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Manager of Government Business
Minister for Planning and Land Management
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

James Milligan MLA

Chair
Select Committee on Estimates 2022-23
ACT Legislative Assembly
CANBERRA ACT 2601
By email: LACommitteeEstimates@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Chair *JAMES*

Thank you for your most recent letter of 12 August regarding the upcoming estimates hearings.

I am pleased to hear that the Committee is giving high priority to the safety of all involved in the hearing process. I would expect no less, given the Committee must meet all its workplace safety duties and obligations, including managing the risks of COVID-19.

As I outlined in my previous letters, the ACT is in a public health emergency. We are currently experiencing a wave of cases that is bigger than we have seen at any point in the pandemic.

I am certain that the committee would not want to risk the business continuity of the ACT Public Service, particularly among our frontline operational agencies such as Canberra Health Services, ACT Police and the Emergency Services Agency. However, this is what is at risk when all officials are required to attend in person.

Given the above, I would like to suggest the following approach to hearings.

Ministers will be presumed to attend in person, noting that this still carries significant risk to their own health and does not account for those who may be vulnerable, have family members who are vulnerable, or those who have caring responsibilities. I ask that the Committee acknowledge this risk and consult with members on its risk assessment, as is required under workplace safety duties.

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All ACT Public Service employees and independent statutory office holders will attend virtually unless they elect to attend in person.

Attendees must be able to choose the safest method of appearance without requiring them to disclose private health information to the Committee.

I trust that the Committee will find this both feasible and reasonable.

The ACT Government and the ACT Public Service has been using online technology to conduct meetings for over two years, including Cabinet meetings, and I can reassure the Committee that it works well. Attendance online will not impede the questioning of attendees.

I note that the Assembly was funded as part of COVID-19 support measures for a technical support officer. I also note that, this morning, the Webex technology appeared to work well in the Community Hearings. This should mean that the Committee has no problem using the technology available to it in order to avoid exposing ACT Public Service employees to COVID unnecessarily.

I trust that this process will lead to a workable estimates process and allow for the Committee to conduct full and proper scrutiny of the budget.

Yours sincerely,



Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety
Manager of Government Business

12/13/2022