



ACT GOVERNMENT

RESPONSE TO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SOCIAL
EQUITY**

***"REPORT NUMBER 1 - PRIORITIES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE
2002-2003 ACT BUDGET"***

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

"REPORT NUMBER 1 -INQUIRY INTO 2002-2003 BUDGET"

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

"REPORT NUMBER 1 - BUDGET CONSULTATION 2002-2003"

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS

***"REPORT NUMBER 1 - PRIORITY ISSUES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IN
LEGAL AFFAIRS WITHIN THE 2002-2003 BUDGET"***

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

***"REPORT NUMBER 2 - SERVICE DELIVERY - 2002-03 BUDGET
CONSULTATION PROCESS"***

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

***"REPORT NUMBER 1 - SERVICE DELIVERY 2002-2003 BUDGET
CONSULTATION PROCESS"***

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**AUTHORISED BY
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Introduction

On 13 December 2001, Mr Ted Quinlan MLA, the Treasurer, invited all issue-related Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly to participate in the process of identifying service delivery and service prioritisation outcomes for the 2002-2003 ACT Budget, these committees included:

- Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity
- Standing Committee on Education
- Standing Committee on Health
- Standing Committee on Legal Affairs
- Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
- Standing Committee on Public Accounts

The Treasurer emphasised that it is the role of government to make decisions on the final content of the Budget, however, he recognised that Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly may wish to contribute to such a process. This invitation was formalised through correspondence to the Standing Committees, on 20 December 2001. All of the Standing Committees accepted the Treasurer's invitation and each conducted a formal Inquiry in aspects of the budget development process during the first three months of 2002.

During the course of their inquiries, the Standing Committees received eighty-eight submissions from community groups and individuals. During the conduct of public hearings before the various Standing Committees, there were forty-one appearances by individuals and groups. The reports of all the Standing Committee inquiries into priorities for the 2002-03 ACT Budget were tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 9 April 2002.

Of the six committees, only the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity made substantive content-related recommendations, whilst the other committees made recommendations regarding the process and endorsed the issues raised in community submissions, for government consideration. The Standing Committees on Health and Public Accounts recommended or concluded that the Government analyse aspects of community and unmet need. The Standing Committee on Education recommended the Government investigate perceptions regarding education funding. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts chose to make no recommendations at all, instead making two conclusions.

During the same period, the ACT Government conducted its own consultation process, which was initiated by a letter issued by the Treasurer, Mr Ted Quinlan MLA, inviting community and business groups to input into the development of priorities for the 2002-03 ACT Budget. Thirty-three submissions were received by the ACT Government from a range of community, business, sports, union and environmental groups, who made over \$53m in additional funding requests.

Some of the groups addressed their comments directly to the Government, while others provided a copy of the submission they had previously provided to the Inquiries being conducted by the Standing Committees of the Assembly. Subsequent to the release of the Budget Consultation Paper, one further submission was received, directly addressing the issues contained therein.

Overview

The six Standing Committees made a total of eleven recommendations and two conclusions in the reports of their Inquiries.

The reports of four Standing Committee inquiries into the budget included a recommendation which asked the government to consider the issues raised by community organisations through the committees when developing the 2002-03 ACT Budget. The Government has undertaken this task, across all of the Standing Committee reports and in relation to those submissions received through its own consultation process.

As part of the budget development process, all ACT Government departments have been involved in analysing and providing advice on the submissions received from the community. This work included a consideration of both funding and policy matters. An examination of the themes evident in all the community submissions is included in Budget Paper No.3, along with the Government's response to those themes.

The Government is also aware that a number of the Standing Committees expressed some level of concern regarding the timing of the provision of the 2002-03 Budget Consultation Paper. While the government does not believe that it was essential for the Standing Committees to have the Paper in order to conduct their Inquiries, it does recognise that it may have impacted on the work of some committees. The Paper was delayed as the Government believed it was critical for it to contain updated economic and government financial data. As such, the Department of Treasury was reliant on other timelines, for example the Commission of Audit.

The Government intends to refine the budget consultation process in time for the 2003-04 ACT Budget, with a view to ensuring that information is available at an earlier stage in the process.

The Government echoes the sentiments of thanks expressed by the Standing Committees to those community groups who participated in the budget consultation process.

In particular, the Government would like to acknowledge those community peak bodies who invested substantial effort in developing comprehensive submissions which addressed a broad range of issues impacting on the Canberra community. The Government is particularly appreciative of the contributions of the few community groups who balanced their requests for additional funding with suggestions regarding areas for revenue growth.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts announced its intention to participate in the budget development process, through a statement by its Chair in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 21 February 2002. The Committee called for public submissions and conducted public hearings. Four submissions were received and four organisations appeared before the Committee during its public hearings.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts chose not to make any formal recommendations in the Report of its Inquiry, and as such, this Government Response addresses the Conclusions outlined on page seven of the Committee's Report.

Committee Conclusion 1

The Committee is grateful to all those who took the time to make submissions, and to those who appeared to give evidence to the Committee.

Government Response

Noted. The ACT Government agrees that it is important for the community to be engaged in government processes, and supports the Committee's expression of appreciation to those organisations which made submissions and participated in public hearings.

Committee Conclusion 2

The Committee reiterates that it regards this inquiry as limited in that the timeframe did not allow full investigations of areas of unmet need. The Government therefore must undertake its own analysis.

Government Response

Noted. The previous ACT Government committed, prior to the last election, to the development of data and research which would better support the planning of service provision. This commitment was made in response to a lack of accessible and reliable information on which to base future service delivery decisions. This Government has also committed to the development of a Social Plan, aspects of which will be supported by analysis of unmet need.

This analysis will address a range of issues such as:

- co-ordination and referral
- location
- physical access to services

- transport options to services
- outreach activities
- costs of accessing services
- gaps in services

Government agencies have already undertaken significant assessment and analysis of service planning and provision. However, to ensure that this work is integrated across Government, and the relevant gaps in service planning are identified, some additional work will be undertaken.

The non-Government sector will also be able to contribute valuable data on these issues, through a range of consultative processes.

Conclusion

The ACT Government very much appreciates the effort of those community, sports, union, arts, environmental and business groups which supplied the eighty-eight submissions received by the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly during the course of their Inquiries into aspects of the 2002-03 ACT Budget. The submissions contained a wide variety of well researched, innovative and progressive proposals, which contributed to making the Government's decisions on the budget a positive, but even more complex, task.

The Government is also very thankful for the effort put in by the Standing Committees, during the process of calling for submissions, conducting public hearings and producing the Reports of their Inquiries.

The Government is particularly appreciative of the Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity, which made substantive content related recommendations. The Government is somewhat disappointed by the degree of analysis provided by the other Standing Committees, in that there did not appear to be any input from the Committees in relation to the relative priority of the proposals submitted to them.

After having the Treasurer's invitation to participate in this process accepted by the Standing Committees, the Government anticipated that the Committees would 'value add' to the process. The Government was particularly keen to see an overlay of the invaluable community understanding and knowledge which Members possess on the community submissions received.

The 2002-03 ACT Budget tabled on 25 June 2002, is a proud achievement for the Labor Government. This Budget implements our election commitments to rebuild services, integrate sustainability, invest in health, planning, education, economic growth, and promote community engagement and safety.