

**2023**

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

**TENTH ASSEMBLY**

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts - Report No 14  
Inquiry into Auditor General's Performance Report January 2022- June 2022**

**Government Response**

**Presented by  
Andrew Barr MLA  
Chief Minister  
June 2023**



## **Introduction**

At its meeting of 30 June 2022, the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee) resolved to inquire into the following Auditor-General performance audit reports:

- a) 1/2022 – Management of detainee mental health services in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC)
- b) 2/2022 – Fraud Prevention
- c) 3/2022 – Taxi Subsidy Scheme
- d) 4/2022 – Governance arrangements for the planning of services for Parkwood, Ginninderry

The Committee held a public hearing on 8 December 2022 and circulated their report out of session on 2 March 2023.

Across the four performance audit reports being inquired into, 12 recommendations were made to the Government. Responses to these recommendations are provided below.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts – Report 14 – Auditor General’s Performance Report January 2022- June 2022 – Government Response

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government meet the mental health needs of all detainees.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b> This recommendation will be met by implementation of the 19 recommendations as outlined in the government response to the <a href="#">Auditor-General’s Report No 1/2022</a> which was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 2 August 2022. The report outlined a total of 19 recommendations with 10 agreed to, 8 agreed in principle and 1 recommendation noted. A full copy of the government response can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct a feasibility study on expanding the Hume Medical Centre.</p>	<p><b>Noted</b> Examination of the need to expand the Hume Health Centre, or other ways to deliver improved health services, will be undertaken as part of broader infrastructure planning for the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) precinct. A range of physical works to refurbish and expand the capacity of the Hume Health Centre was completed in 2022.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide structured days for detainees that cater to their mental health and wellbeing; such structured days should include access to improved alcohol and other drug rehabilitation programs and education programs, designed to assist detainees' mental health and wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Noted</b> A structured day that supports mental health and wellbeing includes activities and recreation time. ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) provides alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, education programs and recreation activities. These are reviewed on a regular basis to determine effectiveness and updated as needed. ACTCS and the Canberra Health Services’ Forensic Mental Health Service are in the process of implementing programs and therapeutic support reforms that will positively impact practices at the AMC. ACTCS has increased education and activities across the Centre. Activities officers now offer programs for 10 hours a day, seven days a week. A new Programs and Services Review Committee has been established to ensure programs and services are meeting the needs of detainees and can be supported by the AMC. This will improve the coordination of programs and services across the AMC.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government agree to all of the recommendations of the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 1/2022</a>.</p>	<p><b>Noted</b> The government response to the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 1/2022</a> was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 2 August 2022. The report outlined a total of 19 recommendations with 10 agreed to, 8 agreed in principle and 1 recommendation noted. A full copy of the government response can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue with its planned update of the conflict-of-interest policy.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b> The ACT Government agrees with the Auditor-General's recommendation. The Conflict-of-Interest Policy was updated in June 2021 by CMTEEDD, and is next due for review in June 2023. The current policy is available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt the recommendations of the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 2/2022</a>.</p>	<p><b>Noted</b> As per the legislation, the government response to the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 2/2022</a> was provided to the Speaker for presentation out of session on 3 July 2022, and tabled in the legislative assembly on the first available sitting day being 2 August 2022.</p> <p>The report outlined a total of 6 recommendations with 4 agreed to and 2 agreed in principle. A full copy of the response can be found <a href="#">here</a>. The ACT Government is committed to strengthening fraud prevention measures and fostering fraud awareness across the ACT Public Sector.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government revise the caps in the taxi subsidy scheme in line with the results of the disability strategy consultation.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in-principle</b> In line with the Government's response to the Auditor General's report, any future change to the Scheme will take the Disability Strategy consultation into consideration. These decisions would be subject to future Budget decisions.</p>

**RECOMMENDATION**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government address geo-spatial disadvantage of users in the taxi subsidy scheme.

**Agreed in-principle**

The Government considers the scheme should be effective regardless of where users live. For simplicity of implementation, the scheme provides the same level of concession across all residential locations in the ACT based on the travel needs of all users. In general, we consider the scheme is successful in this regard. However, the Government is aware, through the ACT Disability Strategy consultation, that there are difficulties for some users accessing specific medical experts when they live in relatively distant parts of Canberra.

As outlined in the Government’s response to the Auditor General’s report, future policy changes will take into account this feedback from the Disability Strategy consultation regarding the expenses of members who live a significant distance from essential services. This could be partially addressed through the subsidy cap (see response to Recommendation 7).

The Taxi Subsidy Scheme is an important component of creating and maintaining an accessible community. Like any scheme, it will have limits. The needs of scheme users should be analysed in the context of the full range of support the Government provides in creating an accessible community.

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<p><b>Recommendation 9</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct more community consultation when revising the cap in the taxi subsidy scheme, including feedback from people who do not use the scheme due to the cap being too low.</p>	<p><b>Agreed</b> The Government receives submissions on its concessions from the public and advocacy groups in each Budget consultation process. The Government has recently run the ACT Disability Strategy consultation. Around 1,000 people have provided feedback on the Disability Strategy and 36 written submissions from individuals and organizations have been received. This included users and non-users of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme.</p> <p>Eligible people who do not use the scheme at all, due to the subsidy cap settings, would only take trips long enough for the subsidy cap to limit the subsidy paid. These potential users are likely the same as discussed in the response to Recommendation 8.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt the recommendations of the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 3/2022</a>.</p>	<p><b>Noted</b> As per the legislation, the government response to the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 3/2022</a> was tabled in the Assembly on 13 October 2022. The ACT Government either agreed or agreed in-principle to all the recommendations in the Report. The Government has already commenced work to improve the scheme's application process. An editable form is now available online.</p> <p>The ACT Revenue Office is currently developing a fraud minimisation strategy with the provider, focussing on driver behaviour, using the expertise of the provider from across multiple jurisdictions.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b> The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to progress negotiations with NSW for the transfer of Parkwood.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b> Work to progress negotiations with NSW to move the ACT/NSW border and transfer Parkwood to the ACT is a prerequisite to making significant progress on service planning. In August 2022, the NSW Premier agreed for officials to progress discussions with the ACT on options to move the ACT/NSW border on a no commitment basis and alongside exploration of other service delivery options. CMTEDD is now working with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet on this issue.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b>  The Committee recommends that the ACT Government adopt the recommendations of the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 4/2022</a>.</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b>  As per the legislation, the government response to the <a href="#">Auditor-General's Report No 4/2022</a> was tabled in the Assembly on 20 October 2022. The ACT Government agreed to Recommendation One of the Auditor-General's Report No 4/2022 but elected to note Recommendation Two. This is because it went to a proposed item of work for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, rather than the supporting governance framework. Further, it was unclear how this recommendation related to an assessment of the effectiveness of the Territory's governance arrangements in relation to the delivery of services in Parkwood.</p>