

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 Education, Training and
Young People

Report No. 2

Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2004-2005

March 2006

Tabled by
Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister

21 / 9 / 2006

Government Response

Report No. 2 of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People 2004-2005: March 2006.

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People reviewed annual reports for:

- Canberra Institute of Technology
- Department of Education and Training
- Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Board
- Office for Children, Youth and Family Support
- Cultural Facilities Corporation

The Committee makes five recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.11 The Committee recommends that large departments, like the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, administering multiple agencies and having complex reporting requirements provide clear cross-referencing tools to ensure that large reports can be easily navigated and measures related to specific outputs are clearly linked.

Government Response

Agreed. The Annual Report Directions address 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. Further, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services will provide greater cross-referencing during the production of the 2005-06 Annual Report.

Recommendation 2

2.14 The Committee recommends that standardised performance indicators be developed with reference to national reporting standards where possible.

Government Response

Noted. The *Annual Reports Act 2004* is currently being reviewed to strengthen the requirement for agencies to report against strategic performance indicators through their annual report.

As part of the 2005-06 Performance Measurement Framework, the office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS) performance indicators have been developed with reference to national reporting standards where applicable (including Productivity Commission Report data sets and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data collections). OCYFS strategic indicators, aimed at measuring performance against longer-term and strategic outcomes, will be used to track performance over time and to establish benchmarks with other jurisdictions.

In regard to performance indicators relating to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community services is working collaboratively with other ACT Government agencies to enable and support consistent reporting across Government.

The Productivity Commission uses a reporting framework that has been agreed to by all governments, including the ACT Government, to prepare its regular Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reports. The Department, along with other ACT Government agencies, will be utilising relevant aspects of this reporting framework together with ACT-specific information to report on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in the ACT.

Recommendation 3

3.5 The Committee recommends that the department clearly indicate within annual reports the expenditure related to central administration and expenditure related to achieving education outcomes in school settings.

Government Response

Noted. The whole of government reporting framework set by the Government is based on reporting against outputs and output classes. The Department of Education and Training is charged with the delivery of the following output classes:

- Government School Education
- Non-Government School Education
- Vocational Education and Training
- Early Intervention

The cost of these output classes (as reported in the Department of Education and Training's annual report) includes direct service delivery in schools and other educational settings, in addition to administration, which supports service delivery.

The costs of overlaying an additional reporting framework separately listing the 'expenditure related to central administration and expenditure related to achieving educational outcomes in school settings' would be substantial, and would run counter to the Government's objectives in setting up an output based framework.

Defining what costs would be regarded as 'central administration' and 'expenditure relating to achieving educational outcomes in school settings' would create some difficulty. For example, the costs of transporting students with a disability are met centrally, but clearly contribute to 'achieving educational outcomes', although not necessarily 'in school settings.'

Recommendation 4

3.7 The Committee recommends that comprehensive data relating to the contribution of volunteers to the effective operations of schools be included in annual reports provided by the department and that such information be annexed.

Government Response

Agreed in principle. The voluntary involvement of our students' families and other community members is crucial to the operation of ACT Government schools, recognising that family and school community are the two strongest influences on the development of children.

The full scope of volunteering associated with ACT schools cannot be accurately captured. There are innumerable occasions that individuals altruistically volunteer their time, talents and skills for the benefit of others without seeking recognition. Such community service is considered by many to be an integral component of their civic responsibility.

Parents and carers organise and participate in school fetes; participate in the management of schools through involvement in school boards or parents and citizens associations; assist in libraries; share their skills with students; assist in the beautification of schools; assist in instructing and organising sporting activities; or undertake canteen duties. Canberra businesses also give their time to school education programs, individual students and school fundraising activities.

Given the breadth of activities and number of people involved it is believed that the Department of Education and Training would only be able to provide indicative involvement of the type of volunteering that occurs in the education sector by school and sector.

Many schools report on measures implemented to develop quality partnerships and networks with the community through the Annual School Board Reports (provided by calendar year). In future years school board reports will include information regarding the type and extent of involvement of community members in a voluntary capacity in the operation of the school and in the presentation of educational programs and services.

Information about volunteering is also available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The General Social Survey (GSS) has data on volunteering (including age, sex, state, income and household tenure). The GSS will be run in 2006 and include the full volunteer survey, with publication proposed for January 2007. The ABS provides information on quantifying unpaid work, recognising its social and economic value and enabling cross sectional analysis and comparative statistics.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that all occupational health and safety (OH&S) measures established and achieved together with numbers and types of adverse incidents by both staff and students be reported annually.

Government Response

Noted. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989* as amended by the Public Sector Management Act 1994 requires agencies to report on:

- The OH&S policy of the agency during the financial year;
- Measures taken during the year to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all staff;
- Statistics about accidents or dangerous occurrences that required the giving of notices under section;
- Any investigations conducted during the year, including details of all tests conducted on any plant, substance or thing in the course of such investigations;
- Directions given to the relevant agency under the OH&S Act; and
- Details of any injury prevention programs initiated or implemented during the year.

