



Upper House committees

The Parliament of New South Wales has two houses: the Legislative Council (Upper House) and the Legislative Assembly (Lower House). Both Houses have parliamentary committees.

Upper House committees usually comprise up to eight members of Parliament from different political parties including the government, the opposition and cross bench parties.

One of the roles of the Upper House is to act as an effective check and balance on the government and committees are an important part of this work. Committees allow members to examine issues in greater detail and with more public input than if the matter was considered only during parliamentary debate.

Engage

Committees provide an important opportunity for individuals and groups to participate in the parliamentary process and put their views directly to members of Parliament. You can:

- make a written submission
- give oral evidence if a committee invites you to be a witness
- attend a public hearing to observe proceedings.

Examine

Committees examine and scrutinise government policy, expenditure, decisions and legislation in order to hold the government to account. Committees can ask ministers and senior public servants to explain and justify their actions or decisions.

Inform

Committees promote public debate and increase awareness of issues under consideration by Parliament. Committee reports provide a valuable summary of a range of views on a particular issue.

Types of committees

There are several types of Upper House committees, including:

- three **subject committees** – the Standing Committees on Law and Justice, Social Issues and State Development
- seven **Portfolio committees** – each focusing on particular areas of government accountability, for example, health, education or transport
- a range of **specialist committees** – such as the Regulation Committee, Selection of Bills Committee, Privileges Committee, Procedure Committee, Public Works Committee and Public Accountability Committee.

At times, select committees can also be established by the Upper House to inquire into particular issues. Select committees cease to exist once an inquiry has been completed.

There are also **joint select statutory committees** comprised of members from both the Upper and Lower House.

Steps of a committee inquiry

1. Terms of reference

Terms of reference outline the scope of the inquiry. Terms of reference may be referred by a minister or a vote of the Upper House, or self-referred by a committee.

The inquiry's terms of reference are advertised on our website and via social media.

2. Evidence gathering

Committees start inquiries by calling for submissions from the public and relevant organisations. They may also hold public hearings, forums and site visits. These can take place in Sydney at Parliament House or in regional locations.

3. Reporting to Parliament

After consideration of the evidence, committees prepare a report which can include findings and recommendations to government. The report is tabled in the Upper House and members are given an opportunity to debate it.

Committee reports are public documents and are available on our website.

4. Government response to recommendations

The government is required to respond to a committee's recommendations within six months after a committee report is tabled. The government is not required to implement the recommendations but must explain what action, if any, it will take in relation to each recommendation.

Government responses are public documents and are available on our website.

How can I get further information

You can find contact details, submissions, hearing schedules, transcripts, committee reports and other information on our website at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees. From here you can navigate to specific committees and inquiries. If you need help finding information, please contact committee staff.

Find us online



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