

Objective 1:

Assembly and Committee support

To support the Legislative Assembly (and its committees and Members) in fulfilling its functions within the institution of Parliament to:

- make law (and supervise delegated law making)
- approve and scrutinise the State's finances
- scrutinise the actions of executive government (and oversight independent bodies)
- provide a forum for debate and grievance.

Overview

To achieve this objective, Parliamentary Service resources have been allocated to provide Members with a range of procedural, research, advisory and information services. These resources are primarily delivered through the following Parliamentary Service offices and Divisions:

- » the Office of the Speaker
- » the Office of the Clerk
- » the Office of the Deputy Clerk
- » the Assembly and Committee Services Division.

In 2022–23 the Assembly and Committee Services Division comprised the following three Service Areas:

- » Chamber and Education Services
- » Committee Office (including Office of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Commissioner)
- » Parliamentary Reporting and Broadcasting Service (Hansard).

The key performance indicators for Objective 1 relate to the extent to which the quantity, quality, timeliness and cost of specified services provided by each of the service areas meet the agreed standards and targets.

The methods of measurement include client survey, benchmarking, internal assessment through information management systems and external assessment through audit reports.

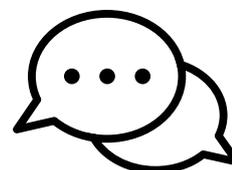
Key performance indicators for Assembly and Committee Support are available as part of the Appendix.

99%

Percentage of Hansard transcripts published on time



680.3 total audio hours transcribed



555 committee hearings, briefings and meetings were supported during the year



1,673 Questions on Notice were processed

Report on parliamentary committee activities for 2022–23

Queensland's parliamentary committee system was significantly reformed in August 2011 in order to improve openness and accountability, better connect the work of Parliament with its committees, and increase the levels of public consultation within Queensland's legislative process. These reforms included the establishment of portfolio committees, resulting in a notable increase in the volume of committee work and greater public involvement in matters discussed by the Parliament. An overview of the committee work conducted during the year is detailed below.

In 2022–23, the Parliament's portfolio committees undertook 48 formal inquiries, which comprised:

- 36 inquiries into bills that were introduced in the Parliament and then referred to committees for examination
- four inquiries on matters of community importance referred by the Parliament
- five inquiries as part of fulfilling statutory oversight, public accounts and public works responsibilities
- three inquiries initiated by a committee under self-referral powers.

A total of 501 portfolio committee hearings, briefings and meetings were held during the year. These comprised 201 hearings and briefings (mostly held in public) and 300 private meetings. The Assembly and Committee Services Division also supported meetings of the Ethics Committee, Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, Committee of the Legislative Assembly and the Business Committee.

Committee inquiries are a key avenue for public consultation and engagement between the public and the Parliament, and support the Parliament to scrutinise government activity. Committees received and considered 880 submissions, and heard evidence from 1,274 persons (comprising 586 representatives of organisations, 212 individuals and 476 public servants).

Portfolio committees tabled a total of 125 publications, mostly reports, in the Parliament during 2022–23. There were a total of 65 recommendations contained in those reports (other than that the bill be passed or not passed). The public consultation as outlined above greatly contributed to the formulation of these recommendations.

One indicator of the influence of portfolio committees is the number of recommendations contained in inquiry reports that were agreed to by the government.

In relation to the bill inquiries for which government responses were received in 2022–23:

- of 8 proposed legislative amendments, 6 were accepted by the government (75%)
- of 57 other recommendations, 49 were accepted by the government (85%).

The review of budget estimates for the 2022–23 appropriations was conducted by the seven portfolio committees during the financial year. Each portfolio committee is responsible for examining the proposed expenditures of the Government departments for their respective areas of responsibility, and advising the Parliament accordingly. Seven estimates hearings were held from 26 July to 4 August 2022 with each of the committees reporting back to Parliament in August 2022.

Committees conducted 36 bill inquiries, including inquiries into the *Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Amendment Bill 2022*, *Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022*, *Police Powers and Responsibilities (Jack's Law) Amendment Bill 2022*, *Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023* and the *Path to Treaty Bill 2023*.

In 2022–23, committees also tabled reports of inquiries into matters of public interest including:

- the decriminalisation of certain public offences, and health and welfare responses
- the support provided to victims of crime
- coal mining industry safety
- the economic and regulatory frameworks of Queensland's island resorts.

Public works inquiry reports tabled included:

- the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) project
- the Sumners Road interchange upgrade project.

In addition, a number of inquiries were referred to or self-referred by committees during 2022–23, and are continuing. These include inquiries into:

- reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland
- delivery of VET (vocational education and training) in regional, rural and remote Queensland
- the Cairns TAFE Upgrade Project
- the impact of climate change on Queensland agricultural production.

In undertaking their public accounts responsibilities, portfolio committees also reviewed Auditor-General reports and reported to the Parliament.

A number of committees undertook proceedings in support of their responsibility for oversight of specific independent entities.

An important function of the Parliament's portfolio committees is to enhance the democratic process by taking the work of the Parliament to the people and giving them a direct way to input into its decisions.

With the continued easing of COVID-19 restrictions during 2022–23, committees travelled to regional Queensland for site inspections and to conduct hearings. Hearings were held in locations such as Cairns, Townsville, Gold Coast, Rockhampton, Mackay, Mount Isa, Palm Island, Bundaberg, Charleville, Thursday Island, Longreach, Mareeba, Moranbah, Redlands, Logan, Ipswich, Roma, Southport, Great Keppel Island, Hamilton Island, Keswick Island, Weipa and Woorabinda.

The use of video conferencing has also allowed committees to hear from additional people. In 2022–23, 151 people participated remotely in 41 committee proceedings held in Brisbane.

The volume of committee work completed and the outcomes achieved during 2022–23 continues to demonstrate that portfolio committees are supporting parliamentary scrutiny of government activity, and contributing to an open, consultative and modern parliamentary system.

Public consultation by parliamentary committees

A number of strategies have been implemented since 2011 to promote Queensland's committee inquiry process and raise awareness of how Queenslanders can be involved with committee inquiries and influence decision making, including:

- publishing details of all inquiries on the Parliament's Internet site
- issuing media releases
- utilising the Parliament's social media channels
- media interviews by committee chairs
- identifying persons and groups who may be interested in each particular inquiry and directly contacting them with information about the inquiry and how they can participate
- sending information about committee activities to committee subscriber email alert lists, including when submissions are invited and public proceedings held
- where an inquiry may have a focus in a particular regional area, advertisements may be placed in relevant local community newspapers
- placing advertisements and articles in trade journals and publications relevant to a committee inquiry topic.

On 1 July 2023 we are commencing surveys of subscribers, submitters and stakeholders to inform Committee Office communication and engagement practices.

Committee hearings held at Parliament House are generally broadcast live on 'Parliament.TV' via the Parliament's website, and can be watched on replay following the hearing. The live broadcast allows people across Queensland with an interest in particular inquiries to follow hearings and events as they occur. Transcripts of public proceedings are also published. Where appropriate, the Parliament's First Peoples Liaison Officer assists in raising awareness of inquiries amongst First Nations people and communities, supporting consultation activities, and providing assistance to those who may wish to participate.

Key initiatives for Objective 1

Assembly and Committee Services

Digitisation of parliamentary papers tabled between 1860 and 1989

The Table Office continued to digitise the significant volume of parliamentary papers tabled in the Legislative Assembly between 1860 and 1989. In 2022–23, papers of the 41st to 45th Parliaments (covering the years 1974 to 1989) were digitised and published on the Parliament's website. This, together with additional papers requested by researchers, brought the total number of historical records digitised and published under the project to over 30,000.

Approach to committee reporting enhanced

In December 2021, the Committee Office began a project to evaluate and refine its approach to committee reporting.

The Committee Office focused on implementing its new reader-centric approach to writing reports in 2022–23, including developing new reporting templates and a style guide.

Planning for a Parliamentary Information Management System

Officers have been involved in planning workshops to prepare for the implementation of a Parliamentary Information Management System (PIMS) in 2023–24. It is anticipated that the system will contain modules supporting unique Parliamentary activities and processes such as Bills, Tabled Papers, Questions and Answers, Petitions, Committee hearings, Procedural Hearings, Hansard and Broadcast (Parliament TV).

'Committees@Work' seminars

In 2022–23 the Committee Office staff delivered four 'Committees@Work' seminars, primarily designed for public servants who wish to learn more about parliamentary committees and their role in the legislative process. The 200 participants learned about what happens to departmental policy development work when it is introduced to parliament as a bill. The seminars step through the various stages by which a Bill becomes an Act of Parliament, with a 'deep dive' into the committee process. Participants learn how to best advise senior officials appearing before committees, or how to best support a committee should they be asked to do so themselves. Participants are always particularly interested in the history and rationale behind having portfolio committees, as these committees aim to enhance public oversight of the executive government.