



Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Public Accounts Committee

Annual Report 2025-26

October 2026



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Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Parliament House

State Square

Darwin NT 0800

Web: www.parliament.nt.gov.au

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Chair's Preface

The primary focus of the Public Accounts Committee over the past 12 months has been responding to inquiry referrals. As detailed in Chapter 3, during the reporting period the Committee finalised and reported on three substantial inquiry referrals concerning the Darwin Ship Lift Project, the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum and the Acacia Digital Patient Record System.

These inquiries required extensive examination of complex matters involving public expenditure, government administration and accountability. They demonstrate the important role of the Public Accounts Committee in ensuring that decisions involving public resources are subject to rigorous, independent and transparent parliamentary scrutiny.

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Committee received four briefings from the Auditor-General regarding his reports to the Legislative Assembly and associated matters. These covered a range of issues including proposed changes to Statutory Integrity Offices; the audit of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report; results of agency financial audits; the Police Information System Replacement Project; the independence of Australasian Auditors-General; and the effectiveness of internal audits and audit committees.

Pursuant to Standing Order 121, eight petitions were referred to the Committee for consideration as to whether they should be debated in the Assembly. As part of its deliberations the Committee sought advice from responsible Ministers on two occasions and thanks them for their prompt responses. The Committee subsequently recommended five petitions for debate in the Assembly.

As noted in Chapter 2, I had the privilege of representing the Legislative Assembly at the 18th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC), held in Hobart on 20-21 April 2026. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences with parliamentary colleagues from across Australia and the Pacific and reflect upon the important role of public accounts committees in strengthening parliamentary oversight.

Of particular significance was the recognition of the considerable volume and complexity of work undertaken by the Northern Territory Public Accounts Committee. Discussions and comparisons with our counterparts demonstrated that the Northern Territory Committee had been one of the busiest Public Accounts Committees in Australia for now two reporting periods in a row.

I was particularly pleased that our inquiry into the Darwin Ship Lift Project was examined as a case study for ACPAC, demonstrating what a Public Accounts Committee can achieve through rigorous investigation and parliamentary scrutiny. The analysis illustrated the capacity of parliamentary committees to examine complex government decisions, scrutinise significant public expenditure and strengthen accountability to the people we represent.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution of the secretariat throughout the reporting period. In particular, the Ship Lift and Acacia

inquiries required the examination and analysis of substantial volumes of complex documentary evidence. The professionalism, diligence and quality of work demonstrated by the secretariat have been exemplary and instrumental to the Committee's achievements.

I also extend my appreciation to the Auditor-General for his professional assistance and valuable contribution to the Committee's work, and to all those who provided submissions, attended private briefings or appeared before the Committee at public hearings.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my fellow Committee members: Deputy Chair Laurie Zio MLA, Member for Fannie Bay; Brian O'Gallagher MLA, Member for Karama; Justine Davis MLA, Member for Johnston; Ed Smelt MLA, Member for Nightcliff; and Manuel Brown MLA, Member for Arafura, each of whom served on the Committee during the reporting period.

I am especially proud of the cooperative and respectful culture we have developed within the Committee. Despite the differing political perspectives represented by its membership, our work has been characterised by constructive engagement, mutual respect and a shared commitment to the proper scrutiny of government. I thank each member for their professionalism, diligence and willingness to work collaboratively in the public interest.

Effective parliamentary scrutiny is fundamental to responsible government. It is through robust examination, transparency and accountability that we uphold the confidence of the people we serve. I am proud of what this Committee has achieved together over the reporting period.



Mr Clinton Howe MLA
Chair

Committee Members

Chair:	Mr Clinton Howe MLA Member for Drysdale
Deputy Chair:	Mrs Laurie Zio MLA Member for Fannie Bay
Members:	Justine Davis MLA Member for Johnston Mr Brian O’Gallagher MLA Member for Karama Mr Ed Smelt MLA Member for Nightcliff

On 8 May 2026, Member for Arafura, Mr Manuel Brown MLA was discharged from the Committee, and the Member for Nightcliff, Mr Ed Smelt MLA was appointed to the Committee.

Committee Secretariat

Committee Secretary:	Julia Knight
Senior Research Officer:	Dr Will Dreyer
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Terms of Reference

Standing Order 177

Public Accounts Committee

- (1) Public Accounts Committee will be appointed at the commencement of each Assembly and have the following duties:
 - (a) to examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory and each statement and report tabled in the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to the Financial Management Act 1995 and the Audit Act 1995
 - (b) to report to the Legislative Assembly with such comments as it thinks fit, any items or matters in or arising in connection with those accounts, statements or reports, or in connection with the receipt or disbursement of the moneys to which they relate, to which the Committee is of the opinion that the attention of Parliament should be drawn
 - (c) to report to the Legislative Assembly any alteration which the Committee thinks desirable in the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them or in the method of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys
 - (d) to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any question in connection with the public accounts of the Northern Territory
 - (i) which is referred to it by a resolution of the Assembly or
 - (ii) which is referred to it by the Administrator or a Minister
 - (e) to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any matters within the executive authority of Ministers of the Territory to which the Committee is of the opinion that the attention of the Assembly should be drawn.
- (2) The Committee will consist of six¹ Members.
- (3) The Committee must take care not to inquire into any matters which are being examined by a Select Committee of the Assembly especially appointed to inquire into such matters and any question arising on possible overlap may be referred to the Assembly for determination.
- (4) The Committee will elect a Government Member as Chair.
- (5) The Committee will have power to appoint sub-committees and to refer to any such sub-committee any matter which the Committee is empowered to examine.
- (6) The Committee will provide an annual report of its activities to the Assembly.

¹ Assembly resolution of 16 October 2024 provided that the Committee would have 5 members.

Standing Order 121

Action on Petition

- (1) After a petition has been read in the Assembly, any member may move, without notice, that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration to determine whether the petition should be debated.
- (2) If the Committee determines that the petition may be debated, it will notify the Clerk of its decision in writing and the debate of the petition will be set down on the Notice Paper as an order of the day for Debates on Petitions.
- (3) When the order of the day is called on, the member who moved that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee will move that the Assembly note the petition. This motion cannot be amended. The mover and a Minister may speak for up to 10 minutes, and 4 other members may speak for up to 3 minutes. The mover may not speak in reply.
- (4) An order of the day for Debates on Petitions interrupted by the routine of business will be listed first of such orders of the day on the Notice Paper.

As amended 21 July 2026

1 Introduction

Establishment and Functions of the Committee

- 1.1 The Public Accounts Committee was established by the Assembly on 16 October 2024 under Standing Order 177.
- 1.2 The duties of the Public Accounts Committee are to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any question in connection with the public accounts of the Northern Territory as it deems necessary, as well as any matter referred to it by the Assembly, Administrator or any Minister. The Committee also examines the reports of the Auditor-General.
- 1.3 The Committee also has a duty to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any matters within the executive authority of Ministers of the Territory to which the Committee is of the opinion that the attention of the Assembly should be drawn.
- 1.4 Pursuant to Standing Order 121, the Committee is also responsible for considering whether petitions referred to it by any member of the Assembly should be debated in the Assembly.
- 1.5 During the reporting period, the Committee met 14 times. Details of these meetings are contained in the Associated Minutes of Proceedings tabled alongside this report.

2 Committee Activity

Auditor-General's Briefings

- 2.1 It is a long-held practice for Auditor-Generals to brief the Public Accounts Committee on the contents of their reports to the Legislative Assembly and associated matters. During the reporting period the Committee received a total of 4 briefings from the Auditor-General as summarised below.
- 2.2 On 15 October 2025 the Auditor-General briefed the Committee on proposed changes to Statutory Integrity Offices as set out in the *Review into the Structural Models for Statutory Integrity Offices* report.²
- 2.3 At its meeting of 11 March 2026, the Auditor-General briefed the Committee on his:
- *Audit of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 30 June 2025* (Report No. 4 of 2025-26)
 - *Results of Agency Financial Audits 30 June 2025* (Report No. 5 of 2025-26)
 - *Police Information System Replacement Project* (Report No. 6 of 2025-26); and
 - the findings of the Australasian Council of Auditors General as set out in its *Independence of the Australasian Auditors General Report 2025*.
- 2.4 On 22 July 2026 the Auditor-General briefed the Committee on the *Results of Financial Audits 30 June and 31 December 2025* (Report No. 1 of 2026-27). This report included audits of the Higher Education and VET Sector (Charles Darwin University, Menzies School of Health Research and Batchelor Institute), and the audits of other entities that were not captured in Report No. 5 of 2025-26 including National Park Boards; Territory Wildlife Parks; and the Northern Territory Police Supplementary Benefit Scheme.
- 2.5 In relation to the audit of Charles Darwin University (CDU), the Committee noted that during the 2025 reporting period international student enrolments had increased by 29%. As the Auditor-General was unable to advise as to how many of these students were completing their studies at one of the CDU's campuses as opposed to those studying online, clarification was sought from the interim Vice Chancellor, Professor Coulson. A copy of the Vice Chancellor's response is provided at Appendix 6.
- 2.6 At its meeting of 26 August 2026, the Auditor-General briefed the Committee on the progress made by government departments and agencies in implementing the recommendations and observations from his Report No. 3 2025-26, *Effectiveness of Internal Audit and Audit Committees*.

² Bruce McClintock SC and Hon Graham Hiley AM RFD KC, *Review into the Structural Models for Statutory Integrity Offices Report*, August 2025, <https://territorystories.nt.gov.au/10070/1009874>

Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees

2.7 The Australian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) was established in 1989 to:

- facilitate the exchange of information and opinion relating to Public Accounts Committees and to discuss matters of mutual concern
- improve the quality and performance of Public Accounts Committees in Australasia
- liaise with Auditors-General so as to improve the effectiveness of both the auditors and the public accounts committees
- communicate with individuals and organisations knowledgeable about matters of concern to public accountability, and
- provide an educational service for the elected Members of Parliament, the media and the general public as to the purposes and activities of the Public Account Committees.³

2.8 To this end, ACPAC conferences have been convened every 2 years with mid-term meetings held in the intervening years. The 18th Biennial Conference was held in Hobart from 20-21 April 2026. Hosted by the Tasmanian Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, the conference brought together 71 delegates from across Australasia and the Pacific, including members of Public Accounts Committees, Auditors-General, and parliamentary staff. Representing the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the conference was attended by Committee Chair, Mr Clinton Howe MLA, former committee member Mr Manuel Brown MLA, Executive Director Parliamentary Support, Ms Candice Maclean, and Senior Research Officer, Dr Will Dreyer.

2.9 The Conference theme of financial oversight, accountability and transparency focused on:

the critical role of PAC's in holding Executive Government to account, particularly in managing emerging and complex risks, including fiscal pressures, social outcomes and climate-related challenges. The program featured range of expert presentations and discussions examining PAC/Audit Office relationships, fraud detection, performance auditing, emerging risk trends, and the scrutiny of executive decision-making.⁴

2.10 The first day of the Conference considered the role of Audit Offices and included a comparative analysis of the independence of the Australasian Auditor-Generals. The second day examined the roles of Public Accounts Committees across Australasia, including evolving functions and expectations as well as shared challenges and ways to address them.

³ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 3.

⁴ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 1.

- 2.11 At the ACPAC General Meeting, held on day 2 of the Conference, members resolved to amend the definition of 'Australasia' in the ACPAC constitution to 'enhance inclusivity and encourage broader regional participation, particularly from Pacific jurisdictions.'⁵ When the ACPAC was first established full membership was only open to Australasian Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees, with 'Australasia' defined as Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Associate membership was open to other Public Accounts Committees located elsewhere.⁶
- 2.12 The amended constitution now extends the definition of 'Australasia' to include Bougainville, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Niue and the Cook Islands⁷; thereby granting full membership status to member countries of the Pacific Network of Public Accounts Committees and expanding Pacific representation and regional collaboration in public accounts oversight. To further facilitate flexibility and accessibility for members, the ACPAC constitution was also amended to provide that mid-term meetings may be held virtually.⁷
- 2.13 With regards to future ACPAC conferences, PAC Chair Mr Clinton Howe MLA registered the Northern Territory's interest in hosting the 2029 Mid-term Meeting and the 2030 20th Biennial Conference. This will be ratified at the 2028 General Meeting.

Figure 1: ACPAC 2026 – Official Photograph⁸



⁵ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 1.

⁶ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 1.

⁷ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 1.

⁸ Parliament of Tasmania, Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts, *ACPAC 2026 – 18th Conference Parliament of Tasmania*, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/107200/FINAL-PAC-ACPAC-Hobart-Report-11-June-2026.pdf, p. 8.

3 Inquiries

Darwin Ship Lift Project

- 3.1 Pursuant to clause 1(d)(ii) of its terms of reference, on 11 May 2025 the Committee received an inquiry referral from the Treasurer, the Hon Bill Yan MLA, requesting that the Committee investigate a range of matters associated with the cost and implementation of the Darwin Ship Lift Project and present its report to the Assembly in the September 2025 sittings (see Appendix 1). Given the detailed terms of reference, the volume of material submitted to the Committee for consideration and the complexity of the matter, the Committee subsequently sought and received an amended reporting date to on or before 31 October 2025.
- 3.2 The Committee completed its inquiry during the current reporting period and, pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), presented its report to the Speaker on 30 October 2025 for tabling in the Assembly on 25 November 2025.
- 3.3 As set out in the Committee's report, the Ship Lift and Marine Industries Complex (SLAMI Complex) was first announced in 2015. What began as a \$100 million commitment has now escalated to an \$820 million project, with completion expected by 1 March 2027. Beyond cost escalations, the Committee was particularly concerned by the contractual structure executed by former Chief Minister Michael Gunner and varied by former Chief Minister Eva Lawler. These agreements transferred significant commercial benefit of the Ship Lift's operations to a private entity, while assigning substantial financial risk, capital cost and long-term liability to the Territory.
- 3.4 While the Committee acknowledged that the completed facility would deliver strategic and commercial benefits for the Territory, it recommended that strict cost controls be implemented whereby any further variations to contracts or the Target Outturn Cost require approval from the Treasurer. To facilitate forward planning by prospective users of the SLAMI Complex, the Committee also recommended that the Government introduce the Access and Pricing legislation in the Legislative Assembly as soon as practical. To maximise the benefits of the SLAMI Complex the Committee further recommended that the Government coordinate the implementation of initiatives to address workforce skills shortages that may impact on the capacity of the Ship Lift facility to meet anticipated service demands.
- 3.5 Given that Cabinet-in-Confidence protections limited the Committee's ability to fully review key documents associated with early decision-making, and noting the importance of maintaining clear and accessible records to support oversight of major capital investments, the Committee recommended that government agencies be required to design and implement processes to ensure information demonstrating evidence-based decision-making is documented, retained and, if necessary, captured in a format that can be provided for audit scrutiny.
- 3.6 In accordance with Standing Order 201, on 30 April 2026 the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, the Hon Bill Yan MLA, advised that the Government accepted the Committee's recommendations and provided the following update:

- Construction activity on the ship lift facility has continued as recommended.
- Recommended strict cost controls have been implemented; specifically including any request for variation that would see an increase to the Target Outturn Cost will go to the Treasurer for review and endorsement;
- Access and Pricing legislation is anticipated to be introduced in Parliament in Q3 2026.
- Coordination and implementation of initiatives to address workforce skills shortages that may impact on the capacity of the Ship Lift facility to meet anticipated service demands are being considered and led by the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations.
- Work is continuing to review the NT Project Development Framework.⁹

3.7 A copy of the Committee's report, government response, and associated documentation is available at: <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/public-accounts-committee/Darwin-Ship-Lift-Project>.

Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum

- 3.8 Pursuant to clause 1(d)(i) of its Terms of Reference,¹⁰ on 22 May 2025 the Assembly resolved that the Committee inquire into and report on issues raised in the Auditor-General's November 2018 report regarding the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum Scheme (see Appendix 2). The Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum (IEPS) was created in 2014 to increase employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians through public construction projects. However, the scheme was suspended in 2017 following concerns raised about potential widespread misuse.
- 3.9 The Committee completed its inquiry during the current reporting period and, pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), presented its report to the Speaker on 30 October 2025 for tabling in the Assembly on 25 November 2025.
- 3.10 Contrary to some public discussion, the Committee found no evidence of large-scale or systemic fraud. Of the \$60.8 million paid through the IEPS, a total of \$1.6 million (approximately 2.6 per cent) was later identified as overpayments. Only \$0.3 million of that amount was proven to involve fraudulent conduct, resulting in three criminal convictions. The Committee found that the overwhelming majority of irregular payments stemmed from unclear policy design and inconsistent administrative processes, rather than deliberate wrongdoing by industry.
- 3.11 Above all, the inquiry served to reinforce that major policy initiatives must be supported by adequate planning, documented business cases, clear guidance, and appropriate systems before implementation. These safeguards protect the public purse and ensure that policy objectives deliver genuine economic benefit. To this end the Committee recommended that Agencies be required to develop policy

⁹ Government Response, *Inquiry into the Darwin Ship Lift Project*, 30 April 2026, https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1619691/From-Minister-for-Logistics-and-Infrastructure-Government-Response-Inquiry-into-the-Darwin-Ship-Lift-30-April-2026.PDF

¹⁰ Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, *Standing Orders (In force as of 21 July 2026)* 5th Edition, <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/business/standing-and-sessional-orders>, Standing Order 177 – Public Accounts Committee, p. 52.

implementation plans, to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer, detailing the performance management system, processes, procedures, controls, risk mitigation, guidance documentation, communication strategy and staff training required prior to the implementation of all major policy initiatives.

- 3.12 Noting that Aboriginal employment obligations continue to play an important role within the Value for Territory framework and support real opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians, the evidence submitted to the Committee indicated that verification of participation rates remained challenging for agencies. As such, the Committee further recommended that the Contractor Compliance Unit strengthen its internal systems to support Aboriginal Territorians to have greater participation in the Northern Territory's workforce and procurement outcomes.
- 3.13 In response to the Committee's recommendations, on 29 January 2026 the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, the Hon Bill Yan MLA, advised that a range of reforms had been implemented including:
- Providing the Audit, Risk and Investigations Unit with the ability to report matters directly to the Chief Executive Officer, ensuring greater transparency and objectivity.
 - Centralising and actively monitoring contractor performance reviews, supported by comprehensive staff training in updated procedures.
 - Strengthening governance structures, including enhanced conflict-of-interest declaration processes and revised meeting schedules to support effective oversight.
 - Consistently exceeding government targets for awarding contracts to Aboriginal Business Enterprises, while refining system to improve verification of Aboriginal participation.
 - Embedding enhance controls, improved document management practices, and strengthened contract management and procurement training, including elements of risk management.¹¹

- 3.14 A copy of the Committee's report, government response, and associated documentation is available at: <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/public-accounts-committee/IEPS>.

Acacia Digital Patient Record System

- 3.15 Pursuant to clause 1(d)(ii) of its terms of reference, on 13 February 2025 the Committee received an inquiry referral from the Treasurer, the Hon Bill Yan MLA, requesting that the Committee investigate the costs associated with the implementation and management of the Acacia Digital Patient Record System (see Appendix 3).
- 3.16 The Acacia Digital Patient Record System (Acacia) refers to the new clinical ICT software in the public healthcare system of the Northern Territory. Delivered by the Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program (CCSRP) housed within the Department of

¹¹ Government Response, *Inquiry into the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum*, 29 January 2026, https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1590798/From-Treasurer-Government-Response-to-IEPS-Report-5-February-2026.pdf

Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD), the Department of Health is the client agency, and will be the end-user of Acacia. Acacia is built on the foundation of 'TrakCare', a commercial-off-the-shelf clinical ICT software purchased from InterSystems.

- 3.17 Partially funded in 2016, with a budget allocation of \$185.9 million, the program was planned to be completed by the end of the 2020-21 financial year. In May 2017, the CCSRP was fully funded, bringing the total budget to \$259 million. In 2019, Acacia was planned to be deployed in 6 different stages, called Functional Groups (FG). However, at the time of reporting, only 2 of the 6 stages had been delivered: FG0 and FG1. Existing funding is not sufficient to deliver any further stages in full. Despite this, the program budget had increased to \$335 million, with \$319.6 million spent to March 2026.
- 3.18 Following detailed consideration of the evidence provided to the Committee, including submissions from stakeholders, testimony in public hearings, key internal documents from the CCSRP, and answers to written questions from the Committee to DCDD and NT Health, the Committee developed a number of recommendations which sought to address the key issues highlighted in its Inquiry. Firstly, given the outstanding questions the Committee had regarding the program budget and costs to date, the Committee recommended that the Government commission a financial audit of Acacia.
- 3.19 Subsequent recommendations sought to address the broad range of issues identified within the CCSRP, which the Committee understood had a significant impact on the delivery of Acacia to schedule and on budget. Issues identified by stakeholders included:
- the responsiveness of the CCSRP to issues identified by clinicians that impacted workflows and presented patient safety risks, both prior to deployment and following implementation
 - the difference between TrakCare and the requirements of NT Health, insufficiently planned and undertaken re-engineering of NT Health business practices, and a resulting need to extensively customise TrakCare
 - governance matters, including change management, benefit management and realisation, utilisation of program management methodologies, oversight and reporting of the program, and workplace culture.
- 3.20 A suite of governance reforms were the focus of the first tranche of recommendations. Importantly, the Committee recommended that a review of the *NTG ICT Governance Framework*, which had not been updated since 2015, be undertaken. The Committee considered that the review should assess lessons learned from Acacia and other ICT programs and projects delivered by DCDD on behalf of client agencies as well as best practice across jurisdictions.
- 3.21 Further governance reforms recommended by the Committee included the:
- requirement for independent and expert membership on steering committees of complex ICT programs and projects

- elevation of benefits management and realisation throughout the lifecycle of programs and projects
 - enhancement of reporting and oversight mechanisms to enable governance bodies to accurately assess the status and health of complex ICT programs and projects
 - development of a cross-government reporting framework for all agencies for consistency and clarity of reporting and oversight.
- 3.22 Additionally, in response to concerns regarding the lack of resolution of clinical issues, the Committee recommended that Service Level Agreements or an appropriate alternative mechanism be implemented between DCDD and client agencies to ensure that there are agreed outcomes and standards of functionality when DCDD delivers ICT projects and programs, and avenues for recourse if those standards are not met.
- 3.23 The Committee was particularly concerned to hear from stakeholders of serious issues regarding what was referred to as a ‘toxic’ workplace culture in the CCSRP, and the impact this had on program delivery and costs. To address some of the root causes of these workplace culture issues, the Committee recommended that DCDD review its induction process for contractors and develop an annual survey of personnel contracted within DCDD aligned to the NT Public Service People Matter Survey,¹² with results to be published in their annual report. These mechanisms sought to both ensure that DCDD contractors understand their workplace health and safety rights and obligations and are aware of complaints processes and procedures; and enable public scrutiny of DCDD’s commitment to improving their workplace culture on an ongoing basis.
- 3.24 The Committee also considered the future of Acacia. While the Committee did not consider that ongoing reliance on the existing legacy systems was tenable, it was not confident that Acacia and the CCSRP were necessarily the most appropriate pathway forward for the Northern Territory. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that strict cost controls are implemented whereby any additional funding is subject to an independently prepared business case that includes rigorous clinical engagement and elevates clinical decision-making in governance, and evaluates the costs, objectives, benefits and implementation timeframe of any proposed future works.
- 3.25 In addition, the Committee recommended that DCDD and NT Health identify any staffing costs to NT Health that have arisen due to the implementation of Acacia that are required to maintain pre-existing levels of functionality and patient safety, such as manual system auditing. Alongside this, the Committee recommended the underlying issues be remediated to eliminate those ongoing costs.
- 3.26 The Committee considered that the existing budget should be utilised on the assumption that no further funding is to be granted to the Acacia program. As such, the Committee recommended that work be conducted to make Acacia fit-for-purpose as a patient administration system for the long-term and integrated with the existing

¹² Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, *People Matter Survey*.

legacy systems. The Committee considered that further development of FG2-5 should only be conducted upon completion of these activities and the remediation of ongoing additional costs to NT Health. Even then, the Committee considered the program should only pursue those FGs that could be delivered and provide clinical benefits within the existing program budget.

- 3.27 Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), the Committee's report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 28 August 2026. At the time of writing the Government had not yet provided its response to the Committee's report and recommendations. In accordance with Standing Order 201(1), it is noted that the Government has 6 months within which to report to the Assembly what action, if any, it proposes to take in relation to each of the Committee's recommendations. A copy of the Committee's report and associated documentation is available at: <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/public-accounts-committee/Acacia-Digital-Patient-Record-System>.

4 Petitions

- 4.1 Pursuant to Standing Order 121(1),¹³ petitions read in the Legislative Assembly may be referred to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration as to whether the petition should be debated in the Assembly. Following is an overview of the petitions referred to the Committee during the reporting period and the outcome of the Committee's considerations. Copies of all petitions and Ministerial responses tabled in the Assembly are available at: <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/business/petitions-and-responses>.

Petition No. 18

- 4.2 Signed by 1524 e-petitioners, Petition No. 18 calling on the Government to abandon its proposed amendments to the NT *Anti-Discrimination Act*, was referred to the Committee on 22 October 2025.
- 4.3 Following consideration of the petition, at its meeting of 28 October 2025 the Committee resolved not to recommend the petition for debate in the Assembly given that the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2025 had been passed into law on 16 October 2025.¹⁴

Petition No. 19

- 4.4 On 27 November 2025, the Assembly referred Petition No. 19 to the Committee. Signed by 204 petitioners it called on the Government to urgently review safety conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on Bagot Road.
- 4.5 The Committee considered the petition at its meeting of 4 February 2026 and resolved to advise the Clerk that it was of the view that the Assembly should debate the petition. While set down as an order of the day for debate on 5 February 2026, the motion was not moved and the order lapsed.

Petition No. 20

- 4.6 The Assembly referred Petition No. 20 to the Committee on 11 March 2026. Signed by 161 petitioners, it called on the Government to immediately pause the closure of the Pine Creek Police Station.
- 4.7 At its meeting of 18 March 2026, the Committee decided to seek advice from the Minister for Police. The Minister subsequently advised that while the Pine Creek Police Station would transition to a consolidated, flexible service post to support sustainable staffing and improved responsiveness, police presence in Pine Creek will continue and the police station would not be closed (see Appendix 4).

¹³ Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, *Standing Orders (In force as of 21 July 2026)* 5th Edition, <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/business/standing-and-sessional-orders>, p. 31.

¹⁴ Parliamentary Record, *Debates and Questions – Day 3 – 16 October 2025*, <https://territorystories.nt.gov.au/10070/1030009>, pp. 2939-80

- 4.8 Given the Minister's response, at its meeting of 6 May 2026, the Committee resolved not to recommend the petition for debate in the Assembly.

Petition Nos. 21 and 22

- 4.9 Petition Nos. 21 and 22 were referred to the Committee by the Assembly on 17 March 2026. These petitions called on the Government to address problem housing tenancies across the Northern Territory so that urban suburbs are safe and members of the community feel safe in their communities and homes.
- 4.10 The Committee considered the petitions at its meeting of 18 March 2026 and resolved to advise the Clerk that it was of the view that the Assembly should debate the petitions. The petitions were subsequently debated in the Assembly on 5 May 2026.¹⁵

Petition No. 23

- 4.11 On 21 July 2026, the Assembly referred Petition No. 23 to the Committee. Signed by 2,421 petitioners, it called on the Government to replace the Katherine Hospital with a new facility outside of the Katherine flood zone.
- 4.12 The Committee considered the submission at its meeting of 22 July 2026, and resolved to advise the Clerk that it was of the view that the Assembly should debate the petition. The petition was subsequently debated in the Assembly on 25 August 2026.¹⁶

Petition No. 24

- 4.13 The Assembly referred Petition No. 24 to the Committee on 22 July 2026. Signed by 137 petitioners, the petition called on the Government to take immediate action to improve housing quality for residents of Mulgga Town Camp near Mataranka.
- 4.14 At its meeting of 20 August 2026, the Committee considered the petition and resolved to write to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development and seek his advice on the matters raised in the petition.
- 4.15 The Minister subsequently advised that as Mulgga is a non-leased, community-controlled town camp it does not form part of the Government's remote public housing system. Rather, responsibility for the management, condition, allocation and occupancy of housing at Mulgga rests with the relevant community-controlled housing management body and other parties responsible for the land and housing assets and not the Northern Territory Government (see Appendix 5).
- 4.16 Given the Minister's response, at its meeting of 14 October 2026, the Committee resolved not to recommend the petition for debate in the Assembly.

¹⁵ Parliamentary Record, *Draft Daily Hansard – Day 1 – 5 May 2026*, <https://hdl.handle.net/10070/1035763>, pp. 61-66.

¹⁶ Parliamentary Record, *Draft Daily Hansard – Day 1 – 25 August 2026*, <https://hdl.handle.net/10070/1046237>, pp. 102-106.

Petition No. 25

- 4.17 Petition No. 25 was referred to the Committee on 23 July 2026. Signed by 432 petitioners, it called on the Government to urgently address the deterioration of NT public housing and restore safe, liveable homes.
- 4.18 Following consideration of the petition, at its meeting of 20 August 2026, the Committee resolved to advise the Clerk that it was of the view that the petition should be debated in the Assembly. On 25 August 2026 the petition was debated in the Assembly.¹⁷

¹⁷ Parliamentary Record, *Draft Daily Hansard – Day 1 – 25 August 2026*, <https://hdl.handle.net/10070/1046237>, pp. 106-111.

Appendix 1: Inquiry Referral – Darwin Ship Lift Project



TREASURER

Parliament House
State Square
Darwin NT 0800
minister.yan@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 31 46
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: 08 8999 8700

Public Accounts Committee

Dear Chair

In 2015 the Darwin Shiplift was proposed with a \$100 million commitment by the CLP Government. The project has faced years of delay and cost escalations so that by the 2024/25 Labor Budget the estimated cost had climbed to \$515 million.

The former Labor Government executed final contractual commitments before the August 2024 Northern Territory general election pushing the Territory past the contractual point of no return. Termination would trigger significant break costs.

Construction is now under way and major equipment is on order. Additional cost pressures in the order of hundreds of millions are now anticipated.

The Finocchiaro CLP Government is committed growing our defence and maritime industries and this project has significant benefits to the local economy.

We want to be open and transparent with Territorians on the costs of the project and ensure steps are taken to minimise further delays and cost blow outs.

I respectfully request that the Public Accounts Committee inquire into the following:

Economic & Strategic Benefits

- Updated demand (defence, offshore energy, coastal shipping, super yachts, fishing).
- Direct/indirect jobs, supply chain impacts, skills development.

Contractual Commitments & Optimisation Options

- Key obligations and risk allocation in the executed agreements.
- Feasible design, staging or pricing refinements that do not breach current contracts.

Cost, Funding & Fiscal Exposure

- Capital and lifecycle cost including escalation and contingency.
- Funding sources (Territory, Commonwealth programs such as NAIF).
- Ongoing budget impacts.

Governance & Project Control



- Adequacy of oversight, probity and cost control processes.

Regulatory & Legislative Settings

- Legislative and regulatory requirements.

Delivery Risks & Mitigation

- Construction, supply chain, workforce and inflationary risks.
- Interface with naval, port and land use planning.
- Contingency plans for cost or schedule overruns.

Opportunity Costs & Regional Impact

- Economic losses from past delays.
- Possible further action needed to fully realise the benefits.

Reporting

Final report with findings and recommendations to be Tabled in September 2025 sittings.

Yours sincerely



BILL YAN

11 May 2025

Appendix 2: Inquiry Referral – Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
15th Assembly

Public Accounts Committee

Inquiry into the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum

Terms of Reference

On 22 May 2025, the Assembly resolved that:

The Public Accounts Committee inquire into and report on the Auditor-General's November 2018 Report to the Legislative Assembly at pages 31 to 66 in respect of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, including but not limited to consideration of:

- a) the full extent of overpayments to all IEPS contractors;
- b) options for repayment by contractors of all unrecovered overpayments; and
- c) implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendations by the former Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and outcomes to date.

and that the Committee present its final report to the Assembly on or before 31 October 2025.

Appendix 3: Inquiry Referral – Acacia Digital Patient Record System



TREASURER

Parliament House
State Square
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minister.yan@nt.gov.au

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Public Accounts Committee - Acacia - Costs associated with implementation and management

I refer to the Public Accounts Committee for further investigation the costs associated with the implementation and management of the Acacia digital patient record system.

I request that the Public Accounts Committee investigate and assess the following:

- The difference between the initial project Budget and the cost of procuring, implementing and managing the Acacia system to date
- A timeline of each of these cost revisions with an explanation for each revision
- Any issues that were raised during implementation of the system, when the responsible Minister was notified of these issues, how long it took for these issues to be resolved, if they were resolved at all, and their cost
- The impact to the health system, and the cost, of any rollbacks/suspensions of using the software in hospitals that occurred during implementation
- The current status of implementation against the original staged project plan and the outstanding steps, and their cost, required for project completion

Yours sincerely

BILL YAN



Appendix 4: Ministerial Advice – Petition 20



CHIEF MINISTER

Parliament House
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chief.minister@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146
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Telephone: 08 8999 8700

Mrs Laurie Zio MLA
Deputy Chair
Public Accounts Committee

Dear Ms Zio

Thank you for your correspondence dated 20 March 2026, regarding the referral of Petition No. 20 to the Public Accounts Committee, which calls for a pause on the closure of the Pine Creek Police Station. I can confirm there will be no closure to the Pine Creek Police Station.

The Northern Territory (NT) Government (NTG) acknowledges the concerns raised by the Pine Creek community and the importance of police presence.

Resource allocation and service delivery are operational matters for the Commissioner of the NT Police Force (NTPF). The NTPF is reviewing arrangements to ensure policing in remote communities remains sustainable, equitable and responsive to demand.

The Pine Creek Police Station currently operates as a two-member station, which creates challenges in meeting community expectations, response times, service continuity and sustained presence. Staffing remote stations across the NT continues to be difficult due to limited workforce availability, ageing infrastructure and changing expectations around remote deployments.

An analysis of calls for service indicates Pine Creek experiences comparatively lower demand than other remote locations with a review identifying an alternative model to improve flexibility, sustainability and regional response capability. Under the proposed model, police presence in Pine Creek will continue, with community safety the priority.

The proposed model transitions Pine Creek Police Station to a consolidated, flexible service post to support sustainable staffing and improved responsiveness. The service delivery under the proposed model will include 24/7 emergency response from Katherine General Duties, scheduled patrols, follow-ups, community engagement and proactive policing while targeting operations with specialist units to address seasonal demand and emerging issues.



The NTPF has communicated the proposed model to the Pine Creek community at a meeting held on 18 March 2026. During this engagement, police addressed misconceptions and reinforced to the community that there will be no closure to the Pine Creek Police Station. Police also advised that, due to uncertainty regarding Daly River, additional resources for Pine Creek, Batchelor and Adelaide River are being considered to maintain regional coverage.

The NTG remains committed to working with the Pine Creek community to ensure appropriate policing services are maintained and changes support improved service delivery across the region.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lia Finocchiaro', written over the printed name and date.

LIA FINOCCHIARO

22 APR 2026

Appendix 5: Ministerial Advice – Petition 24



MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Parliament House
State Square
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minister.edgington@nt.gov.au

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Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: 08 8999 8635

Mr Clinton Howe MLA
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

Via email: Clinton.Howe@nt.gov.au

Dear Mr Howe *Clinton*

I refer to the Public Accounts Committee's request for advice on the matters raised in Petition No. 24 concerning housing and living conditions at Mulgga Town Camp, near Mataranka, including actions taken or proposed in response to the petitioners' concerns. My apologies on the delayed response.

Mulgga is a non-leased, community-controlled town camp and does not form part of the NT Government's remote public housing system. Responsibility for the land, housing assets and associated fixed infrastructure is shared among the relevant landowners, managing organisations, service providers and residents. As a result, the NT Government responsibilities at Mulgga differ from those applying to remote public housing, including leased town camps.

Responsibility for the management, condition, allocation and occupancy of housing at Mulgga rests with the relevant community-controlled housing management body and other parties responsible for the land and housing assets and not the Northern Territory Government.

In 2026-27, the NT Government committed to co-invest \$44.86 million in the continuation of the Homelands Services Program, supporting administration, capital works, housing maintenance, municipal and essential services across 374 homelands, 17 non-leased town camps and eight remote communities, delivered by 33 service providers.

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$220 million from 2022-27 through the *Restoring Funding for NT Homelands* Federation Funding Agreement to support the delivery of urgent housing and infrastructure repairs and upgrades in homelands.



This support does not extend to the same level or scope of housing and tenancy management, repairs and maintenance, or capital investment provided under the remote public housing system.

Roper Gulf Regional Council is funded by the Northern Territory as the service provider for Mulgga town camp and provides housing maintenance, municipal and essential services.

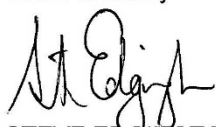
I understand the Homelands Service Program existed for two years under the former Labor Government where the Member for Arnhem was the Minister for Remote Housing and Homelands. It does not appear the Mulgga Town Camp was a priority for improved housing quality or options then.

The NT government remains committed to investing in remote communities through the existing program arrangements. The CLP Government is committed to addressing underlying issues and recognise that access to safe and stable housing support pathways is key to supporting remote residents.

The Department will continue to work with the Mulgga community, community-controlled managing body, Roper Gulf Regional Council, the Northern Land Council, the Mataranka Land Trust and other relevant organisations to support sustainable delivery of eligible services and identify priorities that may be eligible for support through existing government programs.

I trust this information assists the Committee in its consideration of Petition No. 24.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Edgington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

STEVE EDGINGTON

- 6 OCT 2026

Appendix 6: International Student Enrolments

Office of the Vice Chancellor and President

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Mr Clinton Howe MLA
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
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Via email: la.pac@nt.gov.au

31 August 2026

Dear Mr Howe

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 July 2026 seeking clarification regarding Charles Darwin University's international student enrolments, following the Auditor-General's briefing to the Public Accounts Committee.

I am pleased to provide the information below. As the Committee's request arose from consideration of the University's 2025 reporting period, the figures provided relate to international student enrolments and study locations during 2025.

The information provided is based on course-level enrolments and counts each international student once per course. For Degree and Research students, study location has been reported according to the student's course location, regardless of where individual units were undertaken. For TAFE students, course location is not reportable in the same way and the study locations below therefore reflect the location of delivery.

In 2025, CDU recorded 5,070 international Degree and Research enrolments and 345 international TAFE enrolments.

A. Northern Territory locations

International students were recorded at CDU's Northern Territory campuses and locations as follows:

- Casuarina: 1,678 Degree and Research; 46 TAFE
- Danala | Education and Community Precinct: 1,961 Degree and Research; 10 TAFE
- Palmerston: 106 TAFE
- Katherine: 23 TAFE
- Nhulunbuy: 6 TAFE
- Alice Springs: 1 Degree and Research; 73 TAFE
- Other Northern Territory locations: 66 TAFE.

TAFE delivery recorded as "Other NT Locations" includes delivery in towns and locations across the Northern Territory that are not CDU campuses. The largest of these locations in 2025 was Yulara, followed by Wadeye and Keep River.

CDU Casuarina Campus, Ellengowan Drive, Brinkin, Northern Territory, Australia 0811
CRICOS Provider No. 00300K | RTO Provider No. 0373 | TEQSA Provider ID PRV12069 | ABN 54 093 513 649

Page 1 of 2



B. Sydney campus

In 2025, 1,294 international Degree and Research students were recorded with Sydney as their course location.

C. Online study

A relatively small proportion of CDU's international student cohort was recorded as studying online in 2025. For students with an online course location, their state or territory is determined by the term address reported to CDU during the semester.

The reported Australian state or territory of residence for these students was:

- Northern Territory: 66 Degree and Research; 1 TAFE
- New South Wales: 19 Degree and Research
- Victoria: 11 Degree and Research
- Western Australia: 4 Degree and Research
- Queensland: 4 Degree and Research
- South Australia: 3 Degree and Research
- Australian Capital Territory: 1 Degree and Research
- Tasmania: 1 Degree and Research.

International students recorded with an online course location are on non-student visa types and are therefore not subject to the same on-campus study requirements that apply to international student visa holders. These students may undertake all of their studies online. Most are resident in Australia, including in the Northern Territory

D. Online students resident in Australia and overseas

CDU does not currently offer fully online offshore degree enrolments to international students.

Separately, CDU recorded 27 Degree and Research and 14 TAFE international enrolments as offshore in 2025. Offshore TAFE delivery relates to delivery in Timor-Leste.

I trust this information assists the Committee in its consideration of the Auditor-General's briefing. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should the Committee require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



Professor Fiona Coulson
Interim Vice-Chancellor and President

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