

## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

---

This report of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is presented to Parliament on the second component of the Committee's round of 2008-09 Budget Estimates hearings. It is my belief that the successful culmination of the budget hearings process and associated reports produced by the Committee serve to enhance Parliament's deliberations over, and understanding of, the content of the state budget. Importantly, the comprehensive estimates hearing process that has facilitated Parliament's oversight of the budget, complements the government's commitment to greater transparency and accountability in the budget papers.

Part Two of the Committee's *Report on the 2008-09 Budget Estimates*, which continues the new style of presentation introduced for last year's estimates, covers the final 25 budget estimates hearings held between 21 May 2008 and 3 June 2008.

In addition to transcripts of proceedings for each of the hearings, this report provides an index, on a portfolio basis, of the key matters raised at the hearings in the form of the Committee's questions and responses from ministers (241 in total) and summarises the documents presented by Ministers at those hearings. The report also discloses a list of further information to be provided by Ministers and questions taken on notice for each portfolio.

To place in context the scale of the budget estimates hearings process, it is important to acknowledge that, apart from the many hours of preparatory work undertaken by Ministers and departmental staff, the entire hearings process involved:

- 50 hours of proceedings that extended over 10 days;
- in excess of 507 questions researched and raised by Committee members;
- the hearing of evidence from 174 witnesses;
- 603 pages of transcripts; and
- 102 questions on notice and further information requested.

Modelled on the Senate estimates process, the main purpose of the Committee providing early estimates reports to Parliament is to assist in the consideration of the 2008-09 appropriation bills before Parliament. The aim of the Committee is to enhance the timeliness and quality of information available to members on the budget and, in turn, to enrich the Parliament's debate on the bills.

A third and final report derived from the Committee's analysis of the 2008-09 Budget Estimates and related issues, which will include key findings and recommendations, will be presented to Parliament in the first half of 2008-09.

I wish to thank Ministers and their accompanying staff for their time and quality input into the deliberations at each hearing. I also thank the members of the Committee for their commitment and cooperation at hearings. Finally, my particular thanks, on behalf of the Committee, go to members of the Committee's secretariat for their efforts in ensuring the competent and timely preparation of material for this report.

I commend the report to all Members of Parliament and encourage them to draw on the report's contents as they assess the merits of the 2008-09 appropriation bills.



**Bob Stensholt**

**Chair**