

ACPAC 2024

WA PAC Jurisdiction Report

About the WA PAC

- The current Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament of Western Australia (WA PAC) was formed on the 12 May 2021.
- There was a significant membership change, with three new members, in early 2023. Due to the large number of Government members in the Legislative Assembly, the composition of the PAC was unchanged with 4 Government members and 1 non-Government member, who is also the Leader of the Liberal Party.

WA PAC's recent work

House-referred Inquiry

- Immediately following the previous ACPAC Conference our main focus was finalising our House-referred inquiry into rural and education support school bus services.
- The inquiry received over 200 submissions, and we spoke with more than 40 witnesses at 20 public hearings.
- Early in the inquiry we visited several communities to meet with stakeholders, but the latter part of our evidence gathering was conducted virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions.
- We tabled the inquiry report in August 2022, it included 82 findings and 40 recommendations.
- The recommendations were intended to address stakeholders' concerns while considering the financial and logistical issues of delivering a school bus service over a state the size of Western Australia.
- The State Government published its response to the Committee's recommendations in December 2022.

Following-up Auditor General recommendations

- Following the student transport assistance inquiry, we continued our important work of following up State Government entity responses to Auditor General recommendations.
- Historically, our focus has been on the Auditor General's performance audits with recommendations made to specific entities. However, in recent years we have considered other audit reports and we adopted an alternative approach to the Auditor General's reports related to local government entities and the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- While this work was partially interrupted by our current inquiry, we tabled a report summarising these activities in November 2023.
- This report included a summary of the Committee's consideration of 39 Auditor General reports tabled between October 2018 and March 2023. Of these, 17 reports were

considered and concluded without information being sought from the responsible agencies. This figure includes 8 COVID-19 related reports. For 11 of these reports, the Committee concluded its consideration after receiving information from the responsible agencies it followed up.

- To conduct follow-up of 11 of the Auditor General’s local government performance audits, the Committee opted to hold a hearing with the Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries to confirm its role in supporting local governments to address the sector-wide Auditor General recommendations.

Budget briefing

- Since 2001, the WA PAC has hosted a briefing on the Western Australian State Budget for all interested members of Parliament. As is customary, the annual briefing is held on the Tuesday immediately following the Treasurer’s presentation of the Appropriation Bills in the Legislative Assembly and the delivery of their budget speech.
- In 2023, the post budget briefing was held on 16 May.
- The briefing outlined key elements of the State Budget and provided an opportunity for all members to acquire detailed knowledge of the economic and fiscal outlook for the year ahead and gain an understanding of the impact of the Government’s income and expenditure proposals on the State’s overall financial position. It also presents an opportunity for members to ask questions about the Budget’s underlying assumptions and other relevant areas of interest.

Current Inquiry

- In June 2023, we announced our current inquiry into how the State Government’s progress towards achieving environmental, social and governance (ESG) outcomes is assisting to secure international investment. The announcement followed several closed hearings and other scoping activities.
- The ESG space is both broad and dynamic. The policy landscape is evolving rapidly, and this has proved quite challenging for our evidence gathering. We received 20 submissions, held 10 public hearings, and met with 14 entities while conducting investigative travel.
- We intend to table our report in August 2024.

ACPAC – Host jurisdiction

- Western Australia is the current host jurisdiction for the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees (ACPAC).
- Managing these responsibilities concurrently with our inquiry and Auditor General follow-ups has been demanding.
- After hosting the virtual ACPAC mid-term meeting in September 2023, a significant amount of our time has been spent coordinating the 2024 Biennial Conference.