

COVID-safe model for the conduct of supplementary Estimates October / November 2021 (as of 18 October 2021)

Background

This document outlines the model for the conduct of Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings from Tuesday 26 October to Friday 5 November 2021, working on the assumption that NSW has by that time achieved 80 per cent double dose vaccination rates against COVID-19 in the community. The document was prepared following the receipt of advice from HIBBS. Should circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak change the model will be updated.

Model for the conduct of Budget Estimates primarily in person with various health measure in place

At the current time, Supplementary Budget Estimates will proceed from Tuesday 26 October to Friday 5 November 2021 with most members, some witnesses and advisers and the secretariat/Hansard attending hearings at Parliament House in person according to the draft hearing schedule at Appendix 1. This hearing schedule will need to be adopted by the House.

The following health measures will be put in place for the conduct of hearings according to this model.

Attendance

- The strong preference as far as practicable is for all MLCs to be fully vaccinated along with all other participants. In the absence of that, a minimum of 80 per cent of MLCs attending must be fully vaccinated. The definition of fully vaccinated is that 2 weeks have passed since receiving the second vaccine dose.
- All witnesses (excepting ministers to whom the rule in the dot point above applies), advisers and staff attending budget estimates hearings **must** be double vaccinated.
- Members, witnesses and their advisers once seated in the hearing room must minimise their movement from their place for the duration of a hearing.
- Because of room limitations, opposition and cross bench advisers are not able to be present in the hearing rooms.
- The media and the public also may not attend budget estimates hearings, although the proceedings will be live broadcast and the media can access that feed.
- Staff who are identified as vulnerable persons, including staff with compromised immune systems, will not be permitted to attend hearings.

Restrictions and procedures on entry to Parliament House

- Anyone with the mildest symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat should NOT attend Parliament House at any time, and should seek medical advice and assistance. Anyone who becomes symptomatic during proceedings must immediately

seek medical advice and assistance. For common symptoms of COVID-19 as defined by NSW Ministry of Health, see <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/symptoms-and-testing>.

- Daily health screening must be undertaken by everyone entering the parliamentary precinct in a COVID safe manner, upon arrival at Parliament House. Daily health screening by a suitably qualified health practitioner is to include:
 - COVID-19 symptom check and declaration.
 - Declaration and evidence of compliance with NSW Health Orders.
 - Body temperature check (<37.5°C).
 - QR code check-in for contact tracing purposes
 - Rapid COVID antigen test, for screening purposes only (not to be confused with NSW Health Rapid PCR Testing).
- Personnel are not to be permitted to move through the building until the full testing regime is completed (including waiting for rapid antigen test results).
- Any person with a declared or detected COVID symptom or positive COVID Antigen Test must be removed from the screening area to a designated isolation room.

Room density

- Members, witnesses, advisers and staff are to observe physical distancing of >1.5m in the hearings rooms at all times.
- The following room density limits will apply for supplementary estimates hearings:
 - Macquarie Room
 - a maximum of the chair and 8 other members (9 members in total), 3 witnesses and 2 Hansard at the table – being a total of 14 at the table
 - a maximum of three advisers seated behind the witnesses
 - 3 secretariat staff (including the Director) to the side.
 - Jubilee Room
 - a maximum of the chair and 8 other members (9 members in total) and 3 witnesses at the table (the table will be configured in its extended form) – being a total of 12 at the table
 - a maximum of three advisers seated behind the witnesses
 - 3 secretariat staff (including the Director) and 2 hansard staff to the side.
 - Preston Stanley Room (likely not required for Budget estimates)
 - a maximum of the chair and 8 other members (9 members in total) and 3 witnesses at the table – being a total of 12 at the table
 - a maximum of three advisers seated behind the witnesses
 - 3 secretariat staff (including the Director) and 2 Hansard staff to the side.
- Room capacity limits will be strictly enforced by COVID marshalls.
- Members, witnesses and their advisers are to be allocated designated seats and once seated in a hearing room must minimise their movement from their place for the duration of a hearing.

- Those members and witnesses unable to attend hearings in person may attend by webex link.

Masks

- The wearing of masks is strongly recommended during committee proceedings, however can be removed by a member or witness with the call to speak where necessary for clear articulation. Masks are also strongly recommended when in the parliamentary precinct.

Hygiene

- Hands are to be sanitised on a regular basis, prior to entry into hearing rooms, and immediately upon exit, at established hand sanitising stations at entry and exit points.
- Hand sanitiser is to be provided throughout the hearing rooms, including at entry and exit points, and at each allocated seat, with regular use by members, witnesses, advisers and staff.
- Drinking water or other beverages for consumption are to be carried and consumed only from single use disposable containers. Reusable jugs, glasses, or cups are not permitted.
- Desks, chairs and microphones where members, witnesses and staff sit, being high touch points, are to be cleaned and sanitised between hearings by DPS staff wearing full PPE.
- Catering is not to be provided in hearings.
- In the Macquarie Room, one set of doors to be designated for entry and one set of doors to be designated for exit by members and staff (but not witnesses and their advisers).

Ventilation

- The ventilation systems of hearing rooms is to be set to maximum fresh air intake and reasonable air exchange per hour (ideally 100% fresh air intake with an air exchange rate of 8 air changes an hour).
- Doors of the hearing room are to remain closed for the duration of each hearing.
- Hearing room ventilation systems are to operate up to 4 hours prior to a hearing, 4 hours after, and during session breaks.
- In hearing rooms where ideal ventilation characteristics are unable to be achieved or are shared systems with other main parts of the precinct (such as the tower), mobile air purifiers with HEPA filtration and UV / electrical disinfection maybe used.
- Hearings are to break every 2 hours for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Appendix 1: Draft schedule of supplementary Budget Estimates hearings

Tuesday 26 October		Wednesday 27 October		Thursday 28 October		Friday 29 October	
Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee
PC 6 Regional Transport & Roads	PC 7 Energy & Environment	PC 6 Customer Service and Digital	PC 1 The Legislature	PC 7 Local Government	PC 1 Treasurer	PC 5 Families, Communities & Disability Services	PC 1 SMOS, PSER, Aboriginal Affairs & Arts
		PC 6 Better Regulation & Innovation	PC 1 Jobs, Investment, Tourism & Western Sydney, Industry and Trade	PC 7 Planning & Public Spaces		PC 5 Police & Emergency Services	PC 1 Finance & Small Business

Monday 1 November		Tuesday 2 November		Wednesday 3 November		Thursday 4 November		Friday 5 November	
Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee	Macquarie	Jubilee
PC 4 Agriculture & Western NSW	PC 5 Attorney General & Domestic and Sexual Violence	PC 6 Transport & Roads	PC 3 Tertiary Education & Skills	PC 4 Regional NSW	PC 3 Education & Early Childhood Learning	PC 2 Health & Medical Research	PC 1 Premier	PC 5 Counter Terrorism & Corrections	PC 2 Mental Health, Regional Youth, Women
								PC 5 Sport, Multicultural ism, Seniors & Veterans	PC 4 Water, Property & Housing