



Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Standing Orders Committee

Meeting No: 3

Agenda Item: 8

Date: 16 October 2002

SUBJECT: Reference by Assembly to the Standing Orders Committee to review and identify options for enhancement for the Estimates Committee

Reference from the Legislative Assembly on 9 October 2002

I move – that:

- a) the Estimates Committee model utilised in September 2002 be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for review and identification of options for enhancement for Estimates Committee;
- b) the Committee in its deliberations investigate all viable processes to enhance the carriage of the deliberations of the Estimates Committee including but no restricted to those issues raised in paragraph 2 of the Leader of the Opposition's motion of 9 October 2002; and
- c) the Standing Orders Committee report to parliament during February 2003 sittings.

Issues raised in paragraph 2 of the Leader of the Opposition's motion of 9 October 2002 (see b above).

- Retention of One Estimates Committee.
- Estimates Committee hearings be conducted outside designated parliamentary sitting days.
- Allocation of a full sitting day for each Minister, with the provision that the next minister be called on if the preceding minister finishes before his/her allocated time.
- The Estimates Committee sits between 9am and 11.30pm each day.
- Questions may be put to each minister as
 - Written questions prior to the hearings of the Estimates Committee,
 - Questions without notice and
 - Supplementary questions.

- All written answers be provided to members of the Legislative Assembly at least three days prior to the hearings of the Estimates Committee with the relevant Minister.
- All questions and answers to be read into the *Hansard*.
- Generic questions across all agencies and outputs be given precedence over other questions.
- Questions of a similar nature asked by individual members be grouped.
- Standing Orders relating to relevance of answers by ministers be clearly defined specifically for the Estimates Committee.

Other issues raised on Estimates Committee process in debate on motion to establish a review panel to review the Estimates Committee process on 9 October 2002

- One or two estimates committees.
- Time allowed for committee process overall.
- Should questions be in writing.
- When should answers be provided, and if in advance how far in advance.
- Should shadow ministers have precedence in asking questions.
- Should committee members have precedence in asking their questions.
- A more suitable venue should be used.
- All questions and answers to be read into *Hansard*.

Issues raised on Estimates Committee process during debate on Appropriation Bill 2002-03 (Serial 89) on 19 September 2002

- There was not enough time.
- Use time more efficiently.
- Evened out time for each Minister.
- Written questions, oral questions and supplementaries.
- Track preparation of questions through the secretariat, through the respective government agencies and the ministers, and then into the committee process.
- Greater opportunity for members to pursue issues on their electorates.
- Shortcomings in venue.
- Provide all answers to questions on day one as per the Tasmanian model.
- Follow system in Tasmania of using nine hours per minister.
- Minister be able to ask "Are there any more questions?" before moving to next minister.
- Set up of the venue.
- More strategic and orderly process of asking questions.
- There should be sufficient time to read answers to questions and properly formulate supplementary questions.
- Questions and answers read rather than going direct into *Hansard* so general public can hear.
- Answers from different agencies to a generic question provided at the same time.
- Similar questions asked by different members be combined.