

Steps of a committee inquiry

1 Terms of reference

Terms of reference outline the scope of the inquiry and the issues that the committee will inquire into and report on. 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 Twitter, and often in newspapers.

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.

Anyone can make a submission. Further information on making a submission is available on our website.

3 Reporting to Parliament

Committees prepare a report after considering the evidence. The report is tabled in the Upper House and includes the committee's findings and recommendations. Members of the Upper House can debate the findings of the report.

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

4 Government response to recommendations

Six months after a report is tabled, the government must provide a response to the Upper House that addresses the committee's recommendations. The government is not required to implement the recommendations but must explain what action, if any, it will take in relation to each recommendation.

A copy of the government's response is made available on our website.



Further information

You can find contact details, submissions, hearing schedules, transcripts and committee reports on our website at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees.

You can follow us on Twitter for updates about what is happening in the Upper House and its committees @nsw_upperhouse.

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Upper House
Committees



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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 seven members of Parliament from different political parties including the government, the opposition and minor 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
- attend a public hearing.

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.

Standing committees are established for the life of each Parliament, which is four years.

- The **Standing Committee on Law and Justice** focuses on legal and constitutional issues.
- The **Standing Committee on Social Issues** examines matters relating to the state's social development and the wellbeing of its people.
- The **Standing Committee on State Development** considers opportunities for growth and development throughout New South Wales.
- The **General Purpose Standing Committees** focus on government accountability. Each committee is responsible for oversight of certain government portfolios, such as health, education and transport.

Select committees are established by the Upper House to inquire into particular issues. Select committees cease to exist once an inquiry has been completed.

Joint select committees are comprised of members from both Houses.

The **Privileges Committee** examines matters regarding parliamentary privilege and considers submissions from citizens seeking a right of reply to statements made about them in Parliament.

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