

2006

# THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

## TABLING STATEMENT

### Government Responses to:

**Standing Committee on Planning and Environment:** Report No. 19 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005.

**Standing Committee on Legal Affairs:** Report No. 2 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004- 2005.

**Standing Committee on Health and Disability:** Report No. 2 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts:** Report No.5 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005.

**Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People:** Report No. 2 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005.

Tabled by  
Jon Stanhope MLA  
Chief Minister

21 / 9 / 2006

I am pleased to present the Government's Responses to five Standing Committee reports on the Annual and Financial Reports for 2004-05.

As in previous years, I am tabling the responses to all of the Standing Committee reports covering all portfolios together. This is because the Standing Committee reports generally cover more than one Minister and more than one portfolio and, in certain cases, issues raised in the reports apply to all departments and agencies.

As members will be aware, annual and financial reports are prepared by agencies in accordance with the Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions and in accordance with the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004* and the *Financial Management Act 1996*. The government seeks to ensure that the Directions and the Acts are continually updated to reflect best practice and full accountability in accordance with government policy. In line with this approach, some of the issues raised in the Committee reports have already been addressed in the 2006 Annual Report Directions.

The Standing Committees made 29 recommendations. The Government has agreed in full, in principle or in part to fifteen of these, and noted a further twelve. Two recommendations are not agreed.

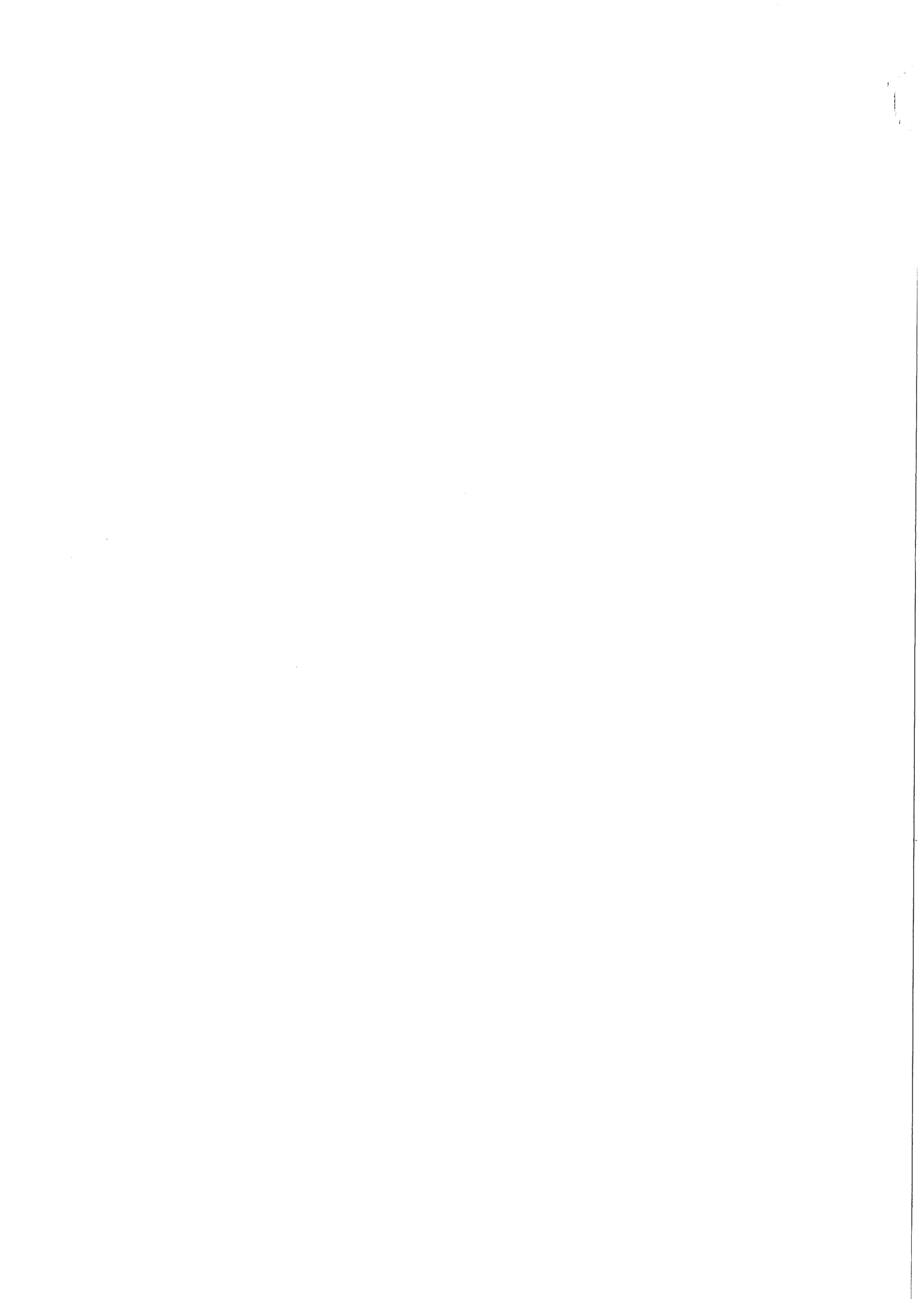
I will briefly touch on the reasons for the Government not agreeing to these two recommendations.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommended that quarterly actuarial assessments of superannuation liability be conducted and published for the Assembly. The actuarial assessment of the ACT's unfunded superannuation liability is a process that typically requires weeks of intensive actuarial assessment after the scheme administrator has provided scheme membership data. This is a sophisticated and expensive process. Moreover, a quarterly update would capture little more than membership changes, and these alone would have only marginal impact on the assessment.

The Standing Committee on Health and Disability recommended that data to enable comparison between financial years be included in tables provided in annual and financial reports. It is the Government's position that agencies report on a pre-determined period (i.e. one financial year). Annual Report Directions include reporting against budget outputs for only that year.

I would like to thank the Standing Committees for the effort they have made in preparing their reports. I am sure the Assembly will agree that the Government has responded in a manner that enhances our record of openness and accountability.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Government's Responses to the Assembly.



2006

THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR  
THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Standing Committee on Planning and  
Environment

Report No. 19

Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005

November 2005

Tabled by  
Jon Stanhope MLA  
Chief Minister

21/9/2006

## **Government Response**

Report 19 - Standing Committee on Planning and Environment– Report on 2004-2005 Annual and Financial Reports

### **Introduction**

The Annual Reports of all ACT Government agencies are referred to the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly for examination and report.

The Standing Committee on Planning and Environment reviewed annual reports for:

- ACT Planning and Land Authority
- ACT Land Development Agency
- ACTION Authority
- Department of Urban Services
- Commissioner for the Environment
- Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust

The Committee makes 11 recommendations.

### **Response to Committee Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

1.18. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase the level of funding for the office of the Commissioner for the Environment in the 2006-07 Budget to enable the Commissioner to properly discharge her functions in relation to the ACT environment.

1.19. The Committee recommends that the Public Sector Management Group in the Chief Minister's Department, and Treasury, review the funding and legal basis of the Commissioner for the Environment's role in relation to regional environmental reporting.

### **Government Response**

**Noted.** Funding for the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment was considered in the context of budget priorities for 2006-07. Funding has been maintained at existing levels and the Commissioner has not been required to contribute to the savings measures that are being implemented across most other Government agencies.

Since 1997, the Commissioner has prepared a regional State of the Environment report at the request of the Regional Leaders' Forum for the Australian Capital Region and with the support of the ACT Government. Member local government authorities of the Forum contribute to funding for preparation of the Regional State of the Environment report. The ACT Government subsidises the remaining cost through the work of the Commissioner's office.

The Commissioner regularly reviews the resources required to complete each report and negotiates an appropriate contribution through the Regional Leaders' Forum.

The Commissioner has also recently held discussions with member councils about mechanisms to streamline the process and to put it on a stronger cost-recovery basis.

### **Recommendation 2**

2.14. That the ACT Government continue to investigate better methods for disclosing and accounting for the value of undeveloped land.

#### Government Response

**Agreed.** The Government will review and consider any new options in relation to disclosure and accounting for undeveloped land. It is noted, however, that the current accounting treatment and disclosure for undeveloped land complies with the Australian Accounting Standards.

### **Recommendation 3**

1.26 That the Land Development Agency consider appointing in-house legal counsel.

#### Government Response

**Agreed.** The appointment of an LDA in-house legal counsel is being considered by the LDA. This may assist in the oversight of services provided by external legal advisers to the Agency.

### **Recommendation 4**

1.43 The Committee recommends that the Land Development Agency and the Government continue to pursue mechanisms for making housing affordable, particularly for first home buyers.

#### Government Response

**Agreed.** The Government remains committed to improving housing affordability and will continue to pursue appropriate mechanisms to meet this objective. The Chief Minister has asked his Department to establish a Housing Affordability Taskforce to examine a range of issues relating to housing affordability and make recommendations to the Government. The LDA will also continue to pursue land release opportunities to assist the Government in making housing more affordable.

1.44 The Committee recommends that the Land Development Agency require a percentage of multi-unit and greenfields developments to be constructed as affordable housing.

#### Government Response

**Agreed.** In response to the Affordable Housing Taskforce Report 2002, the Government will continue to identify sites within its greenfields estates and multi-unit land releases for affordable housing.

Through the Land Development Agency (LDA), the Government will continue with its moderate-income land ballots to facilitate entry of moderate-income earners into the housing market by offering blocks of land priced up to and including \$150,000 to first home purchasers with a joint household income of \$100,000, subject to dependents. In addition, LDA is requiring current developments in Forde, Dunlop, Woden, Franklin and Wells Station to provide affordable housing opportunities. The Forde development will see 5% of all housing as moderate income or community housing and a similar percentage has been set for the future development of the multi-unit estate at Woden East. Future multi-unit land releases will also pursue housing opportunities for the affordable and moderate-income market.

#### **Recommendation 5**

1.53 The Committee recommends that, in consultation with Arts, Heritage and Environment and non-government conservation organisations, the Department of Urban Services place an agreed number of trunks of mature felled trees in open woodland and forested areas of Canberra Nature Park for wildlife habitat.

#### Government Response

**Noted.** A large-scale ecological experiment is already planned at Goorooyarroo involving the Australian National University and Environment ACT to evaluate the benefits of adding logs to reserves. The project is designed to assess the potential benefits (and impacts) associated with the introduction of logs into woodlands for protection of species from predation. The results from this research will be applied to other ACT reserves but any program to introduce logs into the nature parks on a wholesale basis prior to the research taking place would be premature.

#### **Recommendation 6**

1.58 The Committee recommends that future Chief Minister's Department annual reports include better cross-referencing to other program specific annual reports.

#### Government Response

**Agreed.** The 2005-06 Annual Report Directions addresses this under section 1/7 'Format', which requires that "the format and layout should be logical and easy to follow so that it guides the reader through the report". The Directions also specify that where possible the reports should include internal cross-referencing between text and related appendices.

#### **Recommendation 7**

1.73 The committee recommends that the Minister for Urban Services further investigate measures to reduce the tonnage of, and to collect data about the amount of undifferentiated builders' waste being deposited as landfill at the Pialligo waste management facility.

#### Government Response

**Agreed in-principle.** Pialligo Landfill is a privately operated landfill run by Canberra Concrete Recyclers (CCR). Pialligo Landfill is situated on Commonwealth land.

ACT NOWaste will hold discussions with CCR in an attempt to gain agreement to have regular data provided on builders waste disposed to landfill. ACT NOWaste will also encourage CCR to further progress resource recovery activities at the facility for mixed builders waste.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that ACT Government agencies recognise volunteers' contributions, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, in the Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions and 2005-2006 annual reports.

#### Government Response

**Noted.** The Government has decided to streamline annual reporting requirements. Policy implementation reporting will be coordinated by originating policy departments and tabled in the Legislative Assembly, rather than included in each agency's annual report. Volunteer policy and reporting will be developed by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.

#### **Recommendation 9**

1.82 The ACT Office for Women should increase public awareness about the ACT Women's Register

#### Government Response

**Noted.** The ACT Women's Register is promoted through a range of functions and events. Information on the ACT Women's Register and application forms for the Register are published on the Office for Women's website.

1.83 The Committee recommends that when ACT Government agencies invite organisations to nominate persons to Committees, they also advise that the ACT Government has a policy of increasing the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions for gender balance, if this is not done already.

#### Government Response

**Noted.** The ACT Government requires all agencies to consult with the Office of Women prior to making appointments to Government boards and committees in the interests of meeting the Government's target of 50 per cent participation of women on boards and committees.

#### **Recommendation 10**

1.85 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government agree to the establishment of an advisory body on cross-border and regional water management issues.

Government Response

**Noted.** Cross-border and regional water management issues are being resolved through the Regional Management Framework. Management of these issues is guided by the principles for regional settlement and conditions of cross-border water supply as expressed in the respective ACT-NSW Cross Border Agreements. Within the ACT Government, the assessment of applications for ACT water supply to NSW will be conducted by existing inter-agency committees including the Chief Executives Water Group and the Senior Executives Water Coordination Group.

**Recommendation 11**

1.87 The Committee commends the ACT Government for its policy of not encouraging the use of Australian Workplace Agreements in the Public Service.

Government Response

**Noted.**