

# Assembly committees

Committees are small groups of members (MLAs) created by the Assembly to investigate issues in greater detail than is possible to do in the chamber.

## What do committees do?

Committees perform three important functions which reflect the three roles of the Assembly – legislation, accountability, and representation:

- They investigate new proposed laws (bills) in depth and make recommendations to the Assembly for improve them
- They scrutinise the decisions, actions, and spending of the government, particularly through the public inquiries into the budget (future spending) and annual reports (the past year's spending), and
- They provide a platform for the community to have their say on proposed laws, government spending, and important issues.

## Types of committees

There are two types of committees the Assembly can create: standing and select committees.

### Standing committees

A standing committee is created after an ACT election and runs for the full term of an Assembly. 'Standing' refers to the fact that they continue for the full four years. Each standing committee is responsible for a certain subject area that the Territory governs, such as health, education, justice, or the environment. They hold multiple inquiries during a term into issues relating to their specific subject.

There are often multiple standing committees, often up to eight, and what they focus on may change between Assemblies.

### Select committees

A select committee is created to examine a specific issue for a limited time. Any member can move to set up a select committee, or the Assembly as a whole can request one be set up. 'Select' refers to their limited focus and lifespan. A select committee disbands once it completes its enquiry and provides its report to the Assembly.

An example of a select committee is the estimates committee that examines the budget each year.

Reasons for setting up a select committee can include that an issue covers multiple subject areas (e.g., justice and health) or that the relevant committee has no space in its workload to look into the issue.

## Who works on a committee?

Committees are made up of elected members and supported by non-political parliamentary staff.

### Committee members

All committees are made up of non-executive members – MLAs who aren't ministers. There are usually three members per committee, although some select committees may have more. Standing orders (the Assembly's rules) require a committee's membership reflect the party make-up of the chamber as closely as possible. This means that each seat is allocated to a party or independent proportional to their share of seats in the Assembly.

Each party is responsible for nominating who fills their allocated seat on a committee. They can also change this. Members who are not part of a committee can also participate in a public inquiry if the committee members agree.

### Committee chair

Each committee elects a person to run the committee and speak on its behalf, called a Chair. They are also responsible for presenting any reports to the Assembly.

### Committee secretary

The secretary is a non-political parliamentary officer who supports the work of the committee. They provide independent advice to the committee, schedule its meetings and hearings, conduct research for inquiries, and prepare draft reports. The secretary is always the first point of contact for anyone seeking information about a committee.

## How do committee inquiries work?

Just like the chamber has a process for making laws, committees have a process for investigating an issue. This is explained in our [committee inquire process guide](#).