

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2021–22) BILL 2021**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2021–22) BILL 2021**

*Estimates Committees A and B Reports and Minutes — Presentation*

**MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker)** [4.35 pm]: I present to the house the reports and minutes of Estimates Committees A and B.

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*Estimates Committee A Report — Adoption*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens)** [4.35 pm]: The question is —

That the report of Estimates Committee A be adopted.

**MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker)** [4.35 pm]: I just want to make a few brief comments as chair of the committees for the 2021–22 process that we have just been through. I would like to start by thanking all the chamber staff and clerks for the assistance they gave to the chairs throughout the estimates process and for ensuring that everything ran as smoothly as it did. It was a very uninterrupted and smooth process, which was great. I also thank all the Hansard staff, who fastidiously recorded everything that was discussed, once again over very long days. I also thank all the ministers and their advisers, who spent a lot of time making sure they were ready and prepared for when they had to take the hot seat in the chambers and look after their divisions.

I will provide some of the statistics, as it is always interesting to see how we go in terms of what actually occurs during the estimates committees. This year, in Estimates Committee A, 906 questions were asked in total. The opposition asked 265 questions and 614 further questions. The government asked 26 questions, with one further question. As a percentage, the opposition asked 97 per cent of the questions, while the government asked three per cent. Estimates Committee A sat over three days from 9.00 am until 10.00 pm, and examination of the budget took place over a total of 32 hours and nine minutes.

In Estimates Committee B, 980 questions were asked in total, with 935 questions asked by the opposition and 45 questions asked by the government. As a percentage, 95.4 per cent of questions were asked by the opposition and 4.6 per cent of questions were asked by government members.

It was a long and thorough process. I thank all government members who took part in the committees, and of course opposition members, who carried the bulk of the workload throughout estimates. It gave me great pleasure to table those two reports.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [4.38 pm]: I rise on behalf of the opposition, in my role as opposition Whip, to also make a few points about the estimates process. Firstly, I would like to thank the Deputy Speaker for his very interesting statistics, and also for his role. I would like to begin by confirming that the estimates committee at least doubled the length of its meeting in the clerks' room this year, from probably 45 seconds to about a minute and 30 seconds. I once again pass on our thanks to the Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the House and the government Whip, the member for Belmont. I also thank the various government staff—Gary Hamley, Amanda Low and the like—who worked with the member for Moore, as the manager of opposition business, and me, as opposition Whip. I want to mention Maddison McNeil from the LOOP office and our whole team from the LOOP office who did a lot of work, and, of course, staff from the LOSP office as well. I also want to echo the sentiments of the Deputy Speaker who thanked all the clerks, all the chamber staff, all the parliamentary staff for the meals and for being here right through the process and the Hansard staff, of course. I also want to thank the various chairs who were involved. A lot of the chairs were new to the situation, but I thought they handled it pretty well. Well done to the chairs.

As the Deputy Speaker pointed out, we had 1 886 questions combining committees A and B. They were asked over three days in approximately 60 hours of hearings, from 9.00 am to 10.00 pm each day for six sessions. It averaged about 11 hours a day with a couple of breaks in between. In total, 89 agencies were called and 14 ministers were involved.

Given the limited number of opposition members, I can confirm that most of us spent around 30 hours in either committee A or committee B. I certainly enjoyed asking questions with the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Cottesloe, the member for Vasse and the member for North West Central. I can say that it was a pretty draining process. I think we were all pretty washed out at the end of the week. It was a marathon effort. Because of our limited numbers, we may need to look in the future at whether we can somehow break it up a little bit more. It is quite taxing going from one division to another to another. We also need to look at how we go into the divisions of certain portfolio areas. It is always a bit of a challenge what areas will require more questions and we perhaps did not have enough time for other areas. That is something we might work on in the future. I think some of the service areas are particularly ambiguous at times and quite difficult to decipher from the budget. That may be something we need a little bit of clarity on.

From my perspective, I was a little bit disappointed with the number of ministers who were not prepared to provide supplementary information, despite the fact that, at times, they were reading out a schedule with all the information right in front of them, but when we asked for it as supplementary information, it was not provided. That was a bit disappointing from my perspective. Some ministers provided some supplementary information and others provided none whatsoever. I think probably the highlight for me was the Minister for Health, when he left his microphone on. He was just a little bit too close to the microphone when he said to his adviser —

No, tell them nothing! Sorry, did that come out? Yes, that is fine. Use your inside voice!

That was one of the highlights for us. Generally speaking, I thought the chairs did a good job. As the Deputy Speaker pointed out, we probably averaged about 96 per cent of questions going to the opposition. We did appreciate that there were not too many Dorothy Dixers. The opportunity for us to ask those questions was appreciated. Once again, it was a long schedule for a few opposition members. I commend those government members for not asking too many questions. I will leave it at that. From our perspective, the opportunity to ask around 1 800 questions was much appreciated.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [4.44 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution in response to the report. I echo the sentiments of the member for Roe on the government allowing the opposition to ask questions. I think that was good-natured and certainly gave the opposition time to ask those questions. That was in contrast to the last Parliament's estimates, so I will put that on record. I think that was appropriate behaviour. I think the meetings were well chaired in all cases. I think the quality of the chairs for the proceedings was excellent.

One area I think we need to look at in the future is the amount of time allocated to the government trading enterprises. Government trading enterprises account for billions of dollars of, effectively, government expenditure and cumulatively a couple of billion dollars' worth of revenue. The time allocated did not reflect that, yet very small areas of government had significant amounts of time allocated to them. I think it would be very worthwhile for the opposition Whip and the Leader of the House to do a bit of a review and perhaps see whether we can change that. The short time allocated to government trading enterprises has been a feature of estimates since I have been in Parliament. Although they are government trading enterprises, at the end of the day, it is public money and we should have more opportunity to ask more detailed questions of those enterprises.

As I said, otherwise it was a well-managed process. It was exhausting for us. I spent 33 hours in the chamber, as did nearly all the members on this side. It was a marathon effort for all. I thank my colleagues for the good job that they did.

Question put and passed.