

APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2022–23) BILL 2022
APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2022–23) BILL 2022

Estimates Committees A and B Reports and Minutes — Presentation

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker) [5.22 pm]: I present to the house the reports and minutes of Estimates Committees A and B.

[See papers [1186](#) and [1187](#).]

Estimates Committee A Report — Adoption

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife) [5.22 pm]: The question is —

That the report of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker) [5.22 pm]: I have the ability to talk on both estimates committees separately, so I will talk on Estimates Committee A first and then move on to Estimates Committee B after we put the question that the report of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

Estimates committee hearings this year were slightly different. Members will remember that we had a reduced time frame over the three days. I will provide some statistics on what happened during those three days. In all, 613 questions were asked during Estimates Committee A. The opposition asked 206 questions and then a further 387 questions. The government asked 17 questions and then three further questions. The opposition asked 97 per cent of the questions while the government asked three per cent. Interestingly, the following divisions and off-budget authorities were not examined: division 12, Office of the Auditor General; Metronet projects under development; division 43, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, service 1, planning; division 44, Western Australian Planning Commission; Bunbury Water Corporation; Busselton Water Corporation; division 42, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, service 2, tourism; and division 32, Chemistry Centre.

Estimates Committee A sat for three days—from 9.00 am until 7.00 pm, as I mentioned earlier—and the examination took place over a total of 24 hours and 45 minutes.

I would like to thank the Acting Speakers who chaired both Estimates Committees A and B; the clerks; the chamber staff; the ministers; the ministers' staff; the committee members; our Whip, the member for Belmont; and the Whip's assistant, Ryan Harte, for all the great work they did, making sure that we had people in the right place; and of course the Parliament House staff who made sure we were fed and watered throughout the day.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [5.25 pm]: I will be very brief. I thank the Deputy Speaker and acknowledge his work in coordinating the estimates hearings. The estimates committee process is a very important procedure of the house, particularly in its scrutiny of the budget. As members would be aware, as was the case last year, due to the number of members in the house, particularly opposition members, a proposal was devised to allow both Estimates Committee A and Estimates Committee B to function effectively with two members on either side, plus the chair and the minister. That arrangement was agreed to by the opposition and the government for the effective operation of the estimates committees. I congratulate the committees. I understand from the statistics that the number of questions asked was significant. I understand that the opposition was able to ask a significant number of questions compared with government members.

The only other point I would like to make is that because of numbers, the various divisions and the fact that a number of portfolios are held by ministers in the other place, there was discussion, which I think the Speaker was involved in, about reducing the time available to consider the divisions. As members would be aware, that is why Estimates Committees A and B commenced at 9.00 am and concluded at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. As members would be aware, in the past, estimates usually commenced at 9.00 am, there was a lunch break, usually a dinner break at 6.00 pm and then the committees reconvened from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm. It is probably not appropriate to debate it in the report phase but I think the opposition and the government are happy to have a conversation about how that arrangement effectively worked and whether we need to take any other considerations into account in preparation for next year's estimates. Obviously, given the number of divisions, it still meant that all divisions had to be voted on by the committee, which is part of the process. We also aimed to give more time to scrutinise the portfolios held by ministers in this place. As members would be aware, members in the other place through their estimates process will have the capacity to examine and scrutinise the budget with the ministers who represent the government.

I will finish by quickly thanking the manager of opposition business and the opposition Whip. Of course, I thank the government Whip, the member for Belmont, for her outstanding stewardship of the estimates committee process this year. I thank them for their work. I will also highlight that we had the unusual situation in which a number of ministers were COVID-positive, including me. It was an interesting experience and I struggle to remember a similar

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situation during estimates. I was COVID-positive and I think so was the Minister for Child Protection; Community Services; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. The Minister for Housing was COVID-positive late in the piece. I thank the ministers who stepped in. I thank the Minister for Police stepping in for the Minister for Housing.

Mr P. Papalia: I stepped in for Simone McGurk.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I heard that was the most interesting session of all!

I want to thank the ministers who stepped in at short notice to respond to questions during the estimates process. It was an interesting estimates this year, given those factors that I highlighted. Again, I thank those responsible and the chamber staff for their ongoing advice and guidance during the estimates process.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.31 pm]: I also have a few comments on the estimates committee process. Estimates Committees A and B sat for three days, with approximately 51 hours of hearings. In fact, we spent nearly as much time in hearings as last year. We saw about 115 agencies and subsections of agencies, such as the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and federal–state relations, and heard from various departmental and sub-departmental staff. We questioned 15 ministers, including the Speaker and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, and many witnesses along the way. The number of questions asked was close to 1 100. As members well know, the opposition, due to our limited numbers, attended all day, every day. The leader on the number of questions asked was the member for Moore, with 271 questions. He was followed by me, with 190 questions. The member for North West Central asked 182 questions. The member for Vasse asked 169 questions and the Leader of the Opposition asked 151. Of course, the member for Cottesloe was unfortunately afflicted with COVID but managed to ask 48 questions remotely.

Mr R.S. Love: Well done!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Well done to the member for Cottesloe.

I have a few other comments. Firstly, I am glad to see that the Leader of the House, who conveniently avoided my searching questions on sport and recreation and agriculture by retiring to Mandurah for the week, is back on track. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, the member for Southern River, had a problem with traffic and was a few minutes late. The member for North West Central moved a point of order and made fair bit of noise about it, and just as the member for Swan Hills quickly moved to take the empty chair, the member for Southern River turned up! I want to point out that the opposition asked 97 per cent of the questions. For argument's sake, in that particular session, the opposition members were able to ask all the questions, even though we did not have the full time. We appreciated having the opportunity to ask 97 per cent of the questions and to enlighten ministers on various issues over the time.

I have found one of the more interesting facts. The Minister for Environment enlightened us about the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. I think it is something in the order of 91 million tonnes. The minister managed on the day to draw out that answer from his wealth of knowledge. That was a very interesting fact.

I would like to thank all our parliamentary staff, whether that be the house staff or the parliamentary staff in committees A and B. I especially thank members of the estimates committees: the Leader of the House, the Deputy Speaker, the government Whip and of course the manager of opposition business, who is sitting in front of me, the member for Moore. I thank the clerks and anyone else who helped out with putting together the schedule. I especially thank the chief of staff to the Leader of the House and our LOOP staff who did quite a bit of the background work on preparing the schedule. On behalf of the opposition, I express our thanks to all the staff and people who helped during the estimates hearings. Thank you.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.37 pm]: I will make a very brief contribution. I wish to particularly thank the staff of Parliament House for facilitating online examination during the estimates hearings. I think I have the distinction of being the first ever parliamentarian in Western Australia to do estimates online. I actually found the process to be very good. In feedback to the Speaker, the chairs of hearings were excellent in facilitating the process and I found that extremely helpful. I think it is worth noting and I am very grateful that the government for the last two years has had a strong focus on allowing the opposition to ask the great majority of questions. I am grateful for that and it certainly gives us an opportunity that we would not otherwise have to examine in detail what the government is doing. Thank you.

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [5.38 pm]: I rise tonight to also make a few remarks about the estimates committee report. Principally, like many other members, I want to thank a number of people who helped coordinate and effectively shepherd the process through what has been a pretty challenging time for Parliament this year. I think COVID presented some additional challenges. We just heard from the member for Cottesloe about how our remarkable staff at Parliament helped to facilitate his participation in the estimates process of examination while isolating at home—a big congratulations to all the staff. I would like to thank the clerks, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Leader of the House and the manager of opposition

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business for agreeing on, putting together and coordinating the estimates timetable. Thank goodness it was a shortened timetable this year. I think that finishing at seven o'clock was much more palatable for members on all sides. I thank them for shepherding us through the estimates process for another year in the Legislative Assembly. I also take the opportunity to thank the opposition Whip, the member for Roe.

In addition, I take this opportunity to get on the record my thanks and gratitude to my incredibly dedicated and hardworking Whip assistant, Ryan Harte, for the long hours and diligence that he gives to all his duties. I also note my appreciation and gratitude to the chairs; the Department of the Legislative Assembly, including all chamber staff and clerks; the audiovisual team; the ever-patient Hansard team; the caterers and cleaning staff; maintenance and security; of course, the police, who have to stand outside in the cold; and all those people who have made the process run smoothly and made it comfortable for all us members here, and ensured our safety and comfort over that period. I also acknowledge the hard work of the countless public servants and the ministerial staff for their tireless work in preparing their ministers for their sessions, and the efforts of the opposition staff for the forensic work that was no doubt involved in poring over budget documents to assist their shadow ministers. I am sure that this work is not glamorous and oftentimes is fairly thankless.

As we have already said, estimates looked a little different this year. I and the Leader of the House were both afflicted with COVID, so sadly I was not able to participate either, but I hear that, from all accounts, people appreciated the shortened timetable, with the hearings adjourning at 7.00 pm rather than at 10.00 pm. That did not mean that there was not adequate time for due diligence and scrutiny of the budget documents. I think we have already heard from members that in Estimates Committee A alone, 613 questions were asked, and in Estimates Committee B, 829 questions were asked. In total, over 50 hours of time was dedicated to going through the budget in great detail. I think that is a really important parliamentary process and one that provides the opposition that opportunity for scrutiny and oversight. I think that opportunity was certainly demonstrated in the hours that were provided and the number of questions asked.

It would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to thank the Premier; Treasurer and his team for presenting a fantastic budget, which I think we should all be proud of, certainly on the government side. Thank you very much.

Question put and passed.

Estimates Committee B Report — Adoption

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins) [5.42 pm]: The question is —

That the report of Estimates Committee B be adopted.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker) [5.42 pm]: I rise to speak briefly on Estimates Committee B. This committee also sat for three days from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm, for a total of 24 hours and 50 minutes. There were 829 questions asked in total, 797 by the opposition and 32 by the government, which means that 96.1 per cent were opposition questions and 3.9 per cent were government member questions. As in Estimates Committee A, a number of divisions or off-budget authorities were not examined, and they were division 23, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office; division 47, National Trust of Australia (WA); division 30, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; division 31, Corruption and Crime Commission; division 34, the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission; the Building and Construction Industry Training Board; and Keystart Housing Scheme Trust.

In addition to those I thanked previously, I would also add my thanks to the AV people who provided the Leader of the Liberal Party in opposition the ability to participate in estimates this year. I also thank the opposition members for their time and effort this year. It is always a hard gig. We do what we can to give members opposite as much opportunity as possible. It certainly was an interesting estimates in both chambers, so I thank them for their effort. I also thank the Whip for making sure that we had the right people in the right places and the correct numbers to maintain quorum everywhere. That helped the process, as well. Thank you very much to everyone who took part. It is great that we were able to get through it again this year, and I cannot wait until next year!

Question put and passed.