

2017

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
REPORT NO 1**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2015-2016

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2015-2016

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 Public Accounts reviewed annual reports for:

- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
- ACT Long Service Leave Authority
- Canberra Institute of Technology– for calendar year 2015
- Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (Default Insurance Fund, Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, and Skills Canberra)
- Education Directorate
- University of Canberra – for calendar year 2015.

The Committee made 12 recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

3.17 *The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report to the Legislative Assembly on the status of the partnership agreement with the Commonwealth Government for universal access to early childhood education.*

3.18 *The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate report in the 2016-17 Annual Report on the comparative breakdown of ACT and interstate children currently accessing ACT preschool, primary school and high school programs.*

Government Response – Agreed

3.17 The Education Directorate will report on the status of the national partnership as part of the Education Directorate’s 2016-17 Annual Report.

3.18 The Education Directorate will report on this in the 2016-17 Annual Report.

Recommendation 2

3.32 *The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate examine what additional steps and/or measures could be taken to reduce the number of incidents of occupational violence and report those matters in the Education Directorate 2016-17 Annual Report.*

Government Response - Agreed

Information on the response and actions taken to reduce the number of occupational violence incidents will be included in the Education Directorate’s 2016-17 Annual Report.

Recommendation 3

3.39 *The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development report on the progress of the People, Practice and Performance framework at the 2016-17 Annual and Financial Report hearings.*

Government Response - Agreed

The *People, Practice and Performance Framework* outlines the Directorate’s mechanisms to ensure schools are taking a systematic approach to improving performance. The cycle of external school reviews enters its second year in 2017 with individual external school review reports published on school websites. These review reports inform development of future five-year school strategic plans and annual action plans.

Recommendation 4

3.46 *The Committee recommends that in its 2016-17 Annual Report, the Education Directorate report on progress towards the installation of air conditioning at ACT schools and colleges.*

3.47 *The Committee recommends that in its 2016-17 Annual Report, the Education Directorate report on progress towards proposed classroom upgrades.*

Government Response - Agreed

3.46 The Education Directorate will report on the progress of upgrade works to air conditioning and cooling systems in the Directorate's 2016-17 Annual Report.

3.47 The Education Directorate will report on the progress of classroom upgrades in the Directorate's 2016-17 Annual Report.

Recommendation 5

3.54 *The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate provide updated information on the development and implementation of the ACT Safe Schools Program as it is being implemented in ACT schools.*

3.55 *The Committee also recommends that the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development provide advice to the Committee on the role, scope and priorities of the ACT Safe Schools Program once it is established.*

Government Response - Agreed

3.54 Sexual Health and Family Planning (SHFPACT) is currently developing a Safe and Inclusive Schools program with input from the community including principal representatives and parent groups. It is intended that the program will be voluntary. The program will only work directly with schools who have requested support, information or expertise and support will be tailored to a school community's unique needs. During the transition phase from the previous Safe Schools program to the Safe and Inclusive Schools Program, SHFPACT was also engaged to respond to requests for support from schools until the new program is operational in Semester 2, 2017.

3.55 The Safe and Inclusive Schools program is expected to be operational in Semester 2, 2017. The Directorate will provide further information to the Assembly once the program is fully operational.

Recommendation 6

4.8 *The Committee recommends that the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations report back to the Committee at the 2016-17 Annual and Financial Report hearings on the results of the triennial actuarial review of the Territory's portable long service leave schemes.*

Government Response - Agreed in principle

The Long Service Leave Authority's triennial actuarial report is currently being prepared, effective as at 30 June 2017.

The report is scheduled to be finalised late in 2017. The Authority will provide this report to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations upon its completion, prior to the end of 2017.

The Minister will report back to the Assembly and be in a position to discuss the findings at the relevant 2016-17 Annual Report Hearing, subject to the Report having been made available in advance of the hearing.

Recommendation 7

4.11 The Committee recommends that in its 2016-17 Annual Report, the Education Directorate report on the progress towards implementing the outstanding recommendations from the Getting Home Safely report.

Government Response – Noted

Responsibility for implementing the construction training and funding recommendations made in the Getting Home Safely report is now the shared, and ongoing, focus of the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations' safety advisory council, the ACT Work Safety Council, as well as the Construction Safety Advisory sub-committee.

The Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations Division (CMTEDD) facilitates this work and was also responsible for reviewing the overall implementation of the Getting Home Safely report recommendations.

The Government is currently considering a review into the implementation of the Getting Home Safely recommendations alongside the results of a recent survey of the safety culture in the construction industry. The Government intends to release the findings of the review and the safety culture survey results as part of a future focused construction safety strategy and industry engagement plan.

Recommendation 8

4.15 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations report in its 2016-17 annual report on any options the ACT Government has taken up to address public sector workers compensation.

Government Response - Agreed

The 2016-17 Annual Report will describe the policy position on ACT public sector workers' compensation insurance coverage, including the Government's decision to not exit the Comcare scheme.

Recommendation 9

5.8 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research update the Legislative Assembly on future funding from the Commonwealth on skills reform.

5.9 If the National Partnership on Skills Reform is not renewed, the Committee recommends that the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research advise the Committee on the ACT's approach to funding skills reform without assistance from the Commonwealth.

Government Response – Agreed

5.8 The Australian Government has committed future funding for the vocational education and training (VET) sector, through the new Skilling Australians Fund and associated National Partnership Agreement announced in the 2017-18 Federal Budget.

The National Partnership for the Skilling Australians Fund is subject to negotiation between the Australian and state and territory governments. The Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research will make a statement to the Assembly at an appropriate time, to provide information about future funding arrangements under the new National Partnership.

5.9 The new Skilling Australians Fund and associated National Partnership Agreement announced in the 2017-18 Federal Budget will supersede the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, which expired on 30 June 2017. The Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research will provide advice to the Committee on the new National Partnership Agreement for the Skilling Australians Fund at an appropriate time, in accordance with intergovernmental processes.

Recommendation 10

7.10 The Committee recommends that CIT include in its 2017 annual report updated information on progress of its campus modernisation strategies, particularly regarding the CIT Woden campus closure.

Government Response - Agreed

Recommendation 11

7.15 The Committee recommends that in its 2017 Annual Report, CIT report on progress towards reducing printing costs at CIT.

Government Response - Agreed

Recommendation 12

8.8 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research advise the Assembly in the Government's response to this report as to the appropriateness or otherwise of the Committee's future consideration of the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the University of Canberra.

Government Response – Noted

The University of Canberra (UC) operates under the University of Canberra Act 1989, which requires UC to provide an annual report for presentation to the Legislative Assembly each calendar year. Neither the University of Canberra Act nor the Financial Management Act 1996 require the UC Annual Report to be referred to committee for formal examination. The Government considers the current reporting requirements provide sufficient oversight and transparency.