



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QToN No. 1

COMMITTEE SUPPORT

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

**Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022**  
**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

Asked by MR PETERSSON on 2 NOVEMBER 2022: TOM DUNCAN, CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, took on notice the following question:

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 2 NOVEMBER 2022 [PAGE 15]]

In relation to:

[Update on implementation of the Laing Review](#)

MR DUNCAN: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:-

[Please find attached an update on all suggestions contained in the Laing Review.](#)

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Signature:

Date: 10 November 2022

By Janice Rafferty, Acting Deputy Clerk, on behalf of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly



# Review of the Committee Support Function by Dr Rosemary Laing

## Progress on suggestions

Category	Suggestion, recommendation, comment	Owner/s	Agreed / Not agreed / Implemented
<b>Resourcing</b>			
1 Suggestion 1 (Laing Report, para 5.3)	Additional resources need to be found from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ organisational realignment within the Committee Support office</li> <li>▪ creative use of shadowing arrangements across the OLA</li> <li>▪ use of temporary employment registers</li> <li>▪ any unspent appropriations for one-off expenditure</li> <li>▪ seeking additional appropriations for the purpose.</li> </ul>	Clerk / Deputy Clerk	Agreed Waiting for committee support and chamber support to be fully staffed and settled in
2 Suggestion 8 (Laing Report, para 5.16)	The Planning, Transport and City Services Committee should consider its requirement for technical assistance and, if it agrees that a specialist adviser is the answer, develop a brief for negotiation with the Speaker for a possible appointment on a trial basis.	Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Several attempts have been made by the Clerk seeking technical assistance Clerk will continue to seek this assistance
<b>Training and development and induction processes</b>			
3 Suggestion 2 (Laing Report, para 5.4)	The Clerk consider the possibility of reciprocal shadowing between the Committee Support and Chamber Support offices and also explore the possibility of exchange programs with Commonwealth counterparts.	Clerk / Deputy Clerk / Senior Director,	Agreed and in progress. Owners have started

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		Committee Support / Clerk Assistant	discussions about shadowing and learning and development opportunities Waiting for committee support to be fully staffed and settled in
4	Suggestion 16 (Laing Report, para 5.30) With a differently structured committee office, the OLA should consider developing more home-grown parliamentary training and on-the-job support in the form of workshops on various aspects of committee support. It is also suggested that the Clerk discuss with Commonwealth counterparts the possible participation of OLA staff in their respective training programs where it would be of relevance. In return, the Clerk or other senior staff could reciprocate by providing a view from a unicameral parliament and ACT committee case studies.	Clerk / Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Agreed Clerk to write to Commonwealth Clerks in June 2023 to progress possible participation of OLA staff
5	Suggestion 17 (Laing Report, para 5.31) Induction programs for new starters should be checked to ensure they included ongoing support for a period of time, possibly including a buddy system, pairing up new starters with OLA staff from other areas.	Business Support	Clerk to follow up with Executive Manager, Business Support
<b>Committee support structure and staffing</b>			
6	Suggestion 3 (Laing report, para 5.6) The Clerk, in consultation with MLAs as necessary, should consider changing the structure within the Committee Support office to create multi-member secretariat teams supporting groups of committees, with staff performing the functions of secretary, assistant secretary or senior researcher, and administrative officer. If this is	Clerk / Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support /	Implemented

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7	<p>agreed, then duty statements and selection criteria for those positions need to be re-written and recruitment action taken when resources allow.</p> <p>In recruiting researchers, either permanently or temporarily, attention needs to be paid to appointing people with subject knowledge and skills in planning, audit, public finance and legislative analysis to support committee work.</p>	<p>Business Support</p> <p>Senior Director, Committee Support</p>	<p>These are generalist roles, not PSO roles so we cannot recruit for particular qualifications or experience</p>
8	<p>Secretariat groupings could be based on committees as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Planning and Environment Group (comprising Planning Transport and City Services and Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity)</li> <li>▪ Finance and Economics Group (comprising Public Accounts Committee and Economy and Gender and Economic Equity)</li> <li>▪ Legal and Community Services Group (comprising Justice and Community Safety, Education and Community Inclusion, and Health and Community Wellbeing).</li> </ul>	<p>Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support</p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>There are now four groups in place along these lines (JACS is separate and includes Scrutiny)</p>
<b>Accommodation</b>			
9	<p>The Clerk should consider changes to office accommodation that enhance the goal of keeping secretariat teams together and making greater use of open plan space to facilitate better collaboration.</p>	<p>Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support / Business Support</p>	<p>Preliminary draft plans developed</p> <p>Interim measures in place</p> <p>Clerk to discuss with Executive Manager, Business Support and Senior Director, Committee Support</p>

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<b>Senior Director, Committees</b>			
10	Suggestion 7 (Laiing Report, para 5.14)  The Senior Director, Committee Support should report directly to the Clerk and should also be a member of EMC where strategic and governance decisions affecting the OLA are taken.	Clerk	Agreed in part EMC membership agreed from March 2022
<b>Improvements in practices</b>			
11	Suggestion 9 (Laiing Report, para 5.18)  It is suggested that the Assembly and the OLA adopt the concept of a statement of expectations, whether it is focused on what is expected of OLA staff or whether it is based on mutual expectations, as the current Guide for Members of Assembly Committees implies. If the concept of a statement of expectations is adopted, the Chairs Committee might oversee the development of such an instrument, with the OLA providing a draft for its consideration.	Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	In progress To be put to committee chairs meeting in first half of 2023 To be referred to in committee office manual
12	Suggestion 10 (Laiing Report, para 5.20)  When the Administration and Procedure Committee is reviewing the standing referral of bills, it may wish to consider the observation about the usual non-availability of legislative scrutiny comments to committees considering whether to undertake policy inquiries into bills and consider possible mechanisms to overcome this.	Clerk	Agreed Implemented in February 2022

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<b>Budgets</b>			
<p><b>13</b> Suggestion 11 (Laing Report, para 5.22)</p>	<p>It is suggested that the Clerk advise each committee at the beginning of each financial year on the notional administrative budget assigned to it and provide briefing on the purposes to which it can be applied.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>	<p>Agreed in part Committee chairs advised of total budget in December 2021 To be undertaken at the first meeting of committee chairs after beginning of each financial year</p>
<b>Training and Development for MLAs</b>			
<p><b>14</b> Suggestion 12 (Laing Report, para 5.24)</p>	<p>With support from the Administration and Procedure Committee or the Chairs Committee, the OLA could explore the feasibility of compiling self-service training resources for committee members and chairs, along the lines described in paragraph 2.16. The Clerk should also draw MLAs' attention to the new CPA Training Academy and offer briefing on how participation in such programs might be funded. For privilege issues arising in committees, the Clerk should consider how advice on such matters can best be provided to MLAs.</p>	<p>Clerk / Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Office of the Clerk</p>	<p>Clerk to raise self-service training resources with Senior Director, Office of the Clerk Clerk and Executive Manager, Business Support to discuss possible budget bid for MLA training</p>

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<b>Procedural documents and guidance</b>			
15 Suggestion 13 (Laing Report, para 5.26)	As a matter of urgency, steps should be taken to finalise the committee support manual and to mandate a style guide. Steps should also be taken to develop and mandate templates for as many identified purposes as possible, and to develop guidance for administrative officers in their new support roles (if agreed to). There must be a focus on providing committee members with the papers they need for any meeting or hearing by the most efficient means and in a structure that facilitates fast and consistent access to individual items.	Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Style Guide finalised and in use Templates and SOPs in progress Manual update in progress
16 Suggestion 14 (Laing Report, para 5.27)	In light of these developments and the potential adoption of a statement of expectations, the Guide for Members of Assembly Committees should be updated, and promulgated in useable formats, and resources for MLAs' staff should also be considered. Annotated checklists for chairs, including procedural scripts, should also be considered. Finally, even though it has been recently updated, the guide for witnesses and making submissions should be rechecked for procedural consistency and plain English. Practice manuals should also recognise the role of public affairs staff in effective promotion of committee activities.	Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Implemented in part. Chairs notes updated Remainder of suggestion to be implemented once a full complement of committee support staff is in place and settled
17 Suggestion 15 (Laing Report, para 5.28)	Record keeping should be considered a priority for the office and should become a key focus of the new administrative officer positions, with appropriate training and policy guidance from OLA records management staff.	Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Agreed

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<b>Performance management</b>			
18 Suggestion 18 (Lairg Report, para 5.33)	Performance agreements should be updated at least annually, and appraisals should happen more than once a year. Better performance management must be accompanied by effective training in teambuilding and good communications. Performance appraisal should be underpinned by better individual and team-based work reporting practices. Senior managers must foster an inclusive approach to all staff, using both formal and informal means. Moreover, the performance framework should recognise the Clerk as the pre-eminent source of procedural advice.	Deputy Clerk / Senior Director, Committee Support	Agreed Noting performance agreements and appraisals are required for all OLA staff