



ESTIMATES COMMITTEES

Estimates Committees are for the purpose of examining the Appropriation Bill (the Budget) in greater detail than the procedure of the Committee stages of a Bill in the House permits. The Parliament's financial authority is the most important of the powers traditionally and constitutionally devolved to the Executive (Government). The examination by the Estimates Committees is therefore an integral part of the process of ensuring Executive accountability to the Legislature.

The first Estimates Committees were conducted in 1980 and have been a feature of the annual parliamentary calendar in the weeks following the introduction of the Appropriation Bill (the Budget) ever since.

The Estimates Committees provide Members of the House of Assembly (Members of the Legislative Council do not participate) with the opportunity to examine Ministers (including those Ministers who are Members of the Legislative Council) on aspects of Government operations.

The Estimates Committees traditionally meet in the parliamentary chambers – Estimates Committee A in the House of Assembly and Estimates Committee B in the Legislative Council. The Committees meet concurrently.

The proceedings of the Estimates Committees are open to the public and may be viewed from the Strangers Galleries of either chamber at Parliament House.

Each Minister and their associated portfolios are allocated a block of time (see the ***Timetable for the Estimates Committees*** which is published following the Budget Speech) during which time Members of the House may seek information. Generally an agreed informal timetable for that day's examination determines the order in which officers from each of the agencies assisting the Minister will be present, thus determining the order in which the Minister's portfolios will be examined. The Schedule to the Appropriation Bill defines the area of expenditure or proposed payments to be examined.

Please refer to the ***Timetable for the Estimates Committees*** for information on the time and date of the appearance of each Minister and the proposed payments to be examined. See ***Procedure*** below for details on the Standing Orders and procedures of the Estimates Committees.

Members use the Estimates Statement and Portfolio Statements along with the other documents that make up the collection of financial papers known as the Budget Papers tabled on the introduction of the Appropriation Bill as references for their questions.

Procedure

House of Assembly Standing Orders 266 to 278 determines the procedure to be adopted for the consideration of the estimates. While the Schedule to the Appropriation Bill lists the proposed payments for examination.

As Standing Order 267 provides, the Appropriation Bill may be ordered to be referred to Estimates Committees by a Minister at the conclusion of the second reading, and following

the noting of grievances. The referral is made on motion and includes a timetable by which (subject to the relevant Standing Orders and the Committee's agreed approximate timetable) the Committee conducts its business.

The timetable by which the Estimates Committees conduct their business is set out in ***Timetable for Estimates Committees***. As previously mentioned, the order in which the proposed payments are considered can be altered by the Committee for the convenience of the examination.

In addition to the Standing Orders the Estimates Committees have over time adopted particular practices which have assisted the examinations.

The Chairman of the Committee will normally seek the concurrence of the Minister and the Opposition spokesperson to an approximate timetable for consideration of the proposed payments to facilitate the change over of agency advisers.

Ministers may undertake to supply information at a later date for insertion in Hansard.

Both the Minister and the Opposition spokesperson are traditionally permitted to make brief opening statements if they desire.

A flexible approach to giving the call for the asking of questions is usually adopted, based on three per Member, alternating sides. The Chairman may permit a supplementary question in order to conclude a line of questioning.

Access to Estimates Committees Records and Budget Papers

A transcript of each day's Estimates Committees proceedings is posted the next day on the Parliament's website: www.parliament.sa.gov.au/hansard.

The complete Budget papers can be found on the SACentral website soon after the Appropriation Bill is introduced and Treasurer delivers the Budget Speech in the House of Assembly.

For further information:

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For information on the next meeting or the full text of the Standing Orders as they relate to the Estimates Committees see the ***Timetable for the Estimates Committees*** or visit the Parliament House website: www.parliament.sa.gov.au.