



PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Members of the Public Accounts Committee

Legislative Council

Hon Ivan Dean MLC (Chair)

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC
(from 28 May 2019)

Hon Michael Gaffney MLC
(to 23 May 2019)

House of Assembly

Mr Scott Bacon MP

Mrs Joan Rylah MP
(from 19 March 2019)

Mr John Tucker MP
(from 19 March 2019)

Mr Adam Brooks MP
(to 11 February 2019)

Mr Rene Hidding MP
(to 25 February 2019)

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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 2018-19.

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 – 2018-19

A. Completed Inquiries

1. The Committee tabled the following report:

No. 6 of 2018: *Review of Selected Public Works Committee Reports* was tabled 30 August 2018.

B. Prorogation of Parliament

1. Parliament was prorogued on 27 February 2019.
2. The second session of the Parliament commenced 19 March 2019 and Committee Members of the House of Assembly and Legislative Council were appointed.

C. Work in Progress

1. A follow-up review of Auditor-General Reports:

- No. 11 of 2013-14: Compliance with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Plan 2008-13;
- No. 1 of 2013-14: Fraud control in local government;
- No. 12 of 2013-14: Quality of Metro Services; and
- No. 3 of 2014-15: Motor vehicle fleet management in government departments.

A draft report is under consideration by the Committee.

2. A follow-up review of a number of Public Works Committee approved project works including:

- Colebrook Main Road, Richmond – Heavy Vehicle Link Road;
- Construction of Dunalley Primary School; and
- George Town Hub.

A draft report is under consideration by the Committee.

3. A follow-up review of Auditor-General Reports:

- No. 8 of 2015-16: Provision of Social Housing; and
- No. 11 of 2015-16: Compliance with legislation.

A draft report is under consideration by the Committee.

4. The Committee self-initiated an inquiry to review the Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2016.
5. The Committee self-initiated an inquiry into the Office of the Ombudsman to inquire into and report upon the Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner with particular reference to the:
 - functions of the Office;
 - resourcing of the Office;
 - performance of the Office; and
 - any other matters incidental thereto.

D. Briefings

1. The Committee received a number of briefings throughout the year to assist it in its work including:
 - The Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead:
 - 2018-19 and 2019-20 Annual Plans of Work (the prorogation of Parliament had delayed the Committee's review of the 2018-19 Plan of Work); and
 - Special Care Packages for Out of Home Care.
 - The Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance, Mr Tony Ferrall:
 - Implementation of the *Financial Management Act 2016*.
 - Department of Treasury and Finance:
 - Legislation to amend the *Fee Units Act 1997*.

AUSTRALASIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

A. Background

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. An ACPAC 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 2018-19

1. The biennial conference has been postponed to the second half of 2019 due to the timing of the Federal election.

ADMINISTRATION

A. Members' Attendance

2. Committee Meetings and Hearings were scheduled and conducted throughout the year.
3. Attendance by Committee members at full committee meetings over the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 is recorded below:

	Full Committee Meetings	
	Eligible to Attend	Attended
Ivan Dean MLC (Chair)	12	12
Scott Bacon MP	12	12
Adam Brooks MP	8	6
Ruth Forrest MLC	12	12
Michael Gaffney MLC	11	10
Rene Hidding MP	8	8
Joan Rylah MP	4	4
John Tucker MP	4	4
Josh Willie MLC	1	1

B. Committee Secretariat

The Committee was assisted by the following secretariat:

Secretary	Ms Gabrielle Woods
Executive Assistant	Ms Allison Waddington
Parliamentary Research Office	Dr Bryan Stait and staff



Hon Ivan Dean MLC
Chair

27 September 2019

