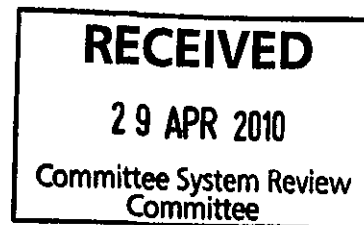


Sub # 4



11.1

23 April 2010

Mr Stephen Finnimore
The Research Director
Committee System Review Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Stephen

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Review of the Parliamentary Committee System in Queensland and accordingly I offer some general comments.

I strongly commend the continuation of a Committee that examines legislation (Scrutiny of Legislation Committee) – especially complicated legislation, before it is considered on the floor of the Parliament. I note that you have a Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and I have argued for same here, but not yet achieved that goal. We have done something similar on an informal basis, eg looking at a Health Bill, and it worked very well. The key issues can be sorted out prior to the full debate in the House. If done properly, ie allowing participation by the Minister and Shadow Minister and any other interested MP, can save hours in the Committee Stage of the Bill. Specialist witnesses can be brought to the Committee to answer queries that the Shadow Minister and MPs have – thus saving time in the chamber. I feel that not all proposed Bills need to go to this Committee – but could be on the basis of a decision by the Minister or Shadow Minister or a number of MPs, deeming a Bill to be “complex” etc. Anyhow, without knowing the detail of your Committee, you seem to have this aspect under control.

Estimates Committees – We spend about 7 sitting days a year on Estimates and, in my experience (20 years as a Member and having been Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees) feel that they are an unproductive use of time. The Government uses them for a headline and the Opposition also wants a headline for different reasons (what's new?) They take up a lot of time and cost a lot of public service time and money, whilst public servants spend weeks preparing answers to questions that may be asked! I feel a better approach is to allocate part of a sitting day (eg 1 hour) spanning a few weeks with the various Ministers present at their nominated time and any Member able to ask a question re that portfolio or portfolios.

Any Committee, if it is to work, must be properly resourced and not simply a rubber stamp for the Government of the day – the latter role being a waste of time.

Can I suggest that you consider a Foresight Committee to look at issues in advance, eg impact of population growth, the ageing of the population, education in the future etc. I find that most Committees look at past or, at best, current issues rather than look to the future. Rarely does Parliament, or a Ministry, look at issues in advance. A Foresight Committee can bring in experts and other relevant stakeholders. I feel that we can learn from countries that put an emphasis on being aware and prepared for future issues that are likely to arise.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of my submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R B Such". The letters are cursive and connected.

Bob Such MP JP
Member for Fisher