



Premier of New South Wales

Reference: 2013-499682

23 MAY 2014

Ms R Miller
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Miller *Ronda*

I write in response to your letter dated 30 October 2013 concerning Report No. 12/55 of the Public Accounts Committee – *Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits October 2011 – March 2012*.

Standing Order 303A of the Legislative Assembly states that within six months of a report being tabled, relevant Ministers are required to report to the House on what action, if any, the Government proposes to take in response to recommendations of the Committee. As previously advised, reporting to the House was delayed by the unanticipated appointment of a new Ministry.

Advice from relevant Ministers has now been collated and I am pleased to provide the House with the attached NSW Government response to the Public Accounts Committee.

Yours sincerely



MIKE BAIRD MP
Premier

NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT 12/55 OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDITS OCTOBER 2011 – MARCH 2012

RECOMMENDATION	NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Committee recommends that Roads and Maritime Services produces an evaluation report by July 2014, analysing the impacts of the following programs for learner drivers, particularly Aboriginal learner drivers, in remote communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Safer Drivers Course, which commenced in a number of NSW locations in July 2013, • the pilot scheme of restricted provisional P1 licences for learners in three communities west of the Newell Highway, which commenced in July 2013. 	<p><i>Referred to the former Minister for Roads and Ports</i></p> <p><u>Evaluation of the Safer Drivers Course</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2014, the Centre for Road Safety, Transport for NSW, commenced an initial two year process and outcomes evaluation of the Safer Drivers Course with broad objectives to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ inform the refinement of course components and delivery model for continuous improvement purposes; ○ assess the extent to which the Safer Drivers Course has achieved its intended objectives; and ○ assess the road safety impacts of the Safer Drivers Course. • It is anticipated that a detailed evaluation framework will be developed by an independent evaluator by July 2014 that will guide the overall evaluation. Interim reports will be provided on a yearly basis and the overall evaluation is planned to continue following the initial two year reporting. <p><u>Evaluation of the Restricted P1 Licence Pilot (RP1)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport for NSW has initiated a process and outcomes evaluation of the RP1 Licence Pilot which is underway until December 2015. An independent evaluator was engaged in October 2013. • The evaluation objectives are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ examine the barriers to licensing within regional and remote areas of NSW, including barriers specific to Aboriginal communities; ○ assess the impacts of the pilot (including for Aboriginal learner drivers) on improving access to licensing and access to essential services and life opportunities; ○ assess the road safety impacts of the pilot for all road users, including road safety outcomes and behaviours of pilot participants; ○ assess pilot design, implementation of supporting programs and ongoing

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	<p>administration of the pilot in targeted communities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o identify any other unintended impacts or outcomes of the pilot. • An Interim Report is due in mid-2014 and the Final Evaluation Report is due in November 2015.
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Committee recommends that Roads and Maritime Services ensures that the proposed changes to continue to improve the Driver Knowledge, Hazard Perception and Driver Qualification Tests be implemented by December 2014, within the 18 months stipulated.</p>	<p><i>Referred to the former Minister for Roads and Ports</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enhancements to the computer based licence tests encompass two significant and related components – the replacement of the information technology test platform (that includes new test hardware) and enhancements to the test content. • Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is currently leading a project to replace the information technology platform and hardware supporting the current computer based driver licence tests. RMS has undertaken preliminary analysis of the current test and identified a broad scope of work. • In the first half of 2014, RMS will develop a business case to seek funding approval for delivery of a new solution. If approved, it is anticipated the implementation of the solution would take approximately 18 to 24 months from time of vendor engagement. The new system will provide a number of enhancements, including a functionality to enable changes to the test questions to be made easily and without the need to engage a service provider. • With regard to the test content, a two-phase approach will be used to enhance test questions and the educational materials supporting the tests. • The first phase, currently in progress, includes the review of the test questions to identify questions with lower degree of effectiveness and their removal from the test question bank. This work is expected to be completed by December 2014. • The second phase has not yet commenced. It is expected to encompass a project to develop, trial, translate and add new test questions and also enhance educational materials supporting the tests. This project is subject to scope and funding approval and time alignment with the replacement of the information technology test platform. The estimated timeframe of the second phase is two

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	<p>years from approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, Austroads has commenced a major national study to review the hazard perception test.
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Committee recommends that Transport for NSW completes the development and delivery of the Repeat Offenders Strategy by December 2014.</p>	<p><i>Referred to the Minister for Transport</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport for NSW has commenced developing the road safety Repeat Offender Strategy, and is on track to deliver by December 2014. • Key actions completed to date include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preliminary analysis of offence and crash data to determine the extent and nature of the repeat offender problem in NSW. ○ An international review of repeat offender programs in other jurisdictions, including evaluations to investigate best practice models. ○ Review of current NSW programs to address repeat offending and high risk crash behaviours and a gap analysis. ○ Identification of specific target areas and actions for the Strategy. ○ Mandatory Alcohol Interlocks, a key intervention found to be effective for drink driving repeat offenders, has been approved by Government for implementation in February 2015. Additional penalties for repeat traffic offenders have also been planned for implementation at the same time. ○ Transport for NSW participated in the former Department of Attorney General and Justice Licence Disqualification Working Group to rationalise licence disqualification penalties for unauthorised driving offences and to abolish the Habitual Traffic Offender Scheme. Subsequently, the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety commenced an Inquiry into the Working Group's recommendations and tabled a report in Parliament in November 2013. A Government response is required by May 2014 addressing the report's 16 recommendations.
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Committee recommends that Roads and</p>	<p><i>Referred to the former Minister for Roads and Ports</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for Road Safety, Transport for NSW, manages crash data and the

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<p>Maritime Services improves its website to provide more useful evidence-based statistical information and increased access to road safety data for the general public.</p>	<p>Centre for Road Safety's website provides a range of statistical reports on road safety data. In mid-2013, a new daily crash summary report was launched on the website, which provides the public with graphical representation of detailed crash information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive review of statistics on the website is underway to improve accessibility, timeliness, coverage and user friendliness of road safety data available to key stakeholders and the public. • These activities will include providing interactive statistics on road crashes using the latest available technologies in data visualisation to improve the customer experience for key stakeholder groups. These improvements will be implemented in 2014.
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Department of Family and Community Services, the Department of Attorney General and Justice, the NSW Police Force, and the NSW Ministry of Health re-address the Auditor-General's recommendations on <i>Responding to Domestic and Family Violence</i> to ensure that they are fully implemented, and provide a written response within six months detailing the implementation of the recommendation.</p>	<p><i>Referred to the former Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister for Women; the former Minister for Attorney General and Minister for Justice; the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Hunter; and the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research</i></p> <p>Recommendation 1</p> <p><i>To establish domestic and family violence protocols that:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) clarify what, and how, information can be shared between organisations within the existing law around privacy</i> <i>b) implement privacy codes of practice, or promote legislative reform, for the appropriate exchange of information to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable.</i> <p>Legislative change in mid-2013 improved information sharing between agencies in order to better support people experiencing domestic and family violence. This initial legislative change supported the implementation of the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy, Element 5 of the It Stops Here Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform (DFV Framework).</p> <p>Additional information sharing legislative amendments are now being sought to:</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the provisions of the current Act to private Apprehended Domestic Violence Order applicants; and • Support the service delivery component of the DFV Framework (Element 2) and allow information to be shared where victims are identified to be at threat. <p>In addition, an information sharing protocol is being developed which will outline when and how information can be shared. The protocol will have a strong focus on victims' informed consent, balanced with information sharing to avert serious harm to victims and children.</p> <p>The introduction of the legislation and the protocol will be accompanied by information sessions conducted by the Department of Police and Justice across NSW, commencing in the launch sites for the DFV Framework (Orange and Waverley).</p> <p>The NSW Health Privacy Manual for Health Information also, clearly established the legal basis for sharing information in the context of domestic and family violence.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 2</u> <i>To ensure that local staff from police, prosecutors, child protection, probation, health, housing and appropriate non-government organisations meet regularly. These meetings should use existing forums where available and should:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>identify victims and perpetrators most at risk, share information and agree on a plan of response</i> b) <i>monitor whether these plans are keeping victims safe and perpetrators accountable and revise plans as things change</i> c) <i>provide feedback to senior management about opportunities to improve coordination between services</i> <p>A significant feature of the It Stops Here DFV Framework for Reform is the introduction of multi-agency safety conferencing for victims who are assessed to be at serious threat of further harm.</p>	
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	<p>In defined local areas Safety Action Meetings (DFV Framework Element 2) will be established as a multi-agency response to victims who are at serious threat of escalating violence. Safety Action Meetings will meet regularly, either fortnightly or monthly.</p> <p>Representation at the Safety Action Meeting is designed to be high level, yet flexible allowing for the particular characteristics of the local area. Representatives might include NSW Health; Community Services; Housing; Education; Corrective Services; Victims Services; and non-government agencies that provide services to clients living with domestic and family violence in the local area. The Safety Action Meeting will be chaired by a senior representative of the NSW Police Force. Secretariat will be provided by the Local Coordination Point.</p> <p>At the Safety Action Meetings, all organisations involved with a particular client or family are able to sit together and share information and determine safety actions to address the risks identified. A Safety Action Plan would be completed or confirmed for every person discussed.</p> <p>As participants in the Safety Action Meeting, agencies commit to carry out, follow up and report on agreed actions within agreed timeframes. Participants would be expected to report back to the Safety Action Meeting coordinator when actions have been completed.</p> <p>This approach will be trialled at the launch sites and will be evaluated six months into the trial.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 3</u> <i>To ensure that their organisations build on existing resources to develop and maintain an integrated online directory of specialist and mainstream services for victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence.</i></p> <p>The recommendation has been implemented and addressed as previously noted by the Public Accounts Committee. No further response is required.</p>
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Recommendation 4

To report on:

- a) *the impact and the estimated cost of domestic and family violence on their operations*
- b) *what they are doing, or funding other organisations to do, to respond to domestic and family violence and what this is achieving.*

- a) The second annual report on the status of women was published in June 2013 and included information on the prevalence of domestic and family violence.

NSW currently invests heavily in domestic and family violence programs and services, with around \$58 million being invested by the Department of Family and Community Services alone in 2012-13. NSW Health provides a response to domestic and family violence through the Domestic Violence Routine Screening program (DVRS), Social Work services, Emergency Departments, specialist Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol services, Aboriginal Family Health services and one Domestic Violence Specialist Counselling Service. NSW Health publishes the results of the annual DVRS data 'Snapshot', which reports on the rates and outcomes of the DVRS occurring in November since 2003. The NSW Health NSW Education Centre Against Violence, has an ongoing program of domestic violence (and other specialist) training for Health and non-Health staff, and delivers an annual DVRS Forum to support the continued quality of the DVRS program. In February 2014, NSW Kids and Families provided funding to facilitate attendance by rural and regional NSW Health staff at the DVRS Forum, with an emphasis on participation by Mental Health services where DVRS rates have been low in comparison to other NSW Health services.

On average, across the state up to 40 per cent of NSW Police Force callouts are domestic and family violence related. The former Department of Attorney General and Justice spent more than \$11 million in compensation and counselling for victims of domestic and family violence in 2012-13, and more than \$2 million on services and initiatives associated with the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy.

Consultations on the operations cost of domestic and family violence for named agencies has been undertaken however there are many variables that make it difficult for agencies to provide an exact cost and it is not cost efficient to report regularly on operational costs. For example NSW Police has previously indicated that any estimated cost of domestic and family violence would be highly subjective and inconsistent from year to year and would provide little benefit as police will continue to respond to all reported incidents of domestic violence.

The Department of Family and Community Services will lead an interagency review of current service investment will ensure funding is distributed equitably and efficiently across NSW to maximise value and return for victims accessing services. Evidence will guide funding decisions by considering sound information about population projections, unmet need and any other risk factors that may have an impact on demand.

- b) The DFV Framework outlines the strategies that will be undertaken to respond to DFV. It also outlines initiatives funded under the Domestic and Family Violence Funding Program to directly support the outcomes of the Framework by driving down rates of domestic violence, and better responding to victims. Projects currently funded include:
- NSW's contribution to the establishment of the National Centre for Excellence to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children
 - Three prevention studies to help build the evidence base and inform future approaches to responding to domestic and family violence in NSW
 - The Men's Telephone Counselling and Referral Service
 - The Men's Behaviour Change Network
 - A state-wide skills strategy being developed by TAFE NSW to support NGO workers in the domestic and family violence sector; and
 - Small grants to local Domestic Violence Committees to support community awareness.

Recommendation 5

To agree, in consultation with non-government organisations, to a framework on how to respond to domestic and family violence.

The final DFV Framework announced in February 2014 outlines the many strategies the government will implement to address the issues outlined in recommendation 5. It includes:

- a) a commitment to developing new minimum practice standards for screening and early identification, responding to all victims of DV and victims who are at serious threat.
- b) service mapping and gap analysis, the results of which has informed the development of the reforms and will continue to inform implementation.
- c) Women NSW commissioned the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research to undertake research into underreporting of domestic violence. 'Reporting Violence to Police: A survey of victims attending domestic violence services' was published in December 2013 and will inform new service delivery.
- d) the new referral pathways are outlined in detail in the DFV Framework. An implementation strategy has also been developed by government agencies to support its rollout. The reformed referral pathways will support a consistent service response to victims, regardless of who they are or how they have entered the system. In addition, Safety Action Meetings will include representatives from government and non-government agencies to develop multi agency responses to victims at serious threat.
- e) TAFE NSW has been funded to develop a state wide Skills Strategy to increase the capacity of the NGO human services workforce to respond effectively to DFV. This will include:
 - (i) targeted professional development for workers whose role will change as a result of the DFV Framework; and

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	<p>(ii) enhanced opportunities for front-line workers to access broader domestic and family violence-related education and training, and gain new qualifications.</p> <p>The Skills Strategy will be delivered in a way that maximises collaboration and partnerships across the sector, in line with the intent of the new reforms. This includes cross-sectoral and cross-agency partnership arrangements for the design and delivery of education and training resources and courses. The Department of Police and Justice will additionally provide information sessions on the new information sharing legislation and protocol across NSW.</p> <p>The NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence is NSW Health's state-wide service providing high quality training programs and therapeutic and information resources for professionals in the areas of sexual assault of adults and children, domestic and Aboriginal family violence, and physical and emotional abuse and neglect of children. The NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence also lead the Interagency Domestic and Family Violence Learning Project, which aims to supporting the development effective interagency relationships to respond to domestic and family violence. In recent years they have delivered training partnerships and consultations with: Family Planning NSW; Staying Home Leaving Violence program; and Legal Aid NSW.</p> <p>f) The governance structure of the DFV Strategy involves a Domestic and Family Violence Ministerial Group, a NSW Domestic and Family Violence Council, a Domestic and Family Violence Interdepartmental Steering Committee and Domestic and Family Violence Reforms Implementation Working Group.</p> <p>g) The DFV Framework has been developed through extensive consultation with the government and non-government sectors. A communications strategy is under development to support ongoing collaboration.</p> <p>h) The DFV Framework was approved by all relevant chief executives, including those from the Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Police</p>
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	<p>Force and the former Department of Attorney General and Justice.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 6</u> <i>To ensure that organisations comply with the framework (established per recommendation 5), and attend inter-sectoral committees for the reduction of domestic and family violence.</i></p> <p>The DFV Framework was released in February 2014. Prior to that steps had already been taken to support an interagency approach to addressing domestic and family violence in NSW.</p> <p>An Interdepartmental Steering Committee monitors the implementation of the reforms and is made up of representatives from: Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Premier and Cabinet; NSW Police Force; NSW Health; Ministry for Police and Emergency Services; Department of Police and Justice; and Department of Education and Communities (including Aboriginal Affairs).</p> <p><u>Recommendation 7</u> <i>To publish their strategies including output or outcome measures that can be used to monitor their impact on domestic and family violence over the following five years (2013 to 2018).</i></p> <p>The DFV Framework was published in February 2014. The DFV Framework articulates a comprehensive evaluation strategy to be applied during the various stages of implementation. As previously identified by the PAC, a governance mechanism is in place to ensure that evaluation is timely and robust. The Minister has committed to providing annual reports back to Cabinet outlining progress against the implementation of the DFV Framework.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 That the NSW Government establishes a</p>	<p><i>Referred to the former Minister for Finance and Services</i></p> <p>The NSW Government, through the NSW Procurement Board, has established a</p>

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<p>standardised approach to risk-based contract management plans across government agencies to identify contracts in need of a contract management plan.</p>	<p>standardised approach to risk-based contracting and contract management plans across government agencies.</p> <p>This standardised approach does not mandate a \$250k threshold. However, it allows agencies to adopt an approach to contract management on the basis of factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the agency's authority to procure (accreditation status) • the value of a contract • the nature of the goods or services being procured • the way in which the procurement was undertaken (whether by tender, prequalification scheme or a more complex method of procurement). <p>This approach gives agencies the flexibility to concentrate contract management planning and monitoring resources on high-risk contracts, regardless of the monetary value of the contract.</p> <p>Adopting an artificial \$250k threshold could create anomalies as agencies would not be required to use contract management resources on high risk engagements under the threshold. Instead they would be required to unnecessarily allocate contract management planning resources to low-risk, commoditised contract areas above the threshold.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The Committee recommends that NSW Health completes the state-wide rollout of VMoney by the end of June 2014, and that NSW Health provides a progress report on implementation as part of the government response to this report.</p>	<p><i>Referred to the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research</i></p> <p>The ongoing rollout of VMoney across Local Health Districts is expected to be completed by June 2014.</p> <p>Roll out of the VMoney Web on line claiming system commenced in Western NSW Local Health Districts (LHD) on 1 September 2013. Since then VMoney has been rolled out in Murrumbidgee and Southern NSW LHDs (1 October 2013), Justice Health and Forensic Medical Health (1 December 2013), Nepean Blue Mountains LHD (1 February 2014), Southern Eastern Sydney LHD (1 March 2014) and Northern Sydney LHD (1 April 2014) and - Illawarra Shoalhaven, South Western Sydney and Sydney Children's Hospitals</p>

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	<p>Network (1 May 2014).</p> <p>The following LHDs have committed to the following commencement dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Jun 2014: Sydney, Northern NSW, Central Coast, Western Sydney and Far West • TBA: Hunter New England and Mid-North Coast.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Committee recommends that NSW Health conducts clinical audits using the VMoney system and continues to analyse data in VMoney to detect inconsistent Visiting Medical Officer claims by September 2014.</p>	<p><i>Referred to the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research</i></p> <p>VMO Claims Management Committee has been established with members from public health organisations and the Ministry of Health to provide guidance and make recommendations for the policies and business process that govern VMO claims. This Committee will also provide advice on the broader question of analysing overall claims data to detect possible inconsistencies in payments and clinical priorities.</p> <p>The ongoing auditing of VMO claims for payment is continuing. These audits are undertaken at the public health organisation level and the activity is not centrally recorded.</p> <p>A guideline addressing the procedures for auditing VMO claims has been published by the Ministry. In addition, the VMoney business rules governing the making of claims assists in ensuring that claims are appropriate for payment.</p> <p>In August 2013, the Ministry sought a report from Local Health Districts on the four Medicare Benefit Schedule fee item numbers which formed the basis for a first round of audits. The response from LHDs identified some inconsistencies in how some fee-for-service item numbers were being claimed.</p> <p>The VMO Claims Management Committee will further support the utilisation of VMoney by VMOs and will recommend suitable priorities for further auditing by public health organisations.</p>

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Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that NSW Health continues to engage with the Australian Medical Association concerning proposed amendments to Visiting Medical Officer contracts to ensure a viable solution is negotiated by both parties in line with the Auditor-General's recommendations.

Referred to the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research

Agreement has been reached with the Australian Medical Association on a time limit for discounting of VMO claims. The process for amending the VMO Determinations has been initiated in accordance with the Health Services Act 1997.