

Our ref: G336

21 May 2010



Sub# 19.

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

Dear Sir

I am delighted that the Government adopted my suggestion (in my submission to the green paper on *Accountability and Integrity*) that a Parliamentary Committee should be established to review and make recommendations about the Queensland Parliamentary Committee system. I was conscious that reform proposals that emanate from outside the Parliament are often resisted, partly no doubt because they fail to take account of practical matters. However I was convinced that the Queensland committee system needed to be reformed as part of a revamp of the accountability system.

My primary submission to your committee is in essence a request that you should revisit the report of the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission on its Review of Parliamentary Committees (R4 of 1992), considering its proposals on their merits.

Some aspects of the EARC report are no longer relevant while some have been implemented. But I believe its central recommendations ought now be reconsidered and adopted. These are the creation of a series of investigatory Standing Committees which have the capacity, authority and responsibility to examine policy and administration across all areas of public administration in Queensland. The Committees should be authorised to examine all proposals for new and amending legislation, including Bills and subordinate legislation, budget estimates and policy and administration within their particular areas of responsibility. [See page 406 of the EARC Report.] EARC also proposed a series of Public Administration Committees (p.413). However, I consider now that these two sets of committees should become one set, with responsibilities across both areas.

I suggest that the adoption of these proposals is even more important today than it was 17 years ago, for several reasons.

The most important is that this committee structure would allow the Parliament (through the committee system) to better tap the resources, knowledge and wisdom of "the crowd" (as web 2.0 enthusiasts like to call everyone outside the official decision-making mechanisms). It would mean that Parliament could better connect with the people it represents. It could mean that legislation might be improved before adoption by Parliament, that better policies could be developed by Ministers and the public service, that services could be delivered more satisfactorily, and that people could feel (and indeed be) less alienated by the political/parliamentary process.

I am less convinced now than I was two decades ago, that adoption of a new, integrated committee system might lead to more bipartisan agreement. It is pointless trying to take the politics out of parliamentary deliberations, and possibly counter-productive to consider that as a reform aim, though it might, and occasionally does, happen. But I consider this is much less important than giving citizens the chance to engage with government and the law-making process.

The second reason for suggesting the adoption of the basic committee system that EARC proposed is the increasing problem on the Government side of the House in finding a sufficient number of MPs to contribute meaningfully to much of the current committee process. They are now spread too thinly, because of the growth in size of the Ministry and the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries. The adoption of the proposed system would also rationalise the provision of staffing resources for committees, improving the prospects of staff (as well as Members) developing their expertise.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Solomon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "S".

**Dr David Solomon AM**  
**Queensland Integrity Commissioner**