

2014

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND TERRITORY AND
MUNICIPAL SERVICES
REPORT NO 4**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2012-2013

**Presented by
Ms Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services Report No 4 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2012-2013

Introduction

The Annual Reports of All ACT Government agencies are referred to the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly for examination and report.

The Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services reviewed annual reports for:

- Economic Development Directorate (sport and recreation services/ venues and events services/capital works and infrastructure);
- Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate;
- Land Development Agency;
- Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment; and
- Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.

The Committee made 28 recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

3.13 The Committee congratulates the ACT Government for the success of the Planning Institute of Australia award for the City to the Lake Project and recommends the Government continue to seek guidance from authorities such as the Planning Institute of Australia.

Government Response

Agreed.

A project reference group comprising representatives of these institutes will continue to review and advise on the City to Lake project in the next detailed planning phase of the work.

Recommendation 2

3.18 The Committee recommends the ACT Government grow targeted attention to sport and recreation in suburbs, with a view to providing a healthier community and reducing the health burden on future generations.

Government Response

Agreed.

The government's sportsground provision model, including the provision of Community Recreation Irrigated Parks, will meet this objective.

Recommendation 3

3.33 The Committee notes the increase in land releases and recommends the Land Development Agency continues to provide information to the community on its development in Denman Prospect.

Government Response

Agreed.

The LDA will continue to liaise with community and industry, as part of the design and development of these areas and through the preparation of Estate Development Plans, on:

- proposed development outcomes;
- sale of finished blocks or private development of larger packages of land; and
- planning, approval and construction processes to improve outcomes in the Molonglo Valley.

Recommendation 4

3.36 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government looks at the success of the recent land auction in Lawson as a model for sales in future new suburbs.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

The Land Development Agency will review the process and results from the Lawson auction while continuing to make commercial decisions on land sales based on market demand through releasing a variety of land and housing options.

Recommendation 5

3.38 The Committee recommends the ACT Government continues the use of the Green Star Communities Tool.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 6

3.42 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a survey of why \$73.5 million in land rent sales contracts were rescinded/terminated in 2012-13.

Government Response

Not agreed.

Purchasers are asked to specify a reason for rescinding a contract. In 2012-13, one third of rescissions/terminations were due to the purchaser's financial capacity or household circumstances. In the remaining cases, the purchaser declined to provide a reason. The rate of rescission has dropped significantly since the introduction of a security payment for the Land Rent Scheme in February 2013.

Recommendation 7

3.46 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to provide opportunities for commercial releases with a view to expanding employment opportunities across the ACT.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Government will continue to release commercial sites in accordance with the Land Release Program.

Recommendation 8

4.7 The Committee recommends the ACT Government continue to examine environment programs that may no longer reflect the needs of Canberrans and reinvest those resources into more effective environment programs in the ACT.

Government Response

Agreed.

The ACT Government has an extensive plan for monitoring and evaluation of its entire program, including all environmental programs. In recent years, a number of programs such as ToiletSmart, GardenSmart, and home energy assessment have all been assessed and either discontinued or amended to enable resources to be directed to areas of greater need or effectiveness. The reprofiling of these programs has resulted in a greater emphasis on low income households, providing excellent environmental outcomes as well as reduced cost of living pressures for these ACT residents.

This work continues to evolve over time and the current evaluation plan will ensure that the funding continues to be used to achieve the maximum environmental outcomes.

Recommendation 9

4.14 The Committee notes the ACT Government's extensive consultation through community forums and recommends that similar style consultations be used in the future.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

Action 5 of the Climate Change Action Plan 2 requires the development of a Community Engagement Strategy (CES) which builds on existing community engagement in relation to continued action on climate change. The CES has identified opportunities for improved information and engagement, including the use of social media. The CES is expected to be completed and publicly available mid 2014.

Recommendation 10

4.16 The Committee notes the ACT Government's commitment to combating climate change and recommends the ACT Government continue to look for opportunities that will reduce cost to business as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Government Response

Agreed.

The large-scale solar feed-in tariff reverse auction in 2012 and 2013 resulted in lower than expected feed-in tariff prices, which meant lower than expected pass-through costs to business. There are currently plans to undertake a wind feed-in tariff reverse auction and a new community solar scheme, as well as a next-generation solar expression of interest program.

The ACTSmart Business Energy and Water program provides advice and financial assistance to small businesses to assist them in reducing energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Of the 68 businesses which have completed significant efficiency upgrades under the program, there has been an annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 653 tonnes, with each individual business saving an average of \$2250 off their annual energy bills.

Recommendation 11

4.21 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government assess whether the structure of the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme could be applied to other programs and change processes for individual household or business.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

The long-term goal of the EEIS is to consolidate existing programs in this area. The Scheme is only legislated until 2015, and is currently under review. Should it be extended, it is expected that there will be greater opportunity for its goal to be achieved. However, there is likely to remain a need for programs that target those not reached by the EEIS.

Recommendation 12

4.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reduce the burden for small business while providing incentives for job creation across the Territory.

Government Response

Noted.

Through 'Growth, Diversification and Jobs' (the ACT Business Development Strategy) and regulatory reform measures, the Government is supporting innovation, investment and business continuity, as well as reducing compliance costs and removing unnecessary 'red tape'. The Government's 'Regulatory Reform Panel' also allows the business sector a voice in directing regulatory reform efforts.

Specific to the EEIS, opportunities are being considered to incentivise further participation and see more activity in the small business sector. The ACTSmart Business Energy and Water program (see Recommendation 10 above) has seen both cost savings and emission reductions.

Recommendation 13

4.32 The Committee recommends the ACT Government investigate other transport programs for projects, similar to the Calvary Hospital car park, across the Territory with a view to allow better access to community facilities.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The Government is undertaking development of a Parking Strategy in accordance with the framework outlined in *Transport for Canberra*. A core objective is improving access to community facilities by making more short stay parking available where it is required.

Recommendation 14

4.34 The Committee recommends the ACT Government continue to place public transport as a high priority and investigate territory wide opportunities for similar projects to improve Canberra's public transport.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The Government has successfully completed a number of major bus stops, bus stations and park and ride facilities. Work is currently progressing on feasibility studies, design and/or construction in relation to a number of projects, including the light rail project, major bus stops, bus stations and park and ride facilities.

Recommendation 15

4.38 The Committee recommends the ACT Government continue to conserve the environment and extend its conservation programs for the benefit of current and future Canberrans.

Government Response**Agreed.**

Implementation of conservation programs to be guided by the *ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-23* and action plans for threatened species and ecological communities.

Recommendation 16

4.44 The Committee recommends the ACT Government review its noise abatement strategy to ensure all proponents are treated fairly and increase its community education program on noise pollution across the ACT community.

Government Response

Agreed.

A recent review of the legislation governing the regulation of environmental noise in the ACT will inform a bill to be introduced in the Assembly during the Spring 2014 sittings. On the basis of this bill, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) will review its enforcement policy to ensure that it remains contemporary and consistent with principles of procedural fairness.

The EPA runs a number of community noise awareness programs, using several media platforms to educate the community on environmental noise and legislative requirements. These programs include targeted social media and articles in industry newsletters, as well as a broad and ongoing program of public and industry education.

Recommendation 17

4.46 The Committee recommends the ACT Government consider enabling enforcement of the ACT Commercial Waste Industry Code of Practice with a view to reducing commercial waste to landfill.

Government Response

Noted.

The ACT Commercial Waste Industry Code of Practice (Code) regulates noise from commercial waste activities. It currently cannot regulate the amount of waste going to landfill.

The Government does not intend to regulate in this matter, as sustainable commercial waste management practices are incentivised through the ACT Smart Business program and licensing of commercial waste recycling activities.

Additionally, the ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011–2025, provides clear guidance for the management of waste, including commercial waste. The strategy actively encourages creative and sustainable resource management practices rather than simply sending waste to landfill.

Recommendation 18

6.16 The Committee recommends that the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate review the professional development available for rangers at Domestic Animal Services to ensure it includes training to respond to situations that involve people with mental health issues.

Government Response

Agreed.

The need for training to respond to situations that involve people with mental health issues was identified in a recent review of the training needs of rangers at Domestic Animal Service and will be delivered within the next six months.

Recommendation 19

6.24 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement a credit card direct debit capability for land tax and rates.

Government Response**Not agreed.**

Allowing credit card direct debit would significantly increase merchant services fees costs to the Territory. Until there is capability within the Revenue Office systems to recover these costs directly from individual customers who choose this payment channel, this proposal is not financially viable.

Recommendation 20

6.30 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate providing all households with a green waste collection service.

Government Response**Not agreed.**

Noting that provision of a third bin would add a level of convenience, the ACT Government has already investigated this matter and concluded that there would be little or no net benefit as approximately 90% of green waste is already being recycled in the ACT. The investigation identified the following issues with provision of a third bin:

- The capital cost of bins and collection trucks, and ongoing fuel costs, would not show value for money, especially in winter when few bins would be full.
- Bins can only take certain sizes of material, requiring residents to still dispose of remaining material by other means.
- All rate payers would effectively have to pay for the cost, regardless of whether they have gardens, whether they prefer to self-haul, or whether they compost their green waste.

The current practices in the ACT for managing green waste are efficient and cost-effective. Most trash pack services will not collect, and thus will not charge a collection fee, if a pack is less than half-full. Alternatively, for those happy to self-haul, ACT Government Resource Management Centres do not charge for disposal of green waste.

Recommendation 21

6.41 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate options for minor renovations to the Mt Rogers Community Hub to improve security, safety and usability of the facility.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

ACT Property Group completed a condition audit of the property in 2013. These reports identify essential and discretionary upgrades and repairs. Work identified in this report will be considered for action over the next five years under the upgrades program. While ACT Property Group considers the current security arrangements appropriate for a community centre occupied by a number of diverse community groups that require access outside business hours, the advice of the TAMS Agency Security Advisor will be sought on potential improvements.

Recommendation 22

6.52 The Committee recommends that ACTION develop a solution for the free replacement of faulty MyWay cards that can be accessed in Civic.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

TAMS has developed a proposed solution for the replacement of faulty MyWay cards within Civic. This proposal will require modification to MyWay system functionality to implement. Funding for this modification will be included for consideration during future budget processes.

Recommendation 23

6.54 The Committee notes ACTION's work on NXTBUS and recommends the ACT Government continues to investigate new technologies that encourage the uptake of public transport.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

The Government continually examines technology and associated best practice to ensure that systems support opportunities to increase public transport patronage.

Recommendation 24

6.57 The Committee recommends the ACT Government work to further improve service consistency across the whole ACTION network.

Government Response

Agreed.

Network 14 has been designed to provide more consistent, regular and direct services to better meet identified transport needs. The network is due to be implemented in early 2014-15 and will be reviewed for performance and patronage once operational.

Recommendation 25

6.61 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake an in-house audit of missing links in the cycle path network, such as the Barton Highway and parts of Lake Tuggeranong.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The path from Tuggeranong Weir to Reed Street has been asphalted. The Government will undertake audits of other paths around the Lakes and the Barton Highway. Any missing links will be included in future Capital Works and Capital Upgrade programs.

Recommendation 26

6.63 The Committee commends the ACT Government for the increase in footpath maintenance in 2012-13 and recommends the Government continue to plan for this maintenance taking into account new national design contingencies for shared paths.

Government Response**Noted.**

Future priorities for footpath maintenance will take into account planning around cycle paths and shared paths.

Unfortunately, due to conflicting priorities in the recurrent funding, it was not possible to continue the 2012-13 level of footpath maintenance activity into 2013-14.

Recommendation 27

6.66 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, after a reasonable time, review the style of traffic flow management system planned for the Barton Highway-Gundaroo Drive roundabout, with a view for inclusion in growing areas of similar nature.

Government Response**Agreed in principle.**

The Government will evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed works at the Barton Highway-Gundaroo Drive roundabout to determine whether this treatment can be applied at other locations. These works are anticipated to be completed in 2016/17.

Recommendation 28

6.69 The Committee recommends that the project to provide parking in the median along Nellie Hamilton Avenue be funded.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

A feasibility study for the project was completed in February 2012. Funding of the project will be considered within the context of future capital works programs.