

## Submission No. 8



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING  
THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

20 SEP 2002

Mrs Margaret May MP  
Member for McPherson  
Chair  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



*Margaret*  
Dear Mrs May

Thank you for your letter of 19 August 2002 concerning the Standing Committee on Procedure conducting an inquiry into the adequacy of House procedures for examining the estimates of expenditure.

I support the inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Procedure and the proposed Terms of Reference for that inquiry.

The House has an important role to play in examining the estimates of expenditure and generally this is achieved when the House examines the Budget Bills. The House also has the ability to further scrutinise the estimates of expenditure through the House's general purposes standing committees and by utilising options under existing standing orders if it chooses to do so. In my opinion, there is also adequate opportunity for scrutinising the performance of the Government through Question Time.

I do not believe that there will be any additional benefit in the reinstatement of the House's Estimates Committees. The parliamentary schedule is extremely busy and we need to carefully consider how we apply our time. I strongly support the current examination of estimates of expenditure by the Senate and believe that it also plays an important role in holding the Government accountable to the Parliament and the Australian public at large. I note that you have indicated that the Committee is not seeking to duplicate the approach of the Senate and its committees in scrutinising the budgetary processes. However, as a Minister of a large Department I would like to point out that significant Departmental resources are applied to supporting the Senate's examination of the estimates. As a result, I would not like to see the House simply covering the same ground as the Senate.

Yours sincerely

*Brendan Nelson*  
BRENDAN NELSON

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