



**2018**

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

**ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL  
REPORT No.2/2017 – INQUIRY INTO BILLBOARDS**

**Presented by  
Mick Gentleman MLA  
Minister for Planning and Land Management**

## Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal (the Standing Committee) Report No.2/2017, *Inquiry into Billboards*, which was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 26 October 2017.

The Government appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into Billboards through a government submission in July 2017; and for officials from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and myself to attend as witnesses at the Standing Committee's hearings on 9 August 2017.

The Government is pleased to provide the following response to the Standing Committee's recommendations contained in the report. The Government's response is presented against each of the report's recommendations.

## Summary of key points

The key points of the Government's response are summarised below:

- The Government agrees in-principle to the recommendations, but will need to give consideration to the most appropriate regulatory vehicle for this to be expressed.
- The Government notes that the Standing Committee's recommendations were broader than the terms of reference for the inquiry into billboards.
- It is acknowledged that the regulatory settings for billboards and outdoor advertising signage are complex, as demonstrated by the many and varied views received by the Standing Committee during its inquiry. These complexities are increased by the signage polices of the National Capital Authority for the designated areas of the ACT and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development for national land, such as the Canberra Airport.
- A coordinated approach to implementation of the recommendations is required to reform the regulatory settings for outdoor advertising signage and billboards.

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## ACT Government Response to Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal Report No.2/2017 – Inquiry into Billboards

### Recommendation 1

**4.21** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government respond to the clear expression of community views throughout this inquiry with a review and potential update of the Signs General Code (ACT), *Public Unleased Land Act 2013*, *Planning and Development Act 2007* and associated regulations and Codes of Practice. This review is to be completed by the end of 2019.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** The ACT Government agrees in-principle to the recommendations of the Standing Committee’s report. However, the Government will need to give consideration to the most appropriate regulatory vehicle for these recommendations to be expressed.

The Government notes that the Standing Committee’s recommendations were broader than the terms of reference for the inquiry into billboards. The submissions received by the Standing Committee and the recommendations made covered all outdoor advertising signage, not solely billboards.

It is acknowledged that the regulatory settings for billboards and outdoor advertising signage are complex, as demonstrated by the many and varied views received by the Standing Committee during its inquiry.

A coordinated approach across-government to implementation of the recommendations is required to reform the regulatory settings for outdoor advertising signage and billboards.

Broadly, there is an opportunity for the Government to deliver community benefit, enliven the city and meet community expectations through modernising the regulatory settings for billboards and other outdoor advertising signage.

However, balancing how signs can enliven a city and deliver public messages, versus how they add to urban clutter, visual distraction and commercial advertising interests in public space, is a complex matter.

## **Recommendation 2**

**4.22** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, when undertaking the review outlined in Recommendation 1, consider including provisions that will apply to advertising on public transport vehicles and public transport stops.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

## **Recommendation 3**

**5.23** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government models the economic impact of different possible regulatory frameworks in the ACT for advertising signage if any substantive changes or additions to signage regulations are proposed following the review outlined in Recommendation 1.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONAL:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

## **Recommendation 4**

**5.52** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consults with relevant road and transport authorities when assessing applications for signs adjacent to and visible from arterial roads and highways, and include provisions that incorporate such a requirement when undertaking the review outlined in Recommendation 1.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

## **Recommendation 5**

**7.30** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, when undertaking the review outlined in Recommendation 1:

- modernise the content and language of all relevant rules and regulations to accommodate and incorporate digital technology;
- update the types, definitions, descriptions and criteria for signs that can be displayed in the ACT;
- incorporate technology neutral definitions of signage, including billboards;
- increase the accessibility, transparency and consistency of the relevant rules and regulations;
- respect the role of the ACT as the national capital; and
- include specific additional criteria, such as luminance, dwell time etc. for electronic/digital signs, particularly when road safety and proximity to residential areas is a factor.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 6**

**7.31 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider a precinct specific/zone specific approach to signage, including billboards.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle.

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 7**

**7.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in undertaking the review outlined in Recommendation 1, fully consult with the ACT community using a variety of formats and mediums.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 8**

**7.33 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should not grandfather existing signage under any new or amended legislation, regulations or Codes of Practice.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

**Recommendation 9**

**7.34** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, following the completion of the review outlined in Recommendation 1, ensure that the regulatory model for signage in the ACT undergoes regular monitoring and review.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

**Recommendation 10**

**8.19** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, following the completion of the review outlined in Recommendation 1, conduct a compliance survey of signage within the ACT in order to address concerns about 'sign creep'.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

**Recommendation 11**

**8.20** The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct and publish annual random compliance surveys of signage within the ACT.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**Rationale:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 12**

**8.21 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish clear and accessible reporting avenues for the public to lodge complaints about signage in the ACT, and consider the potential capacity of the 'Fix my Street' portal when doing so.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 13**

**8.22 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, following the completion of the review in Recommendation 1, establish information and awareness campaigns about how to make a complaint in relation to advertising content, advertising signage and advertising signage locations, and what kind of compliance action can be taken.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.

### **Recommendation 14**

**8.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensures advertisers seeking to place advertisements in the ACT have access to appropriate advice and regulatory guidance.**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:** Agreed in-principle

**RATIONALE:** As noted in above in recommendation 1.