

Background Briefing Paper: COVID-19 Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry – a National Comparison

Compiled May 2020

Overview

At the time of compilation (May), the Federal Parliament and six of the eight subnational legislatures have instigated parliamentary committee inquiries into their respective jurisdiction's COVID-19 responses and recovery efforts.

Tasmania and Western Australia are the only two who have not established similar targeted parliamentary inquiries into government COVID-19 responses.

Of these two states Western Australia has maintained its pre-state of emergency (announced on 15 March) parliamentary sitting plan, which continued as scheduled but with the 4 extra sitting days inserted in April, making it the only Australian jurisdiction to *increase* its sitting days during the critical pandemic period instead of decreasing them (Queensland reshuffled its dates but broke even in total number of sitting days).¹

In contrast, Tasmania initially fully suspended its Parliamentary sitting schedule, but then semi-restored reduced number of sitting days for the first half of the year at the height of the pandemic's first wave, with the primary purpose of those sitting days limited to government COVID-19 related legislation, along with Question Time. Standard Parliamentary mechanisms providing for opposition and independent MPs to raise and debate matters were restored for this period.

Australian National and Subnational Parliaments' COVID-19 Scrutiny Track Record

All national and subnational jurisdictions responded to the coronavirus pandemic crisis by adapting either sitting schedules, as well as their respective parliamentary workplace operations. To supplement reduced democratic scrutiny capacity, most jurisdictions have established parliamentary scrutiny committees.

| | Federal Parliament (Coalition govt) | Australian Capital Territory (ALP-Greens govt) | Northern Territory (ALP govt) | Queensland (ALP govt) | NSW (Liberal govt) | Victoria (ALP govt) | South Australia (Liberal govt) | Western Australia (ALP govt) | Tasmania (Liberal govt) | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| Parliament still sitting? | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended but same number of days | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | Yes amended but increased number of days | Yes amended & reduced sitting schedule | |
| COVID-19 Parliamentary Committee established? | Yes Senate Select Committee | Yes Select Committee | Yes hearings reference to Standing Committee | Yes reference to Standing Committee | Yes reference to Upper House Standing Committee | Yes reference to Joint House Standing committee | Yes Upper House Select Committee | No | No | |
| Cross-party committee membership? | Yes 7 Members : 1 Lib; 1 Nat; 3 ALP; 1 JLN; 1 AG | Yes 30 Members : 14 Lib; 13 ALP; 1 GRN; 1 Country Lib; 1 Nat. | Yes 5 Members : Lib 2; ALP 2; GRN 1. | Yes 6 Members : ALP 3; Country Lib 1; Territory Alliance 1; Ind 1. | Yes 6 Members : LNP 3; ALP 3. | Yes 7 Members : Lib 2; ALP 2; Nat 1; GRN 1; SFF 1. | Yes 10 Members : ALP 5; Lib 2; Lib Dem 1; Nat 1; GRN 1. | Yes 6 Members : GRN 1; SA-Best 1; ALP 2; LIB 2. | | |
| Public hearings underway? | Yes schedule | Not yet. | Yes schedule | Yes schedule | Yes schedule | Yes schedule | Yes schedule | | | |
| Public submissions sought? | Yes available | Yes | Yes available | No | Yes available | Not for initial stage | Yes to be available | Yes available | | |
| Hearings/transcripts/submissions public? | Yes broadcast | Expected to do so | Yes broadcast & transcripts | Yes broadcast & transcripts | Yes broadcast & transcripts | Yes broadcast & transcripts | Yes broadcast & transcripts | Yes broadcast & transcripts | | |
| Reporting Date? | On or before 30 June 2022 | Not set | Not set (<i>Interim Report tabled 15 May 2020</i>) | Not set | No later than 3 months after emergency ends. | 30 June 2021 | 31 July 2020 & 31 Oct 2020 | Not set | | |
| Committee reports to? | Parliament | Parliament | Parliament | Parliament | Parliament | Parliament | Parliament | | | |

Table 1: COVID-19 related Parliamentary Committee Inquiries - Interjurisdiction comparison.

¹ In May Tasmania proposed a revised sitting schedule with additional days added in the Spring session reflecting the later State Budget delivery, and also presumably falling outside the state of emergency period.

Some jurisdictions established non-parliamentary entities to undertake other COVID-19 related investigations and/or recovery plans. In the main, these are additional to jurisdictions' parliamentary inquiries, except for Tasmania.

| | Aust Parliament | | ACT | NT | QLD | NSW | Vic | South Australia | WA | Tasmania |
|---|---|--|-----|----|-----|--|-----|--|----|--|
| Other COVID-19 response entities established? | National Cabinet | National COVID-19 Coordination Commission | | | | Special Commission of Inquiry into Ruby Princess | | Premier's Transition Committee | | Expert Advisory Council |
| Membership of above? | PM, Premiers & Chief Ministers | Hand-picked panel of business reps, not-for-profits & bureaucrats. | | | | Bret Walker SC appointed Commissioner | | Heads of key departments (all public servants) | | Select stakeholders: education, community & private sector |
| Above reports to Parliament? | No formal parliamentary reporting arrangement | No - Reports to the PM | | | | No - Premier and the Governor | | No - reports direct to Premier & Cabinet | | No - reports direct to Premier & Cabinet |

Table 2: COVID-19 related non-parliamentary Inquiries - Interjurisdiction comparison.

Detailed Analysis of Australian Parliaments' Activity during COVID-19 Emergency Periods

Australian Federal Parliament

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Federal Parliament doesn't have declaration powers equivalent to that employed by states and territories. Instead, the date of the first National Cabinet announcement, 13 March, is used as a comparable reference point. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Houses currently working to an amended & reduced sitting schedule. From period of first National Cabinet (13 March to end of May, the Federal Parliament will have sat a reduced 5 days compared with original 7 days for the same pre-COVID-19 period. <i>This equates a -28% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - the Senate established a dedicated Select Committee: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 . |

Further details:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/COVID-19/COVID19

On **8 April 2020**, the Senate resolved to establish a Select Committee on COVID-19 to inquire into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 7 Committee Members: 1 Lib; 1 Nat; 3 ALP; 1 JLN; 1 AG
- Public hearings are underway.
- The committee is to present its final report on or before **30 June 2022**.
- The closing date for submissions is **28 May 2020**.

Parliament of Queensland

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | 29 January declaration of a public health emergency, due to end on 19 May 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to an amended sitting schedule until 20th June (unless advised otherwise), but maintained the same number of scheduled non-budget sitting days of 12, since its date of declared emergency until the end of May. <i>This equates 100% delivery of original parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - The Parliament's Standing Economics and Governance Committee in inquiring into the Queensland Government's Economic Response to COVID-19 . |

Further details:

<https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/EGC/inquiries/current-inquiries/COVID-19>

- 6 Committee Members: LNP 3; ALP 3.

On 22 April 2020, the Legislative Assembly referred an inquiry to the Economics and Governance Committee with the following terms of reference:

1. *That the Economics and Governance Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the Queensland Government's response to COVID-19 in relation to the economic response only;*
2. *That in undertaking the inquiry, the Committee should take into account the Australian Government's response to COVID-19 and its impacts on the Queensland Government's response;*
3. *That in conducting the inquiry the Committee is to be conscious of any requests for witnesses or materials and ensure that any requests do not unreasonably divert resources from the immediate COVID-19 response; and*
4. *That the Committee report to the Legislative Assembly by no later than 3 months after the conclusion of the Public Health Emergency declared under the Public Health Act 2005 regarding COVID-19.*

The committee will table its report no later than three months after the conclusion of the Public Health Emergency declared under the *Public Health Act 2005* regarding COVID-19.

Public hearings commenced in May, via video link. Also broadcast publicly.

Parliament of NSW

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | No state of emergency declared. Instead the State is using powers under their <i>Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)</i> to manage the response. Therefore, the reference point is National Cabinet's 13 March – current state orders due to end on 14 August 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working to an amended and reduced sitting schedule, and will have sat for 3 days instead of the original scheduled 12 days for the 13 March to end of May period. • <i>This equates a -75% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - The NSW Upper House's Standing Public Accountability Committee is inquiring into the NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic . |

Further information:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2593>

- 7 Committee Members: Lib 2; ALP 2; Nat 1; GRN 1; SFF 1.

Inquiry was self-referred on 27th March 2020

1. That the Public Accountability Committee inquire into and report on:
 - a) any matter relating to the NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - b) any other related matter; and
 - c) that the committee reports by **30 June 2021**, or such other date as the committee decides.

Public hearings will commence in May, via web conferencing and will be publicly broadcast, with the following three publicly announced.

- Thursday 7 May – 1st public hearing. Health Minister & senior health officials.
- Friday 15 May – 2nd hearing: senior education and treasury officials
- Thursday 21 May – 3rd hearing: evidence on police response to pandemic, plus residential & commercial lease issues.

Parliament of South Australia

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Initial public health emergency on 16 March, now expired, and escalated to a major emergency on 22 March, scheduled to end on 29 May 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parliament has continued to sit working to an amended and reduced sitting schedule, and will have sat for 10 days instead of the original scheduled 12 days for the 16 March to end of May period. <i>This equates a -17% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - The South Australian Upper House established it's Select COVID-19 Response Committee |

Further details:

<https://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Committees/Committees-Detail>

- 6 Committee Members: GRN 1; SA-Best 1; ALP 2; LIB 2.

Committee appointed on 8 April 2020.

A Committee of the Legislative Council of South Australia has been appointed to monitor and scrutinise all matters related to the management of the COVID-19 response and any related policy matter and any other related matter.

The Committee has begun public hearings (transcript currently available on website) is receiving submissions, one is already available on website, and also makes available other documentation including advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) re managing risk of transmission in schools.

3 May 2020 – SA Premier also established a transition Committee - consists of heads of key departments, Police Commissioner, & Chief Public Health Officer (all public servants).

ACT Parliament

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Public health emergency declared on 16 March, was extended, currently due to end on 7 July 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to an amended and reduced sitting schedule until end of August (election in October). Will have sat for 3 days instead of the original scheduled 6 days for the 16 March to end of May period. <i>This equates a -50% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - The ACT established a Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response On 15 May 2020, the Committee tabled it's Interim Report |

Further information:

https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/parliamentary-business/in-committees/committees/select_committees/select-committee-on-the-covid-19-response

5 Committee Members: Lib 2; ALP 2; GRN 1.

Established on 2 April 2020.

(1) select committee be appointed to consider and report to the Assembly on any matter relating to the ACT Government's health and financial response and any other matter relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic as it relates to the ACT.

Since its April establishment the Committee holds weekly public hearings, alternating between ACT Government officials and community groups, virtually via videoconference and live streamed to the public. The hearings can be viewed from the Assembly on Demand website. Committee witnesses appearing thus far are listed in Appendix A of the May interim report, including the Chief Minister, Health Minister, the ACT Chief Health Officer, and other business and NGO stakeholders.

Committee hearings can be viewed live via web broadcast and/or viewed later on the [Assembly on Demand website](#).

Parliament of Victoria

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Declared a state of emergency on 16 March, extended twice and now due to end on 31 May 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to an amended sitting schedule (additional day in April but May sitting dates cancelled) until 2nd June (unless advised otherwise). Will have sat for 4 days instead of the original scheduled 7 days for the 16 March to end of May period. <i>This equates a -43% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - The Parliament's Joint Investigatory Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is holding an Inquiry into the Victorian Government's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic . |

Further information:

- 10 Committee Members: ALP 5; Lib 2; Lib Dem 1; Nat 1; GRN 1.

29th April the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee established its Inquiry:

Review and report to the Parliament on:

a) the responses taken by the Victorian Government, including as part of the National Cabinet, to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and

b) any other matter related to the COVID-19 pandemic up to each reporting date of the Committee.

The Committee is to report to Parliament: a) on or before 31 July 2020 and 31 October 2020 b) or such other date/s as the Committee decides.

Six days of public hearings are scheduled so far, commencing on Tuesday 12 May: list of witnesses (including Premier, health Minister, AMA, Mental Health Victoria, Trades Hall, Farmers Federation, Council of Aged, Education reps etc) available on [website](#).

Parliament of the Northern Territory

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Declared a public health emergency on 18 March, extended, and is currently due to end on 25 June 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remained operating remotely, but with amended and reduced sitting schedule. Will have sat for 2 days instead of the original scheduled 6 days for the 18 March to end of May period. <i>This equates a -67% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | Yes - Standing Public Accounts Committee is convening a monthly hearing regarding COVID-19 and Territory Finances . |

Further information:

https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/816854/Assembly-Resolution.pdf

- 6 Committee Members: Territory Lab 3; Country Lib 1; Territory Alliance 1; Ind 1.

24 April 2020: Resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly:

This Assembly resolves under Sessional Order 14(2)(d)(i) as a consequence of the presence of COVID-19 in Australia, the delay of a Federal Budget and by extension the delay of the NT Budget and to give Territorians confidence into Coronavirus related expenditure that:

- The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) will convene on the last Thursday of each month to hold a hearing with the Security and Emergency Management Sub Committee of Cabinet in attendance.
- In addition to those mentioned in point 1, the Under Treasurer will also be in attendance at this hearing. [...].

Parliament of Western Australia

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Declared a state of emergency on 15 March (effective 12 am 16 March), and a public health state of emergency on 16 March (effective midnight 17 March), both of which have been extended multiple times. The state of emergency due to end on 28 May, the public health state of emergency due to end on 21 May 2020. |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remained operating remotely as per established sitting schedule, but with 4 additional days added during the April sittings (2 Assembly,+ 1 joint+ Upper House). Will have sat for 2 days instead of the original scheduled 6 days for the 18 March to end of May period. <i>This equates a 25% <u>increase</u> between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | No – WA has not established a Parliamentary Committee inquiry. |

Further information:

[Presiding Officers' Joint Statement, 16 March 2020.](#)

Parliament of Tasmania

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Emergency declarations date(s) | Declared a public health emergency on 17 March – due to end on 9 June 2020 . Also declared a state of emergency on 19 March – due to end on 11 June 2020 . |
| Parliament Sitting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to an amended and reduced sitting schedule. Will have sat for 10 days instead of the original scheduled 15 days for the 17 March to end of May period. (Note: sitting days have had elements of Standing Orders suspended, ie no Private Members Time has been held in Lower House for this period). <i>This equates a -33% difference between original and delivered parliamentary scrutiny capacity for this key pandemic emergency period.</i> |
| Parl Committee? | No – Tas has not established a Parliamentary Committee inquiry. |

Examples of Witnesses Appearing before Interstate Parliamentary Committees

Current as of 25 May 2020

The below is indicative only, and is not intended as an exhaustive list as some witnesses have appeared before their respective Committees multiple times. Similarly, as these interstate committees are underway at the time of compilation, new witnesses will continue to appear during forth-coming hearings.

| Senate Committee | ACT | NSW | Victoria | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Brendan Murphy, Chief Medical Officer • Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet • CEO, National COVID-19 Coordination Commission • Federal Treasury Department • Federal Attorney-General's Department • Secretary, Department of Education, Skills and Employment • Secretary, Department of Health • National Indigenous Australians Agency • Australian Federal Police • ATO • Fair Work Ombudsman • Fair Work Commission • Digital Transformation Agency • Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment • Commissioner, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Minister • Coordinator-General, Whole of Government (Non-Health) Response to COVID-19 Catholic Education Office • Minister for Health • Minister for Education • Association of Parents and Friends • AEU ACT • Association of Independent Schools ACT • Community Housing Industry Association ACT • Real Estate Institute ACT • Property Council • Better Renting • Tenancy Advice Service • Anglicare ACT • Business Council • ACT Shelter • Safe Shelter • Early Morning Centre • Tenants' Union • AHA • Restaurant and Catering Australia • Clubs ACT • United Workers Union • Canberra Convention Bureau • National Capital Attractions Association • Cultural Attractions of Australia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Health Officer • Commissioner, NSW Police Force • Chief Economist, NSW Treasury • Minister for Health and Medical Research • Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning • Minister for Police and Emergency Services • Secretary, Dept of Communities and Justice • Minister for Finance and Small Business • Minister for Innovation • Secretary, Education • Secretary, Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney-General - Minister for Co-ordination of Justice and Community Safety- COVID-19 • Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water and Planning – COVID-19 • Minister for Police and Emergency Services • Minister for the Coordination of Transport – COVID-19 • Victoria Chamber of Commerce and Industry • Victorian Trades Hall Council • Victoria Tourism Industry Council • Visit Victoria • Great Ocean Road Tourism • Real Estate Institute of Victoria • Australian Retailers Association • Chapel Street Precinct Association • Victorian Small Business Commission • Arts Industry Council • Vic Council of Social Services • Domestic Violence Victoria • Tenants Victoria • Council of the Ageing Victoria • Aged and Community Services (Aust.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurant and Catering Australia • Victorian Principals Assoc. • Monash University Vice-Chancellor • Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals • AEU (Vic) • National Union of Students • Australian Assoc of Special Education • Victorian Student Representative Council • AMA (Vic) • AN & MF (Vic) • Worksafe Victoria • Corrections Victoria • Law Institute of Victoria • Community Legal Centres • Justice Connect Homeless Law • Municipal Assoc of Victoria • Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service • Australian Services Union • Master Builders Association • Farmers Federation |
| | | <p style="text-align: center;">Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Health Officer • Chief Commissioner Victoria Police • Premier • Minister for Co-ordination of Health & Human Services-COVID-19 • Minister for Co-ordination of Treasury and Finance-COVID-19 • Minister for Co-ordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions-COVID-19 • Minister for Co-ordination of Education and Training-COVID-19 | | |
| South Australia | Queensland | Northern Territory | WA | Tasmania |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Public Health Officer & State Controller • SA State Coordinator • Department of Education • Department of Health and Wellbeing • AEU • Independent Education Union SA (IEU) • ANMF • AMA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Chief Health Officer • Director-General Queensland Health • Queensland Treasury • Department of Employment, Small Business and Training • Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Minister • Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer • Attorney-General and Minister for Justice • Commissioner for Police and Chief Executive Officer, Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services • Plus departmental officials | <p><i>n/a – no parliamentary committee established</i></p> | <p><i>n/a – no parliamentary committee established</i></p> |

| | Australian Parliament | ACT | NT | QLD | NSW | VIC | SA | WA | TAS |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Date of Emergency Declaration (s) | 13 March 2020 * | 16 March 2020 | 18 March 2020 | 29 January | 13 March 2020* | 16 March 2020 | 16 March 2020 | 15 March 2020 | 17 March 2020 |
| Total Number of COVID-19 Related Statutory Instruments ¹ | 172 | 50 | 44 | 90 | 52 | 60 | 66 | 85 | 100 |
| Number in force | 153 | 21 | 18 | 43 | 44 | 31 | 43 | 45 | 56 |
| Number no longer in force (expired or repealed) | 19 | 29 | 26 | 47 | 8 | 29 | 23 | 40 | 44 |
| Parliamentary sitting days (not including Committee days) for same time period | 5 (equivalent to 34.4 instruments scrutinised per day). | 3 (equivalent to 16.6 instruments scrutinised per day). | 2 (equivalent to 22 instruments scrutinised per day). | 12 (equivalent to 7.5 instruments scrutinised per day). | 3 (equivalent to 17.3 instruments scrutinised per day). | 4 (equivalent to 15 instruments scrutinised per day). | 10 (equivalent to 6.6 instruments scrutinised per day). | 15 (equivalent to 5.6 instruments scrutinised per day). | 10 (equivalent to 10 instruments scrutinised per day). |
| * - in absence of state of emergency declarations, the date of the first National Cabinet held on 13 March is used as an alternative reference point. | | | | | | | | | |
| ¹ Information from Federal Court of Australia (current as of 22 May 2020): www.fedcourt.gov.au/covid19/legislation | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3: COVID-19 related Legislation - Interjurisdiction comparison. Current as of 22 May 2020.

| | Select Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry | Advisory Council* |
|--|---|--|
| Membership | Consists of elected representatives, selected by and from MPs in the parliament. | 9 selected by the Premier mainly private sector with UTAS Vice Chancellor & Children's Commissioner, & a not-for-profit representative |
| Representative of the community? | Yes - Elected representatives charged with representing & serving a cross-section of the community. As such it removes the filtering, or gate-keeping, by vested interests. | No - Heavily weighted to private and business sector. Membership may hold active vested interests in potential action recommended to and undertaken by government. |
| Declaration of pecuniary or conflict of interest required? | Yes | unclear |
| Capacity for Public Submissions, and submissions made public? | Yes | Yes |
| Capacity to summon and examine witnesses, (via video-link)? | Yes | No |
| Capacity to summon and examine evidence ie documents, materials etc? | Yes | No |
| Capacity to hold public hearings – media and the public can attend (via video-link)? | Yes | No |
| Proceedings, hearings and witnesses protected by parliamentary privilege? | Yes | No |
| Transcripts, and committee meeting minutes made public? | Yes -as determined by the committee | No |
| Accountable to public & Parliament? | Yes – Inquiry members are held to account regarding why some evidence was or was not included in final report. This is MPs' paid job and primary focus. | No – Panel is not accountable to public as to why some evidence taken on board and others not. Unclear if Panel is prime focus or additional to other professional responsibilities. |
| Reports to Parliament? | Yes | No – reports to Premier and Cabinet. |
| Inquiry logistical support | Parliamentary Committee secretariat (non-political parliamentary officials), + Hansard. | New secretariat established in Treasury and Finances, with support from DPC and State Growth. |
| Reporting date flexibility? | Usually stipulated in terms of reference, but also has capacity to seek extension and/or submit interim reports. | Directed by Premier: • Immediate report: July 2020 • Interim report Sept 2020 |
| Reports to Parliament? | Yes | No – reports to Premier and Cabinet. |

Table 4: Parliamentary Committee inquiry vs Advisory Council.

*Note: All details pertaining to the Advisory Council are sourced from the <https://www.pesrac.tas.gov.au/home>

Examples of International Parliamentary Oversight.

Internationally, other democratic legislatures have also moved on balancing social distancing affected parliaments with appropriate input and oversight. Examples include New Zealand's Parliamentary [Epidemic Response Committee](#), established on 25 March 2020, and the UK whose Westminster parliamentary system underpins our own.

In the UK, on 1 May the House of Lords Liaison Committee recommended a Lords Select Committee be established, "*to undertake a comprehensive examination of the long-term implications of Covid-19.*" If accepted, this would be additional to at least 18 other current parliamentary committee inquiries already underway:

[Health and Social Care Committee – Management of the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

[Health and Social Care Committee – Delivering Core NHS and Care Services during the Pandemic and Beyond](#)

[Work and Pensions Committee – DWP's response to the coronavirus outbreak](#)

[Home Affairs Committee - Home Office preparedness for Covid-19 \(Coronavirus\).](#)

[Foreign Affairs Committee – Coronavirus: FCO response](#)

[Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee – the impact of coronavirus on business and workers](#)

[Petitions Committee – The Government's response to Coronavirus](#)

[Transport Committee - Coronavirus: implications for transport](#)

[Treasury Committee – Economic impact of coronavirus](#)

[Constitution Committee – Coronavirus Bill](#)

[Women and Equalities Committee – unequal impact the coronavirus \(covid19\) and the impact on people with protected characteristics.](#)

[Justice Committee – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): The impact on prison, probation and court systems.](#)

[International Development Committee – Humanitarian crises monitoring: impact of coronavirus](#)

[Procedure Committee – procedure under coronavirus restrictions](#)

[Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee – Work of the Department and Government Response to Coronavirus](#)

[Impact of COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) on homelessness and the private rented sector](#)

[Human Rights \(Joint Committee\) – The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications](#)

[Welsh Affairs Committee – The Welsh economy and Covid-19](#)

Additional to the UK Parliament's COVID-19 scrutiny, are the UK's devolved parliaments:

- The Scottish Parliament has its [COVID-19 Committee](#) underway.
- The Welsh Assembly has its [Inquiry into the Covid-19 outbreak on health and social care in Wales](#) underway.
- The Northern Ireland Assembly Standing committees (for Health, Education, Justice, Economy, Communities, Infrastructure and Agriculture, Environment, Rural Affairs) have redirected their focus to COVID-19. These Committee evidence and scrutiny sessions are accessible [online](#).