

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

### HEARING IN RELATION TO THE ECONOMIC AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT "PUTTING THE PUBLIC FIRST: PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS TO DELIVER OUTCOMES"

#### BRIEFING PAPER

#### **The Government's position with respect to the recommendations contained in the EAC Report**

On 15 December 2009, the Liberal-National Government released the Economic Audit Committee's (EAC's) final Report "Putting the Public First: Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes".

The Government did not expressly endorse the recommendations. When releasing the EAC Report, the Premier stated that the recommendations would be considered in the context of the Government's agenda of reforming the public sector to focus on providing more efficient and effective services.

The EAC Report has informed the Government's ongoing reform agenda. The broad directions of the EAC Report include:

- Improving the delivery of services to Western Australians, particularly the more disadvantaged and vulnerable;
- Recognising the important role of not-for-profit organisations in working closely in delivering services to the community;
- Building a genuine and collaborative partnership between the Government, public sector and not-for-profit sector;
- Building a more sustainable not-for-profit sector and growing its capacity over time;
- The public sector increasingly acting as a facilitator of services rather than a deliverer; and
- Developing a capable and innovative public sector.

#### **The action plans put in place to implement the recommendations**

As the EAC Report's directions were consistent with the Government's priorities, responsibility for progressing them was split between the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Public Sector Commission.

The Government's commitment to some of the proposed EAC directions predated the release of the EAC Report. For example, following the 2008 election commitment to public sector reform, in July 2009 the Government reaffirmed its intention to improve the flexibility and integrity of the public sector, including by

merging the roles of the Public Sector Commissioner and Commissioner for Public Sector Standards to remove their overlapping responsibilities.

The Public Sector Commission had commenced an initial consultation process which helped shape the Public Sector Reform Program which commenced in October 2009. This Program contains a range of initiatives that is being implemented over three years and is aimed at improving the flexibility, integrity and professionalism of the public sector. Accordingly, the Program addresses the bulk of the EAC public sector management reform and workforce development recommendations.

Work had commenced on development approvals and land and infrastructure planning, steered by the Ministerial Taskforce on Approvals, Development and Sustainability, established in early 2009.

The Taskforce is steering initiatives to improve the State's approval processes through administrative, institutional and legislative measures. The Taskforce has taken account of EAC Report directions as these pertain to the delivery of infrastructure and the role of the State Government in land development.

Tasks, timeframes, sequencing and strategies for each project were determined in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Key directions have been progressed collaboratively and consultatively using a number of mechanisms including working groups, project teams, workshops, information sessions and forums.

### **The progress to date against the action plans in implementing the recommendations in the EAC Report**

The following Government initiatives have been informed by relevant recommendations of the EAC Report:

- The Public Sector Reform Program commenced in October 2009 and includes amendments to the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, capacity building and development, autonomy and flexibility in decision-making, and contemporary management frameworks for the public sector.
- The development of the *Public Sector Reform Act 2010* forms part of the Public Sector Reform Program. It was assented to by the Governor on 1 October 2010. Parts 1 and 2 were proclaimed on 1 December 2010 and Part 3 will come into effect on 28 March 2011. The Act amends the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* in three main areas by establishing the independent statutory office of Public Sector Commissioner, streamlining disciplinary provisions and removing some administrative anomalies and deficiencies.
- In May 2010 the Premier announced the establishment of the Partnership Forum which is comprised of heads of community sector organisations

and major WA Government agencies. The Forum's purpose is to address issues of mutual concern to the community and public sectors with a view to achieving beneficial outcomes for both sectors and for the community. The Forum's first meeting was held in July 2010 and meets quarterly.

- The Premier announced in May 2010 that the Social Innovation Grants Program would be established. The Program aims to promote social innovation in the delivery of human services by the not-for-profit community sector. It was launched by the Minister for Mental Health and Disability services on 21 January 2011.
- Work is progressing on the Community Development Investment Fund, announced in May 2010 by the Premier. The Fund will provide low-interest loans to not-for-profit community sector organisations that want to develop as community employers or social enterprises.
- The Executive Coordinating Committee consists of a number of public sector agency heads. It was established by Cabinet and the first meeting was held in June 2010. Its role is to advise Government on strategic issues and lead the implementation of change in matters of whole of government significance.
- The Amendola Report was released by the Government on 6 December 2010. The Minister for Commerce issued the Government's proposed response to the review and stated that the Government planned to introduce legislation to State Parliament in the second half of 2011, following a period of consultation.

**Any issues experienced with implementing the recommendations that the EAC did not foresee in its report**

There were no significant unforeseen issues experienced in progressing the EAC reforms.