



**Government Response to the Report of the
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
2019-20 on the
Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2019-2020
(No. 2)**

**Andrew Barr MLA
Treasurer
August 2020**

INTRODUCTION

On 13 February 2020, the ACT Legislative Assembly referred the *Appropriation Bill 2019-20 (No.2)* to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The committee released its Report on the *Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2019-2020 (No. 2)* on 27 March 2020.

The Government thanks the Committee for its report on the *Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2019-2020 (No. 2)* and welcomes the efforts of the Standing Committee in its assessment of the expenditure proposals contained in the second Appropriation Bill.

The Government has prepared a response to the seven recommendations of the Committee.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government should report to the Legislative Assembly on the increase in charges to the Government as a result of more frequent light rail services by the last day of sittings in August 2020.

Government Response

Agreed.

The 2019-20 mid-year Budget provided the following funding to deliver more frequent light rail services:

Financial Year	\$000
2019-20	330
2020-21	1,278
2021-22	1,312
2022-23	1,349
2023-24	1,385
Total	5,324

RECOMMENDATION 2

Some members of the Committee recommend that the Minister for Transport and City Services provide a full description of the single-select tender for the network ticketing system to the Assembly before it passes the *Appropriation Bill 2019-2020 (No. 2)*.

Government Response

Noted.

The Minister for Transport wrote to the Chair of the Committee, Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA, in relation to this matter on 18 March 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore introducing family and/or household discounts as part of a new public transport ticketing system.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

Alongside the introduction of a new public transport ticketing system, the Government will consider options for changes to the current fare structure, including discounts and concessions, including those for families.

It should be noted that there are a range of concessions already available to families on public transport.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that Fix My Street should be given priority in work done under the appropriation item 'Improving and expanding online services'.

Government Response

Agreed in principle.

TCCS and Access Canberra IT have established the Digital Partnership Group to improve collaboration across a range of projects including a review of Fix My Street. The review will identify a range of system solutions with the intent to improve the customer experience in line with the 'Improving and expanding online service' commitment.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that the bulky waste booking system provides pictorial examples of what constitutes two square metres of bulky waste.

Government Response

Agreed.

The booking system being implemented by the Territory includes a visual colour-coded 'widget' which adjusts the volume to be picked up by the contractor. The resident can therefore determine the approximate volume of items placed on the kerb. In addition, the supporting bulky waste education website will include various examples of two cubic metres using easily relatable images and pictorials.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government allow for some flexibility in the rollout of the Kerbside Bulky Waste Collection program in new suburbs if residents exceed the two square metres of waste allowable under the program.

Government Response

Agreed.

The booking system being implemented by the Territory will not prevent the resident from submitting a request should the selected items exceed two cubic metres (2m³) as the system provides only an estimate. However, the system will prompt the resident to confirm they are aware of the terms and conditions of the program, including the 2m³ limit. The Contractor will make an assessment at the time of collection as to whether the items booked for collection exceed the allowable limits. Some flexibility will be allowed during the rollout phase in each region, at the Contractor's discretion. Where the

Contractor determines that the item(s) exceed the allowable limits (e.g. is greater than 2m in length), the Contractor will use educational material to communicate with the resident about why the items were not collected, reiterate the service terms and conditions and suggest alternate ways in which the resident can dispose of those items.

RECOMMENDATION 7

A majority of members of the Committee recommend that the ACT Government advise the Legislative Assembly why an anticipated \$60 million operating deficit for Canberra Health Services for the 2019-20 financial year was only identified in late 2019, and to outline the causes of that deficit.

Government Response

Noted.

Sustainability of health system funding will be a key focus of the Government subsequent to addressing the immediate requirements in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the mid-year budget update, the ACT Government provided Canberra Health Services (CHS) with a \$60 million supplementary budget appropriation to help meet acute service demand this financial year.

This investment in CHS helped maintain Emergency Department capacity, allow for the continuation of additional intensive care units and general inpatient beds and maintain capacity for elective and emergency surgeries. The funding ensured that continued demand on the health system would not impact on elective surgery performance.