



New South Wales Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Mr Paul McLeay MP
Chairperson
Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Mr McLeay ^{Paul}

I refer to the Public Accounts Committee's *Report on Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007 – Homelessness, Connecting with Public Transport, Household Burglaries, Government Advertising*, which was tabled on 25 March 2009.

Please find attached the Government's response to the Committee's Report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J Lee'.

John Lee
Director General



NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

TO THE

**REPORT ON EXAMINATION OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE AUDITS
TABLED MARCH TO AUGUST 2007**

September 2009

1.1 RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS

Recommendation 1: *The Committee recommends that the Area Health Services and Local Courts review the extent to which homeless people access their services, develop new ways of delivering services to the homeless, and consider homeless people when planning new services.*

In the NSW Government's previous submission to the Committee, a number of programs that assist homeless people to access Area Health Services and Local Courts were identified, including the Housing and Human Services Accord, the South East Sydney/Illawarra Area Health Service Homelessness Health Strategic Plan, the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative, the Vocational Education Training Employment Program, and the Recovery and Resource Program. Further examples of homelessness strategies, which include new ways of delivering services to the homeless, are detailed below.

The NSW Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth (IHSY) Program aims to improve the health outcomes of homeless and at-risk youth aged 12 to 24 years and their dependents through the provision of innovative and specialised health services. Across NSW there are nine IHSY services located in five Area Health Services. The NSW IHSY services provide a diverse range of assistance including, Aboriginal health services, health promotion, detox, sexual assault services, young parent's programs, hair cuts, showers, counselling and referral to GPs and mainstream health services, where appropriate.

In November 2008, a dedicated contact point for solicitors dealing with homeless people was set up at the Downing Centre Local Court to provide information relating to court appearances. The contact point involves a dedicated phone line and email inbox. This initiative aims to improve the ability of solicitors to access information about homeless people from Local Courts, particularly when they are performing outreach services in the community.

On 15 September 2009, the Attorney General announced a two-year trial to allow disadvantaged people such as the homeless, mentally ill and persons experiencing acute financial hardship to apply for a Work and Development Order from the State Debt Recovery Office in lieu of paying fines. This Order will allow disadvantaged people in the community to pay off fines by doing charity work or treatment programs.

The NSW Homelessness Action Plan (HAP), launched by the Government in August 2009, sets the direction for State-wide reform of the homelessness service system to achieve better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The HAP includes a number of projects that, in consultation with peak homelessness organisations, will be delivered by relevant Area Health Services and the Department of Justice and Attorney General including:

- projects in both the Inner City and Newcastle to provide assertive outreach services and supportive housing to people who are homeless. Support services include health (such as drug and alcohol, mental health and physical health), counselling, case management and, legal support. In addition, a project in Albury/Wagga Wagga to assist chronically homeless

- people in rural areas, aims to increase access to legal services for homeless people to help prevent their legal issues compounding;
- an inner city supportive housing and support for young people project that will draw together a range of government and non-government agencies (including health services, local government, police and homelessness support agencies) to target and respond to young people who are homeless and or at risk of homelessness in the inner city;
 - a project to coordinate exit planning from the St Vincent's Hospital emergency department for people who are homeless. This project will link homeless people to health and support services, improve referral pathways and develop greater partnerships with specialist homeless and mainstream services; and
 - a number of projects in the HAP will link people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to legal support services. This includes distribution of an information card about legal services, and training and support to magistrates about ways of supporting women at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence.

A key component of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan is the development of Regional Homelessness Action Plans. The Regional Plans are being developed during 2009-10 and will drive the re-configuration of the homelessness specialist and mainstream service system to provide flexible and integrated services to homeless people at a regional level. Development of these plans will be informed by an analysis of data available at the regional level regarding the prevalence of homelessness in the area and the opportunities and limitations of the existing service system to respond to this demand.

1.2 CONNECTING WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Recommendation 2: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry use its new responsibilities and powers under the Transport Administration Amendment (Rail and Ferry Transport Authorities) Act 2008 to ensure greater coordination and oversight of interchanges.*

The formation of NSW Transport and Infrastructure will strengthen the capacity of the Government to manage the performance of interchanges. As well as responsibility for transport policy, planning and services, the new Agency will have transport coordination and infrastructure and asset management functions, within which interchanges will be a key priority. The Transport Blueprint, which is currently under development, will ensure an integrated approach to transport and land use planning and will identify the transport infrastructure and services required to meet transport demand into the future.

Recommendation 3: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry provide indicators of its achievements in improving the integration and efficiency of interchanges as part of its Annual Report.*

The Government supports this recommendation. This will be progressed once the internal structure of NSW Transport and Infrastructure is finalised.

Recommendation 4: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry collect and provide data to the Centre for Transport Planning and Product Development on the contribution interchanges make to the transport network, including passenger throughput, transit times, commuter safety and cost effectiveness.*

The former Ministry of Transport has developed a framework titled *Interchange Ranking Project, Metropolitan Sydney* for evaluating and prioritising interchanges so that forward planning can occur. In addition, *Guidelines for the Development of Interchange Facilities* have been implemented to enable assessment of the adequacy of existing interchanges. To date, inspections have been completed at 40 of the most-significant interchanges in Sydney to assess their conditions and identify options for improvements.

Recommendation 5: *The Committee recommends that the Government ensure that the Ministry of Transport has sufficient authority within the planning and budget processes to coordinate interchange development rather than merely provide advice.*

As a result of the recent Public Sector Reform, the Government has established NSW Transport and Infrastructure which will take the lead on all policy and planning functions of the former Ministry of Transport, RailCorp, Roads and Traffic Authority, State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries, the Public Transport Ticketing Corporation and NSW Maritime.

The formation of NSW Transport and Infrastructure responds to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor-General by bringing together all transport service and infrastructure agencies under one umbrella, which will enable the whole-of-network planning, coordination and improved capacity to manage and oversee transport interchanges.

Recommendation 6: *The Committee recommends that the Government publish a review in two years of whether the current interchange governance arrangements enable commuters to interchange in a fast, reliable, safe and convenient manner, and whether they support the development of an integrated and efficient transport network.*

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Transport establish a clear system of accountability for the performance of interchanges that provides ongoing incentives for interchanges to be managed and developed to best serve the needs of commuters.*

Please see the above responses.

Recommendation 8: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Transport establish performance objectives for interchanges such as demand levels, connectivity offered and cost-effectiveness achieved.*

The Government supports this recommendation. This will be progressed once the internal structure of NSW Transport and Infrastructure is finalised.

Recommendation 9: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry ensure that responsibility for emergency readiness is clearly assigned at each interchange.*

The Government's emergency response strategy for interchanges is consistent with the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* and the State Disaster Plan. The strategy acknowledges that there are multiple stakeholders and shared hazards and risks.

In the majority of cases interchanges are covered by local emergency plans overseen by a local emergency management committee chaired by the NSW Police Force. Interchange incident preparedness and responses are dealt with in accordance with this plan.

In other cases the nature and complexity of the interchanges, such as passenger volume, multiple transport operations and stakeholders require a higher degree of planning and coordination.

The NSW Police Force, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and former Ministry of Transport have established Transport Precinct Committees at 11 high volume interchanges. The Committees comprise representatives from the transport operators, local councils, retail owners and facility managers. The Committees are chaired by the NSW Police Force Local Area Commander who is also responsible for emergency coordination if a significant incident occurs.

Recommendation 10: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry ensure that all of Sydney's interchanges have an adequate emergency response strategy in place.*

The Government supports this recommendation. Please see the response to Recommendation 9.

Recommendation 11: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry establish a systematic evaluation process for existing and new interchanges that enables it to analyse the critical aspects of the performance of the services provided, the security attributes of the site and design, and the maintenance costs.*

The NSW Police Force, RailCorp and NSW Transport and Infrastructure are undertaking detailed security assessments at 11 priority interchanges. This includes an assessment of the emergency response arrangements. The assessments will be finalised in November 2009. Security outcomes and measures identified by the assessments will be considered by the Transport Chief Executive Officers Security Committee.

Recommendation 12: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry clearly identify interchange funding objectives and options, including public private partnerships where appropriate.*

The Government expects that the NSW Budget will remain the primary source of transport infrastructure funding. However, the Government will continue to identify opportunities for leveraging alternative funding sources. NSW Transport and Infrastructure is presently developing a transport infrastructure funding strategy as part of the Transport Blueprint.

Recommendation 13: *The Committee recommends that the Ministry, in identifying funding options, assess the adequacy of current and future funding sources and, if necessary, consider a range of alternative funding sources.*

The Government supports this recommendation and the former Ministry of Transport has undertaken a study of funding options (including private sector funding), which identified limited opportunities within existing markets to utilise the private sector.

1.3 DEALING WITH HOUSEHOLD BURGLARIES

Recommendation 14: *The Committee recommends that the Police Force establish guidelines for commanders on when to establish a specialist break and enter team.*

The NSW Police Force reiterates that it does not see the need to implement this recommendation due to existing operational procedures. Specifically, each Local Area Command (LAC) contains an Intelligence section, staffed at a minimum by a uniformed officer and a Civilian Intelligence Analyst. The role of this unit is to provide timely spatial and temporal analysis of crime and criminals in each of the LACs. This includes daily, weekly and monthly analysis of crime trends in major crime categories, including burglaries. This means that each Local Area Commander is aware at any given time as to whether there is an increase in a particular offence in the LAC.

This intelligence-lead policing enables Local Area Commanders to allocate appropriate resources to address specific offences at specific times in specific locations, including break and enter "crime waves". It is only in extreme cases that a LAC may allocate additional resources from Regions to address particular "crime waves". This assessment would be made after consideration of intelligence and analyses of that crime.

It should also be noted that every LAC is advised of recent releases or parolees to the area. The recent NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) *July 2009 Crime and Justice Bulletin: Rates of Participation in burglary and motor theft* supports the NSW Police Force position that the majority of burglaries are carried out by a small number of recidivist offenders. The NSW Police Force considers this is an appropriate mechanism for identifying probable offenders.

1.4 GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Recommendation 15: *The Committee recommends that the Minister for Commerce ensure that the delegation to approve advertising campaigns is only used when the requirements of the Guidelines are met and not for the reason of timeliness alone.*

The Government's Advertising Guidelines establish a clear set of principles and procedures that are to be observed by all agencies. The Guidelines were updated in August 2008 in consultation with key stakeholders and in consideration of best practice advertising principles, as well as the 2007 recommendations of the Auditor General.

The guidelines outline that public advertising with a total budget of \$50,000 or greater is subject to approval by Cabinet and may only be approved out of session by the Minister for Commerce in the following circumstances:

- public awareness advertising with low production media costs;
- public awareness advertising required on a regular or ongoing basis; and
- repeat advertising that has been proven to be effective through quantitative results or post-campaign research.

As noted by the Public Accounts Committee's *Report on Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits Tabled March to August 2007*, the Government has substantially implemented the intent of the Auditor General's recommendations. Further work is being undertaken to ensure that media expenditure costs for Government advertising campaigns are regularly reported on the Department of Services, Technology and Administration's website.