



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Public Accounts Committee

Annual Report

2023-24

May 2024

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Chair's Preface

The Public Accounts Committee is responsible for examining the Auditor-General's Reports to the Legislative Assembly. During the reporting period the Committee received three private briefings from the Auditor-General, Mrs Julie Crisp, on matters raised in her reports. The Committee sought private briefings from two agencies to discuss their responses to the Auditor-General's qualified opinions contained within the November 2023 Report to the Legislative Assembly.

Mrs Crisp was appointed as the Auditor-General of the Northern Territory in September 2014 and her second five-year term will conclude later this year. On behalf of the Committee, and former Public Accounts Committees, I wish to express my sincere thanks for the high quality and professional assistance that she has provided to the committees, and her commitment to improving public sector administration through the independent audits and opinions detailed within her reports to the Legislative Assembly.

The Committee also received a private briefing on the outcomes of the Government's electricity market reform program. Pursuant to Sessional Order 12, eight petitions were referred to the Committee for consideration with five subsequently recommended for debate in the Assembly.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank Chief Executives and agency staff for their responsiveness in providing information to the Committee and appearing at private briefings. There were a number of changes to the Committee's membership during the reporting period and I thank the current and former Committee members for their collaborative work as part of the Committee.



Ms Natasha Fyles MLA
Chair

Committee Members

	Ms Natasha Fyles MLA: Member for Nightcliff	
	Party	Territory Labor
	Committee Membership	
	Standing	Public Accounts (Chair) Standing Orders
	Mr Paul Kirby MLA: Member for Port Darwin	
	Party	Territory Labor
	Committee Membership	
	Standing	Public Accounts (Deputy Chair)
	Mrs Robyn Lambley MLA: Member for Araluen	
	Party	Independent
	Committee Membership	
	Standing	Public Accounts House Standing Orders (Deputy Chair)
	Mrs Nicole Manison MLA: Member for Wanguri	
	Party	
	Committee Membership	
	Standing	Public Accounts Privileges Standing Committee on the ICAC (Chair)
	Mr Bill Yan MLA: Member for Namatjira	
	Party	Country Liberals
	Committee Membership	
	Standing	Public Accounts
<p>On 31 January 2024 the Member for Johnston, Hon Joel Bowden MLA; Member for Fannie Bay, Hon Brent Potter MLA; and Member for Daly, Hon Dheran Young MLA, were discharged from the Committee, and the Member for Nightcliff, Ms Natasha Fyles MLA; Member for Port Darwin, Mr Paul Kirby MLA; and Member for Wanguri, Mrs Nicole Manison MLA were appointed to the Committee.</p>		

Committee Secretariat

Acting First Clerk Assistant:	Ms Julia Knight
Acting Committee Secretary:	Ms Elise Dyer
Administration/Research Officer:	Mr Caelan Ikin (July – August 2023 and May – June 2024) Ms Amy Alexander (October 2023 – March 2024)
Administration Assistant:	Ms Kim Cowcher
Contact Details:	GPO Box 3721 DARWIN NT 0801 Tel: +61 08 8946 1485 Email: LA.PAC@nt.gov.au

Terms of Reference

Standing Order 177

Public Accounts Committee

- (1) A 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 20 October 2020 provided that the Committee would have seven Members. Assembly resolution of 23 February 2021 provided that the Committee would have five Members.

Sessional Order 12

Action on Petition

Standing Order 121 is suspended and the following applies:

- (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 as to whether the petition should be debated.
- (2) If the committee recommends to the Assembly that the petition should be debated, the recommendation of the Committee will be notified to the Clerk who will read the recommendation to the Assembly at the commencement of the next meeting day, where any Member may, without notice, move the report be adopted.
- (3) If the motion is agreed, the debate on the petition will be set down on the Notice Paper as an order of the day on the following meeting day of the Assembly to be considered at the time in the Routine of Business made available at item 8 for Debates on Petitions and Responses to Petitions.
- (4) When the order of the day is called on, the Member who moved that the Assembly adopt the recommendation will move that the Assembly note the petition. This motion cannot be amended.
- (5) The debate may comprise a maximum of two Members speaking for up to five minutes each and two other Members speaking for up to three minutes each.

Adopted 20 October 2020

1 Introduction

Establishment and Functions of Committee

- 1.1 The Public Accounts Committee was established by the Assembly on 20 October 2020 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 NT 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 It also has the 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.'²
- 1.4 The Committee also considers whether petitions referred to it by any Member of the Assembly should be debated in the Assembly.

² Standing Order 177(1)(e)

2 Matters followed up by the Committee

Meetings

- 2.1 The Public Accounts Committee met six times during the reporting period. The details of these meetings are contained in the Associated Minutes of Proceedings tabled alongside this report.

Government Response to the Inquiry into Local Decision Making

- 2.1 In May 2023 the Committee tabled its report on the Inquiry into Local Decision Making which was initiated in June 2021. The Committee made eight recommendations to the Government regarding Local Decision Making and the coordination and implementation of Aboriginal Affairs policies more broadly.
- 2.2 In October 2023, the Minister for Treaty and Local Decision Making, Hon Selena Uiho MLA, tabled the Government's response to the Committee's recommendations, which stated that of the eight recommendations, four were supported and four were supported in principle.³

Briefing on Government Owned Corporations

- 2.1 In October 2023 the Committee invited the Department of Treasury and Finance to provide it with a private briefing on the outcomes of the electricity market reform program, and the extent to which it has had a positive or negative impact on electricity tariff pricing determinations and the level of community service obligation funding required to maintain uniform electricity prices to households and small businesses across the Territory below cost of supply. Representatives from the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade attended the briefing to present information to the Committee and respond to questions.

Auditor-General's Briefings

- 2.2 The Auditor-General, Mrs Julie Crisp, provided three private briefings to the Committee during the reporting period on the findings of agency audits reported to the Assembly from July 2023 to May 2024.

Briefings on Responses to the Auditor-General's Qualified Opinions

- 2.3 In March 2024 the Committee received private briefings from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities on their responses to the Auditor-General's qualified

³ Further information about this inquiry including submissions, hearing transcripts, the Committee's report and the Government response to recommendations can be found at <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/list/PAC/LDM>.

opinion regarding the asset revaluation audit and end of year reviews contained within the November 2023 report to the Legislative Assembly.

3 Petitions

3.1 Pursuant to Sessional Order 12(1), 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. The table below details the petitions considered by the Committee during the reporting period.

No.	Title	Status
25	Justice for Declan Lavery - Action against Crime in the Northern Territory	Recommended for debate
26	Public Housing - Tenancy Kapok Court Karama	Recommended for debate
27	Oppose proposed development permit (PA 2023-0345) application - Katherine Region	Noted
28	Request Government tackle Crime in Alice Springs	Recommended for debate
29	Development of Special Needs Middle & High Schools for residents of Palmerston and the rural area	Noted
30	Independent investigation on levels and impact of bullying and violence in all public schools	Noted
31	Demand immediate action to address rising crime in the NT	Recommended for debate
32	Location for the new Youth Centre in Casuarina	Recommended for debate