

41ST PARLIAMENT



Public Accounts Committee

Report 7

ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022

Presented by
Mrs L.M. O'Malley, MLA

October 2022

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Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 20 October 2022

Chair's Foreword

As Chair of the Public Accounts Committee (the Committee), I present for tabling the Committee's Annual report for the 2021–2022 financial year. This report marks the Committee's first full year of operation in the 41st Parliament.

During the 2021–2022 reporting period, our primary focus was the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework referred to the Committee by the Legislative Assembly in August 2021. This inquiry received over 200 submissions and had the Committee speaking with more than 40 witnesses at 20 public hearings. By the end of the reporting period, we had completed our extensive evidence gathering and were drafting the report to Parliament. By the time this Annual Report is finalised we will have tabled the inquiry report with its 82 findings and 40 recommendations. I would like to thank Member for Roe, Mr Peter Rundle, MLA, who was co-opted to the Committee for the inquiry, for his passion and enthusiasm on the subject matter.

The Committee operated remotely due to COVID-19 related public health measures for the majority of the first half of 2022. This included not only meeting virtually and but also hosting virtual hearings with local and regional stakeholders. The Committee and the witnesses showed great flexibility and patience enabling the work of the Committee to continue uninterrupted.

In addition to the inquiry, the Committee continued its follow-up of government entity responses to recommendations made by the Auditor General for Western Australia in her audit reports. Our fourth report, tabled in November 2021, included the outcomes of the Committee's review of 16 Auditor General reports.

The Committee continues its strong, positive and productive relationship with the Auditor General. This was evident in the Statement of Understanding entered into between the two parties in November 2021. I am particularly proud of this Statement, as the first female Chair of the Public Accounts Committee in Western Australia's history, and with Ms Caroline Spencer being the first woman appoint to the role of Auditor General for Western Australia.

I look forward to working with my Committee colleagues as we continue our work for the duration of this Parliament.



MRS L.M. O'MALLEY, MLA
CHAIR

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Chapter 1

Committee Activities

Introduction

This report covers the work undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee of the 41st Parliament during the 2021–2022 financial year. During the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022, the Committee:

- commenced a House referred inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework
- held 28 deliberative meetings
- took evidence from 47 witnesses at 21 public hearings, and held five closed hearings
- met with over 15 people at five briefings in regional Western Australia
- undertook investigative travel to Darkan, Dumbleyung, Narrogin, Wagin and Jarrahdale as part of its inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework
- tabled five reports.

Table 1.1: Summary of the activities of the Committee, 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

Description	Activity
Briefings	5
Deliberative meetings	28
Formal evidence hearings	26
Witnesses appearing at public hearings	47
Reports tabled	5

Portfolios

The five portfolios of the Committee as determined by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the 41st Parliament are:

- Premier
- Treasurer
- Finance
- Public Sector Management
- Federal/State Relations

Student Transport Assistance Policy framework inquiry

On 18 August 2021, the Minister for Transport asked the Legislative Assembly to refer the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework to the Committee for review. To assist with the inquiry, the Member for Roe, Mr Peter Rundle, MLA was co-opted to the Committee.

The Committee received over 200 submissions in response to the inquiry and heard from over 70 people around the State both in-person and virtually. By the end of the 2021–2022 reporting period, the Committee had completed its evidence gathering and drafting the report to be tabled in Parliament by the end of August 2022.

Public Hearings

Pursuant to Legislative Assembly Standing Order 264, the Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022, the Committee conducted 21 public hearings, taking evidence from 47 witnesses to assist with its investigations. All but one of the 21 public hearings were undertaken as part of the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework. For details of these hearings, see the Committee’s report for that inquiry.¹

In addition to the inquiry hearings, during the reporting period the Committee held one public hearing as part of its follow-up of Auditor General reports. In August 2021, the following witnesses attended a hearing to discuss the implementation of recommendations from the Auditor General’s report, *Access to state-managed adult mental health services*²:

- Dr David Russell-Weisz, Director General, Department of Health
- Dr Duncan Williamson, Assistant Director General, Clinical Excellence Division, Department of Health
- Ms Jennifer McGrath, Commissioner, Mental Health Commission
- Dr Sophie Davison, Chief Medical Officer Mental Health, Mental Health Commission.

Briefings and Investigative Travel

In addition to the formal hearings, the Committee held five briefings while undertaking investigative travel to Darkan, Narrogin, Dumbleyung, Wagin, and Jarrahdale. These briefings, held over three days in late 2021, provided further evidence for the Committee’s inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework. For details of these briefings, see the Committee’s report for that inquiry.³

1 Public Accounts Committee (41st Parliament), *Bus Fair –The report of the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework*, August 2022, p. 161.

2 Office of the Auditor General Western Australia, *Access to state-managed adult mental health services*, August 2019.

3 Public Accounts Committee (41st Parliament), *Bus Fair –The report of the inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy framework*, August 2022, p. 161.

Reports Tabled

The Committee tabled five reports during the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022:

Report No. 1: Annual Report 2020–2021

Tabled in October 2021, this report encompasses two parliamentary sessions. It summarises the activities of the Public Accounts Committee from the 40th Parliament until that Committee was dissolved on 29 January 2021 and the current Committee, established on 12 May 2021.

Report No. 2: Budget Briefing 2021–2022

Tabled in October 2021, this report follows the annual briefing on the Western Australian State Budget hosted by the Public Accounts Committee for members of Parliament. The report includes the PowerPoint presentation provided by the Deputy Under Treasurer at the briefing.

Report No. 3: A Statement of Understanding between the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General

Tabled in November 2021, this report includes a Statement of Understanding entered into between the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General for Western Australia. The Statement of Understanding is the first one entered into between a public accounts committee and the Western Australian Auditor General since 1996.

Report No. 4: Review of Selected Auditor General Reports 2018–2021

Tabled in November 2021, the purpose of this report is to inform Parliament of the actions undertaken by public sector entities in response to recommendations made in audit reports tabled by the Auditor General. This report includes the outcomes following the Committee's review of 16 Auditor General reports tabled in 2018–2021.

Report No. 5: Budget Briefing 2022–2023

Similar to Report No. 2, this report follows the briefing on the Western Australian State Budget hosted by the Public Accounts Committee for members of Parliament. Tabled in May 2022, the report includes the PowerPoint presentation provided by the Deputy Under Treasurer at the briefing.

Chapter 2

Financial Statement

The Committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditures is required on a case-by-case basis and is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

The Committee's expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is detailed below:

Table 2.1: Expenditure items of the Committee, 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022

Expenditure Item	Amount (\$)
Advertising	6,357
Travel	3,137
Staff / Member Amenities	554
Printing	297
TOTAL	10,345

Notes:

- Figures rounded to nearest dollar.
- Salaries of committee staff are not included.
- Costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation, are not included.



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CHAIR



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