

Objective 1

Assembly and Committee Support

To support the Legislative Assembly (and its committees and Members) in fulfilling its functions within the institution of Parliament to:

- make law (and supervise delegated law making)
- approve and scrutinise the State's finances
- scrutinise the actions of executive government (and oversight independent bodies), and
- provide a forum for debate and grievance.

Overview

To achieve this objective, Parliamentary Service resources have been allocated to provide Members with a range of procedural, research, advisory and information services. These resources are primarily delivered through the following Parliamentary Service offices and Divisions:

- » the Office of the Speaker
- » the Office of the Clerk
- » the Office of the Deputy Clerk, and
- » the Assembly and Committee Services Division.

In 2021-22 the Assembly and Committee Services Division comprised the following three Service Areas:

- » Chamber and Education Services
- » Committee Office (including Office of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner), and
- » Parliamentary Reporting and Broadcasting Service (Hansard).

The key performance indicators for Objective 1 relate to the extent to which the quantity, quality, timeliness and cost of specified services provided by each of the service areas meet the agreed standards and targets. The methods of measurement include client survey, benchmarking, internal assessment through information management systems and external assessment through audit reports.

Key performance indicators for Assembly and Committee Support are available as part of Appendix B.

99%

Percentage of Hansard transcripts published on time

799.9

Total audio hours transcribed



456 hearings and briefings



18,374 submissions considered

1,466

Questions on Notice processed

Report on parliamentary committee activities for 2021-22

Queensland's parliamentary committee system was significantly reformed in August 2011 in order to improve openness and accountability, better connect the work of Parliament with its committees, and increase the levels of public consultation within Queensland's legislative process. The reforms have seen an increase in the volume of committee work undertaken and the public having greater input into matters that are debated by the Parliament. An overview of the committee work conducted during the year is detailed below.

The Parliament's portfolio committees undertook 42 formal inquiries, which comprised:

- 32 inquiries into bills that were introduced in the Parliament and then referred to committees for examination
- four inquiries on matters of community importance referred by the Parliament
- four inquiries as part of fulfilling statutory oversight, public accounts and public works responsibilities, and
- two inquiries initiated by a committee under self-referral powers.

A total of 456 portfolio committee hearings, briefings and meetings were held during the year. These comprised 190 hearings and briefings (mostly held in public) and 266 private meetings.

Committee inquiries are a key avenue for public consultation and engagement between the public and the Parliament, and support the Parliament to scrutinise government activity. Committees received and considered 18,374 submissions, and heard evidence from 1,415 persons (comprising 777 representatives of organisations, 108 individuals and 530 public servants).

The Government responded to 14 committee bill inquiry reports in 2021-22, all within the legislated timeframe. There were a total of 35 recommendations contained in

those reports (other than that the bill be passed or not passed). The public consultation as outlined above greatly contributed to the formulation of these recommendations.

One indicator of the influence of portfolio committees is the number of recommendations contained in inquiry reports that were agreed to by the government.

In relation to the bill inquiries for which government responses were received in 2021-22:

- of 14 proposed legislative amendments, 12 were accepted by the government (86%), and
- of 21 other recommendations, 18 were accepted by the government (86%).

Committees tabled a total of 84 publications, mostly reports, in the Parliament during 2021-22.

The review of budget estimates for the 2021-22 appropriations was conducted by the seven portfolio committees during the financial year. Each portfolio committee is responsible for examining the proposed expenditures of the Government departments for their respective areas of responsibility, and advising the Parliament accordingly. Seven estimates hearings were held from 16 July to 13 August 2021 with each of the committees reporting back to Parliament in August 2021.

Committees conducted 32 bill inquiries, including inquiries into the *Public Health and Other Legislation (Further Extension of Expiring Provisions) Amendment Bill 2021*, *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021*, *Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Bill*, *Racing Integrity Amendment Bill 2022* and the *Personal Injuries Proceedings and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022*.

In 2021-22, committees also tabled reports of inquiries into matters of public interest including:

- vehicle safety, standards and technology, including engine immobiliser technology
- the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council and related matters
- social isolation and loneliness in Queensland
- the provision of primary, allied and private health care, aged care and NDIS care services and its impact on the Queensland public health system
- the operation of the *Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 (Qld)*, and
- serious vilification and hate crimes.

On 2 December 2021, the Parliament also established a select committee, the Mental Health Select Committee (MHSC), to inquire into opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders. The MHSC:

- received 164 submissions
- held public briefings with officials from departments
- held 4 private hearings
- held 15 public hearings in Brisbane and across Queensland, hearing from 243 witnesses, and
- conducted 11 site visits across Queensland.

The MHSC reported to Parliament on 6 June 2022 and made 57 recommendations.

In addition, a number of inquiries were referred to or self-referred by committees during 2021-22 that remain ongoing. These include inquiries into:

- matters relating to donor conception information
- the decriminalisation of certain public offences, and health and welfare responses
- the Mount Gravatt TAFE Upgrade Project
- the Peninsula Development Road (Laura to Weipa) project
- the economic and regulatory frameworks for Queensland island resorts, and
- the functions of the Independent Assessor and the performance of those functions.

Portfolio committees also reviewed a number of Auditor-General reports and reported to the Parliament. A number of committees undertook proceedings in support of their responsibility for oversight of specific independent entities.

An important function of committees is to enhance the democratic process by taking the work of the Parliament to the people and giving them a direct way to input into its decisions.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions during 2021-22, committees were able to again travel to the regions and conduct hearings. Hearings were held in locations such as Toowoomba, Nambour, Mount Isa, Cairns, Torres Strait, Townsville, Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Emerald, Longreach, Doomadgee, Mornington Island, Yarrabah, Palm Island, Roma, Charleville, Moreton Island, Yeppoon, Weipa and Cooktown.

The use of video conferencing has also allowed committees to hear from additional people. In 2021-22, 120 people participated remotely in 26 committee proceedings held in Brisbane.

The volume of committee work completed and the outcomes achieved during 2021-22 continues to demonstrate that parliamentary committees are supporting parliamentary scrutiny of government activity, and contributing to an open, consultative and modern parliamentary system.

Public consultation by parliamentary committees

A number of strategies have been implemented since 2011 to promote Queensland's committee inquiry process and raise awareness of how Queenslanders can be involved with committee inquiries and influence decision making, including:

- publishing details of all inquiries on the Parliament's Internet site
- issuing media releases
- utilising the Parliament's social media channels
- media interviews by committee chairs
- identifying persons and groups who may be interested in each particular inquiry and directly contacting them with information about the inquiry and how they can participate
- sending information about committee activities to committee subscriber email alert lists, including when submissions are invited and public proceedings held
- where an inquiry may have a focus in a particular regional area, advertisements may be placed in relevant local community newspapers, and
- placing advertisements and articles in trade journals and publications relevant to a committee inquiry topic.

Committee hearings held at Parliament House are generally broadcast live on 'Parliament.TV' via the Parliament's website, and can be watched on replay following the hearing. The live broadcast allows people across Queensland with an interest in particular inquiries to follow hearings and events as they occur. Transcripts of public proceedings are also published. Where appropriate, the Parliament's First Peoples Liaison Officer assists in raising awareness of inquiries amongst First Nations people and communities, supporting consultation activities, and providing assistance to those who may wish to participate.

Major initiatives

Committee Office

First Facebook Live Q&A event

In October 2021, the Queensland Parliament held its first Facebook Live event called, 'In the Spotlight', to mark the ten year anniversary of the portfolio committee system. The event marked the anniversary of wide-ranging reforms to the portfolio committee system in 2011.

A panel of current and former Members of Parliament, including those who worked on the Committee System Review Committee in 2010, participated in a live, interactive 'Q&A' session, broadcast via the Parliament's Facebook account. Over 90 people registered to attend the event in addition to those who participated online.

Table Office

Tabled Papers Database developed in-house

A new Tabled Papers Database was implemented in January 2022, following a development and testing period in 2021. Developed in-house, the database improves administration capability and searchability for users.

Digitisation of parliamentary papers tabled between 1860 and 1989

The office has also continued to digitise the significant volume of parliamentary papers tabled in the Legislative Assembly between 1860 and 1989. In 2021-22, papers of the 35th to 40th Parliaments, covering the years 1957 to 1974, along with ad hoc papers requested by researchers, were digitised and published on the Parliament's website.

Approach to committee reporting enhanced

In December 2021, the Committee Office engaged external consultants to assist with evaluating and refining the approach to committee reporting.

The Committee Office has developed new reporting templates and a style guide and participated in report writing training. The Committee Office will focus on implementing the new reader focussed approach to writing reports in the next financial year.

Parliamentary Reporting and Broadcasting Service

Transition to a new digital audio recording system

2021-22 saw the Queensland Parliament transition to a new digital audio recording system, Liberty, which is now used by the Parliamentary Reporting and Broadcasting Service in the recording and transcription of proceedings of the chamber, committees and parliamentary special events.