



***PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES
COMMITTEE***

***USE OF VIDEO-CONFERENCING BY
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEES***

Report No. 2

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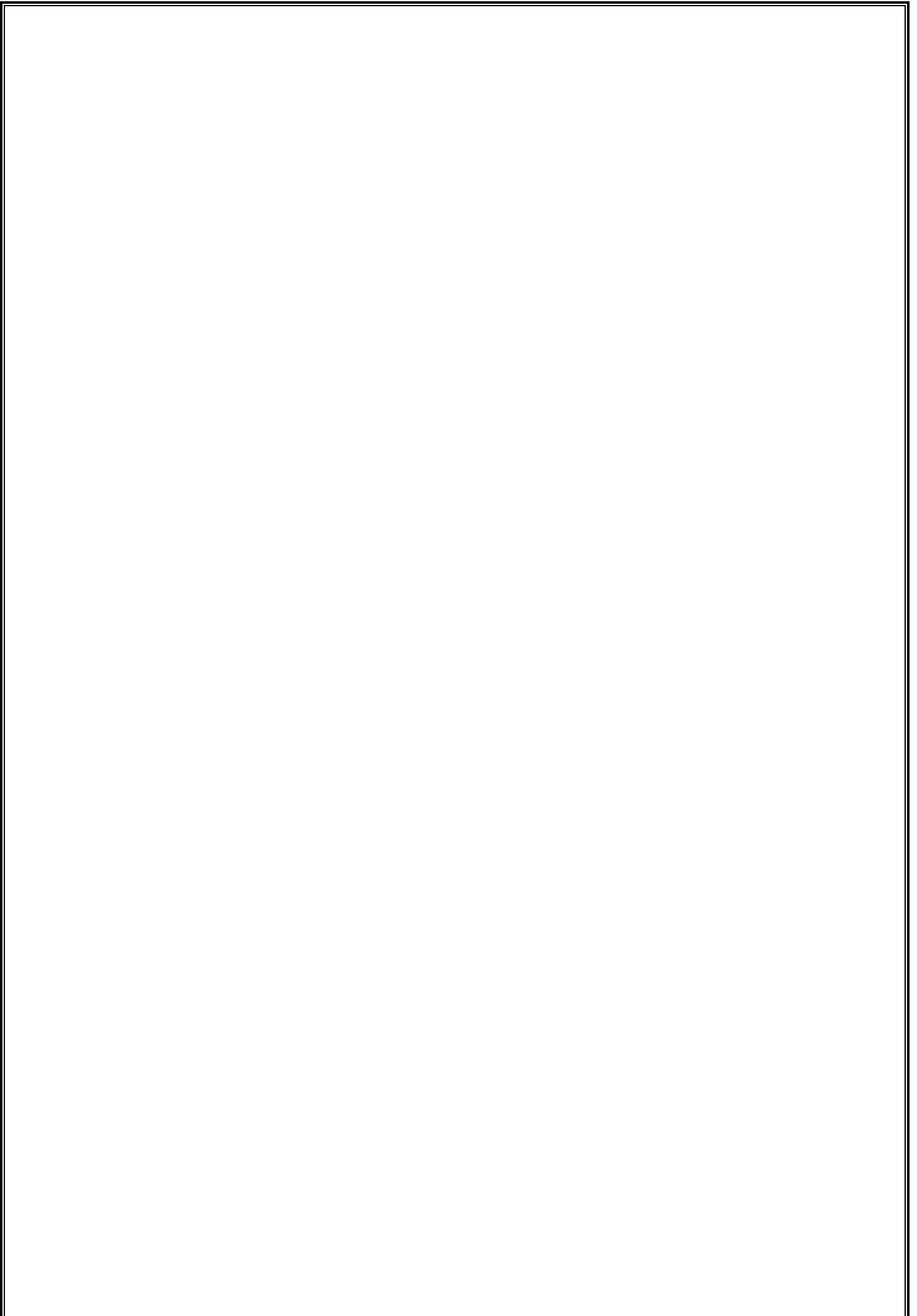


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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEES**

Report No. 2

Presented by:
Ms Dianne Guise, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly
on 19 June 2003



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COMMITTEE'S FUNCTIONS, POWERS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Legislative Assembly Standing Order No. 282 provides the following functions, powers and Terms of Reference to the Procedure and Privileges Committee -

Procedure and Privileges Committee

282. (1) A Procedure and Privileges Committee will be appointed at the beginning of each session to —

- (a) examine and report on the procedures of the Assembly; and
- (b) examine and report on issues of privilege; and
- (c) wherever necessary, confer with a similar committee of the Council.

(2) The Procedure and Privileges Committee will have the powers of a select committee.

(3) Membership of the committee will consist of the Speaker and four other members as the Assembly appoints.

(4) Standing Order 278 will apply except that where possible any report of the committee will be presented by the Deputy Speaker.

(5) When consideration of a report from the committee is set down as an order of the day it will be considered using the consideration in detail procedure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Your Committee recommends -

1. That Standing Order No. 259 be amended, to allow one video-conferencing facility to be used by one or more committee members from a remote location and with those members being counted as part of a Committee's quorum for deliberative meetings and hearings, by inserting after sub-order (1) the following -

“(2) Committee members using a video-conferencing facility will be counted as present for the purpose of a quorum. ”.

The Standing Order will then read -

“

Quorum

- 259.** (1) A quorum for committees is two to take evidence and three to deliberate and pass resolutions.
- (2) Committee members using a video-conferencing facility will be counted as present for the purpose of a quorum.
 - (3) If a quorum is not present within 15 minutes of the time set for a meeting, the members present may retire and the Clerk will enter their names in the minutes.
 - (4) If during a committee meeting attention is drawn to the absence of a quorum, the Chairman may suspend the committee until a quorum is present or adjourn the committee to some future time.

Recommendation 2

Your Committee recommends -

2. That Standing Order No. 267 be amended to -
 - (a) authorise committees' use of video-conferencing to take evidence from witnesses by inserting after sub-order (2) the following –

“

(3) A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee to examine a witness. ”;

(b) prohibit the use of video-conferencing to take *in camera* evidence by inserting after suborder (1) the following -

“

(4) A video-conferencing facility will not be used by a committee to take *in camera* evidence. ”.

The Standing Order will then read -

“

Examination of witnesses

267. (1) The examination of witnesses by a committee will follow the procedural rules determined by the Speaker from time to time.

(2) Under exceptional circumstances a procedural rule may be varied with the prior approval of the Speaker.

(3) A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee to examine a witness.

(4) A video-conferencing facility will not be used by a committee to take *in camera* evidence.

(5) If a portfolio-related committee, or the Public Accounts Committee in relation to portfolio-related matters allocated to it, is examining a witness, any member of the Assembly, not being a Minister, may attend and at the discretion of the Chairman, ask questions of the witness. That member is not a member of the committee and may not vote, move any motion, be counted for the purpose of a quorum, or be involved in any deliberative part of the committee meeting. ”.

Recommendation 3

Your Committee recommends -

3. That procedural rules relating to the use by committees of video-conferencing to examine witnesses be incorporated, in accordance with Standing Order No. 267, as Part 2 of the *Speaker's Procedural Rules relating to Committee Evidence* -

“Part 2. Procedures for formal examination of witnesses when using video-conferencing.

Unless a variation is approved by the Speaker, all committees will observe the following procedures when using video-conferencing to examine witnesses —

- (1) Video-conferencing may be used by a committee to examine a witness.
- (2) Committees may use video-conferencing only in exceptional circumstances; wherever possible witnesses will continue to personally appear before committees.
- (3) Audio only conference links will not be used for committee deliberative meetings or hearings.
- (4) Use of video-conferencing to take closed evidence from witnesses should only proceed once the committee is satisfied the transmission is secure and the closed evidence will not be overheard or recorded by an unauthorised person.
- (5) Subject to paragraph (4), the use of video-conferencing to take evidence from a witness outside of Western Australia will proceed only after appropriate warnings regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation have been provided in writing by either post, facsimile or email to the witness and the chairman is satisfied the witness has received the written warning and understood its implication for evidence about to be given.

Recommendation 4

Your Committee recommends -

4. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly incorporates into the Legislative Assembly's Committees administrative practice and procedure manual guidelines similar to those proposed below, in relation to the use of video-conferencing to examine witnesses.

“

1. A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee for hearing oral evidence from witnesses in accordance with Standing Order No. 267.
2. Video-conferencing will not be used to take *in camera* evidence. The taking of closed evidence using video-conferencing should only proceed once the committee is satisfied the transmission is secure and the closed evidence will not be overheard or recorded by any unauthorised person.

3. The following factors should be considered by a committee when deciding whether video-conferencing is suitable for use in any particular circumstance:
 - (1) whether its use will confer any benefit not available using traditional meeting processes eg cost or time savings, access to evidence not otherwise obtainable;
 - (2) any benefit of traditional methods which may be lost. These may include the value of the committee being present at a location away from Perth; the benefit of including regional, rural and remote areas in the work of the committee; the value of the public being able to observe the committee at work; or possible restrictions on the committee being able to interact freely with a witness;
 - (3) real cost comparisons of alternative means of evidence collection;
 - (4) the type of evidence to be heard. Specialist or expert evidence may be suited to a hearing in this way. Video-conferencing may make it feasible to hear evidence from witnesses located outside Western Australia, however, the committee should take into account the fact that the protection afforded by parliamentary privilege may not extend beyond Western Australia and that an appropriate warning regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation must be provided in writing by post, facsimile or email to the witness prior to evidence being taken; and
 - (5) whether evidence is likely to be contentious or a witness needs to be tested rigorously for truthfulness or there is any concern about the identification of the witness.
4. Any other factors, which the committee considers relevant should be taken into account and a decision, made appropriate to the particular circumstances of the proceeding, inquiry or witness.
5. The use of other types of electronic communication, for example facsimile, email and Internet chat rooms, are not precluded for committee purposes other than deliberative meetings and hearings. ”.

Recommendation 5

Your Committee recommends -

That Recommendation Nos 1 to 4 be incorporated in a Sessional Order and adopted for a trial period of 18 months.

Recommendation 6

Your Committee recommends -

That in exceptional circumstances the Estimates Committees be permitted to use video-conferencing for ministerial advisers.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE

Standing Order 277(1) of the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly states that:

A report may include a direction that a Minister in the Assembly is required within not more than three months, or at the earliest opportunity after that time if the Assembly is adjourned or in recess, to report to the Assembly as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee.

Accordingly, the Committee directs that the Leader of the House report to the Assembly as to the action, if any, proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendations of the Committee.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1 Background

Recently the Legislative Assembly installed a video-conferencing facility at its Committee Offices located on the first floor of 11 Harvest Terrace, West Perth. The facility can be accessed by all of Parliament's members and the parliamentary departments for various uses related to members' activities and departmental operations (for a description see Appendix 1).

1.1 Issues requiring consideration

Your Committee realised that, prior to Legislative Assembly committees using the facility, several issues had to be carefully considered. Following an initial discussion by your Committee it was assumed that, although most committees will continue to meet on Wednesday mornings during sitting weeks when members are in Perth, it is inevitable some country-based members will raise the possibility of using the video-conferencing facility as an alternative to personally attending committee meetings/hearings in Perth on non-sitting days. Some of the issues raised were -

- What would constitute a committee quorum when video-conferencing is used for committee deliberative meetings or hearings? Would a quorum of members need to be physically present in one meeting place?
- During deliberations, would the vote of a member using the video-conferencing facility be counted whenever a committee votes on a question?
- How many members of a committee at any one time should be permitted to use the video-conferencing facility during a committee meeting or hearing?
- What would be the status of evidence taken using the video conferencing facility and, if evidence can be taken via a video-conference, what types of evidence should be allowed to be taken by this method (open, closed and *in camera* evidence)?
- Should audio-conferencing be permitted as an alternative to video-conferencing? May a private chat room on the Internet be used?
- Parliamentary privilege -

To what extent does parliamentary privilege protect witnesses who give evidence, or members who participate, outside of Western Australia's borders?

What are the ramifications of the *Dow Jones vs Gutnick* (2002) case where the High Court decision established that material is deemed to be published at the place where it is down loaded?

What are the possible ramifications for the Parliament if electronic means are used to conduct its business? Should a written warning regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation be provided, either by post, facsimile or email, to those witnesses using a video-conferencing facility outside of Western Australia to provide evidence to a committee?

- If evidence is taken during a closed or *in camera* session, can it be guaranteed it will not be overheard or recorded by anyone other than Committee members, its staff and the witness?

CHAPTER 2 VIDEO-CONFERENCING RULES FOR COMMITTEES

2.1 Practices in other Australian Parliaments

The Parliaments of the Commonwealth, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory are now permitted to use video-conferencing for committee hearings and meetings; the procedures adopted by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament are of particular interest -

2.1.1 Australian House of Representatives

The House of Representatives changed its Standing Orders to permit the use of audio/visual teleconferencing for Committee deliberative meetings and hearings. The following extract from *The House of Representatives Practice (2001)* outlines the guidelines for audio visual and audio link use -

“Committees are authorised to use electronic communication devices in order to take oral evidence from a witness who is not in attendance at a meeting of the committee, and to enable committee members not in attendance to participate in a public or private meeting. Standing order 339 provides:

(b) A committee may resolve to conduct proceedings using audio visual or audio links with members of the committee or witnesses not present in one place. If an audio visual or audio link is used committee members and witnesses must be able to speak to and hear each other at the same time regardless of location.

The following guidelines have been issued by the Procedure Committee to assist committees in deciding whether to conduct meetings using audio visual or audio links. They are to be used by each committee as it sees fit.

1. Audio visual or audio links may be used for deliberative meetings or for hearing oral evidence from witnesses or for any other proceeding described in standing order 339.
2. Audio visual or audio links should only be used to hear evidence *in camera* if the committee is satisfied that the evidence will not be overheard or recorded by any unauthorised person and that the transmission is secure.
3. The following factors should be considered by a committee in deciding whether an audio visual or audio link is suitable for use in any particular circumstance:
 - (a) whether use of the link will confer any benefit not available using traditional meeting processes eg cost or time savings, access to evidence not otherwise obtainable;
 - (b) any benefit of traditional methods which may be lost. These may include the value of the committee being present at a location away from Canberra; the benefit of including regional, rural and remote areas in the work of the committee; the value of the public being able to observe the committee at work; or possible restrictions on the committee being able to interact freely with a witness;
 - (c) real cost comparisons of alternative means of evidence collection;
 - (d) the type of evidence to be heard. Specialist or expert evidence may be suited to hearing in this way. Audio visual or audio links may make it feasible to hear evidence from witnesses located outside Australia, however, the committee should take into account the fact that the protection afforded by parliamentary privilege would not extend beyond Australia; and
 - (e) whether evidence is likely to be contentious or a witness needs to be tested rigorously for truthfulness or there is any concern about the identification of the witness. If the committee wishes to administer an oath an authorised officer must be present with the witness to administer it.
4. Any other factors which the committee considers relevant should be taken into account and a decision made appropriate to the particular circumstances of the proceeding, inquiry or witness.

Standing order 339 does not preclude committees from using other types of electronic communication - for example, fax, email, Internet chat facilities - for purposes other than conducting formal proceedings. ”.

2.1.2 Australian Senate

In 1997, the Australian Senate established Standing Order No. 30 (3) -

“

(3) A committee is authorised to hold meetings by electronic communication without the members of the committee or witnesses being present in one place, provided that:

(a) when a committee deliberates, members of the committee constituting a quorum are able to speak to, and hear, each other contemporaneously;

(b) when a witness gives oral evidence, members of the committee constituting a quorum are able to hear the witness contemporaneously and to put questions to the witness in each other’s hearing; and

(c) the chair of such a meeting takes care to ensure that a quorum is maintained during the meeting and that the standing orders and rules of the Senate are observed. ”.

Senate Practice (2001) makes the following comment in regards to electronic meetings -

“ Committees are authorised to hold “electronic meetings”, that is, meetings at which the members and other participants communicate by electronic means, subject to prescribed conditions, principally that the participants can all hear each other and communicate contemporaneously (SO 30(3)). Until the adoption of this provision in 1997, the principle was followed that a duly constituted meeting of a committee required a quorum of members present in one place, but other members and witnesses could participate in such a meeting by telephone or television. ”.

Your Committee agreed that the general thrust of the Australian Parliament’s rules should be incorporated, where practicable, into the Legislative Assembly’s standing orders and rules for use of video-conferencing by committees.

2.2 Use of audio- and video-conferencing by Legislative Assembly Committees

Following your Committee’s careful consideration of the issues related to audio- and video-conferencing it was proposed that use of video-conferencing by the Legislative Assembly’s committees be authorised by the Standing Orders and that guidelines relating to the use of video-conferencing, in accordance with Standing Order No. 267, be incorporated as Part 2 of the *Speaker’s Procedural Rules relating to Committee Evidence*.

2.2.1 Committee quorums when using video-conferencing

A committee member, when using video-conferencing from a remote location as a method to attend a deliberative meeting or hearing, will be counted as part of that committee’s quorum. If members can participate fully, there is no reason not to count them for quorum purposes or to enable them to move motions and to vote. A chairman of a committee will need to be careful to ensure that a member attending by video-conference has an equal opportunity with other members to participate.

Recommendation 1

Your Committee recommends -

1. That Standing Order No. 259 be amended, to allow one video-conferencing facility to be used by one or more committee members from a remote location and with those members being counted as part of a Committee's quorum for deliberative meetings and hearings, by inserting after sub-order (1) the following -

“(2) Committee members using a video-conferencing facility will be counted as present for the purpose of a quorum. ”.

The Standing Order will then read -

“

Quorum

259. (1) A quorum for committees is two to take evidence and three to deliberate and pass resolutions.

(2) Committee members using a video-conferencing facility will be counted as present for the purpose of a quorum.

(3) If a quorum is not present within 15 minutes of the time set for a meeting, the members present may retire and the Clerk will enter their names in the minutes.

(4) If during a committee meeting attention is drawn to the absence of a quorum, the Chairman may suspend the committee until a quorum is present or adjourn the committee to some future time.

Recommendation 2

Your Committee recommends -

2. That Standing Order No. 267 be amended to -

(a) authorise committees' use of video-conferencing to take evidence from witnesses by inserting after sub-order (2) the following –

“

(3) A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee to examine a witness. ”;

- (b) prohibit the use of video-conferencing to take *in camera* evidence by inserting after suborder (1) the following -

“

- (4) A video-conferencing facility will not be used by a committee to take *in camera* evidence. ”.

The Standing Order will then read -

“

Examination of witnesses

267. (1) The examination of witnesses by a committee will follow the procedural rules determined by the Speaker from time to time.

(2) Under exceptional circumstances a procedural rule may be varied with the prior approval of the Speaker.

(3) A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee to examine a witness.

(4) A video-conferencing facility will not be used by a committee to take *in camera* evidence.

(5) If a portfolio-related committee, or the Public Accounts Committee in relation to portfolio-related matters allocated to it, is examining a witness, any member of the Assembly, not being a Minister, may attend and at the discretion of the Chairman, ask questions of the witness. That member is not a member of the committee and may not vote, move any motion, be counted for the purpose of a quorum, or be involved in any deliberative part of the committee meeting. ”.

After agreeing to the policy that committees be permitted to use video-conferences, your Committee recommends the following matters also be incorporated into the proposed standing orders and rules.

2.2.2 Audio-conference links not permitted

Audio-conference links without video must not be used for committee deliberative meetings and hearings. Your Committee is firmly of the view that witnesses, who are unable to appear personally before a committee, should be clearly identifiable by the Committee through the use of an audio/visual aid such as video-conferencing. Your Committee also believes it would be difficult for members to fully participate in committee proceedings using an audio-link.

2.2.3 *In camera* evidence

Video-conferencing must not be used to take *in-camera* evidence (see recommendation 2). Under

Standing Order 271, *in camera* evidence cannot be disclosed or published. It is important that a witness giving this type of evidence appear personally before the committee particularly when there is concern about the truthfulness of evidence about to be given. The Parliament's Information Technology Office advises that secure transmission of data via a video-conference cannot be guaranteed because we do not have control of the data flow between points A and B. While this risk is acknowledged, the probability of someone having the know how and successfully tapping into a video-conference is extremely remote unless they have access to considerable resources and an inside knowledge of the Parliament's technical setup. Your Committee is not convinced it can be guaranteed that transmission of this type of evidence can be fully secured when using video-conferencing.

2.2.4 Taking evidence from witnesses outside of Western Australia

Subject to 2.2.3, taking evidence from witnesses outside Western Australia's borders will proceed only after an appropriate warning regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation have been provided to the witnesses in writing by either post, facsimile or email.

Your Committee also recommends the Chairman of the Committee must be satisfied the witness has received the written warning and understood its implication for the evidence about to be given to the committee.

2.2.5 Procedural rules relating to the use by Committees of video-conferencing

Guidelines in the *Speaker's Procedural Rules* must emphasise that use of a video-conferencing facility should -

- (i) happen by exception only and not as standard practice. Your Committee is firmly of the view that witnesses, who do not appear personally before a committee, should be clearly identifiable by the committee through the use of an audio/visual aid such as video-conferencing;
- (ii) allow one or more members to use one video-conferencing facility to attend a committee deliberative meeting or to allow a combination of members and witnesses to use one video-conferencing facility to attend a committee hearing;
- (iii) committees should be cautious when using video-conferencing to take closed evidence. A chairman must be satisfied the transmission is secure before proceeding to take evidence and that the evidence cannot be overheard or recorded by any unauthorised person.

Recommendation 3

Your Committee recommends -

3. That procedural rules relating to the use by committees of video-conferencing to examine witnesses be incorporated, in accordance with Standing Order No. 267, as Part 2 of the *Speaker's Procedural Rules relating to Committee Evidence* -

“Part 2. Procedures for formal examination of witnesses when using video-conferencing.

Unless a variation is approved by the Speaker, all committees will observe the following procedures when using video-conferencing to examine witnesses —

- (1) Video-conferencing may be used by a committee to examine a witness.
- (2) Committees may use video-conferencing only in exceptional circumstances; wherever possible witnesses will continue to personally appear before committees.
- (3) Audio only conference links will not be used for committee deliberative meetings or hearings.
- (4) Use of video-conferencing to take closed evidence from witnesses should only proceed once the committee is satisfied the transmission is secure and the closed evidence will not be overheard or recorded by an unauthorised person.
- (5) Subject to paragraph (4), the use of video-conferencing to take evidence from a witness outside of Western Australia will proceed only after appropriate warnings regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation have been provided in writing by either post, facsimile or email to the witness and the chairman is satisfied the witness has received the written warning and understood its implication for evidence about to be given.

2.2.6 Legislative Assembly Committees Administrative and Procedural Manual

Administrative guidelines, based on the House of Representatives’ audio- and visual teleconferencing guidelines and including the above matters, should be incorporated by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly into the Legislative Assembly’s Committees Administrative Practice and Procedure Manual.

Recommendation 4

Your Committee recommends -

4. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly incorporates into the Legislative Assembly's Committees administrative practice and procedure manual guidelines similar to those proposed below, in relation to the use of video-conferencing to examine witnesses.

“

1. A video-conferencing facility may be used by a committee for hearing oral evidence from witnesses in accordance with Standing Order No. 267.
2. Video-conferencing will not be used to take *in camera* evidence. The taking of closed evidence using video-conferencing should only proceed once the committee is satisfied the transmission is secure and the closed evidence will not be overheard or recorded by any unauthorised person.
3. The following factors should be considered by a committee when deciding whether video-conferencing is suitable for use in any particular circumstance:
 - (1) whether its use will confer any benefit not available using traditional meeting processes eg cost or time savings, access to evidence not otherwise obtainable;
 - (2) any benefit of traditional methods which may be lost. These may include the value of the committee being present at a location away from Perth; the benefit of including regional, rural and remote areas in the work of the committee; the value of the public being able to observe the committee at work; or possible restrictions on the committee being able to interact freely with a witness;
 - (3) real cost comparisons of alternative means of evidence collection;
 - (4) the type of evidence to be heard. Specialist or expert evidence may be suited to a hearing in this way. Video-conferencing may make it feasible to hear evidence from witnesses located outside Western Australia, however, the committee should take into account the fact that the protection afforded by parliamentary privilege may not extend beyond Western Australia and that an appropriate warning regarding parliamentary privilege and defamation must be provided in writing by post, facsimile or email to the witness prior to evidence being taken; and
 - (5) whether evidence is likely to be contentious or a witness needs to be tested rigorously for truthfulness or there is any concern about the identification of the witness.
4. Any other factors, which the committee considers relevant should be taken into account and a decision, made appropriate to the particular circumstances of the proceeding, inquiry or witness.
5. The use of other types of electronic communication, for example facsimile, email and Internet chat rooms, are not precluded for committee purposes other than deliberative meetings and hearings. ”.

2.3 Trial period for proposal

A trial period of 18 months, by way of a sessional order, is recommended to the Legislative Assembly. This is the minimum period necessary to allow a substantial trial of the new facility by the Legislative Assembly's committees.

Recommendation 5

Your Committee recommends -

That Recommendation Nos 1 to 4 be incorporated in a Sessional Order and adopted for a trial period of 18 months.

2.4 Review of Sessional Order

Your Committee will undertake a review of the operation of the Sessional Order and Speaker's Procedural Rules and report its findings to the Legislative Assembly before the 18 month trial period expires.

2.5 Uniform approach to video-conferencing by Australian Parliaments

Your Committee believes steps should be taken to achieve a uniform approach by Australian Parliaments to defamation and parliamentary privilege when parliamentary committees use video-conferencing for committee deliberative meetings and hearings.

It is important that reciprocity be achieved between all Australian parliamentary jurisdictions and that arrangements are made to ensure uniform privileges are granted by each Parliament to the members of other Parliaments who are either physically taking committee evidence in another State or are taking evidence from a witness in another State using a video-conference facility. Your Committee is also aware that the Standing Committee of Attorneys - General (SCAG) is currently considering the matter of uniformity of defamation laws in Australia and requests the Attorney General to add this matter to those under consideration when SCAG reviews the defamation laws.

CHAPTER 3 USE OF VIDEO-CONFERENCING BY THE ESTIMATES COMMITTEES

Your Committee considered whether the Estimates Committees should also be able to use audio-conferencing whenever a ministerial adviser, with the permission of the Estimates Committee, is addressing the Committee from a remote location. Your Committee believes there is little reason why advisers should not be present in person to advise their Minister. If they cannot be present in person, the next best method is video-conferencing and that is far more preferable to audio-conferencing.

In the same way that witnesses formally appearing before Standing or Select Committees need to be clearly identified, ministerial advisers should also be clearly identified when providing responses to questions asked of their Ministers during Estimates Committees proceedings. As required by the Standing Orders, Ministers must continue to be physically present if their advisers use video-conferencing to address an Estimates Committee.

While most advisers located in remote regions of Western Australia are now able to access video-conferencing facilities, your committee agrees video-conferencing should only be used in exceptional circumstances. These include the *inability* to travel, but if a Minister wants to have an adviser, neither they nor the Estimates Committees should accept that the cost of travel to Perth is a valid reason not to attend. If the Minister seeks the advice of an adviser and expects him/her to speak directly to an Estimates Committee, then the adviser should be present in person before the committee.

Accordingly your Committee now submits to the Legislative Assembly a new recommendation, which supercedes its previous recommendations allowing both audio- and video-conferencing as contained in its reports on “A review of the Government’s Response to the Recommendations contained in the Procedure and Privileges Committee’s Report on the Operations of the Estimates Committees (2001)” and its subsequent review of the Government’s response to the report, That the Estimates Committees be permitted to use video-conferencing in exceptional circumstances only.

Recommendation 6

Your Committee recommends -

That in exceptional circumstances the Estimates Committees be permitted to use video-conferencing for ministerial advisers.

HON. FRED RIEBELING, MLA

CHAIRMAN TO THE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX ONE

Video-Conferencing at Parliament

The video conferencing unit features –

- A remotely controlled camera that can zoom and pan. It sits on top of a television monitor and is capable of automatically focussing on the person speaking;
- A 68cm television that enables you to see the remote party on the full screen of the TV and a smaller view of what the other party is seeing in a corner of the screen;
- A digital microphone;
- Capability to connect to your computer if want to include a powerpoint presentation in your video conference (slides, graphs, documents, etc).

Depending on the communications capacity of the remote party, the system is run using either an ISDN telephone line or a direct Internet connection, with the latter providing a higher quality video.

Most other video conferencing systems are compatible with the Parliament's unit.