



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURE
Speaker Ms Joy Burch MLA (Chair), Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Deputy Chair),
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Submission Cover sheet

Evaluation of trial of estimates being
considered by standing committees

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Opposition Whip

Tom Duncan

Secretary Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure

ACT Legislative Assembly

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Dear Mr Duncan,

Re Conduct of Budget Estimates

I refer to the letter from the Speaker of November 2022 inviting comments relating to reviewing the efficacy of different approaches to the consideration of the budget.

I note that in the 10th Assembly we have used two different approaches to date - by Select Committee (as took place for the 2022-23 budget) and by Standing Committees (as took place for the 2021-22 budget).

As Opposition Whip, I have consulted with my colleagues from the Canberra Liberals and this document contains a consolidated view on the benefits and difficulties of both approaches.

General comments:

- Callback day should be scheduled in with Ministers. There is no excuse for not being available on callback day. This occurred in the most recent Estimates, with at least one Minister unavailable for callback due to making other arrangements despite the schedule being published
- It has been common practice over the years to have combined Annual report hearing and estimates in first year after an election, this is more to do with the election timing vis a vis annual reports presentation than any administrative or portfolio advantage in combining the hearings.
- In recent years the timing of Budget presentation and Estimates hearing has also varied due to Covid, and the date of delivery of the Federal budget. This has also influenced the way the ACT Legislative Assembly have approached the budget timings.
- The Community Day is seen as an extremely valuable component of the democratic process and must be retained, preferably at the beginning of the hearings.
- Timeliness in scheduling appearances of Ministers was a challenge.

- Having the hearings in the Chamber was generally welcomed. However, especially when held with masks and perspex screens, it made it hard to hear at times particularly if officials sitting in back rows spoke. Recommend better sound/AV equipment.

In summary , the Liberals strongly hold the view that a separate Estimates hearings process is more useful. This was well summarised by Mr Barr and the Chair of PAC in the joint 2021 hearings by Standing Committees¹:

Mr Barr: In the old model, when there was just one committee asking everyone, there would be less risk of this.

THE CHAIR: I have just been advised of a further complexity. Because it was evidence given to another committee, it makes it very tricky for us from a technical point of view.

If you have any questions on the matters outlined in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Nicole Lawder

Opposition Whip

29 January 2023

¹ PAC Hearings 24 February 2021 Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2019-2020 and ACT budget 2020-2021 (pp70-71)



Nicole Lawder MLA

Opposition Whip

Committee Type	Advantages	Issues
Standing Committees	Established committee structure with some knowledge of subject matter	- Members appearing at committees to ask questions of Ministers in the areas of portfolio issue or electorate interest, unaware that similar questions may already have been asked. - For example PAC Hearings 24 February 2021 Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2019-2020 and ACT budget 2020-2021 (pp70-71) BOLD added for highlighting purposes. <i>Mr Barr: This is the question that Mr Davis asked me two days ago. Pat has already given an answer to that, so I just refer to the Hansard for the answer. I had exactly the same question, word for word, from Mr Davis two days ago.</i> <i>MR BRADDOCK: I think there is a lesson here about things being simpler in how people appear in front of the committee so that we are not all duplicating each other.</i> <i>Mr Barr: Yes.</i>

		<i>MR PETTERSSON: Great minds think alike.</i> <i>Mr Barr: In the old model, when there was just one committee asking everyone, there would be less risk of this.</i> <i>THE CHAIR: I have just been advised of a further complexity. Because it was evidence given to another committee, it makes it very tricky for us from a technical point of view.</i> <i>Mr Barr: Pat, do you want to come up and repeat what was said?</i> <i>Ms Vroombout: I can give you the summary.</i> <i>THE CHAIR: I think it would be pedantic for you have to do that again, but it is worth noting, as a committee and as an Assembly, that it is something that we will have to overcome.</i> <i>Mr Barr: This is an issue, yes</i>
Select Committee	• Continuity of questioning, • Awareness of what has gone before • Able to follow up with other Ministers when they appear if the first Minister asked says it is not them	• Heavy demand and workload for a short but sustained period for Committee Members of the Select Committee