



# Queensland Parliamentary Service

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6 August 2007

Mr Peter Lawlor  
Health Quality and Complaints Commission Select Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Lawlor

Thank you for your letters dated 10 and 30 July 2007 regarding the progress of the Committee's inquiry.

In terms of a submission to the Committee, I believe that I can only usefully contribute to one matter that is relevant to the terms of reference dealing with "systems to monitor and report on the quality of health services" and "whether any changes are required to the Act."

The Fitzgerald Report (1989: 124) noted that:

*The operation of a party system in a unicameral assembly, the continuing growth in the scale and extent of government activity, and the increasing complexities of policy making affect the ability of Parliament to review the Government's legislative activity or public administration.*

To address this issue, Fitzgerald (1989: 124) recommended:

*.. a comprehensive system of Parliamentary Committees to enhance the ability of Parliament to monitor the efficiency of Government.*

As with many of Fitzgerald's observations and recommendations, detailed examination and report on parliamentary committees was left to the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC). In its 1992 Report on parliamentary committees, EARC recommended the creation of public administration committees divided on a policy basis – essentially a portfolio based committees system. The Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review (PEARC), favoured a more "functional" committee system, largely modelled on the committee system developed between 1988-1992. PEARC's view was accepted, culminating in legislation in 1995 that entrenched the committee system we have today.

One result of this committee system is that large administrative and policy areas of government have no permanent committee oversight or review. Thus Health and Education, which comprise the State's largest administrative areas and largest budget spend have virtually no connection with the parliamentary committee system.

Whilst the current committee system is a vast improvement on the pre-Fitzgerald era, I do not believe it was what was envisaged by Fitzgerald, where the largest areas of government and those matters most important to Queenslanders go without permanent scrutiny by parliamentary committees. (In this regard I acknowledge the limited role of the annual examination by estimates committees.) [Furthermore, the Queensland Health Systems Review (2005: 200 and 336) ("the Forster Report") envisaged a permanent committee to monitor and review the Health Quality and Complaints Commission.

I submit that the Committee consider recommending the establishment of a permanent parliamentary committee – a portfolio based committee, with an even wider remit on Health and related matters than that recommended by the Forster Report.

Yours sincerely

Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament