



2023-24 BUDGET ESTIMATES PROCEDURE POLICY

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (Committee) is required to:

consider and report on ... the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year ... [and] any matter relating to the financial administration of the State¹

This Procedure Policy sets out the key deadlines and processes for the Committee's consideration of the 2023-24 Budget estimates (the Inquiry) for Members of the Legislative Council, Ministers² and public officials.

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¹ Legislative Council Standing Orders Sch 1, s 3.3(a)(i)-(ii).

² Ministers includes references to Ministers Representing and Parliamentary Secretaries.

1 General information

- 1.1 The Committee will meet with agencies the week commencing Monday 26 June 2023 in the Legislative Council Chamber.
- 1.2 The hearings will be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council and this Procedure Policy. The Chair (or their delegate) will preside over the hearings and has the powers to maintain the orderly conduct of the proceedings.
- 1.3 Committee staff can be contacted on (08) 9222 7400 or Icefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au for further information.

Scope of the Inquiry

- 1.4 The Inquiry will focus on the 2023-24 Budget estimates. However, Members may, within reason, ask general questions about the operations and finances of an agency that are outside the years in question or the budget papers.

2 Information for Members

- 2.1 The Committee encourages Members of the Legislative Council to participate in the evidence gathering process for the Inquiry. Members may:
 - nominate agencies to appear for a hearing
 - submit written questions prior to or after hearings, via the Electronic Lodgement System (ELS)
 - participate in hearings.

Table 1. *Key dates for Members*

Action	Date
ELS for questions prior to hearing will open	14:00, Thursday 11 May 2023
Nominations for agencies to appear for a hearing due	17:00, Tuesday 16 May 2023
ELS for questions prior to hearing will close	17:00, Tuesday 23 May 2023
Hearings	Week commencing Monday 26 June 2023
ELS for additional questions will open	When hearings commence
ELS for additional questions will close	17:00, Friday 7 July 2023

Nominating agencies to appear for a hearing

- 2.2 Individual Members may nominate agencies for hearings at which they intend to participate. Nominations should be emailed to Icefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au.
- 2.3 The Committee will determine which agencies will appear, based on the Committee's priorities and the strength of interest expressed by Members. Committee staff will email the timetable to Members once finalised.

Submitting written questions to Ministers

- 2.4 When formulating questions, Members should note the scope of the Inquiry as discussed at paragraph 1.4 of this Procedure Policy.
- 2.5 Members may submit a reasonable number of written questions to any agency through the ELS. Questions cannot be submitted after the ELS closes.
- 2.6 Committee staff will provide Members with instructions on how to use the ELS.
- 2.7 The Committee will make answers to submitted questions public (where appropriate) and staff will advise Members when those answers are available.

Hearings

- 2.8 When formulating questions, Members should note the scope of the Inquiry as discussed at paragraph 1.4 of this Procedure Policy.
- 2.9 Questions should be directed through, and acknowledged by, the Chair. The Chair has the discretion to rule a question out of order.
- 2.10 Members may direct questions to the Minister or to individual witnesses. Questions that seek an opinion on government policy must be directed to the Minister.
- 2.11 Members may submit unasked questions through the ELS as additional questions.
- 2.12 Uncorrected transcripts will be made available as soon as possible after the hearing on the Committee's website (www.parliament.wa.gov.au/est). Members should note the usual caveats about quoting from uncorrected transcripts.

3 Information for Ministers and public officials

- 3.1 The Committee values the contribution made by Ministers and public officials during this process.

Table 2. Key dates for Ministers and public officials

Action	Date
Questions prior to hearing will be sent	By Friday 26 May 2023
Answers to questions prior to hearing due	17:00, Friday 9 June 2023
Completed 'Information for Witnesses' sheet due	17:00, Tuesday 20 June 2023
Hearings	Week commencing Monday 26 June 2023
Uncorrected transcripts will be sent	As soon as possible after the hearing
Corrections to uncorrected transcripts due	17:00, five working days after receipt
Additional questions will be sent	By Wednesday 12 July 2023
Answers to questions on notice and additional questions due	17:00, Wednesday 26 July 2023

Submitting answers to written questions

- 3.2 Ministers and public officials should note the scope of the Inquiry as discussed at paragraph 1.4 of this Procedure Policy and be prepared to answer all questions directed to them.
- 3.3 Ministers should provide the Committee with all requested information. If a Minister decides not to provide certain information, the Minister should advise each House of Parliament and the Auditor General, as required by section 82 of the *Financial Management Act 2006*.
- 3.4 If the Minister considers that an answer provided (or parts of it) should remain private, the Minister should advise the Committee and explain why that is necessary. The Committee will consider any such request presented by a Minister.
- 3.5 Ministers are responsible for redirecting questions to another Minister if they are not the best party to provide the answer. Ministers involved in the redirection of a question should note in their answer whether a question was redirected to them or redirected by them.
- 3.6 An answer must not simply state that the information sought can be obtained from a website. The information must be extracted from the website and be incorporated into the answer.
- 3.7 If the Minister considers that more time is needed to answer certain questions, the Minister should email lcefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au as soon as possible. The request for an extension should state the reasons why those answers cannot be provided by the due date. The Minister should provide the answers that are available by the due date.
- 3.8 Ministers should provide answers to questions in the format set out at Appendix 1. The Minister should sign or initial each page of the response. A pdf version of the answer should be emailed to lcefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au.

Hearings

- 3.9 The Committee will consult with potential witnesses (Ministers and public officials) to finalise the hearing timetable. Ministers are welcome, but are not required, to attend hearings.
- 3.10 Any public official appearing before the Committee is required to complete an 'Information for Witnesses' document (see Appendix 2). The purpose of the document is to inform public officials of their rights and responsibilities. Signed information sheets should be emailed to lcefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au.
- 3.11 Where more than one Minister is responsible for an agency invited to a hearing, these Ministers should determine which of them (if any) will attend and advise the Committee accordingly. Ministerial staff cannot be a substitute for a Minister at a hearing.
- 3.12 Witnesses will be invited to provide an opening statement of no more than two minutes.
- 3.13 Witnesses should note the scope of the Inquiry as discussed at paragraph 1.4 of this Procedure Policy and be prepared to answer all questions directed to them.
- 3.14 Members may direct questions to the Minister or to individual public officials. Public officials may refer the question to another public official or the Minister. The Minister may direct a public official not to answer a given question and must then either answer the question themselves or direct another public official to answer it.
- 3.15 Questions that are unable to be answered immediately will be taken on notice. These questions are identified as 'Supplementary Information' in the Hansard transcript and allocated a Supplementary Information Number (for example, A1, B3 and so forth).

3.16 Committee staff will provide witnesses with an uncorrected transcript of the hearing as soon as possible after the hearing. Witnesses will be asked to identify typographical and transcription errors. Corrections to the uncorrected transcript should be emailed to lcefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au. The uncorrected transcript will also highlight requests for Supplementary Information (with a formal request for information to follow). Transcripts will also be available from the Committee's website at www.parliament.wa.gov.au/est.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Committee	Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations
ELS	Electronic Lodgement System
Inquiry	The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations' consideration of the 2023-24 Budget estimates
Minister	Includes the Minister Representing the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister, where applicable
witness	A person appearing before the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations to answer questions, and may include a Minister, Minister Representing a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary representing a Minister, or a public official

APPENDIX 1

TEMPLATE FOR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

2023-24 BUDGET ESTIMATES

ANSWERS TO [IDENTIFY IF IT IS QUESTIONS PRIOR TO HEARING, SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION OR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS]

[Insert name of department/agency – if applicable, state ‘ – redirected from the XX department/agency/Minister’]

Hon [insert Member’s name] MLC asked:

1) [Insert question 1]

[If a question has a number of parts]

a) [Insert first part of question]

Answer:... [if applicable, state ‘This question has been redirected to the XX department/agency/Minister.’]

i) [Insert any sub questions]

Answer:...

ii) [etc.]

Answer:...

iii) [etc.]

Answer:...

b) [Insert second part of question etc.]

Answer:...

i) [Insert any sub questions]

Answer:...

ii) [etc.]

Answer:...

iii) [etc.]

Answer:...

[etc.]

2) [Insert question 2]

Answer:...

Minister’s signature/initials

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION FOR WITNESSES

Committee Hearings Information for Witnesses



Important: Please read the following notes before giving evidence.

Full Name: (Title)	(First Name)	(Last Name)
<hr/>		
Title of Position Held:		
<hr/>		
Business Name and Address:		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
Telephone:	Email:	
<hr/>		
Signature:	Date:	
<hr/>		

Introduction

1. A committee hearing is a proceeding in Parliament. As such, you must not deliberately mislead the committee and you must respect the members of the committee and the committee's orders and procedures. If you do not comply with these requirements, you may be subject to legal penalties.

What happens at a hearing?

2. Committees are made up of members of Parliament. There are usually 4-8 members on a committee.
3. You will be escorted into the room by staff. After you are seated, the chair of the committee may ask you to take an oath or affirmation. The chair will then ask you:
 - to state your full name, address and the capacity in which you appear before the committee
 - if you have read and understood the information contained in this document.
4. You may be invited to make an opening statement to the committee.
5. Members, in turn, will ask you a series of questions about the matter being considered. With limited exceptions (discussed below) you must answer questions you are asked.
6. The chair may invite you to make any additional comments at the end of the hearing.

Parliamentary privilege

7. Evidence given to Parliamentary committees is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. This means what you say to a committee, so long as it is not deliberately false, cannot be questioned or used against you in a court, tribunal or similar proceedings. Privilege is important as it allows you to be honest and direct in your evidence to a committee without fear of being sued.
8. It is important to note the protection is strictly limited to the evidence you give to the committee during the hearing. If you repeat or publish your statements elsewhere they will not be protected by Parliamentary Privilege.
9. If you are concerned about the evidence you are going to give you should tell the committee.

Your entitlements

10. Unless the committee orders otherwise, any person examined before a committee is entitled to:
 - a. access to relevant documents before and during examination;
 - b. benefit of counsel;
 - c. request that the evidence be deemed private or in camera;
 - d. be informed prior to the examination of the right of objection provided by section 7 of the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1891*;
 - e. a reasonable opportunity to rebut allegations of criminal, improper or unethical conduct made against the witness if the allegations are relevant to the Committee's inquiry;
 - f. a reasonable opportunity to correct errors of transcription in a transcript of evidence;
 - g. an opportunity to provide supplementary or new evidence; and
 - h. any additional entitlements as determined by the Council.

Is your evidence public or private?

11. Most committee hearings are public. In other words, members of the public and the media may attend the hearings and the proceedings may be reported. In contrast, a committee may conduct a private hearing, which means that members of the public and the media may not attend. If you are uncertain as to whether your hearing is private or public, ask the committee's staff before the hearing or the chair of the committee before you start giving evidence.

Requests to give evidence in private

12. You can ask the committee to take your evidence in a private session. It is important that any request for a private hearing, or for the committee to prohibit publication of all or part of your evidence, or your identity, be made *prior* to giving the relevant evidence. You should be prepared to state why you want your evidence or your identity to remain private. If the committee grants your request, the public and media will be excluded from the hearing.
13. The committee may also decide that all or part of the hearing should be in private, particularly if the evidence adversely reflects on a third person or the matter being investigated is subject to legal proceedings.

14. You should note that the committee retains the power to publish any private evidence. The Legislative Council may also authorise publication. This means that even your private evidence may become public.
15. Evidence given *in camera* can only be disclosed by an order of the Legislative Council. It is rare for a committee to agree to evidence being given in camera.

Broadcasting

16. The committee may decide to broadcast the public hearing on the internet. If this is the case, the hearing will also be recorded and may be available online for viewing after the hearing. If you object to the hearing being broadcast, you should advise staff at the earliest opportunity and provide an explanation for your request not to broadcast the hearing. The committee will consider your request and you will be advised of its decision.

If you are a public servant

17. Public servants appearing before a committee in that capacity are entitled to refuse to answer a question asking them to give an opinion on a matter of policy. The committee must direct all such questions to the responsible Minister.

You must not disclose evidence given in private session

18. You must not publish or disclose any evidence given to a committee in private session unless that evidence has been reported to the Legislative Council in a public document. Premature publication or disclosure may:
 - constitute a contempt of the Legislative Council
 - mean that the publication or disclosure of the relevant material is not subject to Parliamentary Privilege.

Transcript of your evidence

19. A transcript of your evidence will be made and sent to you for correction of typographical and transcription errors. Please see the letter that will accompany the uncorrected transcript in this regard.

Threats or intimidation

20. If you have been threatened or intimidated by any person in respect of giving your evidence to the committee, you should immediately inform the committee or one of its staff. If this occurs after you have given evidence you should notify the committee staff. It is a criminal offence to threaten, punish or injure a witness.