



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Annual Report 2023-24

Members of the Committee

(as at 30 June 2024)

Legislative Council

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
(Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Bec Thomas MLC

House of Assembly

Mr Josh Willie MP
(Deputy Chair)

Mr Simon Behrakis MP

Mr Mark Shelton MP

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAG	Assistant Auditor-General
Academy	CPA Parliamentary Academy
ACPAC	Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees
Act	<i>Public Accounts Committee Act 1970</i>
AFL	Australian Football League
A-G	Auditor-General
ALP	Australian Labor Party
CAPAC	Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Committee	Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
DoH	Department of Health
DoTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
FAS	Financial Audit Services
Hon	Honourable
Ind	Independent
Lib	Liberal Party
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
MP	Member of Parliament
MPDC	Macquarie Point Development Corporation
PAS	Performance Audit Services
PWC	Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Works Committee
RHRA	Royal Hobart Regatta Association
SoU	Statement of Understanding
TAO	Tasmanian Audit Office
TSO	Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

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Public Accounts Committee

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 Act). Prior to the Act, the Committee has been in various forms since a House of Assembly Select Committee was appointed to enquire into the system of keeping and auditing Public Accounts on 28 August 1862. It first became a Standing Committee of the House of Assembly pursuant to a new Standing Order No. 408A being recommended by the House of Assembly Standing Orders Committee on 7 December 1960. On 11 November 1965, a similar amendment to the Legislative Council's Standing Orders saw for the first time the establishment of a Select Committee of Public Accounts and Finance in that Chamber under authority of Standing Order No. 248A.

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

Functions of the Committee

Under section 6 of the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970* the Committee functions are as follows, 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.

Role and Statutory Responsibilities of the Committee

Under the *Audit Act 2008*, the Committee has the following statutory responsibilities:

- in relation to the appointment of the Auditor-General, the Treasurer must consult with the Public Accounts Committee and the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the House of Assembly (section 9(2))
- consider and may comment on the draft Auditor-General's annual plan of work (section 11), and
- receive the findings of the periodic review of the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of Tasmanian Audit Office's operations (section 44) – the last review undertaken was conducted by Moore Australia Audit in March 2024 and covers the period 2019-2023 (the past three reports are available on the Committee's website).¹

¹ See [Section 44 Tasmanian Audit Office Reports](#)

The Committee and the Auditor-General have a Statement of Understanding (SoU), available on the Public Accounts Committee website.² This SoU informs the relationship between the Committee and the Office of the Auditor-General including matters related to the statutory obligations of the Committee and Auditor General.

The SoU also reinforces the Committee's support of the true independence of the Auditor-General and work of the Committee and Auditor General to ensure that this independence is not compromised and the Auditor-General is unfettered in reporting to Parliament objectively, thus enabling Parliament to make informed judgements.

In support of the Auditor General's independence, the Committee will support the Office during the budget and forward estimates setting process, as described in the SoU. This support is provided as follows:

- the Auditor-General shall consult with the Committee during the preparation of the Office's budget submission to Cabinet Budget Committee
- the Auditor-General will provide the Office's submission to Cabinet Budget Committee to the Treasurer and Committee at the same time
- the Treasurer or the Treasurer's delegate may brief the Committee on the Office's budget submission at the Committee's discretion, and
- the Auditor-General and Chair of the Committee may brief Cabinet Budget Committee on the Office's submission at the Cabinet Budget Committee's discretion.

Under the SoU the Auditor-General refers all tabled reports prepared by that Office to the Committee for consideration.

As described under the SoU, the Committee and the Auditor-General share a common mission to enhance Tasmanian public sector accountability and performance. Through cooperation, the Committee and the Auditor-General will promote probity, efficiency and effectiveness in the management of, and reporting on, public resources.

The Auditor-General may refer matters to the Committee that the Auditor-General determines warrant consideration by the Committee in addition to, or in place of, an investigation by the Auditor-General. Conversely, under section 25 of the *Audit Act 2008*, the Committee may refer matters to the Auditor-General that it determines warrant consideration by the Auditor-General in addition to or in place of investigation by the Committee. The Auditor-General will give serious consideration to investigating the matter referred and inform the Committee on the Auditor-General's response to the referral.

The Committee and the Auditor General consider and comment on the Annual Plan of Work for the Audit Office as required under the *Audit Act 2008* and the SoU.

An ongoing and important area of focus for the Committee relates to the follow up reviews undertaken of the Tasmanian Auditor-General's reports to Parliament with this work continuing through 2023-24.

² See [Statement of Understanding between the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor-General](#). At the time of this report, a new Statement of Understanding was being developed between the Committee and the new Auditor-General, Mr Mark Thompson.

The Committee under its ‘own motion’ powers has initiated inquiries into major capital works projects considered and approved by the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Public Works. These reviews have included following-up of completed works or the reviewing of progress of selected major public works. Through these reviews, the Committee can bring to the public record any issues identified relating to budget variations, scheduled completion, management of delays to completion, delivery of stated outcomes and benefits etc., and make recommendations for affected Departments to consider as appropriate.

Finally, the Committee may also inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any matter arising in connection with public sector finances that the Committee considers appropriate. Areas of interest may come from within the Committee or brought to the Committee by external third parties from time to time.

Committee Activities

The Committee activities for 2023-24 include a combination of self-initiated inquiries and referred inquiries. The Committee receives submissions and briefings and conducts public 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 on the Committee website.³

The website provides background information on the Committee's roles and functions, 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 external correspondence.

The Committee receives administrative and other support from its Secretariat (Committee Secretary and Assistant Committee Secretary) and from the Parliamentary Research Service.

³ See Public Accounts Committee, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/public-accounts-committee>

Year in Review 2023-24

During the reporting period, on 14 February 2024, the Committee’s planned work was deferred due to Parliament being prorogued and the House of Assembly being dissolved pending the outcome of the early Tasmanian election called for 23 March 2024. A new Committee was not reinstated until 30 May 2024. During the prorogation, by parliamentary convention, no Committee work could be undertaken and accordingly work in progress was delayed.

Completed Inquiries

The Committee tabled the following six (6) reports over the period:

Title and Tabling Date	Detail of Inquiry
<p><u>Tasmanian Government’s Proposed Hobart Stadium Feasibility Planning Process Interim Report</u></p> <p>30 August 2023 (No.16 of 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee determined by its own motion to undertake a targeted inquiry into the feasibility planning for a new sporting and event stadium at Macquarie Point in Hobart. • This inquiry was in direct response to significant community interest in the proposed facility at Macquarie Point, claimed to be a requirement of the Agreement with the Australian Football League (AFL). • As a result of evidence received to date and new information becoming available, the Interim Report provided an overview of evidence received predominantly prior to the public release of the redacted Club Funding and Development Agreement between the State of Tasmania and AFL. • The Committee resolved to continue the Inquiry under a revised Terms of Reference (see <u>‘Inquiries in Progress’</u>).
<p><u>Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Preparation for the Return to School in February 2022</u></p> <p>12 September 2023 (No.18 of 2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 23 February 2022, the Committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into the continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic by State Government particularly preparation for the reopening of the Tasmanian border to other mainland States and international arrivals. • This Report, one of three related Reports, focussed on the planning and preparedness for the return to school for the 2022 school year. • The Report provided evidence related to the financial and public health measures taken by the State Government to prepare for the return to school for students and staff for the 2022 educational year and the financial, social and educational impacts associated with the measures implemented. Areas covered included the impact on students and their educational outcomes, parents and carers, teaching and ancillary staff, and the early education and care sector. • The Committee acknowledged the extraordinary work undertaken by all Department of Education staff to minimise disruption to student learning while keeping students and staff safe. • The Committee recommended the State Government ensure the early education and care sector is included in any future state pandemic preparedness planning. • The Committee made 58 findings and 17 recommendations as a result of this inquiry.

Title and Tabling Date	Detail of Inquiry
<p data-bbox="204 544 501 667"><u>Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:</u></p> <p data-bbox="204 674 560 763">Preparation for the State Border Re-opening on 15 December 2021</p> <p data-bbox="204 801 389 864">17 October 2023 (No.25 of 2023)</p>	<ul data-bbox="608 232 1382 1144" style="list-style-type: none"> • The second of three related Reports, focussed on the planning and preparedness for the re-opening of the Tasmanian border on 15 December 2021. • The Committee acknowledged the challenges associated with the decision to re-open the Tasmanian border and the lack of universal acceptance of the hard date of 15 December 2021. • The Committee further acknowledged the extraordinary workload of many in the planning and preparation for the border re-opening that was made more challenging by the arrival of the highly transmissible COVID-19 Omicron variant. This factor created additional pressure on the State's health system and health care providers and contributed to increased community anxiety with many vulnerable Tasmanians electing to isolate during this period of uncertainty in what was described as a 'shadow lockdown'. • Overall, the significant preparation and planning, supported by high rates of full COVID-19 vaccination by eligible Tasmanians, even in light of the more transmissible Omicron variant enabled many families to be together over Christmas and make informed decisions regarding their social interactions. • The business community welcomed the decision whilst health professionals broadly stated that a greater lead time was needed following the emergence of the Omicron variant as the dominant variant. The Committee acknowledged the competing viewpoints. • The Committee made 55 findings, 5 overarching recommendations, and an additional five recommendations related to specific areas relevant to the planning, preparedness, management of and response to the re-opening of the Tasmanian border on 15 December 2021 as a result of this inquiry.
<p data-bbox="204 1429 501 1552"><u>Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:</u></p> <p data-bbox="204 1559 555 1621">Business Support and COVID-19 Check-in App</p> <p data-bbox="204 1659 389 1722">19 October 2023 (No.26 of 2023)</p>	<ul data-bbox="608 1184 1382 1995" style="list-style-type: none"> • The third and final Report described financial support provided by the Tasmanian Government to businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tasmanian Government provided targeted COVID-19 support to Tasmanian businesses of over \$160 million in grants and support packages since March 2020. • This Report had a particular focus on financial support provided to businesses negatively impacted by restrictions and/or workforce challenges related to the isolation and quarantine requirements and businesses impacted by the three-day lockdown direction on 15 October 2021 prior to the re-opening of the border. • As a result of a three-day lockdown direction, made in response to a positive case of COVID-19 in the community, approximately \$3.5 million of funding support was provided to impacted businesses. The three-day lockdown direction also resulted in the unplanned cancellation of the Unconformity Festival in Queenstown with funding support provided to impacted businesses in collaboration with the West Coast Council. • In addition, the Report covered the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app which was to be a key resource in pursuing an elimination/containment strategy for COVID-19. • Following the re-opening of Tasmania's border, mandatory requirements for use of the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app became futile with the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. Public Health focussed on use in high-risk venues and events, to support ongoing management of COVID-19.

Title and Tabling Date	Detail of Inquiry
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee acknowledged the financial support provided to Tasmanian businesses. The Committee recommended the State Government review the design and implementation of the various business support programs to inform the design of any future programs. • The Committee also acknowledged the value of digital contact tracing and recommended the State Government maintain the capacity for effective digital contact tracing for future pandemics. • The Committee made 17 findings and 2 recommendations as a result of this inquiry.
<p data-bbox="204 790 564 913"><u>Short inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Proposed Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services Funding Model</u></p> <p data-bbox="204 954 363 1010">19 June 2024 (No.7 of 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee through its 'own motion' resolved to conduct preliminary inquiries into the matter of the Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services Funding Model and write to the relevant Minister to seek further information with respect to the Tasmanian Government's proposed new fire levy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the methodology and modelling used by Treasury and/or any other third party the Government has relied upon to inform them of the proposed Tasmania Fire and Emergency Services Funding Model, and ○ the details of any meetings and/or communications between lobbyists and the Tasmanian Government with regard to the proposed Tasmania Fire and Emergency Services Funding Model. • During the process of this short inquiry the Hon Felix Ellis MP (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) made a determination not to proceed and stated this proposal was no longer Government policy. • The Committee made no findings or recommendations.
<p data-bbox="204 1350 507 1440"><u>Hydro Tasmania and the Termination of the Basslink Services Agreement</u></p> <p data-bbox="204 1480 363 1536">19 June 2024 (No.8 of 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the 23 February 2022, the Committee resolved to inquire into the decision by Hydro Tasmania to terminate the Basslink Services Agreement (BSA) and the financial and other implications this may have for Hydro Tasmania and the State of Tasmania with particular regard to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ timing of the decision ○ rationale behind the decision ○ impact on Hydro Tasmania's financial position, and ○ potential future impact on Tasmania's energy security and fibre optic telecommunications. • The Committee makes 25 findings and noted the successful outcome financially for the State and Hydro Tasmania through the legal proceedings. The Committee made no recommendations.

Inquiries in Progress

The Committee had four (4) inquiries that were still in progress at the end of the reporting period:

Inquiry	Terms of Reference
Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart (formerly Tasmanian Government's Process into the Feasibility Planning for a New Sporting and Event Stadium in Hobart)	To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> matters related to the Club Funding and Development Agreement (Agreement) signed between the Crown in the Right of Tasmania and Australian Football League the suitability of Macquarie Point as the site for a proposed the Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct the financial risks associated with the Agreement matters related to the financing and delivery of the entire proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct the future of Blundstone Arena and UTAS Stadium, and any other matter incidental thereto.
Tasmanian Government's use of provisions of the <i>Financial Management Act 2016</i> to fund election commitments in 2021	An inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's use of provisions of the <i>Financial Management Act 2016</i> to fund election commitments in 2021.
Follow-up of Auditor-General Reports: No.2 of 2015-16 – Capital Works Programming and Management, and No.4 of 2019-20 – Rostering of Specialists in Tasmania's Major Hospitals	In line with section 6(2) of the Act, the Public Accounts Committee resolved to undertake a review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Treasury and Finance, Department of Education, Children and Young People and Department of Health (DoH) responses to the Auditor General's recommendations contained within <u>Report No.2 of 2015-16 – Capital Works Programming and Management</u>, and the DoH and Tasmanian Health Service response to the Auditor-General's recommendations contained within <u>Report No.4 of 2019-20 – Rostering of Specialists in Tasmania's Major Hospitals</u>.
TT-Line Spirits Project	Resolved to inquire into matters related to the delivery of the new Spirit of Tasmania vessels and associated infrastructure and the decision by TT-Line to vary the terms of the contract for the new Spirit of Tasmania vessels, including its adherence to caretaker conventions.

Briefings with Stakeholders

The Committee received briefings throughout the year from the following stakeholders:

Date	Parties	Commentary
16 Aug 2023	Rob Whitehead (Auditor-General) Jonathan Wassell (Deputy Auditor-General) Janine McGuinness (AAG PAS) David Bond (AAG FAS) Jeff Tongs (AAG FAS)	Briefed the Committee on a number of matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit of State entities and audited subsidiaries of State entities 31 December 2021 and 30 June 2022 (Volume 2) - Report of the Auditor-General (No. 4 of 2022-23), and Follow up of selected Auditor-General reports tabled between November 2016 and October 2018 - Report No.5 of 2022-23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2017 Park Management 2017 Use of Fuel Cards 2018 TasWater 2018 Use of Tasmanian Government Cards

Date	Parties	Commentary
15 Nov 2023	Jonathan Wassell (Deputy Auditor-General) Janine McGuinness (AAG PAS)	Briefed the Committee on matters related to the draft Annual Plan of Work 2024-25.
19 June 2024	Martin Thompson (Auditor-General) Jonathan Wassell (Deputy Auditor-General) Janine McGuinness (AAG PAS)	Briefed the Committee on matters related to the finalised Annual Plan of Work 2024-25 and draft revised Statement of Understanding between the Audit Office and the Committee.

Public Hearings Held

The Committed held fourteen (14) public hearings over seven days throughout the year:

Date	Inquiry	Witnesses Examined
05 Jul 2023	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Hon Michael Ferguson MP (Treasurer) Fiona Calvert (Deputy Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance (DoTF)) James Craigie (Deputy Secretary, DoTF)
16 Oct 2023	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Mike Grainger (Chair, TT-line Company Pty Ltd) Bernard Dwyer (CEO, TT-line Company Pty Ltd)
03 Nov 2023	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Dean Coleman (Managing Director, Stadia Precinct) Paul Lennon (Paramul Pty Ltd)
28 Nov 2023	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Charles Toubert (Managing Director, Charles Toubert Productions Pty Ltd) Brian Scullin (Chair, Macquarie Point Development Corporation) (MPDC) Anne Beach (CEO, MPDC) Stuart Tanner (National President, Australian Institute of Architects) Paul Zanatta (Australian Institute of Architects)
08 Dec 2023	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Hon Michael Ferguson MP (Treasurer) Fiona Calvert (Deputy Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance (DoTF)) James Craigie (Deputy Secretary, DoTF) Caroline Sharpen (CEO, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra) Dr Daniel Hanna (Exec GM Corporate & Regulatory Affairs, Federal Group) Ralph Freckleton (GM, Hotel Grand Chancellor Hobart) Ross Doddridge OAM (President, Royal Hobart Regatta Association) (RHRA) Steve Dine (Senior Vice President, RHRA)
21 June 2024	Tasmanian Government's Process into the Proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart	Ms Anne Beach (CEO, MPDC) Mr Kim Evans (Chairperson, MPDC) Ms Janice Overett (Facebook Convenor No Stadium Yes Team) Mr Brian Chapman (Spokesperson No Stadium Yes Team) Mr Roland Browne (Spokesperson, Our Place)

Date	Inquiry	Witnesses Examined
		Mr Shamus Mulcahy (Spokesperson, Our Place) Mr Mat Hinds (Spokesperson, Our Place) Mr Richard Flanagan (Spokesperson, Our Place) Mr Russell Hanson Mr Jim Wilkinson
28 June 2024	TT-Line Spirits Project	Mike Grainger (Chair, TT-line Company Pty Ltd) Bernard Dwyer (CEO, TT-line Company Pty Ltd)

Meetings Held

Committee meetings and public hearings were scheduled and conducted throughout the reporting year, with the exception of the prorogation period between 14 February to 30 May 2024: a total of 24 meetings (18 meetings before and 6 after).

A list of full Committee meetings and attendance over the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 is provided below:

Date	Legislative Council					House of Assembly					
	Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Ind. Member for Murchison)	Hon Meg Webb MLC (Ind. Member for Nelson)	Hon Josh Willie MLC (ALP Member for Elwick)	Hon Bec Thomas MLC (Ind. Member for Elwick)	Hon Luke Edmunds MLC (ALP Member for Pembroke)	Dr Shane Broad MP (ALP Member for Braddon)	Ms Lara Alexander MP (Ind. Member for Bass)	Mr Dean Young MP (Lib Member for Franklin)	Mr Josh Willie MP (ALP Member for Clark)	Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Lib Member for Clark)	Mr Mark Shelton MP (Lib Member for Lyons)
05 Jul 2023						WebEx	WebEx				
16 Aug 2023											
29 Aug 2023											
30 Aug 2023											
06 Sep 2023											
08 Sep 2023						WebEx	WebEx				
13 Sep 2023											
20 Sep 2023						WebEx					
29 Sep 2023	WebEx	WebEx	WebEx			Apology	WebEx	WebEx			
06 Oct 2023								Apology			
10 Oct 2023											
16 Oct 2023											
18 Oct 2023											
01 Nov 2023											
03 Nov 2023											
15 Nov 2023											
28 Nov 2023						WebEx	WebEx				
08 Dec 2023							WebEx				

Date	Legislative Council					House of Assembly					
	Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Ind. Member for Murchison)	Hon Meg Webb MLC (Ind. Member for Nelson)	Hon Josh Willie MLC (ALP Member for Elwick)	Hon Bec Thomas MLC (Ind. Member for Elwick)	Hon Luke Edmunds MLC (ALP Member for Pembroke)	Dr Shane Broad MP (ALP Member for Braddon)	Ms Lara Alexander MP (Ind. Member for Bass)	Mr Dean Young MP (Lib Member for Franklin)	Mr Josh Willie MP (ALP Member for Clark)	Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Lib Member for Clark)	Mr Mark Shelton MP (Lib Member for Lyons)
Prorogation of Parliament and Dissolution of House of Assembly - 14 February to 14 May 2024											
30 May 2024				WebEx							
14 Jun 2024	WebEx										WebEx
17 Jun 2024											WebEx
19 Jun 2024										Apology	
21 Jun 2024											WebEx
28 Jun 2024											WebEx
Attendance	18/18 6/6	18/18	18/18	6/6	6/6	17/18	18/18	14/15	6/6	3/3 5/6	6/6
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	94%	100%	93%	100%	89%	100%

Notes:

- Attendance at Committee meetings is either in person or remotely through the Parliament's secure web meeting host (WebEx).
- Mr Dean Young MP resigned from the Committee on 9 November 2023.
- Mr Simon Behrakis MP was appointed to the Committee on 14 November 2023.
- On 14 February 2024, the Tasmanian Parliament was prorogued and the House of Assembly dissolved following a call for an early State election that was to be held on 23 March 2024.
- Hon Josh Willie MLC resigned from the Committee on 27 February 2024 to contest the House of Assembly Election for the seat of Clark.
- Ms Lara Alexander MP was not successful in keeping her seat in the House of Assembly.
- On 21 May 2024, the Legislative Council Committee Members appointed Hon Ruth Forrest MLC, and new members Hon Bec Thomas MLC and Hon Luke Edmunds MLC to the Committee.
- On 23 May 2024, the House of Assembly appointed the following members to the Committee: Mr Josh Willie MP, Mr Simon Behrakis MP and Mr Mark Shelton MP.
- As a result of the appointments from both places, Hon Meg Webb MLC and Dr Shane Broad MP were no longer members of the Committee.
- Following the prorogation of Parliament between 14 February and 14 May 2024, there was a requirement to re-establish the Committee. Hon Ruth Forrest MLC and Mr Josh Willie MP were nominated and took their places as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee respectively on 30 May 2024.

Committee Secretariat

The Committee acknowledges the assistance during the period by the following officers:

Position	Officer
Committee Secretary	Simon Scott ⁴
Assistant Committee Secretary	Alison Scott

The Committee also acknowledges the assistance of the Parliamentary Research Office by Dr Bryan Stait⁵ and staff.

⁴ Ms Julie Thompson and Ms Jenny Mannering (Committee Secretaries) substituted for Mr Scott who was interstate on another committee's business on 6 October 2023, and Mr Craig Muir (Clerk Assistant and Usher of the Black Rod) took over from Mr Scott on 28 November 2023.

⁵ Vale Dr Bryan Stait who passed away 30 June 2024, having served from 1990 to 2024 within the Tasmanian Parliament.

Liaison with External Bodies

Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees

The Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC) was established in 1989 and provides a unique forum for the exchange of information and opinions relating to Public Accounts Committees, providing committees with the opportunity to share experiences, best practice and matters of mutual interest. Its aim is to improve the quality and performance of Public Accounts Committees, particularly in Australasia.

An ACPAC conference is nominally held every two years, and in the intervening year a mid-term meeting is held to develop an agenda for the next ACPAC conference. The Tasmanian Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts is a full member of ACPAC and is committed to supporting its role and function.

The Chair and Committee Secretary attended the 17th Biennial Conference held in Perth, Western Australia between 21 – 22 July 2022. The Conference covered the following broad areas of interest:

- In the absence of angels: the role of auditors and Parliament in our system of checks and balances
- Sustainability reporting – Is there a role for PACs?
- Measuring how procurement policies shift government spending to achieve intended outcomes
- Gender responsive budgeting – How governments can identify and fund measures to help close the gender gap
- Beyond economic outcomes – Adopting a wellbeing approach to measure progress
- Managing occasions of non-provision of information
- The state of State finances – Experiences with qualified audit opinions
- Government spending on Aboriginal programs and services
- Public Accounts Committee experiences with Parliamentary Budget Offices, and
- Conducting statutory reviews of audit offices – Sharing experiences and lessons learned.

The Chair made three presentations during the Conference:

- Managing and overcoming occasions of the non-provision of information or documents – the Tasmanian Public Accounts Committee experience
- The role of PACs during and following statutory reviews of audit offices, and
- Jurisdictional report for Tasmania (2022-2024).⁶

The 18th Biennial Conference is scheduled to be held in Hobart, Tasmania in 2026.

⁶ These presentations are available on the ACPAC 2024 website: <https://acpac.asn.au/conferences/2024-perth/>

Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees


The Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) was founded in June 2015 with the aim of ensuring that ‘all Commonwealth Parliaments and the citizens they serve benefit from strong and independent Public Accounts or equivalent committees to sustain and promote the highest principles of public finance.’

Tasmania was ratified as a member of CAPAC at the CAPAC Conference held in Malé, Maldives (30 – 31 August 2022).

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is one of the oldest established organisations in the Commonwealth. Founded in 1911, it is a membership association which brings together Members, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, who are united by community of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by the pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy. The Association is made up of over 180 legislatures (or Branches) divided up between nine geographic regions of the Commonwealth.

Of interest, an article celebrating the Committee’s 162-year history was published in the Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth - The Parliamentarian (2024 Vol 105 Issue 1). A copy is available on the Committee’s website.⁷



Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
Chair
Independent Member for Murchison

18 July 2024

⁷ See ‘Examining the History of One of the Longest Established Public Accounts Committees in the Commonwealth’ by Simon Scott, The Parliamentarian 2024: Issue One, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/81293/Examining-the-History-of-one-of-the-Longest-Established-Public-Accounts-Committees-in-the-Commonwealth-Article.pdf