



**Government Response to the
Select Committee on Estimates
2008-2009**

Tabling Statement

June 2008

Jon Stanhope MLA
Treasurer

Mr Speaker, I present the Government's Response to the Report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2008-2009. I thank the Committee, and its support staff, for the Report on the Appropriation Bill 2008-2009.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of presenting to this Assembly a Budget for the future; a Budget that was prepared by a Government that is ready for the future. This Budget presents a vision for a long-term future for this great city. This is a Budget that we have been able to deliver because we have undertaken necessary reform, made hard decisions, and maintained fiscal discipline.

Mr Speaker, I wish to remind the Assembly of the achievements of the 2008-09 Budget, in particular the unprecedented, indeed historic, investment in the Territory's infrastructure.

As I made clear at the time, the Budget's centrepiece, *Building the Future*, is a billion-dollar investment in the productive capacity of our economy. It is a billion dollars channelled into areas that are of critical importance to our city; into our health system and our transport system; into combating climate change and reinvigorating our urban amenities; into Communication Technology infrastructure and boosting our capital works program.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, it was a Budget that dedicated hundreds of millions of dollars to targeted recurrent programs, designed to maintain the exceptional standard of services Canberrans have become accustomed to under this Government.

Not content with this alone, the Budget was also framed to deliver much deserved tax cuts, to, amongst others, pensioners, first home buyers, and of course, the business community.

And all this while responsibly maintaining modest budget surpluses, and strong cash surpluses, across the forwards years.

Mr Speaker, the 2008-09 Budget indeed leaves the ACT ready for the future.

Mr Speaker, turning then to the Select Committee on Estimates and its deliberations on this important document. In its consideration of the Budget, the Committee has canvassed a wide range of issues, the result of which has been the presentation of 54 recommendations to the Government. The Government has duly responded to each of these recommendations in turn.

I will not take the Assembly's time now by working through each of the Select Committee's 54 recommendations. These are separately discussed in the response document, which I table here today.

Broadly speaking, the recommendations included in the report related to improvements in Estimates procedure and Budget presentation, and additional information to be provided to the Assembly in the future. The Government accepted or noted the majority of the recommendations and again thanks the Committee for its diligence in preparing the Report.

Mr Speaker, the Committee's Report was accompanied by a second volume, namely a Dissenting Report prepared by Mrs Dunne and Mr Smyth which contained a further 55 recommendations.

The Government considered the report did little to promote debate about the 2008-09 Budget, as it did not substantially further the discussion of the proposed expenditure proposals and resource allocations. As a result the

Government has not responded in a detailed manner to the dissenting report's individual recommendations.

However, there was one aspect of the report that the Government felt it necessary to respond to, that of land rent. The land rent scheme, operational from 1 July 2008, will allow low-to-moderate-income households to rent instead of buy the land component of a house and land package. The report recommended that the Government withdraw the land rent scheme.

The Government strongly disagreed with this recommendation and considered that by making such a recommendation, Mrs Dunne and Mr Smyth demonstrated that they have not been able to grasp the basic concepts of the scheme. In fact, the report makes a number of erroneous statements, despite the comprehensive information provided to the Estimates Committee hearings, responses to Questions on Notice and direct briefings by officials.

Mr Speaker, to set the record straight, independent analysis of the Treasury modelling of the scheme has been extremely positive and the scheme has been designed in consultation with the Law Society, valuers, financial institutions and the Real Estate Institute.

Mr Speaker, returning to the main Report of the Estimates Committee, the recommendations do not raise any serious issues that would prevent the passing of the Appropriation Bill 2008-2009. Rather, the report seeks more information and clarification on a range of issues that the Government has agreed to provide where feasible.

I again thank the Committee for its consideration of these issues, and remind the Assembly that this Budget prepares the Territory for a prosperous future, by building on the strengths of the present.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Government Response to the Assembly.



**Government Response
to the Report of the
Select Committee on Estimates 2008-2009
on the inquiry into the
Appropriation Bill 2008-2009**

June 2008
Jon Stanhope MLA
Treasurer

26 / 06 / 2008

INTRODUCTION

The Select Committee on Estimates circulated out of session on Tuesday, 17 June 2008 its Report on the Appropriation Bill 2008-2009.

The Committee made 54 Recommendations in its Report. The Government has responded to all of the Recommendations.

The Committee also tabled Volume 2: Dissenting Report. A Government response addressing the broad themes of Volume 2 is included in this Reponse.

The Government thanks the Committee for its Report on the 2008-2009 Appropriation Bill.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

1.11 The Committee recommends that each year the ACT Government provides an indexed set of budget submissions received from stakeholders when the Select Committee on Estimates is established and any additional submissions received prior to the tabling of the ACT Budget.

Government Response

Agreed in principle

Treasury will continue the practice of providing the Estimates Committee with a courtesy copy of all Submissions from the public, community and interest groups when the Budget is presented in the Legislative Assembly.

It is not possible to provide the committee with copies upon establishment of the Committee (that is, approximately one month prior to Budget presentation) as these documents are used in the development of the Budget.

Recommendation 2

1.13 The Committee recommends that the manager of government business, in consultation with the opposition and crossbench MLAs, determine the period for Estimates hearings as a formal part of the sitting pattern each year.

Government Response

Noted

It is ultimately a matter for the Committee to determine when inquiries or hearings are conducted.

It should be noted that the Manager of Government Business circulates a proposed draft sitting pattern to Opposition and Cross Bench members prior to presenting it to the Assembly for endorsement.

The Government also notes that a period for Estimates hearings is included in the sitting calendar published by the Legislative Assembly prior to the start of the sitting year.

Recommendation 3

1.14 The Committee recommends that a draft programme be prepared by the Committee office by 28 February each year for circulation to Ministers and confirmation prior to the establishment of the Select Committee in order that Ministers are aware of time commitments as early as possible.

Government Response

Noted

This is a matter for the Committee office.

Recommendation 4

1.15 The Committee recommends that the first two government sessions of the hearing schedule be designated for the Treasury portfolio.

Government Response

Noted

The schedule for the hearings of any Legislative Assembly committee is a matter for the Committee itself, and any draft programme circulated would still require the endorsement of the Select Committee on Estimates on its formation, subject to the availability of Ministers and their officials.

However, the Government would consider favourably an Estimates process that allows for better planning and preparation.

Recommendation 5

1.27 The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly amend the Standing Orders to provide specifically for the establishment each year of a select committee on estimates and which also provides for rules for the conduct of the inquiry and for the questions on notice process as do the Standing Orders in the Senate.

Government Response

Noted

Standing orders of the Legislative Assembly are a matter for the Assembly to determine, normally following advice from the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure.

Recommendation 6

1.29 Committee recommends that all questions taken on notice and all written questions on notice not answered by 17 June 2008 be forwarded to the Speaker for tabling in the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting day in August.

Government Response

Noted

The tabling of publications of a Legislative Assembly committee is a matter for the Committee itself. However, the Government would consider favourably an Estimates process that reduces the burden placed on the Government by needing to answer over two thousand questions on notice within an extremely short time frame.

Recommendation 7

1.34 The Committee recommends that the contents of budget papers be indexed for ease of accessibility to readers particularly those accessing information via the internet.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The Government strives to continually improve the quality and usability of information included in the Budget Papers. The Budget Papers contain a table of contents, footers identifying chapters and agency references. Agency BP4 chapters are also structured in a uniform and consistent manner to assist with the ease of use and navigation. Website content also includes a search function to assist with ease of use.

The inclusion of an index has been explored and assessed as not feasible given time constraints for publishing and the risk of referencing errors, as the index would be produced manually.

Recommendation 8

1.36 The Committee recommends that the budget papers include, in a table format, details of all separately identified initiatives for specific portfolio areas against the appropriate output class.

Government Response

Not Agreed

As initiatives often span across output classes within an agency and sometimes across agencies, it is not practical to provide a list of initiatives against each output class.

Recommendation 9

1.39 The Committee recommends that the Budget Papers include not only details of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions held by public servants, but also details of FTEs held by contractors within agencies.

Government Response

Not Agreed

Departments engage external labour and organisations to undertake services dependant on the need for particular skills, the absence of suitable in-house resources, and the need for independent reviews or facilitation.

Reporting entities are required to report on procurement and contracting activities including compliance with the Government Procurement Act 2001 and Government Procurement Regulation 2007. Under the Act a notifiable contracts register must be maintained by a Chief Executive that states the parties to the contract and other aspects of the contract, including the financial value of the contract, rather than the number of employees. The provision of information on the number of external sources of labour and services is also an annual reporting requirement of reporting entities under the Annual Report Directions (a notifiable instrument).

It would be administratively complex for each agency to independently and effectively calculate the FTE of contractors who may be engaged from time to time and under a variety of contractual arrangements. Such reporting could also be considered as imposing an additional regulatory burden and undermine the willingness of private sector providers to engage in procurement activities. It is considered that the current reporting requirements under the Act and Annual Report Directions provide an appropriate level of accountability.

Recommendation 10

1.41 The Committee recommends that a breakdown of specific funding allocations to the environment, women's affairs, multicultural affairs, Indigenous affairs, ageing and youth affairs be provided in the budget papers and also requests the provision of separate budget statements in those portfolio areas where they are not already provided.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The current structure of the Budget Papers reflects the grouping of similar services with common goals and strong synergies. The Government can see little value in changing these arrangements based on Ministerial responsibilities of the day. In fact the presentation of these broad categories of service delivery and policy development, which cuts across a departments and outputs, into separate budget statements would be complex and costly.

As an example the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services' Output 3.2 Community Affairs contains multicultural, ageing, and indigenous affairs. While Ministerial responsibility for this output rest with three separate Ministers, the Government considers it appropriate that they be consolidated and reported as community affairs.

Recommendation 11

1.43 The Committee recommends that proper care be taken in providing details on depreciation of projects for inclusion in the budget papers.

Government Response

Noted

Appropriate scrutiny will continue to be applied to all aspects of the Territory's Budget, including the calculation of depreciation.

Recommendation 12

1.44 The Committee recommends that the allowances for depreciation of project design amounts in Budget Paper 5 for 2008-09 be corrected prior to the Appropriation Bill No. 1 being passed.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The depreciation included in the forward estimates for these forward design projects will have no impact on the Appropriation Bill No. 1 as depreciation is not funded through appropriation. The way in which agencies include depreciation in the forward estimates for forward design costs will be reviewed by Treasury in next year's Budget. Pending the outcome of this review, agencies will be notified as appropriate.

Recommendation 13

1.47 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the accountability indicators used in budget papers for their effectiveness in providing a transparent measure of performance in key areas.

Government Response

Agreed In-Principle

The Government currently reviews accountability indicators on an annual basis; this review coincides with the preparation of the annual Budget Papers. In doing this, care is taken to maintain, as far as practical, comparability across previous budgets, and to provide transparency in the performance targets that are set.

In addition, the 2008-09 Budget contained funding for the Chief Minister's Department to develop a new government performance and accountability model and commence implementation of the new model. The Committee's recommendations will be taken into account in this process.

Recommendation 14

2.4 The Committee recommends that, in addition to indexing the Budget Papers, the Government provide information sessions to the community and a web-based guide about the structure of the budget papers and where specific elements of the budget are detailed.

Government Response

Noted

The Government already provides information sessions to peak community groups. Information regarding the structure of the budget papers, and the areas addressed by each, is already detailed in the Guide to the Budget Papers which can be found at the beginning of each Budget Paper. This Guide is also included in the electronic copies that can be accessed via the ACT Treasury website.

Recommendation 15

2.38 The Committee recommends that the Government make a decision about the future of Currong Apartments and their occupants.

Government Response

Noted

Currong apartments are being effectively used as part of the stock of student accommodation in Canberra. As is usual practice, current occupants of Currong Apartments will be notified in enough time before the end of the current academic year if these arrangements are to be altered.

Recommendation 16

3.10 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provides an update of the budget improvements that have been achieved to date following the introduction of the Shared Services Centre and consequential changes.

Government Response

Noted

The Business Units of Shared Services are to provide on-going savings in the vicinity of \$20.3 million. The model adopted for delivering these savings (or budget improvements) was via reducing appropriation to agencies by this amount and requiring the Business Units of Shared Services to reduce their charges to agencies through their various cost recovery models (or savings) by the same amount. Through Shared Services meeting its allocated budget, the savings announced will be achieved.

Recommendation 17

3.16 The Committee recommends that the Treasurer report back to the Legislative Assembly when a determination regarding the over- or underpayments to some superannuants has been made.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 18

3.18 The Committee recommends that the Government report to the Legislative Assembly on the outcomes of the Superannuation Strategic Investment Review.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 19

4.22 The Committee recommends that strategic indicators that allow for an assessment of government effectiveness in the provision of strategic policy and services for an ageing population be developed.

Government Response

Noted

In relation to the provision of strategic policy and services for an ageing population, this work will be further informed by the 2008-09 Budget Initiative 'Confronting the Demographic Challenge – Policy and Demographic Research'. This initiative, being undertaken by the Chief Minister's Department, will provide the Government with dedicated demographic expertise to produce demographic analysis and population forecasting. This will inform the Government about the changing nature of the population and will help agencies efficiently plan and deliver infrastructure and services to the community. The ageing of the population and its implications for policy and service delivery will be a key focus.

Recommendation 20

4.24 The Committee recommends that the Government table the report of the Canberra Theatre feasibility study in the Legislative Assembly before the last sitting day in August 2008.

Government Response

Agreed In-Principle

The report will not be completed by end of August 2008. The report is scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2008, and will be considered by Government at this time.

Recommendation 21

4.38 The Committee recommends that a State of the Service Report be prepared each year as part of the annual reporting processes by the ACT Government.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The ACT Government Workforce Profile provides a snapshot of the ACT Public Sector, and has been produced since the 2005-06 financial year. In combination with the Commissioner for Public Administration's Annual Report, the Workforce Profile provides an effective report on the state of the ACT Public Sector providing measures against more than 40 employee and human resource related variables. As well as providing statistical data, the Profile identifies broader workforce trends that are likely to impact on the Sector in coming years. The publication of a separate State of the Service report would effectively duplicate this reporting arrangement and is not considered an appropriate use of limited resources.

Recommendation 22

5.13 The Committee recommends that, once the Alexander Maconochie Centre is operational, revised indicators in relation to re-offending should be developed.

Government Response

Agreed

With the Alexander Maconochie Centre due for commissioning this year, the ACT will be in position to develop indicators around rate of return of offenders to Corrective Services.

Recommendation 23

5.17 The Committee recommends that the Government provides to the Legislative Assembly a detailed strategy for achieving the relocation of the Emergency Services Authority (ESA) headquarters to Fairbairn.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The Emergency Services Agency has provided a project plan as part of the 2008-09 Estimates process. The Project is overseen by an ACT Government Inter-Departmental Committee that is made up of senior level officers from the Departments of Justice and Community Safety; Treasury; Chief Minister's; Territory and Municipal Services; and the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

Recommendation 24

5.23 The Committee recommends that the Government invest in the training and equipping of frontline emergency personnel in the event of a chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) incident.

Government Response

Agreed

The Government already provides training for all Fire Brigade staff, key Ambulance Staff, key AFP officers, and key SES Volunteers and is satisfied that the level of current and programmed training addresses the needs of the current environment in which these personnel operate. The Government's recent funding initiatives in the 2008-2009 Budget ensure equipment replacement and capability.

Recommendation 25

6.9 The Committee recommends that the Government pursue with vigour the Commonwealth Government either for appropriate compensation or to gain a commitment for completion of the capital works projects previously agreed as compensation for the land swap.

Government Response

Agreed

The Commonwealth and the Territory reached agreement in August 2007 that, in exchange for the Territory agreeing to the transfer of certain roads and land to the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth would undertake roadworks to the value of \$73.1 million.

The roads transferred included Commonwealth Avenue, Parkes Way east of Commonwealth Avenue, Constitution Avenue, Kings Avenue, part of Coranderrk Street and a number of roads in Russell.

The specified works to be undertaken comprised grade separation of Parkes Way and Kings Avenue, valued at \$26.6 million, and the duplication of Constitution Avenue, with associated works, to a value of \$32.2 million, as well as budgetary provision for maintenance and depreciation of the roads, bringing the total value of the package to \$73.1 million.

The Commonwealth Government, as part of its savings initiatives, announced a cut of \$46.5 million from its Griffin Legacy commitment. This comprises work on Constitution Avenue as well as amounts for maintenance and depreciation.

This “savings” initiative is clearly different from other cuts that the Commonwealth is making as this was not a pre-election commitment nor a grant by the Commonwealth. It was an agreement under which the Commonwealth obtained a benefit in exchange for which the ACT was to receive a consideration.

As this was an agreement between Governments, and the Commonwealth’s decision has broken that agreement, the Territory will be pursuing compensation for the amount that the Commonwealth has withdrawn from the project.

The Chief Minister has written to the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP, urging the Commonwealth to reconsider its view that this comprises a legitimate area from which the Commonwealth can take savings.

The Government will continue to pursue the Commonwealth for either a commitment to complete the works identified, or for compensation under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 (Commonwealth)*

Recommendation 26

6.14 The Committee recommends that consideration be given to planning for the location of appropriate facilities in Weston Creek to underpin the sense of community in this region.

Government Response

Agreed

As part of the 'Establishment of Regional Community Facilities and Neighbourhood Halls' initiative, Weston Creek will have a Regional Community Facility in the former primary school, which will provide accommodation for non-government organisations. At the site there will also be a Neighbourhood Hall which the local community will be able to use. The 2008-09 Budget provides significant funds to refurbish the community facility, build the Neighbourhood Hall and engage a community development officer, all with the aim of ensuring a community focus in the Weston Creek region.

Recommendation 27

6.17 The Committee recommends that the intent of the accountability indicators provided in the budget papers be clearly annotated to identify government funding levels and other outputs achieved by the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 28

6.24 The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training provide details in their annual report of the progress being made towards improving the indicators of apprentice and employer satisfaction.

Government Response

Agreed

The Department will report its strategies to improve the indicators of apprentice and employer satisfaction in its 2008-09 Annual Report.

Recommendation 29

6.30 The Committee recommends that the Government publish clear guidelines to students and parents before the end of the 2009 school year on when Gungahlin College will take enrolments, the dates for commencement of teaching and the subjects to be offered in 2010.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 30

6.31 The Committee recommends that the Government provide information nights in 2008 and 2009 for interested families at locations in Gungahlin and through relevant colleges in Belconnen and North Canberra.

Government Response

Agreed In-Principle

Information nights only need to occur in the year prior to the college opening. This will be scheduled within the usual time period for all college open nights.

Recommendation 31

6.35 The Committee recommends that the Government table in the Legislative Assembly before the end of August a list of contractual commitments entered into for the refurbishment of ACT schools and the corresponding timeframes for project delivery, including the scope under each contract for project slippage, to demonstrate when it will deliver its School Infrastructure Refurbishment Program.

Government Response

Agreed

The Government will provide the information to the Assembly by the end of August 2008.

Recommendation 32

6.38 The Committee recommends that in determining the range of possible land uses for former school sites closed as a part of the Towards 2020 process, the Government consider a range of land uses consistent with the preferences of the affected local communities.

Government Response

Agreed

The 2007 consultation process on the former school sites considered the views of the affected local communities. Government decided in late April 2008 that consistent with community views, there would be nine neighbourhood halls for community use and three regional community facilities. For eight of the sites, the Government has engaged GHD to undertake a further round of consultation to obtain a clear understanding of community views on a range of land uses before making any further decisions.

Recommendation 33

7.7 The Committee recommends that ACT Health further investigate the causes of aggression towards staff in hospitals.

Government Response

Noted

As previously advised in the response to the question taken on notice, there is already research and other information available on the subject of aggression towards staff in hospitals available to ACT Health. However, ACT Health will continue to monitor the issue of aggression towards staff and take action to improve outcomes.

Recommendation 34

7.11 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure that the ACT is not disadvantaged by changes to the Commonwealth Medicare levy threshold.

Government Response

Noted

The ACT Government cannot ensure that the ACT will not be disadvantaged by changes to the Medicare levy threshold as this is a Commonwealth Government decision. The ACT Government will use its best endeavours to advocate on behalf of the ACT.

Recommendation 35

7.12 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Commonwealth Government to develop strategies that will eliminate the disincentives for people to use their private insurance in the public health system.

Government Response

Noted

The ACT Government is willing to work with the Commonwealth Government to develop strategies to eliminate disincentives for people to use their private health insurance, but this is a policy responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

Recommendation 36

7.15 The Committee recommends that the ACT government continue to work with the NSW Government to ensure more streamlined reconciliation processes and payments are established.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 37

7.29 The Committee recommends that the Government report back to the Legislative Assembly on the progress made with Commonwealth agencies towards the development of a chronic disease plan for the ACT.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 38

7.36 The Committee recommends that expenditure and performance indicators for breast cancer programs for both early detection and treatment be provided in the budget papers to allow them to be viewed together rather than in isolation.

Government Response

Agreed

The accountability indicators for breast screening will be consolidated under a single output in the next Budget.

Recommendation 39

7.39 The Committee recommends that, notwithstanding the inherent difficulties, ACT Health explore the possibility of instituting a consolidated waiting list for places at aged care residential facilities.

Government Response

Not Agreed

As residential care beds are funded by the Commonwealth, ACT Health does not have the capacity to mandate that Residential Aged Care Facilities participate in a consolidated waiting list. ACT Health will continue to strongly encourage participation by facilities. The Residential Aged Care Liaison Nurse continues to work with aged care facilities across the ACT, however, this position has no authority to mandate facilities to contribute information.

Recommendation 40

7.44 The Committee recommends that that the Government develop a men's health plan.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 41

8.18 The Committee recommends that the Government (a) undertake an audit of the occupation of Territory land where no legal arrangements are in place, (b) identify any agreements made with such persons, (c) formalise leases or other legal arrangements with such persons and (d) report to the Legislative Assembly on the steps taken on this matter at the earliest opportunity.

Government Response

Noted

The ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) currently manages crown leases subject to rental agreements, including the collection of rent, management of debtors and the undertaking of rent reviews. ACTPLA maintains contact with these lessees during the course of their lease term. Where land and dwellings are withdrawn for the purposes of estate development, the unleased land and any associated improvements are passed to Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) to manage. As appropriate, TAMS may then issue short term licences for the occupation and use of residences or facilities on that land.

Recommendation 42

8.27 The Committee recommends that the Government clarifies the rules of interpretation that will be applied by ACTPLA for the purposes of

distinguishing between new Development Applications and revised applications in cases where applications have been lodged prior to 31 March 2008 but amended subsequently.

Government Response

Noted

The legislation identifies the circumstances where an alteration may be made to a Development Application not yet decided under the *Land (Planning & Environment) Act 1991 (Land Act)*. Specifically, Section 226(7)(b) provides that the ACT Planning and Land Authority may, at the request of an applicant, make an alteration to a Development Application.

The Land Act does not provide any qualification around the nature of the alteration of a development application. In general terms, where the applicant proposes a reduction in the scale of a proposal, the Development Application is altered and if required under Section 226(8)(b) of the Land Act, notified in accordance with Section 229 of the Land Act. Given the relatively low number of active Land Act Development Applications remaining, legislative or further administrative changes are not warranted.

Recommendation 43

8.29 The Committee recommends that ACTPLA review its policies and procedures to ensure that Development Application approvals are subject to appropriate checks and balances.

Government Response

Noted

ACTPLA has recently completed a review of aspects of its development assessment procedures. The review has identified some areas of improvements. These changes, including the appointment of a Quality Assurance Coordinator, are expected to be in place in the near future.

Recommendation 44

8.31 The Committee recommends that the Government simplify paperwork requirements for development applications under the new Territory planning system and that, in future proposed planning system forms be subject to testing to ascertain compliance problems prior to their introduction.

Government Response

Noted

The suite of forms relating to ACTPLA's application processes have been reviewed and streamlined in consultation with Industry bodies. They will be introduced by the end of June 2008.

ACTPLA is progressively implementing an eDevelopment system which, later this year, will enable applicants to complete and lodge their applications on line. The new system will incorporate a 'smart wizard' process, whereby only questions relating to the specific type of application will appear along with a list of plans and other documents required for lodgement. The system will be one of the most sophisticated in Australia and save customers both time and money.

Recommendation 45

9.10 The Committee recommends that the relevant Minister provide details of car parking arrangements prior to Floriade commencing.

Government Response

Agreed

A strategy to address and manage car parking arrangements for Floriade 2008 is being developed and will be provided when finalised.

Recommendation 46

9.21 The Committee recommends that the Minister provide the report into the ACT Legislative Assembly library to the Speaker forthwith.

Government Response

Noted

The Minister for Territory and Municipal Services is corresponding with the Speaker.

Recommendation 47

9.27 The Committee recommends that any increase in patronage of buses is matched by the addition of new buses to the fleet.

Government Response

Noted

ACTION will examine the requirements for fleet growth to match increased patronage demand.

Recommendation 48

9.31 The Committee recommends that funding be made available to facilitate the removal of graffiti on private property adjacent to public property.

Government Response

Not Agreed

Removal of graffiti from private property is the responsibility of the property owner.

Recommendation 49

9.32 The Committee further recommends that graffiti adorning government owned municipal services buildings be removed immediately.

Government Response

Noted

Once TAMS is made aware of graffiti, the graffiti is removed within three working days, unless the graffiti is considered offensive, in which case a 24 hour removal is required.

Recommendation 50

9.38 The Committee recommends that the State of the Environment report be released by the Minister for the Environment by the end of July 2008.

Government Response

Agreed In-Principle

The Commissioner for the Environment has advised that her intention is to submit the State of the Environment Report to the Minister for the Environment Water and Climate Change by early July 2008.

Recommendation 51

10.10 The Committee recommends that a review of the current equipment list form part of the current review by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services into equipment loans and investigate the inclusion of additional equipment options.

Government Response

Noted

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) is establishing a new specialised equipment loan service for children and young people. The implementation plan for this initiative includes close liaison with ACT Health to ensure that this service dovetails with existing equipment loan and equipment subsidy schemes. The equipment to be available for loan will include items recommended by therapists at Therapy ACT and paediatric therapists at ACT Health.

ACT Health is undertaking a review of the equipment subsidy scheme (ACTES), and has consulted with DHCS on both the operation of the scheme and the items for which a subsidy could be provided.

Recommendation 52

10.18 The Committee recommends that the Minister advise the Assembly once any funding decision regarding an Autism/Asperger's peak body is made and the basis for the decision.

Government Response

Agreed

Recommendation 53

10.38 The Committee recommends that ACT Housing puts in place arrangements to ensure that tenants are not required to undertake maintenance activities which are not part of their responsibilities as tenants.

Government Response

Agreed

Tenants are not required to undertake maintenance that is not their responsibility. Information packages that communicate the relevant responsibilities of Housing ACT and their tenants is currently being revised and enhanced.

Tenants are able to make improvements to Housing ACT properties outside of normal maintenance after obtaining relevant approvals.

Recommendation 54

11.9 The Committee recommends that the Auditor-General's request for funding to implement the requirements of the new professional auditing standard be granted.

Government Response

Not Agreed

The Government expanded the Auditor General's compliance and performance audit capacity by \$0.5 million (indexed) in the 2006-07 Budget. This, combined with the Office's ability to charge agencies for financial audits, should provide the Office with the ability to enable compliance with the new auditing standards.