



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Chair), Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Deputy Chair)
Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

Ms Joy Burch MLA
Speaker
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Madam Speaker

INQUIRY INTO THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE TENTH ASSEMBLY

Thank you for your letter of 14 April 2020 regarding the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure's *Inquiry into the Committee Structure for the Tenth Assembly*.

The Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (EEYA) considered your letter in its private meeting of 12 May 2020.

EEYA noted the recent completion of the *Review of the Performance of the Three Branches of Government in the ACT against Latimer House Principles* and welcomed the opportunity to comment on the recommendation relating to committees. I have detailed EEYA's views alongside each part of the recommendation below.

Recommendation 3

There is a case for reviewing the roles of committees including:

- *the language used should be sharpened by referring to scrutiny of the Executive and investigation of public policy matters*

EEYA agreed the language could be sharpened in the manner described for the resolutions of establishment for committees in the Tenth Assembly.

- *greater use should be made of standing committees for the examination of bills*

EEYA discussed work prepared for the Meeting of Committee Chairs in February 2020 regarding referral of legislation to committees and committees staffing comparison of parliaments. Notwithstanding potential resourcing constraints on the part of MLAs or committee support staff, EEYA agreed with the recommendation that greater use should be made of standing committees for the examination of bills.

- *standing committees should more explicitly reflect directorates, and be clearly subject matter committees*

EEYA disagreed with this recommendation. The composition of directorates is rightly in the remit of the Executive to determine and it would be inappropriate to restructure committees on this basis.

- *some subjects incorporated in committee titles that are not given obvious attention in committee activity should be dropped*

EEYA noted that some areas of committee titles receive more attention than others but does not recommend any change in title to the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. EEYA emphasised that committees should be empowered to inquire into topics that may be seen to reach into another committee's scope.

- *some select committee activity might be incorporated in standing committees*

EEYA cautioned against any move that would limit the ability of the Assembly to establish select committees where the majority determines that to be the most appropriate course of action.

- *the work of estimates committees should become part of standing committees*

EEYA acknowledged the merits of both potential approaches however decided that estimates should remain a select committee, noting it provides important parliamentary and scrutiny experience for non-executive MLAs.

Looking towards the Tenth Assembly more generally, EEYA agreed there would be merit in reviewing current committee reporting practices suggesting a move to more frequent updates to the Assembly on inquiry processes coupled with streamlining of committee reports.

Further, EEYA proposes Standing Order 99A be amended so that all petitions presented to the Assembly, regardless of the number of signatories, shall be referred to the relevant Assembly standing committee for consideration.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this important process. If you would like further details on any of the points expressed above, please contact the Committee Secretary, Ms Sarah McFadden, at LACommitteeEEYA@parliament.act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Michael Pettersson MLA
Chair

20 May 2020

CC: Mr Tom Duncan