of ACT Government agencies of the costs of holding under-utilised property and to encourage agencies to release under-used properties for other purposes.

A system of cost attribution for property will be developed which will provide incentive for the efficient use of property used by program areas.

Property operations ... will review government accommodation needs and prepare a strategy to rationalise ACT Government Service accommodation.

5.11 The Committee looks forward to the finalisation of these matters as it considers that attribution of all costs is an essential aspect of program budgeting.

5.12 The Committee recommends that:

- the cost attribution system for rent be developed as a priority and be in place for the 1991-92 Budget.**

5.13 The Department of Urban Services stated in evidence that it could advise agencies of the cost of their accommodation.¹⁶

5.14 The Committee believes that, at worst, if the cost attribution system is not in place for next year's Budget, a notional transfer of funds should be done for 1991-92.

5.15 The Committee recommends that:

- if the cost attribution system for rent is not in place for the 1991-92 Budget, a notional transfer be done to ensure that costs are found in the appropriate Program.**

¹⁴ Transcript, p. 456.

¹⁵ Transcript, p. 428.

¹⁶ Transcript, p. 433.

5.16 During the hearing, the Committee was provided with a listing of all properties rented by the Department of Urban Services on behalf of ACT agencies. This showed a total rental payment of \$14,229,692 per annum.

5.17 The Department estimated that this list included approximately 90% of total rent paid by and on behalf of all ACT agencies.¹⁷

5.18 The Committee was advised that not all buildings occupied by ACT agencies are commercially leased. For example, the ACT owns the North and South Buildings. In future years indicative rental figures will need to be arrived at.¹⁸ The Department estimates that some 30% of office space occupied by ACT agencies is owned by the ACT.¹⁹

5.19 The Committee is concerned that until rental and associated costs are attributed to the responsible agencies, and where possible, the programs, managers are not accountable for increasing rents and moves to more expensive accommodation.

5.20 For example, the Economic Development Division's move from the South Building and several other locations to the CBS Tower has resulted in increased rent paid by the ACT. The rent payable for the Tower is \$50,950 per month. Whilst not questioning the Division's decision to co-locate its staff in one building, the Committee does question whether the decision to move to a more expensive location would have been made if Program 3 was to reflect the increased cost, particularly in the current climate of cost-cutting.

5.21 The Committee also is of the view that where agencies or parts of agencies are decentralised for cost reasons, the appropriateness of the move should be assessed on the type of work undertaken by the officers involved. Other factors such as travel time should be considered. As an example, the Committee heard evidence that officers of the ACT Office of Sport, Recreation and Racing spend on average five hours per week travelling.²⁰

5.22 Another issue the Committee considers should receive further attention is the question of using empty school buildings for accommodating public servants.

¹⁷ Transcript, p. 456.

¹⁸ Transcript, p. 433.

¹⁹ Transcript, p. 454.

²⁰ Transcript, p. 1589.

Community Development Fund

5.23 During his Budget speech, the Treasurer announced that the Community Development Fund (CDF) will cease to operate on 31 December 1990. Following that date grants to organisations will be paid from Consolidated Fund appropriations under the relevant programs.

5.24 At present interest earned on the funds has been available for expenditure through the Fund. From 1 January 1991 these receipts will accrue to the Consolidated Fund.²¹

5.25 Budget Paper number 1, The Budget Speech, states:

The Government guarantees that total community grants will be maintained in real terms for two years so that no category of users assisted by the Fund will be disadvantaged.

...

... there has been some disquiet that sport will suffer. It will not.
... Procedures for applications and approval of grants will remain the same as before.²²

5.26 The Committee is concerned that the interest that had previously accumulated on CDF funds and was available for further grants will now not be available following the abolition of the Fund.

5.27 Whilst examining sub-program 15.5, Sport and Recreation, the Committee was advised by the Minister for Housing and Community Services that specific one-off grants, such as to the ACT Netball Association for \$1.2 million, will no longer continue.²³ He also advised that no guarantee has been given in relation to "ad hoc one-off grants that have occurred over the years."²⁴

5.28 The Committee believes that there is an expectation in the community of a guarantee that the total amount of funding, including interest, previously available from the Community Development Fund, will continue to be available for grants for capital projects for sporting and other community facilities.

²¹ Budget Paper No. 5, p. 220.

²² Budget Paper No. 1, p. 10.

²³ Transcript, p. 1573.

²⁴ Transcript, p. 1574.

5.29 The Committee recommends that:

- **from 1 January 1991 the Government increase the amount available for capital grants for distribution to sporting and other community organisations previously assisted by the Community Development Fund by an amount equivalent to the interest that would have been paid if the Community Development Fund had continued to operate.**

Consultants

5.30 One of the areas that the Committee decided to inquire into in detail this year was consultants. (The Committee uses the term in the broad sense, including contractors.)

5.31 As stated earlier, the Committee sought, for information purposes, a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants/contractors for 1989–90 plus indicative figures at sub-program level for 1990–91.

5.32 The information for 1989–90 was generally readily available as it is also included in the annual reports of agencies.

5.33 The Committee was able to identify some \$9.749 million spent on consultants last year, with an estimate of \$10.726 million for 1990–91, an increase of approximately 10%. An increase in this order, in a period of restraint, is cause for some concern.

5.34 The figures are understated to an extent as some sub-programs did not provide figures despite the Committee's request. As such the Committee has not drawn comparisons between the portfolios.

5.35 The Committee was provided with draft guidelines for selecting and managing management consultants and advised that they should be finalised by the end of 1990.²⁵

5.36 The Committee recommends that:

- **careful consideration be given to the use of consultants, particularly when public servants could undertake the task; and**
- **the draft guidelines for selecting and managing management consultants be completed as a matter of priority.**

²⁵ Transcript, p. 1272.

Four per cent cut

5.37 During the course of the hearings one aspect of the Government's Budget strategy was examined over a number of Programs and, in particular, Treasury's program, Program 6, ACT Financial Management. The issue was the four per cent reduction in the 1990-91 Budget estimates over the forward estimates.

5.38 The Committee particularly queried the Chief Minister, as Treasurer, as the Budget documentation did not make clear how the expenditure reduction was effected.

5.39 A number of one-off adjustments were made and had to be taken into account to reconcile the previous estimate with the final figures. A considerable amount of time was taken up with questioning related to this.

5.40 In addition, it was difficult to assess the adjustments on a program basis as agencies applied the reduction across the board with the result that the reduction may not be evenly distributed across each program, for example the Chief Minister's Division.²⁶

5.41 The Chief Minister advised that in February agencies were asked how a four per cent reduction could be achieved if imposed. Some agencies identified specific ways of achieving the reduction and others which failed to do so had an approximate four per cent cut imposed on them.²⁷

5.42 The Committee considers it essential that information be available to allow comparisons between the Budget Estimates and previous years estimates figures.

5.43 The Committee notes that major resource variations are shown against each program in Budget Paper number 5, however, the information was not complete and did not provide a reconciliation nor give enough information to allow one to be carried out.

5.44 The Committee also notes that each year additional functions are transferred from the Commonwealth to the ACT, with further functions to be transferred in the future. This will increase Budget outlays each year.

5.45 The Committee recommends that:

- in future years, each agency prepare and provide to the Estimates Committee a reconciliation of one-off adjustments made to arrive at the Budget estimates when compared to the previous year's Budget estimate.**

²⁶ Transcript, p. 1186.

²⁷ Transcript, p. 1310.

Motor vehicles

5.46 It became apparent to the Committee that there are two methods of providing motor vehicles to agencies – hiring or purchasing.

5.47 The Committee believes that if a vehicle is required for a short time, then hiring is the preferred approach. However, it would appear that some agencies are hiring vehicles for long-term use.

5.48 Evidence showed that the purchase of vehicles is more cost-effective as they are purchased sales tax free but are later sold at market value, often close to what was paid.

5.49 As an example, the Minister for Health, Education and the Arts advised the Committee, in response to a question taken on notice, that the net cost of replacing some 150 vehicles was \$282,000.

5.50 The Committee was also advised by officers from ACTION that the purchase option encourages the user to maintain the vehicle in good condition in order to gain the benefit on sale of the vehicle.²⁸

5.51 The Chief Minister advised the Committee that the Government is making a very strong effort to reduce the amount of public money spent on the use of motor vehicles. He agreed that the ACT would be better to purchase rather than hire vehicles.²⁹

5.52 The Committee recommends that:

- **a review be undertaken of the number of motor vehicles hired and owned by the ACT Government Service and the cost/benefit of each option, including the impact on Fleet Management of the Department of Urban Services be assessed;**
- **a policy be developed for the most cost effective option; and**
- **the Assembly be advised of the results of the review and the policy adopted.**

²⁸ Transcript, p. 396.

²⁹ Transcript, p. 1233.

Reports

5.53 The Committee became aware during the inquiry that not all Members of the Assembly receive copies of all reports and documents released publicly by agencies.

5.54 Members do receive copies of material tabled in the Assembly. The Committee believes it would be beneficial for all Members to receive a copy of other material.

5.55 The Committee recommends that:

- all agencies institute a practice whereby all Members of the Legislative Assembly are provided with a copy of publicly available material, other than those tabled in the Assembly.**

Travel

5.56 The second area of special interest for the Committee was travel. Again, the Committee sought, for information purposes, a detailed breakdown of expenditure on travel for 1989–90 plus indicative figures at sub-program level for 1990–91.

5.57 This information proved much more difficult to obtain than the similar information on consultants. It would appear that until the Committee sought the information, no consolidation had been done at the agency or portfolio level. The information was generally available at the program level.

5.58 It was this request for information, more than any other, that was the subject of critical comment by Ministers and officials.

5.59 The Committee rejects that criticism, as it believes that the public sector has to be accountable, and publicly accountable.

5.60 The Committee noted, however, that some program managers were able to provide the information sought on last years travel more easily than others. For example, it would appear that some agencies maintain such information on computer and were able to provide the Committee with a copy of that record.

5.61 Other programs were not able to provide the details other than at a very macro level, such as overseas travel and domestic travel.

5.62 The Committee recognises that the size of the agency would contribute to the difficulty, but considers that more information should be available to program managers to "let the managers manage".

5.63 The Committee was able to identify \$2.488 million spent on travel in 1989-90, with \$2.737 million estimated for travel expenditure in 1990-91, an increase of approximately 10%.

5.64 The figures are understated to an extent as some sub-programs did not provide figures despite the Committee's request. As such the Committee has not drawn comparisons between the portfolios, however, the Committee is concerned at the increase apparent from the above figures.

5.65 In a period of expenditure restraint travel seems an area where close attention should be given to achieving savings. The Committee has concern with this continued growth in travel.

5.66 One issue to arise during the hearings was that of acquittal by Ministers of overseas travel. Following examination of the acquittals and legal advice from the Government Law Office, the Chief Minister's Department advised the Committee that it had incorrectly provided advice to two Ministers concerning the acquittal process. Comment can also be found at paragraph 2.11.

5.67 The Committee is also concerned at the length of time taken to acquit the advances which has been up to two months. The Government Law Office however, has advised that there is no prescribed time limit within which the advance must be acquitted. Despite this, the Committee believes that Ministers should acquit such advances within 14 days as is the practice in the Commonwealth, a procedure that should also apply to Members of the Assembly.

5.68 The Committee recommends that:

- . Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly should acquit all advances received for overseas travel within 14 days of return to Australia.**

5.69 Inadequate procedures were also highlighted in connection with the slow banking of a cheque presented in repayment of a travel advance. The Department advised the Committee that procedures had been implemented to prevent this in the future.

5.70 A second issue to arise was that of the direction given by the Chief Minister to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly concerning the level of travel funds available to the Assembly for all travel, including that of Committees.

5.71 During examination of Program 1, Support to the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker advised the Committee that the Chief Minister had made the statement that the Assembly would have "to live with \$50,000" for travel and that travel should be kept to a minimum.³⁰

5.72 The Committee is concerned on two grounds, firstly, that a direction was given concerning one aspect of operating costs of a particular program when the Chief Minister indicated during the hearings that the concept of program budgeting is to allow managers to manage.³¹

5.73 The second was that the Chief Minister was reducing the level of funding required to carry out Assembly business when the funding for Ministerial travel was increasing from expenditure of \$46,000 in 1989-90 to an estimate of \$50,000 in 1990-91.³²

5.74 The Committee was also concerned that the Chief Minister did not consider himself accountable for Ministerial travel although it fell within Program 2, ACT Corporate Management, part of the Chief Minister's portfolio. The Chief Minister stated that each Minister was responsible for travel they undertake. However, when the Committee later sought comment from the Deputy Chief Minister concerning his overseas travel, the Committee was advised that the travel fell within Program 2.³³ The same question was not asked of other Ministers. The Committee was surprised to learn that, although the Chief Minister administers the Program for Ministerial travel, he does not consider himself accountable for decisions by Ministers to travel.

Norm Jensen
Presiding Member
5 November 1990

³⁰ Transcript pp. 15-16.

³¹ Transcript, p. 1166.

³² supplementary information, Transcript, p. 1213.

³³ Transcript, pp. 1206-1208, 1212, 1580.

A HEARINGS AND AGENCIES

26 September	ACT Legislative Assembly
4 October	Finance Bureau Department of Urban Services
5 October	ACT Community and Health Services
8 October	Department of Urban Services
9 October	Department of Justice and Community Services
10 October	ACT Community and Health Services Ministry of Health, Education and the Arts
11 October	ACT Institute of Technical and Further Education Chief Minister's Department ACT Auditor-General ACT Treasury
12 October	Parks and Conservation Bureau
16 October	ACT Treasury Department of Environment, Land and Planning
18 October	Department of Justice and Community Services
19 October	Ministry of Health, Education and the Arts
25 October	Chief Minister's Department

B RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

- future Budget Papers contain financial information at the sub-program level.

Paragraph 3.4

- the Finance Bureau seek comment from Members of the Legislative Assembly and all agency heads concerning the Budget Papers and possible changes that could be made to the Papers to make them more "user friendly"; and
- a questionnaire be included in the Budget Papers, accompanied by publicity to encourage users of the Papers to complete the questionnaire.

Paragraph 3.18

- a Select Committee be established, comprising the same membership as the Estimates Committee, to examine and report on matters relating to future Estimates Committees including the form the revised Budget Papers may take.

Paragraph 3.23

- the Office of Public Sector Management in conjunction with agencies review the program and sub-program structure of each agency to ensure relevant programs and consistency across the ACT Government Service, and that the Justice and Community Services Department receives priority attention.

Paragraph 3.28

the Public Sector Management Board undertake a review of program and sub-program objectives and performance indicators, including the measurement process.

Paragraph 3.42

agencies measure the performance of their programs and sub-programs and report the results each year in their annual reports. If the reports are not available for the Estimates Committee, a separate report on the results of the performance measurement should be provided to the Committee.

Paragraph 3.45

the Select Committee (recommended in paragraph 3.23) also consider the format that the supplementary information should take, including recommending a standard form, and when it should be available.

Paragraph 3.61

the ACT Tourism Commission and the ACT Office of Sport, Recreation and Racing develop a co-ordinated process to increase the benefits to the ACT from tourism arising from sporting events.

Paragraph 3.69

future Estimates Committees be established at the time of introduction of the Appropriation Bill into the Legislative Assembly by the Treasurer at the latest.

Paragraph 4.10

future Estimates Committees consider selecting at least two areas service wide for detailed examination each year.

Paragraph 4.15

- . future Estimates Committees consider selecting one sub-program in each portfolio for detailed examination each year.

Paragraph 4.17

- . the cost attribution system for rent be developed as a priority and be in place for the 1991-92 Budget.

Paragraph 5.12

- . if the cost attribution system for rent is not in place for the 1991-92 Budget, a notional transfer be done to ensure that costs are found in the appropriate Program.

Paragraph 5.15

- . from 1 January 1991 the Government increase the amount available for capital grants for distribution to sporting and other community organisations previously assisted by the Community Development Fund by an amount equivalent to the interest that would have been paid if the Community Development Fund had continued to operate.

Paragraph 5.29

- . careful consideration be given to the use of consultants, particularly when public servants could undertake the task; and
- . the draft guidelines for selecting and managing management consultants be completed as a matter of priority.

Paragraph 5.36

- . in future years, each agency prepare and provide to the Estimates Committee a reconciliation of one-off adjustments made to arrive at the Budget estimates when compared to the previous year's Budget estimate.

Paragraph 5.45

- . a review be undertaken of the number of motor vehicles hired and owned by the ACT Government Service and the cost/benefit of each option, including the impact on Fleet Management of the Department of Urban Services be assessed;
- . a policy be developed for the most cost effective option; and
- . the Assembly be advised of the results of the review and the policy adopted.

Paragraph 5.52

- . all agencies institute a practice whereby all Members of the Legislative Assembly are provided with a copy of publicly available material, other than those tabled in the Assembly.

Paragraph 5.55

- . Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly should acquit all advances received for overseas travel within 14 days of return to Australia.

Paragraph 5.68

C ADDITIONAL COMMENTS : Terry Connolly MLA

D ADDITIONAL COMMENTS : Michael Moore MLA

It was not for the Estimates Committee to attempt to question the Government's priorities. Rather it was an attempt to determine, within the Government's framework, if the estimates on future savings and expenditure seemed valid.

There is still a significant question concerning "adjustments" in my mind. Not only are there a series of adjustments to each program but also in the overall budget.¹ Individually, at program level, each of these adjustments can be justified. Just as they can in terms of the whole budget context. However, there is no way to compare the extent of adjustments from one year to the next. The money which has been justified still is part of the money which this Territory spends and it is important that we have a method of comparing the extent of adjustments from one year to the next. Without this the accountability of our public servants is greatly diminished because the opportunity exists for claiming "cuts" on the one hand but readjusting on the other hand. These adjustments account for 20.7% of the recurrent budget.

Overall there were no cuts in this budget – there was an increase in Capital Expenditure by some \$30 million, "a 15% increase on 1989–90"² and a recurrent increase of "2.8% in real terms" which represents a 9.3% increase over the 1989–90 budget. This is hardly restraint!

The most disturbing aspect of the Kaine restraint concept is revealed in Budget Paper 2 Figure 6.3 which indicates that the only two functional groups to suffer cuts in real terms were Technical and Further Education –2.5% and Education and the Arts –1.5%. Clearly, the restraint that the Chief Minister is so fond of pronouncing is just rhetoric.

The most divisive area of restraint has been in Education; in particular the focus of the cuts has been on school closures. The first question which needs to be asked is why are the education areas the only ones to suffer real cuts? Accepting the education cuts as an ideological decision of the Conservative Alliance Government I have been appalled at the difficulty of getting clear answers from the Minister and his Education Ministry on how they expect to make the savings and how they made their decision on which specific schools would be marked for closure in the first place.

There are many questions still to be answered, the most important of these being the safety of children and the structure of Canberra from a planning perspective. The closure decision was taken without regard to the social implications of school closures.

¹ Budget Paper No. 2, pp. 45 – 46.

² Budget Paper No. 1, p. 22.

Of great concern was provision of material to the Committee on the subject of school closures. It seems to me that if a decision is a good and valid one it can stand up to scrutiny as can the material upon which such a decision is made. Getting information on closures that we wanted, rather than information that they wished to provide was like trying to penetrate ASIO.

The Minister for Health, Education and the Arts wrote to the Committee on 30 October 1990 to clarify some statements to the Estimates Committee which were made by one of his public servants. One of the paragraphs reads in full:

Following the meeting on 18 July, recommendations and accompanying material were prepared for me and the Joint Party Room. This submission of some thirty pages went to Joint Party Members on the morning of 26 July 1990 so that it could be considered for their meeting on 27 July 1990.

This prompted a motion from me which resulted in a letter from the Chair of the Committee which included the following paragraph:

The Committee has resolved that I write to you seeking a copy of the information referred to in paragraph three of your letter, ie the submission of some thirty pages that was provided to Joint Party Members on 26 July 1990.

On receiving the information it was clear that no recommendations were included although they too had been sought. It was also clear that no information was provided from any of the submissions by schools throughout Canberra as the response to the "Restructuring Criteria".

On the last day of the Committee November 5, I pointed to the need for such vital information and moved that the papers identified for the Joint Party Room Meeting of 27 July 1990 be provided to the Committee.

JOINT PARTY MEETING 27 JULY 1990

The following papers are attached:

- Groups of Schools for consideration under 2 options	1
- Enrolment patterns and surplus capacity	3
- Bases for recommendations	5
- Details of financial implications	14
- Implications for special education units	16
- Implications for tenants	17
- Revised priority enrolment areas	18
- Disadvantages of small schools	20
- RECOMMENDATIONS	
- Maps of regions with priority enrolment areas	

Background information was provided in a folder on the previous day.

Ministry of Health, Education and the Arts 26 July 1990.

The motion was lost.

It seems to me that the loss of the motion was a blow for open and accountable government. Up until this time the Committee had been prepared to seek information from each of the Ministers. I recognise the limited time available to the Committee, but I believe the Estimates Committee and the public were entitled to know on what information the school closure decision was based.

I have been unable to identify any reference to any of the "Responses to Criteria" by schools. In spite of the thousands of hours schools spent on these submissions the evidence indicates that the decision makers in the Joint Party Room did not have the submissions or even a summary of the submissions.

With regard to the closure of the Royal Canberra Hospital the Committee identified a series of expenditures amounting to some \$12.5 million which had not been clearly linked to the hospital redevelopment proposal but which had been 'buried' in various other programs and sub-programs. If such figures are not attributed correctly it creates a situation where the Assembly and members of the public are directed into believing that the cost of the Hospitals Redevelopment Project is smaller than it actually is.

I believe the Estimates Committee should be able to ask questions of ACTEW in the same way as we have been able to question other parts of ACT finances.

There is a "Yes, Minister" sequence in which James Hacker is asking Sir Humphrey to tell him what he doesn't know and Sir Humphrey, clearly knowing what the Minister is seeking, replies that he cannot tell him what he wants to know if he doesn't know the question. I know how Hacker felt!

Michael Moore
5 November 1990