



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Ed Cocks MLA (Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Auditor-General's Performance  
Audit Reports January 2023- June 2023

**Submission Number: 2**

**Date Authorised for Publication: 7 May 2024**



## Mick Gentleman MLA

Manager of Government Business  
Minister for Business  
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services  
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs  
Minister for Police and Crime Prevention

Member for Brindabella

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Mr Ed Cocks MLA  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts

PRO24/1501

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Dear Mr Cocks 

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 April 2024 about the United Firefighters Union of Australia, ACT Branch (UFU) submission to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts regarding the Committee's *Inquiry into [Government Responses to] Auditor-General Performance Audit Reports January – June 2023*. I note that the UFU submission relates to the *Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report No4/2023 – Procurement of a Hybrid Electric Fire Truck* (Audit Report).

While I thank you for the opportunity to make further comment, the Government has already stated its position on this matter through the Government Response to the Audit Report which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 26 October 2023, and the subsequent Standing Committee on Public Accounts hearing on 9 November 2023. Nonetheless, should it be of further assistance to the Committee, I make the following observations.

In conducting its audit, the Auditor General's Office, which is independent of Government, had access to all the available information in relation to the procurement of the electric fire truck.

I note the Audit Report makes just one recommendation as follows: "The ESA should, prior to its deployment, formally assess and confirm that the electric fire truck meets the needs of the ESA as an urban pumper in the Territory". This recommendation was agreed by Government and is currently being addressed through a mandatory commissioning process that is undertaken for all ESA vehicles

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before they become operational, and I note this approach is standard ESA procedure which predates the Audit Report recommendation.

Notwithstanding, the UFU submission is wide-ranging, covering the ESA and its governance in a very broad sense, and going beyond the focus of both the Auditor-General's Report and the PAC Inquiry. The UFU suggests possible improper conduct by ESA members and, indeed, by me as Minister. I reject any such suggestion in relation to my own conduct. As for suggested possible improper conduct by ESA members, I have no reason to believe that the conduct involved in this procurement was inappropriate. Moreover, I am also comforted that the Audit Report made no finding or observation of any improper conduct against any individual involved.

While the Audit Report makes some observations in relation to the procurement of the electric fire truck and the value for money assessment, the Government has noted the observations in the Audit Report and is using them to inform and improve future procurement practices.

Further, and whilst a matter for the Committee and respecting the application of parliamentary privilege to the Committee's exercise of its functions, it seems most unusual for the Committee to have regard to the UFU submission in its current form, given the untested and wide-ranging nature of those allegations. As such, I would respectfully request that the Committee give serious consideration to reversing its current authorisation to publish the UFU submission on the Committee's webpage, noting this submission risks tarnishing unfairly the reputation of those involved in the procurement, including current ESA members. While again respecting the independence of the Committee, perhaps the Committee might like to invite the UFU to provide any evidence that they hold relative to the allegations, over and above that considered by the Auditor General and the Committee, to the appropriate authority.

Thank you for raising this matter with me. I trust this information and my observations are of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Mick Gentleman MLA  
Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

28<sup>th</sup> April 2024