



Factsheet No. 9 – Parliamentary committees

Parliamentary committees are groups of Members appointed by the Parliament to undertake a particular task or function. Committees are an important way to give the community a say on topical issues and for the Parliament to make the Government accountable. This factsheet gives an overview of the types of committees that are administered by the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales and the important work that these committees do.

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► What is a committee?

A committee is a group of Members of Parliament, usually from 5 to 9 people, appointed by the Parliament to perform a set task. Most committees have members drawn from just one house of Parliament, but some committees have members from both Houses.

Legislative Assembly committees include members from different political parties, but usually have a majority of Government members.

► What types of committees are there?

Different types of committees are appointed for different tasks.

► *Standing committees*

The Legislative Assembly appoints standing committees for the life of each Parliament with terms of reference to investigate particular subject areas. The Assembly may refer specific inquiries to a standing committee, or a committee may decide to investigate a specific issue which is relevant to the terms of reference the Assembly has given it.

The Legislative Council also appoints standing committees including the five Budget Estimates committees, which examine the Government's budget and spending plans each year.

► *Select committees*

From time to time the Assembly may appoint a select committee to investigate a subject. When it appoints a select committee the Assembly always determines the terms of reference for the committee's investigation. When a select committee has finished its investigation by tabling its report to the Legislative Assembly, it ceases to exist.

► *Statutory committees*

Some Acts require the Parliament to appoint committees to perform specific functions. These committees investigate particular matters relevant to their establishing legislation, such as the Legislation Review Committee and the Public Accounts Committee, or oversee the independent bodies established by the legislation, such as the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

► *Legislation committees*

The Parliament can establish committees to examine bills that it is considering and make recommendations for amendments.

► What do committees do?

Each committee has a Chair and Deputy Chair, and has staff from the Parliament allocated to provide support to it. Committees meet to consider matters referred to them, or for which they have a statutory responsibility.

Once a committee has resolved to investigate a matter or carry out its legislated oversight function, it advertises that it is holding a public inquiry and invites the community to send it submissions which address the inquiry's terms of reference. Anyone can make a submission to an inquiry.

After reviewing the submissions it has received, a committee will usually publish the submissions on its webpage.

A committee may hold public hearings during an inquiry. For a public hearing the committee will invite the authors of submissions or other stakeholders to appear before the committee to answer questions in public. An oversight committee will usually invite the senior officers of the agency which it oversees. The transcript of what is said at a public hearing is recorded and also published on the committee's webpage.

Committees may also make site visits to inform themselves first-hand of matters relevant to an inquiry.

Once a committee decides it has received sufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the subject of its inquiry, the members will prepare findings and recommendations, and prepare a report.

► What happens to committee reports?

After a committee has adopted a report, it is tabled in the House and published on the committee's webpage.

The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly will send tabled committee reports to the Government, which has six months to respond to the report's recommendations. The Government can respond by accepting, accepting in-principle, or rejecting a report's recommendations. The Government is not bound to accept all or any of a committee's recommendations. The Government's response is also published on the committee's webpage.

What will you read next?



Other Fact Sheets can be found on the [Procedural Publications](#) section of the Parliament's website.



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