

2020

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
REPORT NO 9**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2018-2019

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Introduction

On Thursday, 24 October 2019, the 2018-2019 Annual and Financial reports of all ACT Government agencies were referred to the relevant Standing Committees of the Assembly for inquiry and reporting.

The following annual reports, or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee):

- ACT Auditor-General;
- ACT Insurance Authority;
- ACT Ombudsman;
- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- Icon Water Limited;
- Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission; and
- Office of the Legislative Assembly.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop and implement a mechanism so that the Territory's superannuation liability can be expressed appropriately in the Budget and Consolidated Financial Statements.

Government Response – Noted.

The defined benefit superannuation liability valuation is currently presented appropriately to meet Australian Accounting Standards and provide long-term budget comparability and is consistent with the presentation by the Commonwealth Government.

Nonetheless, the Government considers budget and financial reporting disclosures on an ongoing basis and will continue engagement with the Commonwealth in relation to the valuation assumptions for both the Commonwealth's and the ACT's defined benefit superannuation liabilities.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Icon Water provide hardship provision for customers affected by interruptions to water or sewerage services on their properties.

Government Response – Noted.

Icon Water is currently prioritising and expanding its hardship program and financial support including suspending charging overdue interest for customers struggling to pay their bills due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Icon Water acknowledges the significant costs that investigating and rectifying internal plumbing issues can present for customers. However, the responsibility for internal plumbing remains the obligation of the property-owner, as detailed in the [*Water services and sewerage services connection and supply standard contract*](#). As advised to the Committee on 5 November 2019, financial assistance is available to Canberrans through charitable organisations such as St Vincent de Paul. Icon Water has a range of support available to assist customers experiencing financial hardship such as the *Staying Connected program*, which offers options such as flexible payment plans and personalised support. Through this service, Icon Water also connects customers to charitable organisations that can provide budgeting advice and financial assistance.

Icon Water proactively engages with the community to seek feedback on their concerns and issues. Icon Water will continue to monitor the feedback of its customers over this regulatory period to identify and inform the priorities for consideration in Icon Water's next pricing submission for the next regulatory period.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) consult Commonwealth departments which have implemented Activity Based Work on lessons learned. CMTEDD should incorporate these into transition plans before staff move into new offices at Dickson and Civic.

Government Response – Noted.

CMTEDD has consulted broadly with state and commonwealth counterparts, as well as with the private sector regarding the implementation of Activity Based Working.

The ABW pilot at the Canberra Nara Centre was influenced by the approach taken by the NSW Treasury Department, and the Commonwealth Department of Industry, with extensive consultation occurring with the latter on the design of the pilot at the Canberra Nara Centre

CMTEDD staff have continued to engage with counterparts in other jurisdictions, with site visits to numerous ABW fitouts, including at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as well as NSW Fire and Rescue. CMTEDD has considered the lessons learned by other jurisdictions and have applied these to the approach taken to transition staff into the Dickson and Civic buildings.

The Territory is leading the way in this space, with numerous State and Commonwealth Government agencies engaging with CMTEDD to benefit from the expertise and experience the ACT Public Service has in implementing Activity Based Work environments.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) survey staff who have experienced Activity Based Work arrangements. The survey should seek to determine satisfaction levels and identify any concerns about working in such environments.

Government Response – Noted.

CMTEDD has conducted a number of evaluation exercises to measure staff satisfaction with Activity Based Working

This included:

- 2016 - 6 Month post implementation review of pilot. 140 staff surveyed.
- 2016 - Focus group sessions with all teams working in ABW
- 2017 - ABW Staff Satisfaction Survey. 565 staff surveyed

Each evaluation project has provided valuable insights into how Activity Based Working is implemented within an ACT Government context. These learnings have been incorporated into change management processes to support the move into the Dickson and Civic Buildings.

Staff have a number of mechanisms through which they can provide feedback, including through their manager and Directorate leads, as well as a shared mailbox that is centrally administered by CMTEDD.

An evaluation project has been established to measure the impacts on Workplace efficiency and Culture.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that Shared Services amend its targets for response times for telephone service requests so that they require a certain percentage of positive service outcomes from interactions.

Government Response – Agreed.

Shared Services is currently reviewing the Accountability Indicators for the Service Desk function with the view to shift the focus to customer satisfaction rather than the previous turnaround time targets.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Ombudsman advise in annual reports as to how many complaints he has received regarding the ACT Ombudsman.

Government Response – Not for government.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Legislative Assembly amended the Parliamentary performance report card to provide further context for information reported.

Government Response – Not for government.