



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Tara Cheyne MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr James Milligan MLA

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

Dear Madam Speaker

I write on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services in response to your letter, dated 14 April 2020, concerning Latimer House Principles and the structure of the Assembly's committee system following the election of the 10th Assembly.

The Committee considered your letter at its private meeting on 13 May 2020 and makes the following comments in response to each point in Recommendation 3:

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

The Committee supports this point.

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

The Committee supports this point, in principle, but notes that in order to make greater use of committees for the examination of bills, committees need to be adequately resourced and sufficient time must be given to committees for the examination of bills prior to their passage through the Assembly. The Committee believes that expanding the membership of standing committees from three to five members may enable committees to better manage an increase in workload associated with bill examination through the formation of sub committees. The Committee further believes that committee deputy chairs should be appropriately remunerated, commensurate with any expansion of their responsibilities in managing increased committee work.

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

The Committee sees some merit in more closely aligning standing committees with directorates and supports the idea that these should be clearly subject matter committees. The Committee notes, however, there are risks in too closely pegging Assembly committees to machinery of government arrangements, noting that these are subject to change throughout the course of an assembly. This would make consistent scrutiny of the executive difficult and potentially result in committees losing agency in determining what is important for them to inquire into.

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

The Committee notes that it has undertaken inquiries into all subjects incorporated into its title and has no comment to make on this point.

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

The Committee believes that while this may be possible in some circumstances, there are times when this is not feasible or appropriate. Select committees are formed when the Assembly sees a necessity in forming them. The Committee believes that such decisions should be left to the wisdom of the Assembly to determine. Further to this, please refer the comment above on the second point concerning the need to adequately resource committees to manage any increase in workload.

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

While acknowledging the reasons for the formation of a select committee on estimates to carry out scrutiny of the budget, the Committee sees merit in this point and believes it is worth exploring further. To determine which approach produces better results, the Committee recommends that a trial be undertaken to allow standing committees to carry out the work of budget estimates, noting that such an approach would require committees to ensure consistency across the secretariat in terms of reporting.

The Committee thanks you for consulting it on this important issue.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tara Cheyne'.

Tara Cheyne MLA
Chair
Environment, Transport and City Services Committee
28 May 2020