



**Government Response
to the Report of the
Select Committee on Estimates 2009-2010
on the inquiry into the
Appropriation Bill 2009-2010**

June 2009
Katy Gallagher MLA
Treasurer

INTRODUCTION

The Select Committee on Estimates presented its Report on the Appropriation Bill 2009-2010 on Tuesday, 16 June 2009.

The Government thanks the Committee for its Report on the 2009-2010 Appropriation Bill. The Committee has provided a report with 130 recommendations on wide range of issues.

In its response¹, the Government has:

- agreed to 37 Recommendations;
- agreed in principle to 6 Recommendations;
- agreed in part to 9 Recommendations;
- noted 50 Recommendations; and
- not agreed to 30 Recommendations.

In view of the large number of recommendations and responses, the Government considers it beneficial to highlight some key issues emerging from the Committee's Report.

The Government notes that, other than referring to the Treasurer's advice on the forecasts for the national economy and Territory's revenues, the Committee's Report is disappointing in that it barely acknowledges the global financial crisis and its impacts on the ACT economy and Budget; and provides no input on the Budget as whole, the Budget Plan, its objectives, targets, approach and the processes for its implementation. Given the uniqueness of the global financial crisis, the Government would have thought the Committee would have at least acknowledged the arduousness of constructing the 2009-10 Budget but, alas, there is no such acknowledgement.

The Government notes and appreciates the insightful analysis prepared by the independent expert adviser, Mr Tony Harris. Mr Harris has analysed the Territory's finances quite succinctly but in considerable depth. He has also provided views on Government's strategy, and its fiscal performance.

Mr Harris not only acknowledged the existence and impacts of the global financial crisis on the ACT but also helpfully compared the responses of the ACT Government to it with assessments arising from various reputable international agencies. None of this appears in the Committee's Report. Apart from a single footnote, none of Mr Harris's observations or commentaries appears in the Committee's Report.

While the Government recognises the Committee's interest, through a number of useful recommendations in the Report, in improvements to performance reporting including reporting on environment and sustainability, it has to be said that the ACT Government

¹ Note some recommendations contain two responses, total responses add to 132 as a result.

has already committed to a span of initiatives, as part of the 2008-09 Budget, to improve the performance and accountability framework.

Ensuring that performance measures remain current and meaningful to the emerging needs of all the stakeholders is an ongoing challenge for all Governments.

Under its Citizen Centred Governance initiative, the ACT Government has embarked on a range of initiatives that include:

- listening to the community and exploring improved communication and engagement mechanisms
- positioning for improved accountability and reporting
- developing frameworks for improved decision-making and coordination.

We are also updating our sustainability policy and developing policy frameworks to incorporate triple bottom line analysis across government decision making and accountability.

The Citizen Centred Governance paper released last year outlined the directions of this Government to meet the needs and expectations of the ACT community. This paper included a range of recommendations to build a more citizen-centric approach to our governance models and practices and to reinforce the role of citizens in shaping the decisions and services that affect them.

These recommendations covered a range of issues, including:

- Government's performance and accountability frameworks;
- opportunities to enhance community engagement;
- discussions on public satisfaction with government services;
- mechanisms to improve the community's awareness of planning proposals and then opportunities for comment;
- opportunities for further dissemination of government generated information; and
- opportunities for capacity building in the ACT Public Service.

These themes feature in a number of recommendations of the Estimates Committee Report. However, the Government is already progressing these issues on multiple fronts through an integrated policy agenda. We are making progress across some of our basic governance and institutional building blocks. Given the way these building blocks inter-relate, it will take time to move forward in a sensible and coherent way but we are making strong progress. We are ahead of the game.

The Government had sought input from the Legislative Assembly Members on the changes to the framework incorporated through the 2005-06 Budget Papers. The Government renews its invitation to Members of the Legislative Assembly to join it in this endeavour.

The Government notes that in the case of a number of recommendations in the Committee's Report, the Committee would clearly have benefitted from making itself more familiar with work and effort which is already on foot.

The Government considers that some of the Committee's recommendations could be met by way of less expensive means and mechanisms and in some cases could not be implemented due to legal impediments.

As an example, Recommendation 9 asks for electronic publishing of the detailed financial information for programs in output classes. It is important to note that program budgeting has generally been discontinued and replaced with the financial management reforms of the mid to late 1990s. Further discussions through the estimates hearings would have assisted the Committee in formulating its information needs.

The Government is mindful that the Assembly's Select and Standing Committees, and indeed all the Members of the Assembly would be interested in the underlying information, particularly of a conceptual or framework nature. Such information could be sought through discussion during the estimates process, or simply by asking the relevant Minister through targetted formal questions on notice, or informally.

As a further example, Recommendation 16 proposes amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, in replication of similar changes in NSW. However, some of the proposed protections and entitlements already exist in the current legislation. Preliminary advice also suggests that the ACT Legislative Assembly may not have the legislative power to make some amendments.

The Government is concerned that in a number of instances, the Committee has provided no rationale, background information or justification in making a recommendation. Recommendations 16 and 17 are some examples in this regard.

In other instances, the Committee does not appear to have taken into account all the relevant information in formulating its position, or did not seek such information. A pertinent example in this regard is Recommendation 14 where, in recommending additional resources for the Auditor General's Office, the Committee failed to take into account the highest per capita expenditure in the ACT on this function. The Committee also does not appear to recognise that recurrent funding for the Auditor General's Office has increased by an average annual growth rate of 17 per cent per annum over the last five years.

Similarly, Recommendation 64 fails to recognise the considerable investment in increasing access to elective surgery in the ACT by the Government since its initial election in 2001, and the impact of that investment on the elective surgery waiting list.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the Government recognises the breadth of the issues covered in the Committee's Report. The Government also appreciates the short timeframe within which the Committee and its secretariat has produced this Report.

A number of recommendations in the Report are matters for the Legislative assembly Secretariat, other Assembly Committees' or the future Select Committee on Estimates (as yet unconstituted). Accordingly, the Government is not in a position to provide a response to such recommendations.

Finally, the Government notes again with interest that a number of recommendations do not appear to have been informed by the analysis by the independent expert adviser engaged by the Committee.

The Government notes the Volume 3 of the Report (Dissenting Report), and agrees to its Recommendations.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

1.18 The Committee recommends that guidelines for the use of ACT Government facilities be clearly displayed on all ACT Government websites, that all requests for use of a facility be submitted in writing, and that any approval to use a facility be supported by written documentation outlining the conditions of use. Any approvals for use of facilities for political or commercial purposes should be published on Departmental websites as soon as possible.

Government Response

Noted.

Following the outcomes of the Select Committee on Campaign Advertising, the Government will develop and implement guidelines on advertising that will include the use of government websites, buildings and facilities.

The ACT Government has proposed in its submission to the Select Committee that an expert panel or individual with extensive government/legal and/or media experience be appointed to scrutinise Government advertising campaigns which exceed \$100,000 or that are sensitive in nature.

This procedure would ensure that ACT Government facilities are used in accordance with Government advertising guidelines and caretaker conventions are adhered to without the need for onerous and time consuming approval and web posting processes.

Recommendation 2

1.19 The Committee recommends that the Ministerial Code of Conduct be amended to ensure that Ministers do not use their office to arrange party political advertising and activity.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Ministers' offices are by definition political and therefore it is no more appropriate to suggest their offices not be involved in political activity than, say, suggesting the office of the Leader of the Opposition and his staff not undertake political activities. The key issue is that public money should not be used for party political activity.

The Ministerial Code of Conduct already provides that "Ministers are to ensure that publicly funded publicity that they arrange or approve is relevant to Government responsibilities and is not party political in tone".

Recommendation 3

1.25 The Committee recommends that the indicators in the ACT Budget papers reflect how progress will be measured in relation to the implementation of ACT Government strategies and plans.

Government Response

Noted.

The 2008-09 Budget allocated \$250,000 to the Chief Minister's Department to strengthen the Government's focus on accountability and performance.

A key outcome of this initiative will be the development and implementation of a more mature government performance and accountability framework for the ACT that will: strengthen the Government's capacity to deliver policy and service delivery outcomes; promote agencies' accountability and performance; and enhance across-government planning, strategy development and delivery.

Recommendation 4

1.26 The Committee recommends that strategic indicators contained in the ACT Budget papers for ACT Government agencies be meaningful and measurable.

Government Response

Noted.

The 2008-09 Budget allocated \$250,000 to the Chief Minister's Department to strengthen the Government's focus on accountability and performance.

A key outcome of this initiative will be the development and implementation of a more mature government performance and accountability framework for the ACT that will: strengthen the Government's capacity to deliver policy and service delivery outcomes; promote agencies' accountability and performance; and enhance across-government planning, strategy development and delivery.

Recommendation 5

1.27 The Committee recommends that a measure be introduced as a strategic indicator for each agency requiring that agency to report on its work towards achieving zero net carbon emissions.

Government Response

Noted.

The Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water strategic indicators will be reviewed as part of the Government's development of a comprehensive road map to move towards the goal of zero net emissions.

Recommendation 6

1.40 The Committee recommends that future ACT Legislative Assembly estimates committees consider whether the deadline for questions on notice should be extended to three working days after the close of the sitting day which included the relevant portfolio area.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 7

1.41 The Committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure review the process and timeframes for lodging, responding to and communicating questions taken on and lodged on notice during inquiries by select committees on estimates, and make recommendations to the Assembly by the end of 2009.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Committee should take into account the number of questions asked, the resources diverted from normal activity to respond, the cost of responding and any delays in providing the questions.

Recommendation 8

1.42 The Committee recommends that all questions taken on notice and all written questions on notice not answered by 12 June 2009 be forwarded to the Speaker for tabling in the Assembly by the last sitting day in June 2009.

Government Response

Agreed.

All outstanding Questions on Notice will be provided to the Speaker by 25 June 2009.

Recommendation 9

1.43 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government publish electronically as part of the next ACT Budget papers, a breakdown of the output classes into their programs, and the funding per program.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The ACT Government moved away from program budgeting in the financial management reforms in 1996. By way of clarification, program budgeting has generally been discontinued across all Australian jurisdictions in line with the move from input and cash based reporting. Instead, the budgeting and financial management frameworks adopted are on an accrual output/outcome basis.

The ACT Budget is presented on the basis of the delivery of outputs. The Government notes the Committee's recommendation may relate to provision of financial information for individual deliverables and activities that contribute to the delivery of a particular output or outcome.

Significant information is already included in budget papers providing descriptions and costings of outputs, as well as details of initiative funding each year in the budget papers. To this end, the Government remains committed to providing adequate information in the Budget Papers that meets the needs of all the stakeholders including the Legislative Assembly and the general community.

Inclusion of financial information for all the deliverables across all the outputs, however, comes at a cost. Financial information and measures included in the budget papers subsequently needs to be included in the annual financial statements under the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 1996*. Establishment and maintenance of accounting and financial systems to an auditable standard at activity level will involve considerable additional costs.

The inclusion of program budgeting/costing in addition to this would be onerous, and confusing for users of the budget papers.

The Government is mindful that the Members of the Legislative Assembly will be interested in the underlying detailed financial information pertaining to specific activities and functions. The Committee should note that besides the Estimates Committee process, Members could seek such information from the responsible Minister through other Assembly processes.

Recommendation 10

2.6 The Committee recommends that the electronic mail box size across the Legislative Assembly and Secretariat be unlimited.

Government Response

Noted.

This is a matter for the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

It should be noted that Recommendations 11 and 12 relate to Assembly resourcing decisions that are not pertinent to the 2009-10 Budget.

Recommendation 11

2.7 The Committee recommends that the file server space allocated to the Assembly be significantly increased.

Government Response

Noted.

This is a matter for the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

Recommendation 12

2.8 The Committee recommends that information and communications technology services for non-Executive members and their staff be equivalent to those provided for Executive members of the Legislative Assembly.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

This is a matter for the Legislative Assembly Secretariat. However, it is noted resources provided to Ministers reflect the substantial additional workload.

Recommendation 13

2.10 The Committee recommends that the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure review the staffing available to the Legislative Assembly's Committee Office.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 14

2.19 The Committee recommends that the Auditor-General's funding allocation be increased to allow for the target number of performance audits to be reached without running a deficit.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

A preliminary analysis of funding of Auditor General functions for Australian States and Territories suggests the ACT Auditor-General is comparatively well funded. The ACT Auditor General has the highest total revenue per capita (\$16.75 per person in the ACT – the lowest is NSW at \$4.88 per person) and a mid range (fourth highest out of eight) level of direct government appropriation per person.

Further, over the last five years, recurrent funding for the ACT Auditor General's Office has increased by an average annual growth rate of 17 per cent per annum. The Government expanded compliance and performance audit capacity of the Auditor General's Office by \$300,000 (indexed) in the 2004-05 Budget and a further \$500,000 (indexed) in the 2006-07 Budget. The Government had also provided funding increase in 2005-06 for accommodation cost to maintain the operating base funding for the Auditor General.

These funding increases, combined with existing revenue streams from financial audits, should allow the Office to comply with the new auditing standard and reach the targeted number of performance audits without running a deficit for the 2009-10 financial year.

The Government intends to seek external advice on a methodology to support the Auditor General identifying and prioritising activities for the performance audit program. Following consideration by the Government, this advice will be provided to the Public Accounts Committee for wider discussion.

Recommendation 15

3.10 The Committee recommends that if the Commonwealth Budget is delivered in May, the ACT Government consider delivering its Budget later, so as to enable the ACT Budget to take account of the final Commonwealth Budget figures.

Government Response

Noted.

The ACT has generally targeted presentation of a May Budget to provide certainty of appropriation to agencies for the full financial year, and allow for expenditure on new programs and projects to commence immediately.

To delay the ACT Budget to enable it to take full account of the effects of the Commonwealth Budget would conservatively require at least a further four weeks to incorporate properly any flow on impacts of the Commonwealth Budget. This, along with the need to provide adequate time for scrutiny of the budget through the estimates process, would delay the passage of the Appropriation Bill until well into the new financial year.

The Government will continue to review the date of its budget each year taking into account both local and national circumstances to determine the most appropriate timeframe for presentation.

Recommendation 16

3.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider further relief measures for tenants whose place of residence is involved in a mortgagee foreclosure and their tenancy is terminated. Such measures could include amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (ACT)* to provide for rental refunds, 30 days rent free accommodation to enable affected tenants to find alternative accommodation, and expedited return of rental bonds.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Government notes that in making this recommendation, the Committee has not provided or referred to information on the incidence of mortgagee foreclosures for investment properties which involve termination of tenancies.

Research undertaken by the Consumer Law Centre on the incidence of mortgagee foreclosure in the ACT suggests that it mainly relates to owner-occupier properties (although no specific break-up is available).

There is considerable value in an in-place and continuing tenancy for an investor, and it is likely that tenancies will continue in an 'investor to investor' transition under mortgagee foreclosure. While a tenancy will be discontinued under investor to owner-occupier' transition in mortgagee foreclosures, the incidence of such transition appears to be low. Indeed, advice from the counselling service indicates that it is the owner-occupiers facing mortgagee foreclosure who are seeking assistance.

Accordingly, the Government has committed to the development and implementation of a Mortgage Relief Fund to assist owner-occupiers at risk of mortgagee repossession.

In relation to the Committee's specific suggestions on amending the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, it is important to note that the Act already provides significant protection for tenants who may find themselves in this situation. A tenant is already entitled to a full rental refund in the unlikely case that the tenant has prepaid rental.

The ACT already has in place a simple statutory process for the return of bond money to tenants. Where the return of the bond is in dispute, the process will be heard through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for determination. It is currently unclear how the statutory provisions might be altered in a way that would not involve an injustice to the tenant.

Nevertheless, the Government will sympathetically consider the need for further measures to protect the rights of tenants following a foreclosure and is in discussion with the Tenants Advice Service about issues which arise in these cases. If systemic problems are identified in the course of this discussion about the rental bonds refund process, specific measures will be considered to address those issues. As section 23(1)(a) of the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988* provides that

the Assembly has no legislative power to acquire property without compensation, the Assembly could not lawfully provide for a 30 day rent free period following foreclosure.

It should also be noted that a number of avenues remain available to households who may end up in a terminated tenancy and limited options in the market to access support, for example, crisis accommodation and public and community housing.

In addition, there are a number of ACT Government services which can provide assistance to establish a new tenancy, such as the Private Rental Bond Loan scheme provided by Housing ACT, and the Financial and Material Aid program.

Recommendation 17

3.27 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide to the Assembly substantiation for its revenue predictions, detailed information regarding efficiency dividend application, and justification for how revenue and expenditure will be reconciled to return the Budget to surplus within the specified seven years.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Government has provided considerable information in the Budget Papers and the factors that have been taken into account in revenue forecasts, the efficiency dividend and the Budget Plan.

The Government notes that in making this recommendation, the Committee has referred to observations of stakeholder groups on revenue forecasts. In coming to this recommendation, the Government is disappointed the Committee has not referred to its own expert advisor's analysis on the integrity of estimates. For example, Mr Harris in his *Review of the ACT 2009-10 Budget for ACT Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Estimates 2009-10* recognises that (introduction):

Formulating budgets during these difficult economic times is a fraught exercise. For a start, forecasting - never an exact science - is more difficult when the direction of the economy is changing significantly. Trying to determine accurately the timing and extent of a turning point - in this instance from recession to recovery - makes the task harder. The atypical nature of this recession, in its depth and its causes, added to problems of forecasting revenues and expenditures. These uncertainties probably made the 2009-10 Budget significantly harder to frame than moat.

Further, Mr Harris concludes (page 2):

...there are no important biases which would adversely affect the integrity of those budgets. There is a natural conservatism in the estimates for revenue, but the differences between budget estimates and actuals are not so marked as to distort budgets.

Mr Harris recognised the context in which this Budget has been framed – a point the Treasurer made in presenting the Budget. This is an important recognition, for this determines the Budget strategy. In coming to his conclusion, Mr Harris the expert adviser, has highlighted the fiscal discipline of this Government.

The Committee also had the opportunity through the hearings to discuss and clarify its concerns, if any, but did not seek to do so.

Recommendation 18

3.29 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government immediately commence the development of a policy framework that will provide encouragement for the growth of the private sector in the ACT.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Government already has a policy framework. The Committee should note the Government released *Capital Development – Towards Our Second Century* on 3 September 2008.

Capital Development sets out a policy framework that encourages private sector growth in the ACT and which allows economic policies to be flexible and adaptable to future challenges and opportunities. It recognises the Government's role as an enabler of economic activity, creating an environment that attracts and retains skilled workers and investment, which allows both employees and business owners to drive economic growth and development in the Territory.

Recommendation 19

3.35 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government instigate a comprehensive approach to the incurring and management of debt in the ACT to facilitate the development of significant community infrastructure.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government has a good record of delivering significant community infrastructure. The Committee should note the Government investment as a share of the total economy has more than doubled from 0.5 per cent in 2002-03 to 1.3 per cent in 2007-08. This increase in investment, until now, due to the strength of the Territory's balance sheet and cash balances, has not required debt facilities.

The Government has applied the principles of responsible and prudent financial management in the development of this budget and in the delivery of community infrastructure across the forward estimates. In light of significant changes in financial

circumstances, the Government has highlighted the potential need to undertake debt later in the budget cycle.

The Government has well established cash and debt management policies and processes that are currently applied in relation to all financial activities, including the capital expenditure program, which we believe to be important in providing the Territory with stability and confidence in this period of economic uncertainty.

Recommendation 20

3.36 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government demonstrate appropriate responsibility and make the necessary fiscal policy decisions with respect to savings, revenue and associated matters.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government has published a Budget Plan that incorporates a fiscally, economically and socially responsible approach to returning the Territory's budget to surplus. The Plan is appropriate for the current circumstances. The Committee should note that a number of jurisdictions have adopted similar approaches.

The Government will make the necessary fiscal policy decisions with respect to savings, revenue and associated matters consistent with its Budget Plan objectives and targets.

In all financial decisions taken by the Government, the principals of responsible fiscal management, as required by Section 11 of the *Financial Management Act (1996)* are taken into account.

Recommendation 21

3.37 The Committee recommends that the economic forecasts that underpin the ACT 2009–10 Budget be reviewed, and that any revisions be published.

Government Response

Noted.

ACT economic forecasts will be updated in the Mid Year Review following a review of all assumptions underpinning potential changes.

Recommendation 22

3.55 The Committee recommends that the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission be asked to update its analysis of the cost of the major water security projects and to report to the Assembly.

Government Response

Noted.

The Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission currently has in place a process whereby the issue of claimed additional costs to be incurred by ACTEW in undertaking the designated major water security projects will be subject to a detailed public analysis and appropriate action taken if required. As part of this process, the Commission has had several meetings and discussions with ACTEW on this matter over the last eight months, and the Commission is currently awaiting formal costing from ACTEW to substantiate the claimed additional costs. This will be evidenced by updated tender quotes and other expert advice on the likely costs of engineering, construction and associated works.

The Commission will examine this evidence in the context of the significant allowance that has already been made for new capital expenditure in the current water and wastewater prices and price path, and if prima facie a case exists for a reopening of the price path, then the Commission will self reference and commence a public process of review of the current prices regime.

Recommendation 23

3.60 The Committee recommends that details of ACTEW expenditure, including the salaries of senior executives, be included in the corporation's annual report.

Government Response

Noted.

ACTEW does report expenditure including the salaries of senior executives and other public company reporting requirements in its annual financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Corporations Act 2001*. ACTEW's financial statements are audited and signed off each year by the ACT Auditor-General.

In relation to executive remuneration, ACTEW will not breach the requirements of the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* in relation to the disclosure of personal information and the Shareholders and the Government will not be asking ACTEW to do so.

Recommendation 24

4.9 The Committee recommends that section 11 (1) of the Financial Management Act 1996 (ACT) be amended to require that the proposed budget for the Territory for a financial year presented to the Assembly under section 10 (a) include a statement about how the Budget has taken into account the object of ecologically sustainable development, including greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Budget Paper 3 already incorporates a chapter on sustainability, *Chapter 7, A Sustainable Territory*.

Recommendation 25

4.10 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister's Department ensure that executive performance contracts include, if they do not do so already, performance indicators concerning environmental sustainability.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Executive contracts include provision for the development of a performance agreement against which individual executives are held accountable. Contracts and agreements usually cover a five year period and, forming part of the contract, changes to the agreement must be tabled in the Assembly. Accordingly, the agreement needs to be specific in respect of those responsibilities which are those of the executive alone and those matters which are wholly or partly beyond the scope of the individual. Performance in respect of environmental sustainability is more effectively and appropriately addressed through organisational outcomes than individual performance and will be dealt with in the context of the proposed triple bottom line framework. In this respect, it should be noted that through the Annual Report process agencies are already accountable for their performance against a range of sustainability measures.

Recommendation 26

4.17 The Committee recommends that the Coordinator General provides a quarterly report to the Assembly on progress of the Federal Nation Building stimulus package projects.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Government will provide quarterly reporting to the Assembly until the Taskforce is disbanded and has already started this process with the Chief Minister's Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 16 June 2009.

Recommendation 27

4.23 The Committee recommends that where community inclusion programs have ceased and have been evaluated, the evaluation should be considered and formally responded to by the relevant ACT Government department or agency.

Government Response

Noted.

The Community Inclusion Fund program ceases on 30 June 2009. Individual program deeds of grant include an evaluation and/or reporting requirement.

Recommendation 28

4.27 The Committee recommends that sufficient details be provided in the ACT Budget in relation to business and industry development programs to give a clear and unambiguous understanding of the funding for these programs.

Government Response

Agreed.

Given some Members of the Committee clearly misunderstood the Budget in relation to these programs, as demonstrated by the Canberra Liberals' media release entitled "Business Assistance Suffers with \$3m Slashed," which erroneously stated that funding had been reduced to these programs, the Government will seek to provide a clear explanation in future Budgets to avoid these unfortunate mistakes.

Recommendation 29

4.29 The Committee recommends that appropriate co-ordination take place when programs being developed and implemented by ACT Government departments and agencies have interests that cross administrative boundaries.

Government Response

Noted.

The 2008-09 ACT Budget allocated \$250,000 to the Chief Minister's Department to strengthen the Government's focus on accountability and performance.

A key outcome of this initiative will be the development and implementation of a more mature government performance and accountability framework for the ACT that will: strengthen the Government's capacity to deliver policy and service delivery outcomes; promote agencies' accountability and performance; and enhance across-government planning, strategy development and delivery. Mechanisms for reporting against programs that cross administrative boundaries will also be considered.

Recommendation 30

4.30 The Committee recommends that more meaningful indicators be developed for business development in the ACT.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Choosing a small number of indicators to measure 'business development' is problematic. The Government prefers the approach of monitoring a broad range of ABS and other data series that provide insights into aspects of private sector performance in the Territory. Through this composite approach a better picture of business development directions can be obtained, but it is not necessarily suitable for output indicators.

Recommendation 31

4.33 The Committee recommends that funding for the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens not be counted as a climate change initiative until there is a cost benefit analysis on climate change outcomes from the Arboretum, including the carbon emissions generated and offset.

Government Response

Noted.

The Arboretum will make a positive contribution to meeting the Government's environmental objectives. A carbon sequestration audit has been completed by the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University (ANU), and which will soon be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, estimates that the Arboretum will reach a maximum carbon stock of around 70,000 tonnes with 90 per cent of this amount sequestered within 200 years.

Additional research work, including on climate change, is likely to be undertaken in the future in partnership with organisations such as the ANU and the CSIRO.

In addition, the Arboretum is regarded as an initiative that contributes to Action 36 in the *Weathering the Change* Action Plan, in which the Government committed to plant one million trees.

Recommendation 32

4.40 The Committee recommends that the Minister for the Arts and Heritage, Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, reconsider the Government's stance on the future of the Nolan Gallery and the Nolan collection, and negotiate with the Commonwealth to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Nolan Gallery / Lanyon Feasibility Study.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Government does not consider that the approach recommended by the 2004 Nolan Gallery/Lanyon Feasibility Study is the best means of meeting its custodial responsibilities for the care and conservation of the Nolan Collection on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.

The Study's recommended approach is to retain the Collection at Lanyon, at an expanded Nolan Gallery, combined with a visitor/orientation centre. The Government considers that the recommended approach does not resolve issues of access, physical security and opportunities for interpretation of the Collection.

The Government believes that, in terms of the ACT's custodial responsibilities, these issues can be most appropriately addressed through the ongoing location and display of the Collection at the Canberra Museum and Gallery. It will continue to present this approach as its preferred option in discussions with the Commonwealth Government regarding future arrangements for the Collection.

Recommendation 33

4.47 The Committee recommends that artsACT review the policy regarding structures for arts organisations and assess whether less restrictive policies for minimising conflicts of interest in small community based organisational structures are more appropriate. The Minister for the Arts and Heritage should report to the Assembly on the findings of the review by the end of 2009.

Government Response

Agreed.

artsACT will review its policy regarding Key Arts Organisation best-practice board governance requirements by the end of 2009.

Recommendation 34

4.55 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, correct the record concerning his misrepresentation of the letter that the Committee wrote to the Deputy Chief Executive of Business and Projects, Mr Dawes, on 27 May 2009.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Chief Minister did not misrepresent the letter. A copy of the letter, written by the Committee Chair on behalf of the Committee, is attached **Appendix A**. It clearly repeats the offensive and defamatory implications first raised under privilege in Estimates by Liberal MLA Alastair Coe.

Recommendation 35

4.56 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister, Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, write again to the builders involved in the OwnPlace scheme – those with whom he had previously corresponded and misrepresented the Committee – and that the Chief Minister correct the record.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Chief Minister did not misrepresent the Committee in his letter dated 20 May to the OwnPlace builders. The letter clearly refers to defamatory allegations made by the Liberal Party through Liberal MLA Alistair Coe, to the effect that one or more OwnPlace builders were overcharging clients by up to \$60,000, an allegation Mr Coe refers to in Hansard as ‘extortionate’. The letter to the builders does not suggest that allegations were made by the Committee nor does it reference any defamatory allegations by the Committee to that point in time. A sample of the letter sent to builders is attached at **Appendix B**. Also attached are the responses received from each builder, along with letters from the Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association, and relevant extracts from Hansard relating to Mr Coe’s allegations.

Recommendation 36

4.62 The Committee recommends that the Executive refrain from ordering ACT Government agencies to place advertisements, or write letters attacking reporting because they feel personally aggrieved.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Executive has responsibility for all advertising undertaken by the ACT Government. Agencies are properly involved in all advertisements concerning the programs they administer.

The Executive is within its right to take action to seek to correct incorrect media reporting on government programs in whatever way it believes will be most effective. This includes through advertisements and letters to the editor, prepared with factual agency input.

The government's proposed advertising guidelines will direct future actions in this regard.

Recommendation 37

4.63 The Committee recommends that guidelines be developed and adhered to, that provide a more accountable process for the use and placement of ACT Government advertising, as is being considered by the Select Committee on Government Advertising.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Principle.

The government has suggested new guidelines for advertising in its submission to the Select Committee. It should be noted that the correct title of the committee is the Select Committee on Campaign Advertising.

Recommendation 38

4.69 The Committee recommends that the Land Development Agency maximise solar orientation consistent with topographical orientation and yield requirements.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 39

4.89 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister prepare and table a full briefing for the Assembly, in the next sitting, on the progress of the Land Rent scheme, a timeline of what advice his office and department received, and a cross reference to information provided to the public, and to reveal the identity of lending institutions, if any, who have officially offered support for the scheme.

Government Response

Noted.

The Chief Minister tabled on 18 June 2009 an updated report on Land Rent as per an earlier Assembly Resolution.

Recommendation 40

4.90 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister provide an update to the community, informing those currently waiting for this scheme, about progress on the status of financial support and the likelihood of any potential purchase being completed prior to the expiration of the first home owners' grant.

Government Response

Noted.

The Chief Minister's Department has recently provided an update to people with land rent blocks on hold, and will continue to provide updates to concerned parties as appropriate.

Recommendation 41

5.5 The Committee recommends that the Strategic Indicator 1 for the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water be amended to provide an equivalent to:

Integrate environmental sustainability into decision-making across the ACT Government sector, including through a pre-Cabinet environmental sustainability assessment and certification. All cabinet submissions will be reviewed by the Department to ensure that they explicitly support environmental sustainability outcomes, including reporting on greenhouse gas emissions, waste, water, biodiversity and resource efficiency issues.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Government is already examining an approach to integrating triple bottom line analysis into wider decision making frameworks. The Chief Minister's Department is coordinating this work.

It is not necessary that DECCEW undertake an additional role in this area. The Cabinet Handbook already requires that Submissions address environmental impacts, and the Cabinet Submission template already highlights these impacts for Ministers.

Recommendation 42

5.6 The Committee recommends that all of the strategic indicators for the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water be reviewed to ensure that they are measureable and relevant.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 43

5.10 The Committee recommends that in the second Action Plan under Weathering the Change to be brought forward at the end of 2009, more meaningful and ambitious targets are set.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government has already announced it will bring forward the development of the Action Plan.

Recommendation 44

5.18 The Committee recommends that the Minister for the Environment Climate Change and Water, Mr Simon Corbell MLA, provide the Standing Committee on Climate Change Environment and Water with a copy of the ACT carbon sequestration study during the June sitting, and explain to the Assembly why the report had not been provided to that Committee earlier.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Report will be issued shortly.

Recommendation 45

5.25 The Committee recommends that the Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water work with the Chief Minister's Department to promote Office Smart and Business Smart programs.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department consults regularly with the Chief Minister's Department and will continue to work collaboratively to deliver Government programs.

Recommendation 46

5.27 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develops a new strategy, including indicators, timetables and targets to achieve the *ACTNOWaste* target, and tables that in the Assembly before the end of 2009.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Government provided funding in the 2009-10 Budget for a new waste strategy. The timetable for the development of the strategy is currently under consideration.

Recommendation 47

5.33 The Committee recommends that accountability indicators for energy and water saved and greenhouse gas emissions reduced as a result of the *Switch your thinking!* program be developed and reported against.

Government Response

Agreed.

Accountability indicators will be developed as part of the program.

Recommendation 48

5.35 The Committee recommends that staff in the *Switch your thinking!* program team be asked to specifically liaise with and assist community sector organisations, their clients, recipients of income support payments, and other disadvantaged stakeholders, to apply for funding and other assistance from Commonwealth and Territory programs to enable them to achieve operational and cost-of-living savings from water and energy efficiency and sustainable transport use.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Program will have a strong focus on assisting low income and disadvantaged members of the community. In addition the Department will work with the community sector.

Recommendation 49

5.47 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop an approach to administration that facilitates dealing with cross-portfolio issues raised by the community about the development and management of community facilities.

Government Response

Noted.

The matter will be considered by the cross-agency ACT Property Forum at their next meeting.

Recommendation 50

5.53 The Committee recommends that the Commissioner for the *Environment Act 1993 (ACT)* and the *Environment Protection Act 1997 (ACT)* be amended to grant the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment the power to audit in relation to sections of annual reports prepared under section 158A of the *Environment Protection Act 1997*.

Government Response

Noted.

The *Weathering the Change* Action Plan, Action 2, commits the Government to developing resource management plans which will be subject to scrutiny by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

Under the existing *Commissioner for Environment Act 1993*, the Commissioner can undertake such an audit and she will be commencing an ACT Government Agencies Environmental Performance Audit/Assessment in the future.

Recommendation 51

5.54 The Committee recommends that each relevant section of each annual report under 158A of the *Environment Protection Act 1997 (ACT)* be collated into a new whole-of-government report on the ACT Government's sustainability performance, including greenhouse gas emissions, with a whole-of-government summary of performance.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government, through the Chief Minister's Department, already provides Annual Reporting Directions for all ACT Government Agencies. Specifically, section C.21 of the Annual Reporting Directions, requires agencies to report on ecologically sustainable development.

The Government is considering issues such as the value of aggregating agency reporting as part of wider policy on triple bottom line reporting.

Recommendation 52

6.8 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in determining currently unallocated savings, avoid any unnecessary imposition on front-line health services, and report back to the Assembly with progress by the last sitting day of the 2009 calendar year.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government does not anticipate any unnecessary imposition on frontline health services. The Government's strategy ensures that service levels will be preserved, and in fact enhanced where necessary, and growth in demand in priority service areas, such as health, will continue to be met.

The Committee should note two of the key objectives of the Government's Budget Plan are to (Budget Paper No. 3, page 18):

- ensure that in restoring the surplus, core services, community safety, and risk mitigation and protection are maintained to the high standard the community expects; and
- plan for adequate growth in expenditures to meet the needs of a growing population, and in particular, in the priority service areas such as health and education.

The Government has committed to engaging with the community in a conversation on the specific measures to achieve the targets under the Budget Plan throughout the 2009-10 financial year. As such, the Government is not in a position to provide a report to the Assembly on the impact on frontline health services, or other service areas.

Recommendation 53

6.20 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health, Ms Katy Gallagher MLA, provide to the Assembly during the June sitting details of the Budgetary performance of Calvary Hospital and the Canberra Hospital over the past three financial years.

Government Response

Agreed.

The detail will be provided in the June sitting period.

Recommendation 54

6.25 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health advise the Assembly, before the appropriation bill is debated, how the possible purchase of Calvary Hospital will be funded.

Government Response

Agreed.

There is currently no agreement in place between the ACT Government and the Little Company of Mary for the transfer of ownership of the Calvary Hospital and therefore no impact on the 2009-10 Budget currently before the Assembly. The Government will receive a submission on a range of issues in due course, which may include funding options. The Minister for Health has already advised the Assembly that the purchase of Calvary Hospital may involve a supplementary appropriation at some stage in 2009-10.

Recommendation 55

6.26 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report to the Assembly the status of negotiations and plans for the purchase of Calvary Hospital moving forward, prior to the finalisation of any agreement about the purchase, and that ACT Health develop detailed plans should the sale not proceed.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Government is responsible for moving the proposal and negotiations to the point of either agreement or non-agreement. At that point the Government will provide information to Members of the Assembly, including detail on our plan for hospital services on the north side of Canberra if the purchase of Calvary Hospital does not proceed.

The Assembly will of course have its role to play in relation to legislation and Budget appropriation issues.

Recommendation 56

6.36 The Committee recommends that ACT Health undertake an immediate review of its internal approval processes for using health facilities and staff for party political purposes, and provides the Assembly with the results of that review, including an explanation as to how such a situation had occurred without due process or record keeping, and what steps will be taken to remove the possibility of recurrence.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government believes ACT Health's approval processes are adequate.

All individuals and organisations must receive advance permission before they can film on ACT Health premises. This ensures a patient's privacy and confidentiality is protected.

Risk is managed and patients privacy and confidentiality are observed. When permission is granted, media are always escorted around health facilities by a Public Affairs Officer and security is always notified in advanced.

Any organisation with such a request liaises with the Communications Manager in the ACT Health Communication and Marketing Unit. The Communications Manager runs through a list of procedures, including that no patients can be identifiable and privacy is respected.

Individuals may be filmed when they have given an informed consent. The person is then given a Consent Form to sign acknowledging this.

In this instance, ACT Health conducted itself appropriately under the Australian Capital Territory 2008 General Election - Guidance on Caretaker Conventions during Caretaker Mode. During this time any political organisation may use ACT Health premises as long as there are no unreasonable interruptions of normal procedures of the area concerned (4.i).

At no time did any organisation disrupt the normal operations of the premises concerned. In this case filming took place on the weekend in an area under refurbishment. There were no patients and clinical activity, taking place in the area.

Recommendation 57

6.50 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Assembly with the details of how the \$12.2 million, in addition to funding provided by the Federal Government, which has been allocated to general practitioner (GP) initiatives, will impact upon GP numbers in the community.

Government Response

Noted.

The proposed funding will support the ACT's ability to train, attract and retain General Practitioners (GP) in the Territory. The intention is for this initiative to have a positive impact on GP numbers in the ACT. The initiatives will:

- establish GP Trainee Scholarships to deliver an ANU Medical Graduate Scholarship Scheme to keep ANU Medical School Graduates working in Canberra;
- establish a Teaching Incentive Payments Scheme for general practitioners who support undergraduate clinical training;
- establish a flexible bi-annual GP Development Fund;
- establish a business-hours aged care GP locum service to free up GP practices to provide care to people who cannot travel easily (such as residents of aged care facilities) and reduce pressure on after hours services and our emergency departments; and
- establish rotations of four junior doctors into general practice to expose them to the general practice setting as a possible career choice.

It is difficult to quantify the impact this initiative will have on GP numbers in the community as there are many other factors, most of which are outside the control of the ACT Government, that impact on GP numbers. However some positive response has been received from the medical students who have been spending time in GP practices, and although the program has been running for a short time only, one student has indicated that they will be pursuing general practice as their specialty. Also feedback from general practitioners in the ACT, via the GP Workforce Working Group, has indicated that support in the form of a locum to fill in for GPs while they are attending to patients away from the clinic, will help prevent burn-out of our existing workers, as well as increasing the capacity of our GPs to service currently underserved areas such as aged care facilities.

The latest Federal Budget invests in a broad range of health strategies, but incorporates some measures to address the Australia-wide shortage of GPs, including:

- funding over five years for additional GP training places in 2009 and 100 new places in 2010, and to provide 22 Remote Vocational Training Scheme GP training places from 2011. In addition, 212 GP training places are being provided through the COAG package from 2011. This will permanently increase the number of GP

training places to more than 800 places per annum from 2011 onwards—a 35 per cent increase on the cap of 600 places imposed since 2004; and

- encouraging more junior doctors to become GPs by investing in high quality, supervised, general practice training under the Prevocational General Practice Placement program.

The ACT initiatives allow us to tap into the Federal Government’s plan for increasing the GP numbers, by providing incentives to train in the ACT. In addition, the ACT initiatives complement the Federal initiatives by supporting the GPs we already have and by providing incentives to attract working GPs to the region. This shores up our current *and* our future GP workforce.

Recommendation 58

6.57 The Committee recommends that funding allocated to the community mental health sector not be used to fund the ACT Government oversight group.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 59

6.60 The Committee recommends that at the conclusion of the public consultation process for the location of the Mental Health Young Persons Unit and its model of care, the findings be tabled in the Assembly and put on the ACT Health website.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 60

6.67 The Committee recommends that the Assembly pursue the Minister for Planning, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, for his contempt of the Committee and accountability processes, in refusing to reappear to explain to the Committee his proposed use of Ministerial call-in powers in relation to the Canberra Hospital car park.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Government notes the Assembly passed a motion on 17 June 2009 of admonishment of the Minister in relation to this matter as it is for the Assembly to respond to the Committee’s recommendation in relation to this matter.

Recommendation 61

6.87 The Committee recommends that ACT Health undertake a rigorous and comprehensive review of its freedom of information processes to ensure that inappropriate exclusions are not claimed, and to report back to the Assembly by the first sitting day in September 2009.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Existing FOI processes are rigorous. The Government does not agree with the wording 'inappropriate exclusions' as this casts aspersions on the integrity of the public servants undertaking the Freedom of Information (FOI) processes within ACT Health.

Further, ACT Health has already undertaken a rigorous and comprehensive review of its FOI processes.

The objectives of the review were to assess ACT Health policies, procedures and guidelines for the administration of the FOI against the requirements of the Act; assess compliance by ACT Health officers and the FOI Officer with ACT Health FOI policies, procedures and guidelines in relation to the release of information under the Act; assess the effectiveness of systems or processes for the administration of FOI; and identify areas for improvement.

Overall, the review found that ACT Health has the appropriate systems and processes in place to enable the statutory functions under the Act to be performed effectively.

Recommendation 62

6.92 The Committee recommends that if the Speaker agreed that the issues raised by Mr Hanson in his letter to the Committee dated 4 June 2009 concerning his interaction with the Chief Executive of ACT health, have substance , and/or the Assembly agrees that a Select Committee on Privileges be established, that the Select Committee also investigate the broader issues of protection of communications made by Members of the Legislative Assembly in the course of their employment.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 63

6.93 In the event that the Select Committee is not established, this Committee recommends

(a) that the *Handbook for ACT Government Officials on Participation in the Assembly and Other Inquiries (2004)* be amended to provide guidelines for correspondence between staff in the ACT Public Service and members of the Legislative Assembly, and

6.94 (b) that the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure inquire into and report on the protections available to Members concerning protection of communications made by Members of the Legislative Assembly in the course of their employment.

Government Response

(a) Not Agreed.

(b) Noted.

Recommendation 64

6.104 The Committee recommends that ACT Health put in place strategies to ensure that elective surgery patients are seen on time, consistent with the nationally established criteria.

Government Response

Noted.

This recommendation fails to recognise the considerable investment in increasing access to elective surgery in the ACT by the Government since 2001, and the impact of that investment on the elective surgery waiting list.

A total of \$60 million in additional funding has been allocated to ACT Health to increase elective surgery operations in the ACT (including the funding allocated in the 2009-10 Budget).

This funding has enabled the recruitment of more surgeons to the ACT public hospital system and the opening of additional operating theatres at The Canberra Hospital.

This increase in investment has ensured that we have been able to provide record levels of access to elective surgery in each of the last six years. This additional funding has also enabled the ACT to focus on increasing access to surgery for patients with longer than standard waiting times as well as ensuring that the most serious elective surgery cases are admitted on time.

This investment is working. At 31 May 2009, there were 598 people on the elective surgery waiting list with a waiting time greater than one year – 45 percent better than the 1,091 people on the list who had been waiting longer than one year on 31 May 2006.

At the same time we have ensured that well over 90 percent of category one patients (those with suspected cancers and major heart conditions) have been admitted within the standard waiting time of 30 days.

Our effort has been supplemented by the current Commonwealth Government under its elective surgery waiting list reduction plan. As part of the plan, we are opening another three operating theatres at our public hospitals during 2009 (with the first already open at Calvary and the remaining two opening at The Canberra Hospital later this year). This will provide the additional capacity required to increase access to elective surgery pending the redevelopment of the public hospital system (which will meet our community's needs for over the next decade).

The Government is aware that still more needs to be done. However, the Government is seeking to ensure that improvements in access to elective surgery are managed in a sustainable way. This includes the sustainable growth of specialised clinical staff that will ensure that our community has the skills base to provide for increasing demand for services over the long term.

The Government is aware of the large number of people classified as category two patients on the waiting list with longer than standard waiting times. As part of the refinement of the Government's strategy of focussing on long wait patients, ACT Health will concentrate on initiatives to further improve access to surgery for these patients in the development of its 2009-10 elective surgery targets.

Recommendation 65

6.110 The Committee recommends that ACT Health revise its strategic indicators for key performance areas to reflect a date for achieving performance targets as opposed to 'long-term' and aspirational targets, in particular those related to the waiting list times for elective surgeries.

Government Response

Agreed in-Principle

The Government has already embarked on a process to overhaul the strategic indicators within the health portfolio to ensure that they maintain their relevance over time.

In addition, the new National Healthcare Agreement contains a range of strategic performance measures that will assist in the current review of our indicators to ensure that they are consistent with national and local strategies.

However, it is likely that the Government will maintain some strategic indicators that are not updated annually where these indicators are major Government or national priorities, such as life expectancy and community incidence of certain chronic diseases.

The review of the ACT Health strategic indicators will be completed in time for inclusion in the 2010-11 Budget Papers.

Recommendation 66

7.4 The Committee recommends that the Department of Territory and Municipal Services provide a breakdown of the operating expenses and revenue of each business unit within the output classes for the current budget and in future years.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Department complies with appropriate reporting requirements with regard to format and presentation of the budget papers.

The Budget Papers include details of operating expenses and revenue by output in line with the accrual output/outcome basis of budgeting and reporting practices and frameworks adopted across all Australian jurisdictions.

Recommendation 67

7.11 The Committee recommends that a formal and comprehensive assessment of parking availability at the Kingston local centre be undertaken with specific reference to the potential increase in parking demand from library users.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department will undertake a parking utilisation survey and assess what impact a library operating in the area will have on parking availability.

Recommendation 68

7.30 The Committee recommends that when developing its urban forest renewal program, the ACT Government consider environment and amenity, as well as cost and safety issues. In particular, the ACT Government should ensure solar access to buildings is maintained, or preferably enhanced.

Government Response

Agreed.

Maintenance of urban amenity and environmental values will be prime considerations in the urban forest renewal program. Solar access will be another important consideration, as well as providing shade for houses during summer.

Recommendation 69

7.31 The Committee recommends that if the urban forest renewal program is to be funded from the climate change program, the net greenhouse gas emission contribution must be independently measured, and must lead to reduced emissions.

Government Response

Noted.

The carbon sequestration audit mentioned in the Government's response to Recommendation 31, examined the role of the urban forest in sequestering carbon. The report will be released shortly.

In addition, it must be noted that the climate change strategy in the *Weathering the Change Action Plan*, contains a commitment to plant one million new trees. This would include both the urban forest and the Canberra International Arboretum and Gardens.

Recommendation 70

7.34 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government maintain the grass in Green Square and take action to provide it with adequate protection.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The ACT Government does not believe that grass is the best option for Green Square, as it is costly to maintain, suffers excessive wear and requires regular replacement, and is not water efficient in these times of drought. It is not possible to "protect" the grass without excluding public access.

The ACT Government has developed an alternative sustainable and green landscape plan for the Square.

The Government has also offered to enter into partnership with local leaseholders and business operators to provide the significant increase in resources required to maintain, water and regularly replace grass in the Square.

Recommendation 71

7.40 The Committee recommends that the Ernst and Young review of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services financial and asset management be tabled during the June sitting.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 72

7.42 The Committee recommends that the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety consider, as part of their inquiry into freedom of information legislation, discussion of the issue of cabinet-in-confidence designations for documents.

Government Response

Noted.

Exemptions under sections of the *Freedom of Information Act 1989* are already within the scope of the Committee's inquiry.

Recommendation 73

7.45 The Committee recommends that the ACT Property Group prioritise energy and water savings as a contribution to achieving the efficiency dividend across ACT Government.

Government Response

Agreed.

ACT Property Group will prioritise the delivery of energy and water saving measures in buildings which it manages for the ACT Government. These measures will provide agencies with the opportunity to realise cost savings that can contribute to achieving efficiency dividends.

Recommendation 74

7.56 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government renews its commitment to open-source software, and that it uses open-source software where appropriate.

Government Response

Noted.

The ACT Government is currently utilising a variety of open source products. The selection processes for all software products are based on value for money, fitness for purpose and long-term supportability. The Government also uses open source software where it is appropriate to meet business requirements and long-term viability, and has an ongoing strategy to keep abreast of open source utilisation and developments particularly in other jurisdictions.

Recommendation 75

7.64 The Committee recommends that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts include social tendering as part of its inquiry into procurement.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 76

7.66 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government clarify in its response to this report, whether occupational health and safety and environmental management plans are required by ACT Government construction contractors.

Government Response

Agreed.

Shared Services Procurement Solutions has extended an offer to Mr Smyth, MLA to contact the Executive Director of Procurement Solutions, Ms Robyn Hardy, to facilitate a briefing on these issues.

Ms Hardy is also available to brief other MLAs and their staff on this matter upon request.

Recommendation 77

7.78 The Committee recommends that the note for accountability measure a) 'Timeliness of ACTION Services' is revised to more clearly explain the way that the measure is assessed, and that the discrepancy concerning the source of the target figure be clarified.

Government Response

Agreed.

ACTION will provide a clearer explanation on how it measures this indicator in the note for accountability measure a) 'Timeliness of ACTION Services' in the 2008-09 Annual Report.

Recommendation 78

7.79 The Committee recommends that the next round of reporting should include a report for ‘Timeliness of ACTION Services’ against the new methodology (point to point sampling) as well as reporting against the previous measure (depot departure times) to enable cross year comparisons.

Government Response

Agreed.

ACTION will include a comparison report for ‘Timeliness of ACTION Services’ against the new methodology (point to point sampling) against the previous measure (depot departure times).

Recommendation 79

7.83 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate the claimed \$4 to \$5 million in efficiencies to be found in ACTION, prepare a plan identifying impediments to achieving those, and report back to the Assembly on progress by November 2009.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

ACTION is committed to providing efficiencies within the organisation. This is a continual process and is reported on an annual basis through the financial statements and budgeting process.

Recommendation 80

7.84 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, tables annually in the Assembly data comparing ACTION with other comparable services using nationally established benchmarks.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

This information is commercial in confidence.

Recommendation 81

7.86 The Committee recommends that once locational data is available from the new ACTION ticketing system that ACTION provide an overlap in reporting on ‘timeliness of ACTION Services’ by including data from the point to point sampling system as well as the locational data to enable cross-year comparisons.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The locational data will provide accurately the timeliness of ACTION’s bus services. It would be a waste of resources to continue to undertake point to point sampling. A comparison against previous years will be provided.

Recommendation 82

7.92 The Committee recommend that the ACT Government reviews the impact of ACTION fare increases on students and low income earners, and other customers who cannot afford to buy pre-paid multiple tickets.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

ACTION’s fare price policy is monitored to ensure it is consistent with economic conditions prevailing at the time and ticketing system innovations.

Recommendation 83

7.101 The Committee recommends that if the Redex express service trial is successful, the service should continue without interruption.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Principle.

Following the evaluation of the trial, if successful, appropriate policy consideration will be given to the continuation of this service.

Recommendation 84

7.108 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government requires, as part of its performance agreement with the Brumbies, that a prescribed minimum amount of ACT Government funding go to junior development, and that the Brumbies be required to report on compliance with this requirement in their acquittal of future grants.

Government Response

Noted.

Currently the Brumbies receive triennial funding of \$42,000 for grass roots development and competition. While the current performance agreement does not stipulate the redirection of funds to community rugby, it does acknowledge the role of the "Brumbies" in promoting and developing the sport at a grass roots level. This is reportable under current terms. The "value" of this role is unquantifiable in monetary terms but would be regarded as not insignificant.

Recommendation 85

7.117 The Committee recommends that specific data on which elements of sport and recreation facilities users are dissatisfied with be collected in future surveys.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Principle.

The Department will explore options for seeking more specific data on user dissatisfaction.

Recommendation 86

7.118 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conducts a facilities audit of all ACT sports venues and report to the Assembly by February 2010.

Government Response

Noted.

A detailed facilities audit that would comprehensively explore the need for quality of current facilities is perceived by all States and Territories as a time consuming and ineffective model for planning of facilities. However, the requirement for organic planning of new development areas does allow for a regular strategic review of current built and turfied facilities - their uses, capacity to meet growing demand and quality of provision. The Department will undertake a benchmark costing exercise to provide further advice on this request.

Recommendation 87

7.133 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, provide to the Assembly a report providing a reconciled budget for the Mountain Bike World Championship, and which outline the benefits of that event.

Government Response

Agreed.

This will be provided after the Championship event has occurred.

Recommendation 88

7.137 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services table in the Assembly the final Floriade statistics in the first sitting week after receiving them.

Government Response

Agreed.

The event evaluation report (conducted by Ernst & Young) requires the collation and analysis of market research data collected on site, economic modelling and is also supported by turnstile and accreditation figures supplied by Australian Capital Tourism and will be tabled when available.

The Committee should note that the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation has responsibly for Floriade, and not the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services.

Recommendation 89

8.16 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Training, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, include in the School Census report clear and concise information outlining class sizes across the ACT Government education system, including the number of classes which exceed 21, 25 and 30 students.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government will consider including class size data in future school census reports.

Recommendation 90

8.17 The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training publish on its website the School Census data as soon as it is available.

Government Response

Agreed.

This is current practice. As soon as census collected figures are audited and the publication is finalised, school census data is made available on the Department of Education and Training website.

Recommendation 91

8.30 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide to the Assembly a detailed analysis of the impact that a major restructure of the education teaching workforce would have on budget outcomes over the forward years.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

There is insufficient detail in the recommendation to allow the Government to respond.

Recommendation 92

8.39 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government pay particular attention to innovative and effective community-based programs, and that funding for Gugan Gulwan's numeracy and literacy program be continued at the current rate.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department of Education and Training will continue to fund Gugan Gulwan's numeracy and literacy program at the current rate for 2009-10, and in that time work with Gugan Gulwan to evaluate the educational outcomes of the program, with a view to determining how best to support the objectives of the program within DET's overall Indigenous education program.

Recommendation 93

8.55 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government budget gives a more detailed breakdown of funding to non-government education.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government will consider the recommendation in framing the ACT 2010-11 Budget.

Recommendation 94

8.63 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government reports to the Assembly on the structural changes it will make to ensure more efficient delivery of infrastructure.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that projects become available to the market on time. The Budget Committee of Cabinet will receive a report from each department every second month on the progress of the Capital Works Program and the Treasurer will also meet monthly with each department to discuss the progress of their capital program.

To ensure rapid delivery of the Commonwealth's stimulus initiatives, the ACT along with the other jurisdictions has committed to national coordination and implementation arrangements.

A taskforce has been set up reporting to the Chief Minister. The Taskforce has been identifying changes to systems, procedures, practices or policies that are required in order to meet the *Nation Building and Jobs Plan's* timeframes.

To expedite the schools construction program, exemptions from development applications have been made to projects where appropriate. Other measures are under consideration to streamline planning approval processes to ensure the ACT receives the full benefit of the timely delivery of the stimulus package.

These measures were outlined to the Assembly in the 2009-10 Budget Papers.

As per the response to Recommendation 26 of this Report, the Government has agreed to provide the Assembly with a quarterly report until such time as the Taskforce is disbanded and has already started this process with the Chief Minister's Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 16 June 2009.

Recommendation 95

8.69 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct an audit of school safety and security in all ACT schools and formulate a safety and security plan by 30 June 2010.

Government Response

Noted.

The Government will consider this recommendation. In that consideration, the Government will take into account current policies and initiatives including the Safe Schools Taskforce, the Department of Education and Training Security Committee, school security plans developed in individual schools and policies such as:

- *Providing Safe Schools P-12;*
- *Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools;*
- *Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools;*
- *Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools;* and
- *Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer of students in ACT Public Schools.*

Recommendation 96

8.74 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Training widen the scope of the special needs review to include nongovernment school students.

Government Response

Agreed.

An announcement was made by the Minister for Education and Training on 16 June 2009 to extend the scope of the Shaddock Review into special education services in the ACT to include non-government schools.

Recommendation 97

9.7 The Committee recommends that the official opening of an ACT Government facility not be held until the facility is complete and ready to operate.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 98

9.12 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate the involvement of community organisations in the provision of through-care and after-care in relation to the Alexander Maconochie Centre as a matter of urgency.

Government Response

Agreed.

ACT Corrective Services is actively engaging at present with a number of community organisations in regard to its operations.

Recommendation 99

9.13 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Corrections, Mr John Hargreaves MLA, report all security breaches at all ACT correctional facilities to the Assembly quarterly.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Relevant information will be reported in the Department of Justice and Community Safety's Annual Report.

Recommendation 100

9.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide details to the Assembly of the impact on services as a result of the decision to fund the ACT Policing Consultative Committee trial from existing funding and that the ACT Government report to the Assembly with the result of the trial in November 2009.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The results will not be reported by November 2009. ACT Policing is increasing the staff in the Crime Prevention portfolio to provide an enhanced service to the community and better enable the delivery of Purchase Agreement outputs. This will enable the portfolio to undertake the trial in 2009-10. ACT Policing will provide the results of the Policing Consultative Committee trial to the Government at the conclusion of the trial in June 2010.

Recommendation 101

9.26 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the funding arrangements for all community legal centres prior to the 2010–11 ACT Budget.

Government Response

Noted.

Recommendation 102

9.33 The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General commission an independent review of the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal after twelve months of its operation, including the activities undertaken during the transition period.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety will review registry resources for the support of ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) after 12 months of operation.

Recommendation 103

9.34 The Committee recommends that accountability indicators be developed for ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal and be reported upon in the Department of Justice and Community Safety's 2009–10 annual report.

Government Response

Agreed.

Accountability indicators will be developed during 2009-10 and reported from 2010-11.

Recommendation 104

9.43 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review its policy in relation to the criteria for seeking the advice of the Government Solicitor on contracts with the Territory.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 105

9.57 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Simon Corbell MLA, report quarterly on the progress of the Emergency Services Authority headquarters being constructed at the Canberra Airport.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Emergency Services Agency (ESA) will be reporting on the progress of the headquarters as part of the framework for reporting on Capital Works as outlined in the 2009-10 Budget Papers.

Recommendation 106

9.58 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services provide a full budget acquittal for the emergency services headquarters to date.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Government has already provided this information in its response to a question taken on notice during the budget estimates hearing process to this Committee.

Recommendation 107

9.61 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement, as a matter of urgency, action to develop a new facility for the Tidbinbilla Rural Fire Service.

Government Response

Agreed.

The future location of the Tidbinbilla Rural Fire Service facility is part of longer term planning for ESA facilities resulting from the station relocation study. Preliminary alternate site investigation has been ongoing as part of that study. Government will consider recommendations following public consultation on the study to occur in due course.

The Government will consider this in future budget processes.

Recommendation 108

9.65 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incorporate detailed accountability indicators relating to ACT Policing as part of its Justice and Community Safety budget statement to provide a correlation between the ACT Policing Purchase Agreement and performance.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Australian Federal Police currently report in their Annual Report on accountability measures in the ACT Policing Purchase Agreement. The Government is satisfied with this reporting arrangement and considers it unnecessary to duplicate these accountability measures.

Recommendation 109

9.67 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Assembly with specific details of ACT Policing personnel by location, rank and duties, and incorporate this information in future Justice and Community Safety budget statements.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Australian Federal Police requirement in the ACT Policing Purchase Agreement is specified in raw FTE. The deployment of resources is a matter for the AFP.

Recommendation 110

9.71 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in conjunction with ACT Policing, develop strategies to target the alarming increase in the number of people driving under the influence, and that the ACT Government report back to the Assembly with progress in November 2009.

Government Response

Noted.

Effecting attitudinal change is a long term goal and November 2009 is too short a time frame to report on any substantive progress. ACT Policing will continue to liaise with the ACT Government and relevant organisations, such as the NRMA Road Safety Trust, to target this offence.

Recommendation 111

10.11 The Committee recommends that ACT Health conduct a full consultation process with users of both the equipment loan service and the Independent Living Centre to determine the best location for these services before the relocation occurs.

Government Response

This Recommendation needs to be considered in two parts, as the issues are quite distinct.

Equipment Loan Service

Noted. – ACT Health has already undertaken a detailed review of its equipment services and this has been the subject of detailed consultation.

This move will also provide improved access for clients and a better working environment for staff. It is also linked to the Capital Asset Development Plan in freeing up space for service development essential to the TCH campus.

Independent Living Centre

Agreed – Consultation on the planned move of the Independent Living Centre to Village Creek has already commenced.

Recommendation 112

10.25 The Committee recommends that in relation to the Multicultural Festival, the ACT Government develop formal monitoring and evaluation processes, including key accountability indicators, and provide a full annual report measuring the success of the Festival.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DDHCS) will review the key accountability indicators for the Multicultural Festival, and develop a formal evaluation process for the Festival. DDHCS will continue to report on the Festival outcomes in its Departmental Annual Report.

Recommendation 113

10.34 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct an independent assessment of the costs associated with funding the initiatives in the multicultural strategy (when it is finalised) and increase the allocated funding as required.

Government Response

Noted.

Any proposals for funded initiatives in the new Multicultural Strategy will be subject to appropriate Government consideration for proposals in the context of budget development.

Recommendation 114

10.39 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consults further with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the Indigenous Elected Body in relation to its plans to fund a Ngunnawal Genealogy Study and report back to the Assembly by the last sitting week in 2009.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 115

10.42 The Committee recommends that in future budgets, the ACT Government provide the total annual spending on initiatives and programs specific to the Indigenous community across all ACT Government departments, agencies and administrative units.

Government Response

Noted.

As part of the reporting to COAG and the COAG Reform Council on the *Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage* targets, Heads of Treasury have developed a *National Framework for Reporting Expenditure on Services to Indigenous Australians: Stocktake Report*. The ACT will begin collecting data for this report at the end of October 2009.

The ACT Government will examine expenditure on Indigenous specific services as part of undertaking the ACT work on the Stocktake Report, and consider whether to report separately on Indigenous specific programs as part of the ACT Budget.

Recommendation 116

10.48 The Committee recommends that funding to the ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service be continued for the Elder Abuse program, until a review of the program is undertaken.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS) was provided with funding for a full-time advocate for one year for advocacy services for people experiencing or at risk of elder abuse. No core funding is currently available for an advocate in the Elder Abuse Prevention Program (EAPP).

The recommendations of the *2008 Strategic Review of the Elder Abuse Prevention Project* are being implemented and focus on the redevelopment of the EAPP to provide a more co-ordinated and multidisciplinary approach to addressing abuse of older people in the ACT.

Decisions about the future provision of advocacy services will be informed by this program redevelopment. Any funding of advocacy services will be made in accordance with the *Government Procurement Act 2001*.

ADACAS is funded approximately \$222,000 from the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) for support and advocacy for ACT residents who are eligible for HACC services.

Recommendation 117

10.77 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government engage with the community housing sector to ensure that they can build their capacity in order to play a more active part in the social harmony initiative and in meeting the social housing needs of the Territory.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Government through the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DDHCS) has engaged the community housing sector in developing the Stage 2 proposals for consideration by the Australian Government of the Nation Building and Jobs Plan. DDHCS also works to build the capacity of the sector through funding arrangements and regular meetings as well as National Affordable Housing Agreement reforms.

Recommendation 118

10.79 The Committee recommends that definitions of community housing, affordable housing, public housing and social housing be agreed with housing service providers.

Government Response

Noted.

The Minister for Housing has committed discuss this matter at a national level through the Housing Ministerial Council in order to gain a shared understanding of the different definitions of community and affordable housing, however it may not be possible to reach agreement on the definition of community housing, affordable housing, public housing and social housing as there are many different views.

Recommendation 119

10.87 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the employment conditions in the child and protection area to ensure that the ACT can attract and retain sufficient numbers of skilled professionals.

Government Response

Noted.

The ACT Government regularly reviews employment retention and recruitment strategies and conditions which impact on the attraction of skilled professionals to Care and Protection Services.

As part of this procedure, a review of the health professional structure is underway and employment conditions will be considered as part of this process. Classification of positions is also considered as part of enterprise bargaining.

Recommendation 120

10.93 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Children and Young People, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, reports all security breaches at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre to the Assembly quarterly.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

Robust reporting procedures are in place. Bimberi Youth Justice Centre has a Records and Reporting Policy and Procedure that requires a written report be submitted for all reportable incidents. The policy is detailed with significant reporting requirements and obligations.

In addition, monthly summaries are provided to the Minister for Children and Young People. Registers regarding searches, the use of force and segregation are available for

inspection by a Judge, a Magistrate, the Official Visitor, the Commissioner, the Public Advocate and the Ombudsman.

Recommendation 121

11.10 The Committee recommends that the ACTPLA website include regular updates of the number of development applications in the system, and the estimated time it will take to process each application.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Part.

The Government agrees to include regular updates of Development Applications in the system.

The Government does not agree to providing estimated time it will take to process each application. This would involve an excessive use of resources, may be difficult to estimate with reasonable degree of accuracy for all applications given their varying nature and complexity, and may create unrealistic expectations for proponents.

Recommendation 122

11.11 The Committee recommends that ACTPLA create an archive section on their website, and that it provides access to all processed development applications from the commencement of the new planning system.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Principle.

ACTPLA will respond to some specific requests. However, it is not possible to post all Development Applications on the ACTPLA website.

To do this would require significantly more IT support/server space because this would amount to millions of gigabytes of data.

Recommendation 123

11.24 The Committee recommends that ACTPLA include as an accountability indicator the average energy efficiency rating of domestic and commercial buildings constructed each year.

Government Response

Noted.

The Committee should collection and collation of the necessary information to a reasonable degree of verifiability is difficult and costly.

Recommendation 124

11.28 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Planning, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, provide the Assembly, in the June sitting, with a report on how the issues concerning Section 63 in Civic have been addressed.

Government Response

Agreed-in-Principle.

This is subject to legal advice.

Recommendation 125

11.32 The Committee recommends that ACTPLA ensure that solar orientation is a key criterion in estate plans.

Government Response

Agreed.

This process is already applied.

Recommendation 126

11.44 The Committee recommends that new areas of suitable land be identified for use as horse paddocks and that the contract management of horse paddocks is reviewed.

Government Response

Noted.

ACTPLA does not make specific provisions for additional horse paddocks within the Canberra's urban area including Molonglo. In relation to other recreational and sporting facilities, these are considered in detail as part of either the structure plan or the concept plan/precinct code stage, in consultation with ACT Government agencies. "Horse paddock" is not a use under the Territory Plan. However, horse agistment is permitted under the "agriculture" use in relevant Territory Plan zones.

Management of horse paddocks in the ACT's non-urban areas is the responsibility of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services.

Recommendation 127

12.18 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provides a detailed response to the Assembly regarding the concerns raised by the Australian Medical Association during the Estimates inquiry about the sale of Calvary Hospital and other matters.

Government Response

Noted.

The inclusion of Calvary Hospital IT projects in the E-Healthy Future - Capital Asset Development Plan funding in the 2009-10 does not pre-empt the sale of Calvary Public Hospital to the ACT Government. The proposed roll-out of standardised IT systems across ACT public hospitals and other health services is a key component of the redevelopment of health services to improve future health services and to ensure that they are affordable.

There are no planned reductions to services at Calvary Public Hospital as a result of the proposed sale.

ACT Health will monitor the outcomes of innovations in other State and Territory health services, such as the “four hour rule” and make decisions on their adaptability in the ACT as appropriate.

Recommendation 128

12.28 That the ACT Government review bureaucratic processes and communication with business, and prepare a detailed plan to redress the concerns of the business sector in the ACT.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The ACT Government’s relationship with the local business community is open, collaborative and constructive. This was evidenced by Business Roundtable process that the Government initiated in late 2008 and through 2009, in response to addressing local impacts of the Global Financial Crisis.

Besides these, the Government has actively engaged with the representatives of business and industry sub sectors. These engagements have resulted in significant initiatives across a range of areas including access to government procurement, planning, development, education exports, tourism and retail. Further, Government Ministers and senior members of the public service engage actively with the business community on an issues basis and readily make themselves available to discuss and respond to matters as they are raised.

The Government is also currently looking at additional measures to improve lines of communication with the small and micro business sector, a cohort that tends to be underrepresented in business association memberships.

Recommendation 129

12.35 The Committee recommends that the Treasurer provides a detailed response to the Assembly regarding the concerns raised by the Property Council about the ACT's narrow revenue base and other matters.

Government Response

Not Agreed.

The Government considers the Committee's expert adviser, Mr Tony Harris has provided a reasonable response to the issues raised by the Property Council in relation to the ACT's revenue base.

More generally, the Government supports the observations made by Mr Harris in relation to other issues, such as debt and expense growth, raised by the Property Council.

Recommendation 130

12.43 The Committee recommends that the Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services inquire into the impact of the global financial crisis on the non-government community services sector in the ACT and the ACT Government funding it receives.

Government Response

Noted.