



Premier of Queensland

For reply please quote: ES/AT – TF/11/30694 – DOC/11/189594

28 NOV 2011

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Thank you for your letter of 28 October 2011 enclosing e-petition No. 1723-11 concerning the re-introduction of an Upper House in the Queensland Parliament, which was tabled in the Parliament on 27 October 2011.

The issues outlined in this petition were contained in the People's House Bill 2011 and the Referendum for an Upper House Bill 2011 (the Bills), both of which were introduced by the Member for Beaudesert, Mr Aidan McLindon MP, on 24 May 2011.

As you are aware, these Bills were debated by the Parliament on 26 October 2011, and were negatived at the second reading stage with Government and Opposition members opposing the Bills. Fewer than five Members supported the People's House Bill 2011 when a division on the second reading was called.

As outlined by the Deputy Premier during this debate, the Queensland Government does not support the re-introduction of an Upper House in the Queensland Parliament.

In November 2009, after considering the submissions received to the *Integrity and Accountability in Queensland* green paper, the Government determined that it would not pursue the re-introduction of an Upper House given the mixed views on the matter expressed during this consultation, and that implementing such a decision would require majority support at a referendum and result in greater ongoing costs to Queensland taxpayers.

The Government instead committed to an all party parliamentary process to review the Parliament's committee system and legislative processes.

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As you are aware, arising from this review has been the implementation of landmark reforms to the Parliament's procedures and committee system during 2011, which provided the Parliament with greater scope to scrutinise the actions of Government and the legislative proposals which the Government places before the Parliament.

These reforms, which have been introduced with bipartisan support, include the establishment of seven portfolio committees which cover all Ministerial portfolios and Government departments. Their main activities include, for their respective portfolios, conducting the budget estimates inquiries, examining legislation and examining public accounts and public works matters associated with their portfolio.

The portfolio committees have the ability to call public servants as witnesses and ask questions of them directly, or to invite public servants to assist the committees to understand the legislation which the Government places before the Parliament.

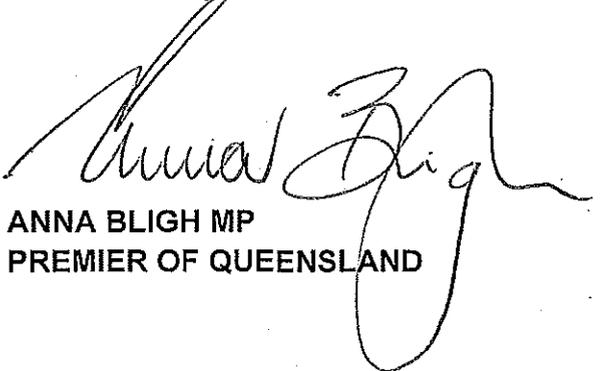
Members of the public are also able to make submissions on this legislation and raise any concerns they have directly with the committees.

These processes have been operational since the new portfolio committees were appointed by the Parliament on 16 June 2011, and it is already generally accepted that they have enhanced the Parliament's traditional processes for considering and debating legislation.

The Government is of the view that the new parliamentary committee system should be given the opportunity to operate for a reasonable period of time so that all Members, commentators and, indeed, all Queenslanders, can make a fair assessment of its operations. Therefore, the Government believes that the Parliament should afford this time to the new system before any other significant changes to the Parliament's processes are considered.

Ultimately, this is why the Government does not support the proposal outlined in petition No. 1723-11 and is also why the Government did not support the People's House Bill 2011 and the Referendum for an Upper House Bill 2011 when they were recently debated.

Yours sincerely,



ANNA BLIGH MP
PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND