



AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

APPROPRIATION BILL 2002-2003 (NO. 2)

6 MARCH 2003

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled its report (Report No.4) on the Appropriation Bill 2002-2003 (No. 2) on Tuesday 4 March 2003.

The Committee made three recommendations. The Government has responded to all the recommendations.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the bill be passed.

Government Response

The Government notes the recommendation and acknowledges the support offered by the committee through its recommendation. The passing of the Appropriation Bill 2002-2003 (No.2) will allow funds to be provided to agencies, to address expenditure arising from the January 2003 bushfires.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government's quarterly financial statements for the next five quarters include, as a discrete item, the expenditures related to the bushfires and the amounts recouped from other sources.

Government Response:

Bushfire costs are incurred across a number of agencies. These will be estimated and reported on over the next five quarters as part of the commentary of the Quarterly Consolidated Management Report. It should be noted that it will be difficult to estimate these costs in many cases, as final estimates from the disaster may not be known for some time.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Government bring forward a statement on the risk management strategies adopted in agencies such as the Emergency Services Bureau and the hospitals to deal with major emergencies.

Government Response

The matter of risk management and emergency management is not one treated lightly by the Government.

The *Emergency Management Act 1999* sets out a number of necessary processes in relation to planning for and managing an emergency in the Territory. The Emergency Management Committee, chaired by the chief police officer, and established under the *Emergency Management Act 1999* meets every 6 weeks.

In the event of an emergency, the Territory activates its Emergency Plan (which is a requirement of the Act). This plan was totally re-written in 2000 and is constantly under review and will be again after the recent bushfires.

The Emergency Plan is based on Australian standards for risk management (ie AS/NZ 4360: 1995 Risk Management). It also follows the Emergency Risk Management Applications guide developed by the National Emergency Management Committee as published by Emergency Management Australia.

The Emergency Plan is an overarching plan with many sub-plans, aimed at amplifying the main plan in relation to particular event or support functions. For example, the Community Recovery sub-plan puts in place procedures for evacuation centres and the handling of evacuees. The Health Medical sub-plan, managed by the Chief Health Officer, establishes processes for casualty treatment.

The funding of an emergency or disaster will depend on its scale. While there is capacity in many operational areas to handle a certain level of event, it is beyond the scope of recurrent funding to provide for exceptional events such as the January 2003 bushfires.