



THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

REPORT 59

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS 2014-15

Presented by Hon Ken Travers MLC (Chair)

December 2015

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

Date first appointed:

30 June 2005

Terms of Reference:

The following is an extract from Schedule 1 of the Legislative Council Standing Orders:

“3. Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations

3.1 *An Estimates and Financial Operations Committee* is established.

3.2 The Committee consists of 5 Members, 3 of whom shall be non-government Members.

3.3 The functions of the Committee are to –

(a) consider and report on –

(i) the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year;

(ii) any matter relating to the financial administration of the State; and

(iii) any bill or other matter relating to the foregoing functions referred by the Council;

and

(b) consult regularly with the Auditor General.”

Members:

Hon Ken Travers MLC (Chair)

Hon Peter Katsambanis MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Rick Mazza MLC

Hon Alanna Clohesy MLC

Hon Liz Behjat MLC

Hon Martin Aldridge MLC

(appointed 9 September 2015)

(until 5 September 2015)

Staff:

Michael Ryan (Advisory Officer)

Andrew Hawkes (Advisory Officer)

(since 24 November 2014)

Kate McConigley (Advisory Officer)

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(until 27 February 2015)

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REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

IN RELATION TO THE BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS 2013-14

1 REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE

The Committee's function of expenditure review

- 1.1 It is a function of the Estimates and Financial Operations Committee (Committee) to consider and report to the Legislative Council (Council) on the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year and any matter relating to the financial administration of the State.¹
- 1.2 Government revenue goes into the Consolidated Account, which is the major source of funding for the State public sector.² The Government's estimates of expenditure for a financial year comprise the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Bills and the supporting documentation (Budget Papers). These are presented to Parliament on an annual basis to enable the Government to access or appropriate money from the Consolidated Account to fund expenditure by the Government over a given financial year.³ Government agencies are required to table annual reports in the Parliament each year.
- 1.3 Under its terms of reference, the Committee conducts Budget Estimates Hearings and Agency Annual Report Hearings each year.
- 1.4 This report relates to the Annual Hearings held in relation to the Budget Estimates for 2014-15.⁴

The Committee's approach

- 1.5 The Committee adopted a Budget Estimates Hearings approach for its consideration of the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year over the following dates:

¹ Term of reference 3.3a.

² The major revenue sources for the Western Australian Government include taxes, imposts, fines, rates, duties, royalties and Commonwealth Government grants: *Constitution Act 1889*, section 64 and the *Financial Management Act 2006*, section 8.

³ *Constitution Act 1889*, section 72.

⁴ The 2014-15 Budget Statements were tabled in the Legislative Council on 8 May 2014. The Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Capital 2014-15 Bill 2014 and the Appropriation (Consolidated Account) Recurrent 2014-15 Bill 2014 were assented to on 25 August 2014.

- 10 to 13 and 16 June 2014
- 21 and 23 July 2014
- 15 August 2014.

2 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

2.1 To assist the Committee in determining which agencies to examine, the Committee corresponded with all Members.

2.2 The Committee sought to give priority to the portfolios of the Ministers in the Council.

2.3 Details of the hearings were placed on the parliamentary website (www.parliament.wa.gov.au).

2.4 On 10 to 13 and 16 June 2014, the Committee held hearings with the following agencies:

- Department of Treasury
- Department of Commerce
- Attorney General
- Department of Health
- Mental Health Commission
- Disability Services Commission
- Department of Child Protection
- Department of Education
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Public Transport Authority
- Main Roads
- Department of Agriculture and Food
- Department of Fisheries
- Western Australian Police.

2.5 On 21 and 23 July 2014, the Committee held hearings with the following agencies:

- Department of Transport

- Department of Regional Development
- Department of Housing
- Department of Parks and Wildlife.

2.6 On 15 August 2014, the Committee held hearings with the following agencies:

- Department of the Legislative Council and Parliamentary Services Department
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

2.7 The hearings were conducted in accordance with the Committee's Procedure Policy.

2.8 All Members were notified of the hearings and invited to participate.

2.9 All of the hearings were public and the proceedings were recorded by *Hansard*. Transcripts of the hearings are posted on the Committee's website.⁵

Questions on notice

2.10 In accordance with the Procedure Policy, the Committee invited Members to submit questions on notice prior to the hearings. Seven Members submitted questions on notice prior to the hearings and the answers were provided to the Members prior to the hearings.

2.11 During the Budget Estimates Hearings a number of questions were taken on notice.

2.12 Where a Member was unable to ask all their questions in the scheduled time, they were provided with the opportunity to submit those questions in writing at the end of the hearing.

2.13 Copies of the questions and answers can be found on the Committee's web page.⁶

3 FEEDBACK

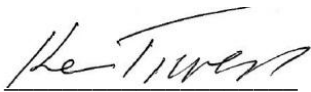
3.1 The Committee sought feedback on the Budget Estimates Hearings, distributing a questionnaire to all Members. The Committee received a limited number of completed questionnaires, which were positive in nature.

⁵ [Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations website](#) Viewed 30 October 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

Committee comment

- 3.2 The Committee was pleased with the conduct of the hearings, the level of attendance at the hearings and Member participation. A good cross-section of questions were asked by both government and non-government Members and a large number of issues were canvassed in the course of the proceedings.
- 3.3 The Committee is committed to continually reviewing and refining its processes to ensure that effective and worthwhile estimates processes are conducted. To this end, the Committee will continue to consult with Members to improve the process.



**Hon Ken Travers MLC
Chair**

Date: 3 December 2015