

Parliamentary Committees in the Western Australian Parliament

Parliamentary Committees in the Western Australian Parliament: An Overview of Their Evolution, Functions and Features

Volume 1: 1870–2000

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Preface

In Western Australia, with the adoption of the representative government in 1870, the standing orders for the new legislature provided documented direction for parliamentary committees. Then when responsible government was established in 1890 the standing orders were expanded for the committee system to function in the bi-cameral parliament. However, even when the centenary of responsible government was celebrated in 1990 the significance of parliamentary committees tended to be overlooked. This first volume, titled *Parliamentary Committees in the Western Australian Parliament: An Overview of their Evolution, Functions and Features* covers the historic period from 1870 to the beginning of the new millennium in 2001, which marked the beginning of the 36th Parliament. Volume 2 is planned to then cover, the extended scale of parliamentary committees, mostly standing committees, to the conclusion of the 39th Parliament, which was prorogued in January 2017.

Both volumes are intended to be placed on the Parliament's website, in the Library section, which will permit expansions and amendments to the treatise. Both volumes will include appendices which contain tabulations of the parliamentary committees which have reported to the Parliament in chronological order. The subject or portfolio designation for each of the standing committees is recognised providing a comprehension of the vast range of topics given focus by the Parliament. The listings include select committees, standing committees from both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, as well as joint (both Houses) standing and select committees. A range of 'unofficial domestic committee' reports encompassing matters such library, education and history are not extensively documented. However, these domestic committees will be briefly mentioned in the outline of the works of each committee.

Acknowledgements

As the role of parliamentary committees is frequently discussed in the parliamentary setting it would be a difficult task to fully acknowledge those interested persons who have at least indirectly made observations about their history functions, growth, costs and even effectiveness. Both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly had produced reports on their respective parliamentary committees particularly in the light of observations made by the Royal Commission and the subsequent Commission of Government. Steps were then taken through the auspices of the Parliamentary History Advisory Committee to focus research attention to the parliamentary committees of the Parliament. In the first instance their effectiveness was to be highlighted but given the difficulty of this task, and lack of literature on this dimension of parliamentary committees, the study was modified to be titled *Parliamentary Committees in the Western Australian Parliament: An Overview of their Evolution, Functions and Features*.

For Volume 1 the generous organisational support of Mathew Bates, Clerk Assistant of the Legislative Assembly, is recognised. He arranged the professional assistance of Vanessa Beckingham, a committee research officer with the Legislative Assembly. Her dedicated commitment to the task was outstanding, as was her scholarship and encouragement. For some weeks Dr Loraine Abernethie, a former principal research officer with the Legislative Assembly Committee Office, also valuably assisted Vanessa Beckingham, with her excellence and support. Jan Phillips also kindly assisted with the pre-reading of each chapter. Moreover, the regular research assistance of the Parliamentary Library is acknowledged, plus the expertise and support of the parliamentary committee staff in both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly.

A comprehensive list of acknowledgements will be cited in Volume 2. This will include the important role of the former History Advisory Committee chaired by Emeritus Professor David Black. The Parliamentary History Advisory Committees for the last two Parliaments is cited in the next page. At all times, too, the support of the current President, Hon Kate Doust, and the current Speaker, Hon Peter Watson, is greatly appreciated. This is in conjunction with the supportive roles of the Clerk of the Legislative Council, Nigel Pratt, and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Kirsten Robinson.

To finalise the arrangements for Volume 1, Belinda Corey, the Director of Parliamentary Information, in consultation with Judy Ballantyne, the Manager of the Library, Education and Community Relations, also provided assistance including discussions with Laurie Mansell and Olivier Breton, as well as Amanda Simpson, to assist with the *Hansard* arrangements. For Volume 2, Niamh Corbett, Deputy Librarian, is providing the professional assistance. Liz Kerr, Clerk Assistant, has generously assisted with the organisation of the publication, with the valued assistance of Bryan Vander Vinne.

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