



Media Release

LANDMARK QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT REVIEW RECOMMENDS UNIQUE NEW ROLE FOR COMMITTEES

A Queensland Parliamentary committee today recommended the widest ranging reforms to the structure of the Queensland Parliament since the abolition of the Upper House in 1922.

The Chair of the bipartisan Committee System Review, Judy Spence, along with Deputy Chair Lawrence Springborg, who released the committee's unanimous recommendations today, said the changes would be much more effective in keeping governments and the Executive accountable.

The report proposes that all new bills be referred to a committee for consideration and public hearings before progressing through Parliament.

It also proposes to end Parliamentary Estimates in their current format, to be replaced by new portfolio committees examining the Estimates in their areas of concern.

"This new model will be workable and make the Queensland committee system unique in Australia," Ms Spence said.

"In particular, it would give members of the public a unprecedented opportunity to comment on government legislation before it is voted on in the Parliament," she said.

"Other Westminster Parliaments have much more vibrant committee systems than our own, including the unicameral New Zealand, Scottish and Canadian Provincial Parliaments," she said.

"Our committee came to the view that a strong, independent committee system will serve Queenslanders more effectively than the role that Upper Houses perform in other Parliaments."

Other recommendations made by the committee include:

- The establishment of nine portfolio-based committees which would examine policy and legislation in their dedicated policy areas.
- That the new committees have the ability to report on all aspects of government activities, including investigating and reporting on events, incidents and operational matters of the government.
- The bipartisan support of a committee would be required before the government could make any appointment to a range of sensitive public offices, including the Ombudsman, the Information Commissioner and the Auditor-General.

- The current Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee would continue and, in a first for Queensland, would be chaired by a non-government MP.
- A review of the make-up of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, with a view to including lay members on the committee.
- There would be a Committee of the Legislative Assembly which would coordinate the business of the parliament.
- Committee hearings should be open and broadcast.

Ms Spence said the committee unanimously agreed that the present committee structure was under-resourced, did not have sufficient influence over the Executive, did not receive sufficient attention in Parliament and was largely unknown to the majority of Queenslanders.

“The fact there are no dedicated committee rooms or video conferencing facilities in the Queensland Parliament reveals how little attention has been paid to this important function of the Parliament,” she said.

Ms Spence said the committee was fortunate in having some of the longest serving and experienced Members of Parliament as members. Each political party and the Independents were represented.

“The committee members believe we can transform the way the Queensland Parliament operates,” Ms Spence said.

“We believe all Queenslanders will benefit from giving the Parliament a committee system that is strong and dedicated to the purpose of scrutiny, review and deliberation,” she said.

The committee proposals would build on changes in early 2009 which saw the establishment of some portfolio-based committees.

The committee’s report is available at the Committee’s website:
www.parliament.qld.gov.au/csrc

Judy Spence MP

Chair

15 December 2010

Phone 3224 7336

For further information about the Committee System Review and its work contact the secretariat on **(07) 3406 7174** or at csrc@parliament.qld.gov.au or visit the website.

Committee System Review Committee

CHAIR	Hon. Judy Spence MP, Member for Sunnybank
DEPUTY CHAIR	Mr Lawrence Springborg MP, Member for Southern Downs
MEMBERS	Mr Simon Finn MP, Member for Yeerongpilly
	Mr Mike Horan MP, Member for Toowoomba South
	Ms Carolyn Male MP, Member for Pine Rivers
	Mr Evan Moorhead MP, Member for Waterford
	Mrs Dorothy Pratt MP, Member for Nanango
	Hon. Robert Swarten MP, Member for Rockhampton
	Mr Jeff Seeney MP, Member for Callide

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee was established by the Queensland Parliament on 25 February 2010 to inquire and report on how the Parliamentary oversight of legislation could be enhanced and how the existing Parliamentary Committee system could be strengthened to enhance accountability. The resolution establishing the Committee goes on to provide that:

In undertaking this inquiry, the Committee should consider –

- *the role of Parliamentary committees in both Australian and international jurisdictions in examining legislative proposals, particularly those with unicameral parliaments;*
- *timely and cost effective ways by which Queensland Parliamentary Committees can more effectively evaluate and examine legislative proposals; and*
- *the effectiveness of the operation of the committee structure of the 53rd Parliament following the restructure of the committee system on 23 April 2009.*

The committee should include in its report options on models for structuring the Queensland Parliamentary Committee system.