Committee effectiveness in the pursuit of executive accountability: does the winner really take all in Queensland?

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Abstract: Committee effectiveness literature is replete with criteria for how to best measure the performance of parliamentary committees. Traditional focus of these studies on committee outcomes (such as outputs produced or influence wielded) has observed the restraining effect of executive dominance on committee work. Emerging work in this field is shifting gaze away from outcomes and towards process considerations of committee effectiveness. This paper applies systems theory to highlight factors present at various levels of parliamentary systems which support or constrain parliamentary committees' objective of pursuing executive accountability and finds encouraging evidence of many of these factors operating at the committee, assembly and parliamentary levels of the Queensland Parliament.

INTRODUCTION

> *The main task of committees in Queensland is to ensure government administration is accountable to the parliament and to the people of Queensland… [to] consider and report on bills introduced into the parliament and subordinate legislation, consider the annual state budget Appropriation Bills, investigate issues of public importance, consider*

> *whether policies or past decisions could be improved and make sure that public money is used appropriately.*[1]

Parliamentary committees are limbs of their parent parliaments. The effectiveness of a committee is therefore determined by how well it expedites the parliament's core function. As to what that core function is, the Hansard Society concludes that parliament should be defined by what it does.[2] What parliament does has much to do with the executive; of the three primary functions of modern parliaments – lawmaking, representation and oversight - holding the executive to account predominates.[3] However, parliaments generally exercise their oversight function within a dynamic relationship which is traditionally characterised by executive dominance.[4]

Executive dominance, or the inability of parliaments to restrain or resist the executive, is central to much of the extant body of empirical studies into committee effectiveness.[5] These

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[1] Queensland Parliament, 'Parliamentary Committees Factsheet 3.9'. Accessed at https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Visit-and-learn/Education/Resources/3-Parliament.

[2] Hansard Society, 'The Challenge for Parliament: Making Government Accountable'. Accessed at https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/publications/reports/the-challenge-for-parliament-making-government-accountable-the-report-of The Report of the Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny

[3] Richard Mulgan, *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

[4] John Uhr, 'Redesigning accountability: From muddles to maps' *Australian Quarterly*65 (2) 1993, pp. 1-16; David Hamer, 'Can responsible government survive in Australia?' (PhD thesis) University of Canberra, 1994. Accessed at https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000794190500864; Jim Chalmers and Glyn Davis, *Power: Relations between the Parliament and the Executive Australia*. Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library, Commonealth of Australia 2000; Richard Mulgan, *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies;* Scott Prasser, 'Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(1) 2012, p. 48; Kate Jones and Scott Prasser, 'Resisting executive control in Queensland's unicameral legislature-recent developments and the changing role of the speaker in Queensland' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(1) 2012, p. 67; Ian Holland, *Senate committees and the legislative process* (Parliamentary Studies Paper 7) Canberra: Crawford School of Economics and Government, Australian National University; Paul Lobban, 'Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(1) 2012, p. 178.

[5] Kenneth Wheare, *Government by Committee: An Essay on the British Constitution.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955; Malcolm Aldons, 'Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples' (2001) 16(1) *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 52; Gareth Griffith, 'Parliament and accountability: The role of parliamentary oversight committees' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 21(1) 2005, p. 7; Elizabeth McLeay, 'Scrutiny and Capacity: An evaluation of the parliamentary committees in the New Zealand Parliament' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 21(1) 2006, pp. 158-82; John Alvey, 'Parliament's accountability to the people, the role of committees: A Queensland view'' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 23(1) 2008, pp. 62-72; Clare James, 'Government responses

studies have employed a variety of empirical methods to evaluate committee effectiveness, including the traditional approach of measuring the impact and outputs of committees - through assessing the number of report recommendations accepted by the government, or amendments to legislation in response to committee reports.[6] However outcome-focused assessment frameworks can obscure the importance of committee processes, and the relationships between different committees within the parliamentary system. Repeated findings in these studies, of executive dominance resulting from entrenched party discipline, do little to progress the committee effectiveness literature. [7]

The objective of this paper is to situate committee processes – those tasks undertaken towards its function - within the parliamentary context, by examining the systemic factors that bear on committees' core function of pursuing executive accountability to parliament. This paper takes as its starting point that the objective of the parliamentary system is pursuing executive accountability. Within the parliamentary system contemplated by this paper, the whole of government activity constitutes the 'what' of accountability; the executive – ministers and senior public service leaders– are *from* 'whom' accountability is sought, and Parliament and the public are *to* 'whom' accountability is provided. This paper conceptualises the 'how' of accountability by analysing the systemic guardrails and resources available to support committees' accountability function. The 'why' of executive accountability is beyond the scope

to parliamentary committee enquiries'*Australasian Parliamentary Review* 24(2) 2009 p. 182; David Monk, 'A framework for evaluating the performance of committees in Westminster parliaments' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 16(1) 2010, p. 1; P Lobban, *Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive*; David Monk, 'Committee inquiries in the Australian Parliament and their influence on government: Government acceptance of recommendations as a measure of parliamentary performance' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 18(2) 2012, pp. 137-160; Ian Marsh and Darren Halpin, 'Parliamentary committees and inquiries', in Brian Head and Kate Crowley (eds) *Policy analysis in Australia*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2015, p. 137; Mark Goodwin, Stephen Bates and Steve McKay, 'Elected chairs do not seem to have brought a new kind of parliamentarian to Select Committees' *Democratic Audit UK.* Accessed at https://www.democraticaudit.com/2016/07/06/elected-chairs-do-not-seem-to-have-brought-a-new-kind-of-parliamentarian-to-select-committees/*;* John Halligan and Richard Reid, 'Conflict and consensus in committees of the Australian parliament' *Parliamentary Affairs* 69(2) 2016 p. 230.

[6] M Aldons, *Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples.*

[7] D Hamer, *Can responsible government survive in Australia;* J Chalmers and G Davis, *Power: Relations between the Parliament and the Executive Australia*; Christopher Kam, *Party discipline and parliamentary politics*. Cambridge: University Press, 2009; Ulrich Sieberer, 'Party unity in parliamentary democracies: a comparative analysis', in Phillip Norton (ed) *The Impact of Legislatures*. London: Routledge, 2020, 141; Kate Jones and Scott Prasser, 'Resisting executive control in Queensland's unicameral legislature-recent developments and the changing role of the speaker in Queensland' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(1) 2012, pp. 67-84.

of this paper, but has been extensively considered in the literature.[8] This paper case-studies the presence of factors bearing on committees' accountability function in the Queensland Parliament, and argues that a focus on process over outcomes neutralises the executive dominance narrative in committee effectiveness literature, by acknowledging that committee work is a nuanced task specific affair, and conditioned by processes operating holistically within the system in which committees are located.

ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

> *'Accountability' means answerability. To be accountable is to promptly and accurately inform the relevant authority or the public directly of the reasons for all significant or potentially controversial decisions and actions. It means being answerable in respect of those decisions [emphasis added].*[9]

Uhr defines accountability in government as obligations owed by the powerful to the powerless through various accountability institutions including parliament.[10] Parliament pursues accountability through identified procedures - including debates, question time and inquiry by committee - for scrutiny of legislation and regulatory policy, finance and public administration.[11] Parliament legitimates the political system by linking politics with the people, functioning as a 'safety valve' check on government action, and ensuring articulation of the public interest through consultation and engagement processes which supplement

[8] Andrew McGowan, 'Accountability or inability: to what extent does House of Representatives question time deliver executive accountability comparative to other parliamentary chambers? Is there need for reform?' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 23(2) 2008 pp. 66-85; Richard Mulgan, ''Accountability': an ever-expanding concept?' *Public administration* 78(3) 2000, pp. 555-573; Eric Posner and Adrian Vermeule, 'The credible executive' *University of Chicago Law Review* 74 2007, pp. 865; Sean Gailmard and John Patty, *Learning while governing: Expertise and accountability in the executive branch.* Chicago: University Press, 2012.

[9] Peter Coaldrake, *'Let the sunshine in'- Review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector.* Final Report, Accessed at https://www.coaldrakereview.qld.gov.au/assets/custom/docs/coaldrake-review-final-report-28-june-2022.pdf, 6; see also Accountability Roundtable, *The Fitzgerald Principles*, Press Release, 2015 accessed at https://alhr.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/150128-Open-Letter-Fitzgerald-Principles-.pdf.

[10] J Uhr, *Redesigning accountability: From muddles to maps.*

[11] Malcolm Aldons, 'Problems with parliamentary committee evaluation: Light at the end of the tunnel?' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 18(1) 2003 pp. 79, 82-87; Malcolm Aldons, 'Responsible, representative and accountable government' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 60(1) 2001 pp. 34, 36; R Mulgan, *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies,* 52.

parliament's traditional public-facing educative, petition and grievance functions.[12] People or groups excluded from the government process or those who were unsuccessful get an opportunity or another chance.[13] Committees work to connect the public to the parliament in recognition of the rightful place that publics have alongside houses and chambers of assembly as to 'whom' executive accountability is required.

Notions of executive accountability for parliaments without a strict separation of powers between the parliamentary and executive branches traditionally rest on the ideal of responsible government, which has been argued in Australia to have collapsed in the wake of some of the strictest party discipline of any Westminster system.[14] Prasser observes the general consensus that the executive are seen to dominate decision making processes across government, set the policy agenda and manage policy issues, and minimise scrutiny of its activities.[15] The apparent demise of responsible government as a litmus test for executive accountability has prompted proposals for a functional (rather than outcomes-based) approach to evaluating committee effectiveness.[16] Aldons has argued this type of approach promotes an alternative ideal of accountable government to supplant responsible government.

COMMITTEE EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

It is difficult to arrive at a shared understanding of what committee effectiveness means, given the number of ways in which it can be measured.[17] As outlined above, impact or outcomes have traditionally been the focus here, measuring committee power, influence, and/ or

[12] Malcolm Aldons, *Responsible, representative and accountable government*; John Halligan, 'Parliamentary committee roles in facilitating public policy at the Commonwealth level' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 23(2) 2008 p. 135; Philip Norton, *Parliament in British Politics*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[13] John Uhr, *Deliberative democracy in Australia: the changing place of parliament*. Cambridge: University Press, 1998, 140.

[14] D Hamer, *Can responsible government survive in Australia*; J Chalmers and G Davis, *Power: Relations between the Parliament and the Executive Australia;* C Kam, *Party discipline and parliamentary politics*; U Sieberer, *Party unity in parliamentary democracies: a comparative analysis*.

[15] S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments*, 49; John Halligan and Robin Miller, *Parliament in the Twenty-First Century: Institutional reform and emerging roles*. Melbourne: University Press, 2007; John Uhr, 'The future roles of parliament'' in Patrick Weller and Michael Keating (eds), *Institutions on the Edge? Capacity for Governance.* London: Routledge, 2020, p. 10; Gordon Reid, 'Parliamentary politics' *Politics* 2(1) 1967, pp. 76, 92.

[16] M Aldons, *Responsible, representative and accountable government*.

[17] T Mickler. *Parliamentary committee in a party-centred context: Looking behind the scenes*. London: Routledge, 2022.

outputs such as recommendations. [18] Other committee measures that have been canvassed include: extent of parliamentary scrutiny achieved; presence of democratic indicators including transparency, inclusivity, and diversity and level of participation of witnesses; or structural issues such as level of activity, or scope of legislative powers.[19] The question of exactly which criteria to use in effectiveness assessments remains contested.[20]

Critiques of the impact or outcomes model of evaluation point to the difficulty of assessing long term effect of committee recommendations on policy matters, and the complexity of integrating qualitative and quantitative data to measure the phenomenon of influence.[21] In her 2021 review of parliamentary committee effectiveness in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament), Stirbu observed that

> *One of the biggest hurdles in developing a coherent framework for evaluation of committees' work is that not everything can be easily quantifiable and measurable.*[22]

[18] M Aldons, *Problems with parliamentary committee evaluation*; Ian Marsh and Robin Miller, *Democratic decline and democratic renewal: Political change in Britain, Australia and New Zealand*. Cambridge: University Press, 2012; Suman Ojha, 'The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(2) 2012, pp. 71, 72.

[19] Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Scottish Parliament, Committee effectiveness – background resource overview, 2. Accessed at https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/standards-procedures-and-public-appointments-committee/spice_briefing.pdf.

[20] Wheare, *Government by Committee: An Essay on the British Constitution*; Ian Marsh, 'Interest groups and policy making: A new role for select committees?' *Parliamentary Affairs* 41(4) 1988 p. 469; Gavin Drewry, 'Perspectives on law and politics' *Parliamentary Affairs* 42(1) 1989, p. 127; M Aldons, *Responsible, representative and accountable government*; M Aldons, *Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples*; Diana Stirbu, 'Power, influence and impact of Senedd committees-developing a framework for measuring committees' effectiveness'. Accessed at https://senedd.wales/media/xtqk0ojr/gen-ld14672-e.pdf; T Mickler. *Parliamentary committee in a party-centred context: Looking behind the scenes*.

[21] Meghan Benton and Meg Russell, 'Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons' *Parliamentary Affairs* 66(4) 2013, pp. 772, 775; Derek Hawes, 'Parliamentary select committees: Some case studies in contingent influence' *Policy & Politics* 20(3) 1992, p.227; Meg Russell and Philip Cowley, 'The policy power of the Westminster parliament: The "parliamentary state" and the empirical evidence' *Governance* 29(1) 2016 p.121; M Aldons, *Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples*, 55.

[22] D Stirbu, *Power, influence and impact of Senedd committees-developing a framework for measuring committees' effectiveness.*

Regarding impact evaluations, Aldons notes that contemporary assessments give less weight to process than outcomes, such that a focus on committee power or influence may ignore committees that have neither, but which nonetheless contribute to open government and accountability.[23]

A process approach

An alternate evaluation approach to an impact or outcomes focus is one that focuses on *process*. A focus on the *way* committees work (including the different discrete steps they undertake to complete their functions) supplies a more holistic evaluative lens to the scrutiny, oversight and public engagement tasks committees do to support parliament's core function of executive accountability. A process focus also allows other criteria which have been applied to committee effectiveness, such as attendant democratic indicators such as transparency, inclusivity, and diversity and level of participation of witnesses, and structural issues such as level of activity or scope of legislative powers, to be integrated into assessments of committee effectiveness alongside impact or outcome considerations. Critically, this more process-focused analysis of the parliamentary system engages the equally important yet oft-overlooked work that committees do in pursuing accountability of the executive to the voting public.

A process approach does not reject consideration of committee impacts - indeed, the process of producing committee reports containing recommendations subsequently accepted (or not) by government, shows the scope of the lens. Halligan, Miller and Power propose a hybrid outcome and process evaluation, by distinguishing between different committee processes which support policy-influencing, legislation-influencing and scrutiny functions.[24] Committees progress through each function incrementally, and the effectiveness of how committees step through each function provides insight into the expected outcome. In this way, the Halligan, Miller and Power model can accommodate inherent tension between process and outcome in committee effectiveness evaluations.

> *When a committee scrutinises a bill, the question of whether it has made a valuable contribution to the legislative process is a very subtle exercise. Is the most important contribution flushing out the people with an interest in*

[23] M Aldons, Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples, 57; M Aldons, *Problems with parliamentary committee evaluation,* 83; M Aldons, *Responsible, representative and accountable government*.

[24] J Halligan and R Miller, *Parliament in the Twenty-First Century: Institutional reform and emerging roles*; J Halligan, *Parliamentary committee roles in facilitating public policy at the Commonwealth level*.

> *legislation and hearing their voices, or, at the other end of the scale, having a bill rejected or amended?*[25]

A body of work is developing around process-driven considerations of committee effectiveness, such as committee regard for rights protection during scrutiny, and agenda-setting processes used by committees overseeing non-legislative executive action.[26] Moulds argues for a systems-based analysis of committee effectiveness in rights scrutiny, moving through various layers of evaluation based on context, function, committee factors and outcome.[27] James argues important committee functions such as public participation, exposure of issues, interactions with the executive, exercising jurisdictional mandate and bipartisanship are better observed by functional rather than impact analysis.[28]

A process approach to committee effectiveness can also neutralise the executive dominance narrative emanating from impact studies that focus on committees' scrutiny role in Australian parliaments with strong party discipline. These studies point to the sheer volume of Bills resulting from government majorities, whose large, well-resourced executives produce more work, use Ministerial powers to shorten reporting timeframes, and ensure supportive recommendations in committee reports despite overwhelming stakeholder opposition (usually aided by a government Chair's casting vote).[29] Other studies of committees' scrutiny function

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[25] Harry Evans, 'Parliament in the Twenty-First Century: Institutional Reform and Emerging Roles, by John Halligan, Robin Miller and John Power.' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 67(1) 2008, p. 112.

[26] Sarah Moulds, 'Democratic and Judicial Review of Enacted Laws in Australia: A Case Study of the Rights Scrutiny Work of Australian Parliamentary Committees' *Revue générale de droit* 51 2021 p. 47; Benton and Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons*; James, *Government responses to parliamentary committee enquiries.*

[27] Sarah Moulds, 'Committees of influence: Evaluating the role and impact of parliamentary committees' (2024)(071) *Papers on Parliament*. Canberra: Parliament of Australia, 66; Sarah Moulds, 'Committees in Dialogue: Parliamentary Scrutiny of the High Risk Terrorist Offenders Bill' *Australian Public Law*. Accessed at https://www.auspublaw.org/blog/2017/01/committees-in-dialogue; C James, *Government responses to parliamentary committee enquiries.*

[28] C James, *Government responses to parliamentary committee enquiries.*

[29] S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments*; Neil Laurie, 'Life after (or winner takes all)' (2022) 25(3) *Queensland History Journal* 260; Cosmo Howard and Pandanus Petter, 'What does democracy require of Queensland's political system?' in M Evans, P Dunleavy, J Phillimore (eds), *Australia's Evolving Democracy: A New Democratic Audit*. London: LSE Press, p. 415. Bryan Horrigan, 'Reforming rights-based scrutiny and interpretation of legislation' *Alternative Law Journal* 37(4) 2012 pp. 228-232; P Lobban, *Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive*,183.

challenge this view.[30] Marsh and Miller also suggest that parliamentary committees have a unique opportunity to contribute to democratic renewal by reconnecting citizens to the political system, identifying committees' capacity to:

> *recreate the capabilities that were formerly located in the mass party organisations … This involves the ability to renew the link between civil society and the formal political system, in a discursive or deliberative setting... Committees have the capacity to do this around single issues. Their findings might then frame later contention between rival political elites. We conjecture that no other agent in the political system offers these essential capabilities.*[31]

ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH COMMITTEES

The Commonwealth (Latimer) House Principles on the Three Branches of Government, endorsed in 2003 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, provide the foundational doctrine for strong democratic government, and emphasise the importance of maintaining institutional checks and balances, and strengthening the separation of powers. The principles pursue 'the entrenchment of good governance based on the highest standards of honesty, probity and accountability.'[32] Latimer House Principle 6 provides for executive accountability to parliament:

> *Parliamentary procedures should provide adequate mechanisms to enforce the accountability of the executive to parliament. These should include … a committee structure appropriate to the size of parliament, adequately resourced and with the power to summon witnesses, including ministers.*

[30] Meg Russell, Daniel Gover and Kristina Wollter, 'Does the Executive dominate the Westminster legislative process?: six reasons for doubt' *Parliamentary Affairs* 69(2) 2016p. 286; Sarah Moulds, 'A deliberative approach to post legislative scrutiny? Lessons from Australia's ad hoc approach', *Parliaments and Post-Legislative Scrutiny* in Franklin de Vrieze and Philip Norton (eds) *Parliaments and Post-Legislative Scrutiny*. London: Routledge, 2020, p. 14; S Moulds, *Democratic and Judicial Review of Enacted Laws in Australia*.

[31] I Marsh and R Miller, *Democratic decline and democratic renewal: Political change in Britain, Australia and New Zealand.*

[32] Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*, Commonwealth Principles (Latimer House) on the Relationship* (Report, 2023)10, Preamble https://www.cpahq.org/media/dhfajkpg/commonwealth-latimer-principles-web-version.pdf.

> *Governments should be required to announce publicly, within a defined time period, their responses to committee reports.*[33]

Parliamentary studies literature indicates certain factors are required for committees to effectively exercise their accountability function. Systems theory, as developed by political scientists including Easton and Young, provides a useful framework to determine what those factors are.[34] Systems theory anticipates that accountability by one object to another will be achieved through a set of interactions between objects within a system, towards that common objective. A systems analysis therefore focusses on observing patterns in behaviour of different objects in the parliamentary system, and the interactive and conditioning behaviour between objects, to find the factors which help maintain that system. This paper seeks to identify the factors, at different levels of the political system, which bear on executive accountability. All systems have micro- meso- and macro levels, which correspond in this paper to committees (micro), houses and chambers of assembly (meso), and Parliament (macro), see Figure 1 Systemic factors enhancing committees' accountability function.

The micro- level: Committee factors

The nature of parliamentary committees varies dramatically, from oversight and public accounts committees to inquiry-based, portfolio committees. Committees are constituted by elected members of parliament and staffed by secretariats, and factors relevant to a committee's members, staff and style condition how successfully a committee expedites its functions. As well as a Chair's consensual approach, personal capabilities of knowledge and relationship capital held by individual members are significant.[35] Supplementing these capabilities with training in committee specific and parliamentary wide issues can enhance committee members' contribution.[36] A committee secretary with specialist skills in drafting and

[33] Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*, Commonwealth Principles (Latimer House) on the Relationship* (Report, 2023)12, Principle 6 https://www.cpahq.org/media/dhfajkpg/commonwealth-latimer-principles-web-version.pdf.

[34] Oran Young, 'International regimes: toward a new theory of institutions' *World politics* (1986) 39(1) pp.104-122; David Easton, 'An approach to the analysis of political systems' *World politics* 9(3) 1957 pp. 383-400.

[35] Ken Coghill, 'Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively?' *Australasian Parliamentary Review* (2012) 27(2) pp. 99,103.

[36] K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively,* 48; S Moulds, *Committees of influence: Evaluating the role and impact of parliamentary committees*; Colleen Lewis and Ken Coghill, 'Surveying

subject matter is also important.[37] Committee reports with appropriate tone communicate important messages about a committee's style and enhance impact.

A strategic approach involving rigour, initiative and engagement is also critical for committee success. In-depth, consistent examination of policy implementation, administration, estimates and expenditure by executive government, and submission of reports which question aspects of that activity is vital.[38] For inquiry-based committees, drawing attention to niche issues lacking ministerial attention is another effective way to demand accountability.[39] It is also important for the committee to follow up on executive responses to recommendations and monitor implementation, in other words 'closing the feedback loop'.[40] Committees can show initiative by annually reporting on their activities, 'because if committees are to become even stronger advocates of accountability in governance, they will have to lead through example.'[41] Furthermore, committees' strategic engagement with extra-parliamentary components of the scrutiny system, for example Auditors-General or law reform commissions, can enhance overall accountability.[42]

Public representation efforts - calling for submissions, public hearings in decentralised locations, direct inclusion of publics into committee deliberations via round tables - are seen

research on parliament and parliamentary oversight of the public sector' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* (2005) 64(1) p. 62.

[37] S Moulds, *Democratic and Judicial Review of Enacted Laws in Australia: A Case Study of the Rights Scrutiny Work of Australian Parliamentary Committees*, 65; M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Common,* p. 782.

[38] K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively.*

[39] M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Common,* 790.

[40] Cristina Leston-Bandeira and Sven T. Siefken, 'The development of public engagement as a core institutional role for parliaments' *The Journal of Legislative Studies* (2023) 29(3) pp. 361-379, 371; M Aldons, *Rating the effectiveness of committee reports: some examples*; I Halligan, *Parliamentary committee roles in facilitating public policy at the Commonwealth level*,153.

[41] M Aldons, *Responsible, representative and accountable government* (n 9); John Uhr, *Deliberative democracy in Australia: the changing place of parliament*. Cambridge: University Press, 1998; I Halligan, *Parliamentary committee roles in facilitating public policy at the Commonwealth level.*

[42] Sarah Moulds, *Committees of Influence*. Singapore: Springer Nature, 2020; Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee, Parliament of Western Australia *Report On Statement Of Understanding Between The Auditor General And The Public Accounts And Expenditure Review Committee.* Accessed at https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/commit.nsf.

to demonstrably improve accountability.[43] Access to public testimony and subject matter experts within committee also provides a 'safe space' for government committee members to resist party discipline through an evidence-based decision-making process.[44]

The meso-level: Assembly factors

Houses and chambers of Assembly interact with parliamentary committees by supplying committee Members. They also condition committees by setting the rules and laws which supply a committee's mandate in terms of jurisdiction, powers, degree of autonomy, and its composition. Assemblies also have the prerogative to override or protect the agenda and reporting timelines of committees, depending on the number of referrals and tabling deadlines. Executive dominance during various committee processes - hearings, report drafting, and private meetings - resulting from government committee Chairs equipped with a casting vote, can be restrained by Assemblies making provisions for non-government Chairs.[45]

Assemblies can codify or mandate requirements for post legislative scrutiny by committee, by including sunset clauses or review provisions in draft Bills, which can lead to a more accountable approach.[46] Pre-legislative scrutiny – where committees scrutinise draft bills, liaise with public servants about guidance and drafting, and make recommendations to ministers –

[43] I Halligan, *Parliamentary committee roles in facilitating public policy at the Commonwealth level*, 136; P Norton, *Parliament in British politics*; S Moulds, *Committees of Influence*; John Uhr and John Wanna, 'The future roles of parliament', *Institutions on the edge?* New York: Routledge, 2020, 10-35; C Leston-Bandeira and S Siefken, *The development of public engagement as a core institutional role for parliaments.*

[44] S Moulds, *Democratic and Judicial Review of Enacted Laws in Australia*, 76,85; Adam Fletcher, *Australia's Human Rights Scrutiny Regime: Democratic Masterstroke or Mere Window Dressing?* Melbourne: University Publishing, 2018.

[45] Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*, Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*. Accessed at https://www.cpahq.org/media/l0jjk2nh/recommended-benchmarks-for-democratic-legislatures-updated-2018-final-online-version-single.pdf; M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Common*, 785; David Skinner, ' Independence and reform – the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory ' Unpublished paper, Parliamentary Law, Practice and procedure Course, University of Tasmania 2017*,* 6.

[46] S Moulds, *A deliberative approach to post legislative scrutiny? Lessons from Australia's ad hoc approach,* 4; Catherine Lynch and Shane Martin, 'Can parliaments be strengthened? A case study of pre-legislative scrutiny'*Irish Political Studies* (2020) 35(1) p. 138; S Moulds, *Democratic and Judicial Review of Enacted Laws in Australia*.

can also enhance committee's accountability function, but only if enough time is given to committees to do so.[47]

Assemblies can equip committees with jurisdiction to review all legislative proposals, initiate 'own motion' inquiries and 'cover the field' of executive government action, which underpins committee success, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.[48] Their self-assessment toolkit for parliaments additionally requires statutory protection of committee autonomy through control of its own budget, agenda, inquiry timetable, and personnel.[49] A requirement for formal, public government responses to committee reports, and a requirement for the executive to notify when a Bill or subordinate legislation departs from fundamental legal principles or human rights, further legitimates the committee's scrutiny function.[50] Separately, there is benefit from the presence of permanent monitoring committees - with remits over, for example, subordinate legislation, parliamentary ethics or anti-corruption – separate to portfolio committees, and empowered to demand explanations, summon, and to approve executive appointments.[51]

[47] C Lynch and S Martin, *Can parliaments be strengthened? A case study of pre-legislative scrutiny*; S Moulds, *Committees of influence: Evaluating the role and impact of parliamentary committees*, 21; Goodwin, Bates and McKay, *Elected chairs do not seem to have brought a new kind of parliamentarian to Select Committees*; Matt Korris, 'Standing up for scrutiny: How and why parliament should make better law' *Parliamentary Affairs* (2011) 64(3) p. 564.

[48] K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively?*; P Lobban, *Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive*, 189.

[49] Inter-Parliamentary Union*, Evaluating Parliament - a Self-Assessment Toolkit for Parliaments*. Accessed at https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/toolkits/2016-07/evaluating-parliament-self-assessment-toolkit-parliaments.

[50] Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, *Commonwealth Principles (Latimer House),*12; Laura Grenfell and Sarah Moulds, 'The role of committees in rights protection in federal and state parliaments in Australia' *University of New South Wales Law Journal,* (2018) 41(1) pp.40,61; J Uhr and Wanna, *The future roles of parliament*; M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons*; Brendan Gogarty and Gabrielle Appleby, 'The role of Tasmania's subordinate legislation committee during the COVID-19 emergency' *Alternative Law Journal* (2020) 45(3) p. 188.

[51] Gogarty and Appleby, *The role of Tasmania's subordinate legislation committee during the COVID-19 emergency*; Hallbera West, 'Parliamentary committees and Ex-post oversight: Institutional options and design' *Parliamentary Affairs* (2024) 77(3) pp.601, 604; M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons*, 793.

The macro-level: Parliament factors

At this macro level of inquiry lies Parliament, an interconnected system of objects – members of parliament, political parties, houses and chambers of assembly, parliamentary rules, procedures and convention, and the parliamentary service – in constant, whirling interaction. Parliamentary culture - created and sustained by the diverse range of participants, traditions and conventions that develop and change over time - is an example of this macro-level landscape for analysis. Coghill suggests the ultimate test of parliamentary culture is whether the committee system operates to make government more responsive to the aggregate wishes of the governed.[52] A United Kingdom study captured this phenomenon in its observation that government 'aims to make policy as committee-proof as possible.'[53]

When the size of the executive is disproportionately large in comparison to the number of Members serving in a parliament, a committee's capacity to expedite accountability tasks associated with its oversight and public engagement function can be hindered, in the face of an agenda drowning in legislation resulting from an over-resourced executive.[54]

Promotion and respect for the committee system is important. Prasser suggests making the position of committee Chair as desirable as a Minister.[55] Another connected issue is how responsive Ministers are committee recommendations? The 'anticipated reaction' of government is linked by scholars to a committee's capacity to generate fear.[56] Readers' familiar with the Queensland context, to which this paper now turns, will implicitly understand this as the 'Courier Mail' effect.

[52] K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively*, 104-105.

[53] M Benton and M Russell. *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons,* 792.

[54] S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments.*

[55] S Prasser, Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments, 59.

[56] M Benton and M Russell, *Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons,* 792; Jean Blondel, 'Legislative Behaviour: Some Steps towards a Cross-National Measurement1' *Government and Opposition* (1970) 5(1) p. 67; Michael Ryle, 'Introduction: An investigation into select committees' *Contemporary British History* (1997) 11(3) p. 63; S Ojha, *The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001,*305; David Mayhew, *Congress: The electoral connection*. Yale: University Press, 1974, p. 107; M Russell and D Cowley, *The policy power of the Westminster parliament: The "parliamentary state" and the empirical evidence*.

Figure 1. Systemic factors enhancing committees' accountability function

QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Upper houses elsewhere may have had only a modest track record as chambers of review, yet the potentially moderating influence of a second chamber has not been present in Queensland. This absence, taken together

> *with something of a frontier mentality, has helped to cultivate a raw, unrestrained 'winner takes all' style of politics in the northern state….*[57]

Criticised since the Fitzgerald Inquiry for its weak parliamentary system and dominant executive, the lack of an upper house in Queensland is sometimes attributed for its late development of parliamentary committees.[58] Post-Fitzgerald, both Labor and Liberal-National Party (LNP) governments experimented with various committee system formulations.[59] Major reforms in 2011 bought permanent portfolio committees, and parliamentary ethics and crime and corruption oversight committees, and the commencement of a Committee of the Legislative Assembly (CLA), comprised of three each of the most senior government and non-government Members, and the Speaker. The CLA has responsibility (formerly sitting solely with the Speaker) for managing House business, and for parliamentary committees funding and resourcing arrangements.[60] In 2016, during a government push for four-year electoral terms, the political trade-off of stronger accountability safeguards saw the entrenchment into the Constitution of Queensland of six 'cover the field' portfolio committees with self-referral and Estimates examination powers, and minimum six week reporting timeframes for referred legislation.[61]

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[57] P Coaldrake, *Let the sunshine in'- Review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector,* 12.

[58] John Wanna, 'Public policy and public administration' in Ian McAllister and Steve Dowrick (eds) *The Cambridge handbook of social sciences in Australia*. Cambridge: University Press, 2003, p. 81; K Jones and S Prasser, *Resisting executive control in Queensland's unicameral legislature-recent developments and the changing role of the speaker in Queensland*, p. 80.

[59] Parliament of Queensland Committee System Review Committee, *Report on the Review of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System,* 3. Accessed at https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2010/5310T3777.pdf; Amanda Honeyman, *An evaluation of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System: from Fitzgerald to recent reforms.* Unpublished paper, Parliamentary Law, Practice and procedure Course, University of Tasmania 2013. Accessed at https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2014/5414T5920.pdf; S Ojha, *The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001*; Judy Spence, 'A new era of parliamentary reform' *Australasian Parliamentary Review,* (2012) 27(1) p. 63.

[60] Committee System Review Committee, *Report on the Review of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System*, xiv; K Jones and S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments*; Spence, *A new era of parliamentary reform,* v.

[61] *Constitution of Queensland Act 2001* (Qld) Part 5.

Existing evidence

In a unicameral context, the capacity of parliamentary committees to perform the 'review' aspect of its accountability function is considerably more necessary than for committees in bicameral parliaments. A survey of literature into the effectiveness of Queensland parliamentary committees identified seven studies specifically evaluating their performance using various metrics, at various points in time.[62]

Ojha utilised the traditional impact evaluation framework in his examination of committees in Queensland Parliament between 1996-2000. [63] He found committees were somewhat effective in obtaining the cooperation of the executive, and having a good number of committee recommendations implemented, but less effective on accountability due to rarely probing controversial matters of public importance. Coghill's study assessed the Queensland committee system against the Inter-Parliamentary toolkit in 2011, and noted that while establishing the CLA breached a committee effectiveness requirement for autonomous agenda-setting, there was still effective committee measures present, particularly portfolio committees' complete coverage of the field of executive government responsibility.[64] Prasser and Jones's study also considered the period immediately-post CLA to argue the CLA breached a bulwark against executive intrusion into the legislature.[65] However, they were prepared to consider the CLA as representing cultural change away from extremely traditional public accounts committees with limited executive scope of field accountability, and towards portfolio committees with broader remit. [66]

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[62] J Alvey, *Parliament's accountability to the people, the role of committees: A Queensland view*; Lyndel Bates, 'Parliamentary committees are important in developing policy: evidence from a Queensland case study' Australasian Parliamentary Review (2010) 25(2) p. 14.; K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively?*; Jacqueline Dewar, *Developing Queensland's Parliamentary Committees: will increased statutory recognition provide better executive and legislative scrutiny in a unicameral parliament?* Accessed at https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableOffice/TabledPapers/2014/5414T5920.pdf; A Honeyman, *An evaluation of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System: from Fitzgerald to recent reforms*; K Jones and S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments*; J Spence, *A new era of parliamentary reform;* S Ojha, *The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001*; Lynda Pretty, 'Queensland's scrutiny of proposed legislation by parliamentary committees: Do they make for more considered, rights-compatible law?' *Australasian Parliamentary Review,* (2020) 35(1) p. 54. The study by Alvey is not reviewed in the paper as it seeks to explain rather than evaluate committees' role.

[63] S Ojha, *The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001*, 84.

[64] K Coghill, *Queensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively.*

[65] K Jones and S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments.*

[66] P Lobban, *Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive*, 81.

Honeyman's study applied the Aldons impact evaluation model to the extent of acceptance of committee recommendation during 1996-2010.[67] She noted committees of that era had limited scrutiny of administrative, legal and technical matters, and identified executive dominance of committees via government majority and government Chair, as preventing genuine scrutiny or inquiry into controversial matters; committee recommendations usually supported the government line.[68] Dewar's case study of two portfolio committee inquiries conducted post-2016 constitutional entrenchment found their report recommendations did not reflect majority submitter sentiment. On key policy issues, government-controlled committees for each inquiry reinforced the wishes of the Government such that committee recommendations aligned with party positions.[69] Pretty's study of committees' rights-protection role in the period immediately after the introduction of the Queensland's *Human Rights Act 2019* indicated that even a new layer of human rights scrutiny did not necessarily make for better, more rights-compliant law in the face of the government of the day's priorities.[70]

Bates' impact evaluation, of the effect of a specific standing committee on government policy over two parliamentary terms, made contrasting findings about executive dominance to the other studies surveyed above.[71] By examining the Hansard record for discussion of recommendations and citations of the reports of Queensland's Travel-Safe Committees, her study identified factors which supported that committee's successful impact included: strong ideas about transport policy that were pursued consistently by committee; a consensual approach by the Chair; a focus on reporting evidence-based recommendations; and respect for the work of the committee from other Members of Parliament.[72]

[67] A Honeyman, *An evaluation of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System: from Fitzgerald to recent reforms.*

[68] S Ojha, *The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001*, 82-83.

[69] J Dewar, *Developing Queensland's Parliamentary Committees: will increased statutory recognition provide better executive and legislative scrutiny in a unicameral parliament.*

[70] L Pretty, *Queensland's scrutiny of proposed legislation by parliamentary committees: Do they make for more considered, rights-compatible law,* 54.

[71] L Bates, *Parliamentary committees are important in developing policy: evidence from a Queensland case study.*

[72] L Bates, *Parliamentary committees are important in developing policy: evidence from a Queensland case study.*

Systems analysis

The existing Queensland studies show that committee performance at the micro level of the parliamentary system is difficult to insulate from conditioning by the meso- and macro- levels of that system. When it comes to inquiries where the Government may already have a clear public position that it cannot easily depart from, even in the face of contradictory evidence from committee process, the intent of the incumbent Government prevails. Bates' study reflects this by showing how committee members have space to undertake their work in a more deliberative manner, when the issues under inquiry are outside the immediate political agenda of the government.

Queensland studies generally do not suggest significant progress in the capacity of committees to resist executive dominance over the period 1990-2020 in Queensland. Since Bates' study, no further empirical studies have been published about micro- level factors bearing on Queensland committees' pursuit of executive accountability. Notwithstanding this, a systems analysis of committee effectiveness still helps to reconceptualise whether all has been lost for committees in the 'winner takes all' style of Queensland politics, because it identifies factors present at different levels of the parliamentary system which act as guardrails and resources supporting committees' accountability function. For example, there is great utility in committee members determining to use their personal skillsets – relationship capital, subject matter expertise, knowledge about committee powers and processes – towards a bipartisan, evidence-based approach to inquiries. Additionally, once a committee has made its recommendations, it can maintain the executive's focus on recommendations using the full scope of the committee's powers. Committees in Queensland *do* publish annual reports, engage in extensive public consultation processes, and their committee members receive induction and refresher committees-specific training at the start of each parliament.[73] These factors reflect micro-level factors available to support Queensland committees' accountability function.

Meso-level factor analysis suggests the Queensland's 2011 committee system reforms the Legislative Assembly initiated, were transformational. They gave portfolio committees accountability powers covering the field of government activity (including Budget estimates);

[73] Queensland Parliamentary Service, *Annual Report 2023–24.* Accessed at https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Visit-and-learn/Publications-and-Reports/Annual-Reports.

extensive technical and substantive scrutiny remit (including ability to recommend amendments); self-referral powers; and oversight of independent bodies.[74]

The functions of the six portfolio committees entrenched in Queensland's Constitution are contained in Chapter 5, Part 3 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* (Qld) and the *Standing Rules and Orders of The Legislative Assembly*. Queensland's Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee has a non-government Chair which can notably assist to restrain executive accountability.[75] However, some accountability-supporting, meso-level factors are absent, for example, the Legislative Assembly can declare a Bill urgent by ordinary majority, thereby restricting committees' inquiry time. Under Standing Order 137 and section 46 of Queensland's Constitution, a government may introduce a Bill to the House and declare the Bill to be urgent. Government members also chair all portfolio parliamentary committees and have a casting vote, apart from during the 55th Parliament, which was a minority government, when Committees Chairs did not have a casting vote.[76]

At the macro-level of the parliamentary system, while Queensland committee Chairs receive additional remuneration, it is inferior pay (and perceived status) to that of a Queensland government Minister. A parliamentary committee member receives an additional $27,846, a committee Chair an additional $69,616 per annum, while Government Whips, Assistant Ministers and Deputy Speakers receive an additional $97,462 and a Minister an additional $194,925 to their base salary of $183,985.[77] Additionally, Queensland traditionally hosts one of the largest executives proportionally to the number of sitting Members, meaning the executive can stack committee agendas with legislative scrutiny work, at the expense of committee oversight and public engagement functions.[78]

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[74] K Coghill, Q*ueensland's parliamentary committees: dead, on life support, or lively*; P Lobban, *Who cares wins: Parliamentary committees and the executive.*

[75] *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (Qld) s 300(2); Committee System Review Committee, *Report on the Review of the Queensland Parliamentary Committee System*, p. 23.

[76] *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 (*Qld) s 82, Standing Order 201, Legislative Assembly of Queensland; Neil Laurie, *Moving towards the entrenchment of parliamentary committees* (49th Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference, Wellington, 7-14 July 2018),p. 9. Accessed at https://www.parliament.nz/media/4944/moving-towards-the-entrenchment-of-parliamentary-committees-neil-laurie.pdf.

[77] Office of the Clerk of the Queensland Parliament, *Legislative Assembly Of Queensland Members' Remuneration Handbook* December 2024, p. 8. Accessed at https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Members/Members-and-Former-Members-Entitlements.

[78] S Prasser, *Executive growth and the takeover of Australian parliaments*.

KEY FINDINGS

In Queensland, parliamentary committees undertake a diverse variety of substantive engagement processes that shed important light on their overall effectiveness at performing their prescribed functions. For example, during the period 2023-24, 13 parliamentary committees[79] conducted:

- 72 committee inquiries, made up of 65 Bill, 3 House-referred, 2 self-referred and 2 public works inquiries
- 631 committee meetings, hearing and briefings
- 4745 public submissions considered
- 1428 witnesses called.[80]

By comparison, committee *outcomes* for the same period in Queensland include:

- 137 committee reports (committee annual reports, subordinate legislation and Bill and Inquiry reports)
- 73 recommendations made in Bill inquiry reports (excluding those concerning whether the Bill be passed and including 19 proposed amendments to legislation)
- 27 government responses to Bill inquiry reports (accepting 17 of 19 proposed legislative amendments and 51 of 53 other amendments).

This statistics disparity shows the benefit of a systems approach to evaluating committee effectiveness. The more holistic lens encompasses *all* the processes that committees engage in towards pursuit of executive accountability, moving the focus away from the executive dominance which predominates outcomes measurement, towards attendant factors within the parliamentary system which restrain or enable executive dominance.

A systems approach allows consideration of, for example, how the micro- meso- and macro-levels interacting within the parliamentary system demonstrates the overlapping identities

[79] inclusive of three standing committees: the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, Ethics Committee, and Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, and eight portfolio committees: Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee, Community Support and Services Committee, Cost of Living and Economics Committee, Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee, Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee, Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee, and Legal Affairs and Safety Committee; and two select committees: Supermarket Pricing Select Committee and the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee.

[80] Queensland Parliamentary Service, *Annual Report 2023–24*, p. 27.

Members of Parliament embody as firstly, a committee member wanted to engage with the public in an issues-based inquiry, then as a member of a house or chamber of Assembly wanting to represent their constituency in debates on proposed laws and finally, as a member of a political party with a particular mandate and capacity to govern. Given all these roles, one of the strongest determinants of committee effectiveness in pursuit of executive accountability may indeed be the personal capabilities of knowledge and relationship capital held by individual committee members. This accords with earlier parliamentary studies literature which observes the different roles that parliamentarians adopt in their work.[81] A systems analysis situates MPs as objects moving within the parliamentary system and draws attention to the full scope of work that committees, as constituted by their individual members, undertake in their furtherance of executive accountability.

Measurement by outcome is inevitably reductive. It obscures the scope, nature and reach of committee activities, particularly engagement with the public as another body 'to whom' the executive is accountable. A systems analysis can measure committee effectiveness within the parliamentary system in which they operate, because this type of approach is alive to the nuanced manner in which committees interact with other parts of the parliamentary system.[82]

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified guardrails and resources which support parliamentary committees' pursuit of executive accountability, at each level of the system in which they are located. At the Committee level: member capability in subject-matter and committee procedure, a skilled secretariat, consensus, significant public interaction and deliberative engagement with evidence, and strategic relationship management with opposing parties, the executive and other accountability bodies, all reflect and enhance committees' accountability of the executive. At the Assembly level factors include: entrenchment of committees' jurisdiction across the whole field of government activity, ability to self-refer, and pre- and post-legislative scrutiny powers, protecting independence by guaranteeing committees' minimum timelines

[81] K Strom, Rules, reasons and routines: Legislative roles in parliamentary democracies. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, (1997) 3(1), pp. 155-174; D Searing, *Westminster's world: Understanding political roles*. Harvard: University Press, 1994.

[82] S Siefken and H Rommetvedt, *Parliamentary committees in the policy process*. Routledge: 2022; B Gaines and M Goodwin et al, Conclusion: Prospects for analysing committees in comparative perspective. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, (2019) 25(3) pp.434-441.

for reporting, autonomy over budget, agenda, and personnel, permanence of monitoring abilities and powers to obtain information, and support for bipartisanship, support committees' capacity to ensure accountability. At the Parliament level elements including a culture of anticipatory respect for the committee system, financial and reputational incentives for committee members, and an executive reasonably proportionate to the number of sitting members, can ensure an optimal environment for committees to achieve their accountability function.

In delineating these guardrails and resources, this paper contributes to the growing departure in parliamentary studies literature on committee effectiveness away from executive 'winner takes all' dominance of committees, towards a conceptual systems framework that, because it is cognisant of context, is able to assess a committee's effectiveness towards its base obligation to its parent Parliament - enhancing executive accountability to parliament ***and*** to the people.