



APAC 17th Biennial Conference – New South Wales Jurisdiction Report

Current Parliament (58th)

On 22 June 2023, in accordance with section 54 of the *Government Sector Audit Act 1983* (NSW) the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales passed a motion to appoint the below members to serve on the Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) for the 58th Parliament. At the Committee's first meeting on 28 June 2023, Mr Jason Yat-Sen Li MP was elected as Chair, and Mr Clayton Barr MP was elected as Deputy Chair.¹

	Member	Electorate
Chair	Mr Jason Yat-Sen Li MP	Strathfield
Deputy Chair	Mr Clayton Barr MP	Cessnock
Members	Dr David Saliba MP	Fairfield
	The Hon. Anthony Roberts MP	Lane Cove
	Ms Jenny Leong MP	Newtown
	Mr Michael Regan MP	Wakehurst

In the 58th Parliament, the Committee has adopted three inquiries and tabled one report.

Report on the Parliamentary Budget Office 2023 Post-Election Report

This inquiry and report considered the 2023 Post-Election Report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The NSW Parliamentary Budget Officer is an independent officer of the Parliament. They are responsible for costing election policies submitted by party leaders in the lead up to the state general election.

After the election, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is required to report to the Public Accounts Committee as soon as practicable.² The report can include recommendations on operational arrangements and activities of the Parliamentary Budget Officer to assist in the conduct of future general elections. The Parliamentary Budget Officer provided the Committee with their post-election report on 30 June 2023.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer made seven recommendations, including legislative amendments to enhance the ability of future Parliamentary Budget Officers to provide accurate and timely costings of election proposals. For example, the Parliamentary Budget Officer recommended that the timing of the Budget Impact Statements (and associated deadlines) be brought forward by three calendar days, to eight days before the election, instead of the current five days. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also called for consideration of a permanent Parliamentary Budget Office or the extension of their statutory term.

After considering this report and meeting with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Committee tabled its report. The Committee recommended that the Government considers and responds to

¹ New South Wales, Legislative Assembly, [Votes and Proceedings No. 12](#), Item 16(1); *Government Sector Audit Act 1983* (NSW), s54.

² [Parliamentary Budget Officer Act 2010](#) (NSW), s15

the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Committee will review the Government's response to and any implementation of the recommendations within 12 months of the tabling of the Committee's report.³

Accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW

In September 2023, the Committee adopted a self-referred inquiry into the accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure, contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW. Shortly after this and following a performance audit by the Auditor-General of NSW, the Committee resolved to consider the Critical Communications Enhancement Program (CCEP) as the initial focus of this inquiry.

The CCEP is a program aiming to delivery an enhanced public safety radio network to serve the five emergency services organisations, as well as a range of other users. Since 2016, the estimated capital costs of the CCEP increased from \$400 million to \$1.293 billion.⁴

At present, the Committee has received submissions and heard from witnesses at public hearing on 25 March 2024.⁵

Assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service

The Committee received a referral from the Minister for Local Government to undertake an inquiry into the assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The terms of reference provide that the Committee inquire into and report on the funding, maintenance, accounting and operational management of NSW Rural Fire Service assets and premises. The inquiry will consider arrangements between the NSW Rural Fire Service and local councils. It will also consider the appropriate role of local authorities in providing emergency services and the sustainability of contributions to emergency service provision.

At present, the Committee is receiving submissions to this inquiry until 10 May 2024.⁶

Previous Parliament (57th) – Follow the Dollar powers

In November 2022, a recommendation made by the previous Public Accounts Committee led to the *Government Sector Audit Act 1983* and the *Local Government Act 1993* being amended to give the Auditor-General for NSW 'follow the dollar powers'.⁷

In September 2022, in recognition of the growing use of outsourced service delivery, the Committee recommended giving follow the dollar powers to the Auditor-General to provide:

- greater accountability of the government
- transparency as to the level of service being provided by various entities
- increased scope of public money that can be directly oversighted⁸

³ Public Accounts Committee, [Report on the Parliamentary Budget Office 2023 Post-Election Report](#), report 1/58, Parliament of New South Wales, November 2023, pp iv-2

⁴ Audit Office of New South Wales, [Management of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program](#), viewed 12 April 2024.

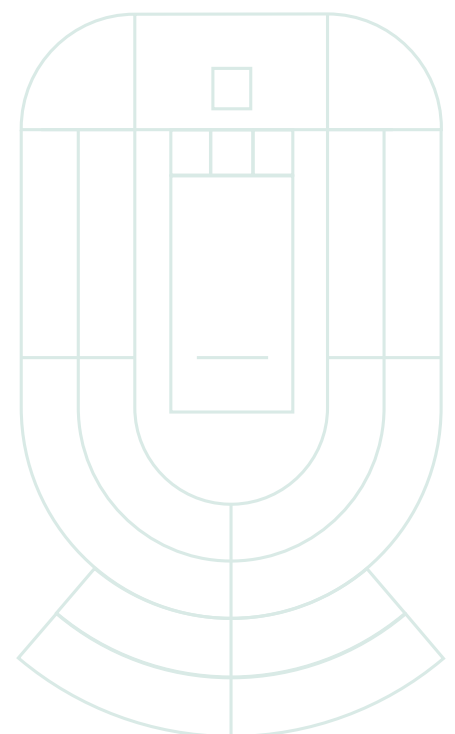
⁵ Parliament of New South Wales, [Accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure, contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW](#), viewed 12 April 2024.

⁶ Parliament of New South Wales, [Assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service](#), viewed 12 April 2024.

⁷ [Government Sector Audit and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022](#) (NSW); New South Wales, Legislative Assembly, [Parliamentary Debates](#), 9 November 2024 (Felicity Wilson, Member for North Shore), pp 9150-9151.

⁸ Public Accounts Committee, [Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office of New South Wales 2022](#), Report 10/57, September 2022, pp iv-3.

The Committee's recommendation followed similar recommendations made in the quadrennial review of the Audit Office. The Committee is required to appoint an external reviewer at least once every four years to review the Audit Office. After conducting their review, the external reviewer reports any findings and recommendations to the Committee. This is referred to as the quadrennial review.⁹



⁹ [Government Sector Audit Act 1983](#) (NSW), s48A Review of Audit Office.