



PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

Members of the Public Accounts Committee of the 48th Parliament:

Legislative Council

Hon Ivan Dean MLC

(Chair to 6 May 2015 – due to Legislative Council election
Re-elected Chair from 3 June 2015)

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

(Deputy Chair to 3 June 2015)

Hon Adriana Taylor MLC

House of Assembly

Mr Scott Bacon MP

Ms Sarah Courtney MP

(Deputy Chair from 3 June 2015)

Mrs Joan Rylah MP

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THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

A. Background

The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) is a Joint Standing Committee of the Tasmanian Parliament constituted under the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970*.

The Committee comprises six Members of Parliament, three Members drawn from the Legislative Council and three Members from the House of Assembly.

Under section 6 of the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970* the Committee:

- must inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any matter referred to the Committee by either House relating to the management, administration or use of public sector finances; or the accounts of any public authority or other organisation controlled by the State or in which the State has an interest; and
- may inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any matter arising in connection with public sector finances that the Committee considers appropriate; and any matter referred to the Committee by the Auditor-General.

The Committee also has oversight responsibilities regarding the independence of the Auditor-General, which are derived from the *Audit Act 2008*.

An important area of focus for the Committee is following up Auditor-General's reports to Parliament under Section 6.2(b) of the Act.

In scrutinising the work of the Auditor-General, the Committee believes it can provide greater awareness within the Parliament and the community, leading to increased information and greater transparency.

B. Responsibility of the Committee

The Committee has responsibility in key areas encompassing Public Accounts and Auditor-General independence oversight.

(i) Public Accounts

The Committee has key roles in this area including undertaking general inquiries into some aspects of administration or public sector management, including inquiries into the accounts of any public authority or other organisation controlled by the State or in which the State has an interest (these inquiries can be resulting from a referral from either House or can be self-initiated); and following up matters referred by the Auditor-General to the Committee.

An important area of focus for the Committee is following up Auditor-General's reports to Parliament in accordance with section 6.2(b) of the Act. The Committee is pleased to report that it has continued its series of rolling reviews of Auditor-General's Reports in 2014-15.

The Committee and the Auditor-General share a common mission "to enhance public sector accountability and performance" which is reinforced in their 2012 Memorandum of Understanding. While the work of both parties is complementary, the Memorandum of Understanding reinforces the independence of each party in the carrying out of duties under their respective legislation.

(ii) Auditor-General Independence Oversight

The Committee has a statutory responsibility under the *Audit Act 2008* to:

- Section 9 - consult with the Treasurer regarding the appointment of the Auditor-General;
- Section 11 - review the Auditor-General's draft annual plan, and provide comments on it to the Auditor-General prior to its finalisation and tabling in Parliament; and
- Section 44 - review the findings of the periodic review of the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the Tasmanian Audit Office operations.

C. Committee Activities

The Committee activities include a mix of self-initiated inquiries and referred inquiries. The Committee receives submissions and conducts briefings and hearings on such matters as required.

Results of inquiries are presented in reports that are tabled in both the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council. Those reports are available to the public and are posted on the Committee website <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Joint/pacc.htm>.

The website provides background information on the Committee's roles and functions, and provides details of members, administration, current inquiries, meeting dates, recent reports and past inquiries.

The Committee also has an email address: pac@parliament.tas.gov.au, which is used for outside correspondence with the public and external bodies.

The Committee receives administrative and other support from its Secretariat, and timely and valuable research assistance from the Parliamentary Research Service.

YEAR IN REVIEW – 2014 15

A. Inquiries Progressed July 2014 to June 2015

Inquiry into Government Funding of Australian Rules Community Football in Tasmania

The Committee of the 47th Parliament resolved of its own motion to inquire into and report upon:

- The funding provided to AFL Tasmania by the Tasmanian Government and how the funding is expended to develop and support community football in Tasmania (including umpiring);
- The outcomes achieved in respect of the future and structure of community football in Tasmania and those who support and provide services to it as a result of that funding; and
- Any other matters incidental thereto.

The previous Committee had received submissions from interested parties and conducted Hearings but had not progressed to the report stage before the Parliament prorogation period as a result of the State election.

The Committee of the 48th Parliament resolved to finalise this Inquiry and the Committee received briefings from representatives of the Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet during the year.

The final Report was tabled by the Committee 13 October 2015.

B. Reports Issued

The Committee tabled three reports during the reporting period:

1. Report No. 7 of 2014-15: *Infrastructure Projects – Road Works*
2. Report No. 8 of 2014-15: *Community Support Levy*
3. Report No. 13 of 2014-15: *Follow-up of Auditor General's Special Reports No. 82 Head of Agency Contract Renewal No. 84 Funding the Tasmanian Education Foundation*

C. Follow-up of Auditor-General's Special Reports

The follow-up of Auditor-General's reports to Parliament, in accordance with section 6.2(b) of the Act, is an important aspect of the Committee's work. The Committee can follow up on matters raised by the Auditor-General in various reports to the Parliament. The Committee can take further evidence on the progress achieved by public sector agencies on the Auditor-General's recommendations where attention has been drawn to financial concerns or issues of efficiency.

During 2014-15 the Committee continued with its previously implemented framework for the follow-up of the Auditor-General's Special and other reports.

WORK IN PROGRESS as at 30 June 2015

The following work was being undertaken by the Committee and was at various stages of progress:

- Inquiry into Government Funding of Australian Rules Community Football in Tasmania; and
- Follow up review of Auditor-General's:
 - Special Report No. 95: *Fraud control*; and
 - Report No. 10 of 2013-14: *Government Radio Communications*.

AUSTRALASIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

A. Background

The Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) was established in 1989. ACPAC is an 'umbrella' organisation of Public Accounts Committees with membership open to all Australasian Parliamentary Public Accounts Committees.

The aims of ACPAC include the following: to facilitate the exchange of information and opinion relating to Public Accounts Committees, to discuss matters of mutual concern and to improve the quality and performance of Public Accounts Committees in Australasia.

An APCAC conference is held every two years, and in the intervening year a mid-term meeting is held to develop an agenda for the next ACPAC conference, as well as to discuss other issues of mutual concern around Public Accounts Committee-related themes. The Tasmanian Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts is a full member of ACPAC and as such, is committed to support its role and function.

B. ACPAC Activities 2014-15

The Committee maintains an active involvement in ACPAC affairs and has supported ACPAC during the past year as follows:

2015 ACPAC Conference

The 2015 conference was held in Adelaide, South Australia from 15 to 17 April 2015.

Committee member attendees were Hon Ruth Forrest MLC, Hon Adriana Taylor MLC, Mrs Joan Rylah MP and Ms Sarah Courtney MP.

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC took part in the panel session - *Politicians vs Parliamentarians... does it matter in ensuring rigorous scrutiny?*

Hon Adriana Taylor MLC took part in the panel session - *Do Public Accounts Committees make a difference? Measuring the performance of Public Accounts Committees.*

The conference program also considered:

- Changing engagement in public accountability: Making what governments do more relevant –wellbeing: measuring beyond GDP.
- Avoiding Community Apathy, Outrage and Emotion through Good Community Engagement.
- Public Accountability across ICACs, Auditors-General and Public Accounts Committees.
- International Perspectives in the Public Accounts Committee arena – and an illustrative Kiribati case study presentation.
- Australian National Audit Offices’ international engagement approach and opportunities for collaboration in the future.
- Roles and responsibilities of Public Accounts Committee Members and consideration of whether guidelines assist in dealing with witnesses and in providing procedural fairness’
- The opportunity for presentation of jurisdiction reports.

Further details of the conference can be found on the ACPAC website:

<http://www.acpac.asn.au/conferences.htm>

ADMINISTRATION

A. Members' Attendance

Committee Meetings and Hearings were scheduled and conducted throughout the year.

Attendance by Committee members at full committee meetings over the period 1 July 2014-30 June 2015 is recorded below:

	Full Committee Meetings	
	Eligible to Attend	Attended
48th Parliament		
Ivan Dean MLC (Chair)	17	17
Scott Bacon MP	17	17
Sarah Courtney MP	17	17
Ruth Forrest MLC	17	15
Joan Rylah MP	17	16
Adriana Taylor MLC	17	17

B. Committee Secretariat

The Committee was assisted by the following secretariat:

Secretary	Ms Gabrielle Woods
Assistant Committee Secretary	Ms Natasha Exel (to 31 December 2014) Ms Jenny Leaman (from 1 January 2015)
Research Officer	Dr Bryan Stait



Hon Ivan Dean MLC
Chair

18 November 2015

