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

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration
Report No 6 - Inquiry into the CIT CEO recruitment process**

Government Response

**Presented by
Minister Pettersson
Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations
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Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration (the Committee) Inquiry into the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) recruitment process.

CIT is the cornerstone of vocational education and training (VET) in the ACT. Established in 1928, CIT is both the largest and only public VET provider in the ACT. Each year, CIT teaches thousands of Canberrans and residents of the wider ACT region the skills they need to get ahead in their career and contribute to the ACT economy and community. CIT has made significant contributions to the social, economic and cultural development of the ACT.

Maintaining trust and confidence in the ACT's public VET provider is critical. The ACT Government is committed to ensuring CIT is well governed, able to support staff and students, delivers high-quality outcomes to support ACT workforce needs, and positioning CIT to harness future opportunities as we move toward a more harmonised and integrated tertiary education sector.

Canberra Institute of Technology

CIT is a Territory authority with a governing board established under the *Canberra Institute of Technology Act 1987* (CIT Act). As a Territory authority, it is subject to provisions under the *Financial Management Act 1996* (FMA).

Under the CIT Act and the FMA:

- The CIT Board is the key decision-maker for CIT. It is responsible for the efficient and effective financial management of CIT, sets the strategic direction, and provides oversight of operational and financial matters.
- The CIT Board is responsible for recruiting the CIT CEO, and following consultation with the Minister, appointing the CEO.
- The Minister can give a direction to CIT; however, it must be broad and relevant to the functions specified in the CIT Act. The Minister cannot direct CIT to take a specific action.

On 4 May 2026, the ACT Government announced a review of governance arrangements at CIT (the Review). The Review will examine legislative and policy considerations and arrangements at CIT, other ACT Government entities, and equivalent institutes across the country to identify governance options to ensure CIT can best deliver on the needs of ACT learners and the community. Importantly, the Review will have regard to the scope and outcomes of the Committee's Inquiry Report, however, it will not re-examine the findings.

Committee Inquiry

On 24 March 2026 the ACT Legislative Assembly referred the Committee to inquire into and report on the CIT CEO recruitment process. The terms of reference of the Committee Inquiry in the CIT CEO recruitment process included:

- the effectiveness of due diligence processes of the Board of CIT in the recruitment of Dr Margot McNeill,
- whether Dr McNeill breached the FMA in failing to disclose she was under investigation for 'serious misconduct' at the time she applied for the role,
- whether the Board breached its duties under the FMA in relation to the recruitment of Dr McNeill, and

- whether the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations discharged his obligation in his duty of oversight of the Board.

The Committee's report was released on 4 May 2026. It made seven recommendations aimed at strengthening governance, transparency, and accountability.

Independent Review

In December 2025, the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations requested an independent review of the conduct of the Board and Dr McNeill during the recruitment process (the Independent Review). In February 2026, the ACT Government commissioned Carmel McGregor Consulting Pty Ltd to undertake this review.

The Independent Review established the timeline and facts of the recruitment process and assessed probity and due diligence. The Independent Review found:

- the due diligence undertaken by the CIT Board and the Selection Panel was appropriate and thorough to manage probity risks associated with the recruitment,
- the referee checks and discussions with the former employer and experts were thorough,
- policy settings could be strengthened by ensuring disclosure documents for executive recruitment are appropriately tailored, and
- consideration could be given to a staged or conditional approach to declaration requirements to balance probity and fairness.

The Independent Review concluded during the Committee Inquiry and its findings were provided to the Committee.

ACT Government Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the CIT Board take all possible steps to obtain and consider the findings of misconduct against Dr McNeill by TAFE NSW with a view to consider whether Dr McNeill remains suitable for the role of CEO.

Agreed in principle, noting this is a matter for the CIT Board.

As a statutory authority with a governing board, the CIT Board is responsible for managing the appointment and ongoing employment of the CIT CEO.

The CIT Board advises it has taken appropriate steps to obtain and consider the findings by TAFE NSW and will develop a formal policy to support the assessment of fit and proper persons.

As noted by the Committee in the Inquiry Report, the confidentiality requirements relating to the investigation against Dr McNeill restricted the provision of information to CIT about the existence of the allegations and the misconduct investigation.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that recruitment for ACT Public Service and other Government entities include questions around potential breaches of codes of conduct, including roles conducted through external recruitment agencies.

Existing Government Policy.

The ACT Government notes this is existing policy for ACT Public Service (ACTPS) recruitment. In relation to Ministerial appointments, the [*Governance Principles – Appointments, Board and Committees*](#) constitutes the ACT Government’s preferred approach.

The Governance Principles were most recently reviewed and updated in October 2025. Notably, this included the addition of a broader disclosure requirement in the Declaration of Private Interests form, which Ministerial and Executive appointment nominees must complete prior to their appointment. ACT executives subject to the *Public Sector Management Standards 2016* must complete a comparable Disclosure of Private Interests prior to their commencement.

Across the ACTPS, a declaration-based framework is in place requiring applicants to attest to the accuracy and completeness of their information and respond to questions relating to integrity and misconduct.

This is supported by multiple checkpoints across the recruitment process, including:

- integrity and misconduct-related questions within the application process, allowing applicants to provide context and explanations,
- Declaration of Private Interests requirements for executives prior to engagement and for executive and ministerial appointees prior to appointment, and
- self-disclosure obligations within pre-employment documentation.

The CIT has advised it uses ACTPS processes to recruit staff, including the CEO and CIT executives, and will align future recruitments with the latest guidance subject to legislative requirements, including processes involving external recruitment agencies.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the CIT Board adopt a formal protocol requiring Chair led, independent verification of referees, including direct engagement with the relevant employing authority where practicable.

Agreed in principle, noting this is a matter for the CIT Board.

The CIT has advised it follows ACTPS processes to recruit staff, including the CEO and CIT executives. The ACT Government Recruitment Policy and Guidelines strongly encourage the use of referee checks as a key mechanism for substantiating the claims made by applicants and supporting merit-based decision-making.

The CIT Board has advised it will develop additional protocols for ensuring that the CEO is a fit and proper person. This will include Chair led, independent verification of referees for the CIT CEO role.

The CIT Board notes this is a formalisation of an existing process which was followed during the recruitment of the current CIT CEO.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government pursue improved inter-jurisdictional communication to allow for better information sharing.

Agreed in principle.

The ACT Government recognises transparent information sharing enhances decision-making processes and leads to better outcomes. Commonwealth, state and territory governments come together on matters of shared interest via Ministerial Councils, most notably National Cabinet. The ACT Government actively participates in Ministerial Councils and works collaboratively to pursue

shared goals and outcomes that are in the public interest. This includes strengthening communication where it is appropriate to do so.

In relation to recruitment processes, the ACT Government notes there are legislative and policy complexities regarding privacy and confidentiality. Any expansion of information sharing arrangements for this purpose would require each jurisdiction to carefully consider legislative constraints, procedural fairness, and appropriate safeguards to mitigate legal and reputational risks.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the CIT Board strengthen their recruitment processes to require a formal, documented probity risk assessment for senior executive appointments including:

- unresolved or ongoing employment investigations in other jurisdictions
- any material matters that could reasonably impact public confidence in the appointment.

Agreed in principle, noting this is a matter for the CIT Board.

As a Territory authority with a governing board, the CIT Board is responsible for managing the process to recruit the CIT CEO. The CIT CEO is responsible for all other CIT senior executive appointments.

As above, the CIT has advised it will develop additional protocols to support the assessment of whether proposed appointees are fit and proper persons.

The CIT Board notes the Independent Review of the CIT CEO recruitment process found no evidence of procedural deficiencies or probity issues in the actions of the CIT Board or the Selection Panel.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the governance arrangements of boards as set out by the *Financial Management Act 1996*, including whether formal information sharing obligations between boards and the responsible ministers for events which raise material or reputational risk is appropriate.

Agreed.

The ACT Government has committed to a review of governance arrangements at CIT which will examine legislative and policy considerations relevant to CIT governance – including the FMA.

The primary purpose of the FMA is to provide for the financial management of the ACT Government. Relevant to boards of statutory authorities, it imposes obligations on the Chair of a governing board to ensure the Minister is kept informed about the operations of an authority. Additionally, the Minister must be informed of any significant event, as defined by the FMA, as soon as practicable. How that occurs and is monitored is a matter for the Minister and the Board, through its Chair, to settle.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Minister hold the CIT Board accountable for not fulfilling their duties appropriately.

Existing Government Policy.

Ministerial accountability mechanisms are prescribed in the CIT Act and the FMA. While accountability mechanisms under legislation will form part of the review into the governance arrangements at the CIT, the responsible Minister has exercised all reasonable and appropriate steps within current statutory powers to ensure that community confidence in the leadership of CIT is maintained.

Section 7 of the CIT Act allows the Minister to give directions to CIT in relation to the exercise of its functions; however, these powers are limited and do not extend to directing the Board in relation to individual employment matters or interfering with the Board's independent governance responsibilities.

The ACT Government notes the Committee's concerns about the effectiveness of the due diligence undertaken by the CIT Board and the Selection Panel. The independent review of the recruitment process for the CIT CEO found that the process undertaken constituted an appropriate and thorough approach to managing probity risks associated with a senior executive appointment.

As above, the CIT has advised it will develop additional protocols to support the assessment of proposed appointees at CIT.

The ACT Government notes that CIT Board members are statutory office holders, meaning they are captured within the meaning of a 'public sector member' in section 150 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*.

Public Sector Members are required to comply with the ACT Public sector standards and are bound by the *Public Sector Management (ACT Public Sector) Code of Conduct 2022*.