

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

*Eighty-second Report — “The Local Projects Local Jobs Program
and the Establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office” — Tabling*

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [9.07 am]: I am directed to present the eighty-second report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, titled “The Local Projects Local Jobs Program and the Establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office”.

[See paper [4006](#).]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The report I have just tabled canvasses two separate, though related, matters referred by the Legislative Council. The first part of the report relates to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations’ inquiries into a program that was partially developed by a party in opposition and implemented as a government program following a state election. The purpose of the Local Projects, Local Jobs program was to implement election commitments. The program involved 849 projects at a cost of \$39.1 million.

The second part of the report relates to the committee’s inquiries into the establishment of a parliamentary budget office for the independent costing of election promises. The committee did not receive evidence to demonstrate that any new jobs in the form of sustainable or ongoing employment were created by the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. However, the program provided short-term stimulus to some local economies. The committee found that government departments implemented the Local Projects, Local Jobs program in a professional and accountable manner, supported by established governance arrangements. The committee has also found that the program was not a grants program. The committee encountered instances of mixed messaging regarding the type and purpose of the program and considered that some clarification was necessary. As a result, the committee has recommended that the government inquire into and consider a formal state policy for the administration of election commitments to assist future governments.

The committee has also recommended that a parliamentary budget office be established to cost announced election policies and to improve the Parliament’s capacity to conduct financial scrutiny. The committee sees a dual benefit in the establishment of a parliamentary budget office. During state elections, the people of Western Australia will benefit from improved financial transparency of the election promises they are being asked to vote on. A parliamentary budget office will also improve the financial literacy and the capacity of the Parliament to scrutinise and understand the finances of the state. I commend the report to the house.