Government business

Includes all business items presented to the Assembly by the Executive including bills, motions, and papers

Bills introduced

Election Commitments Costing Bill 2012—
This bill proposes a framework for the costing of election commitments (presented on 14 August 2012)

Discrimination Amendment Bill 2012—
This bill will introduce provisions into the principle Act to include religion as a ground of unlawful vilification (presented on 22 August 2012)

Taxation Administration Amendment Bill 2012—This bill will permit the exchange of taxpayer information between the ACT Revenue Office and the Australian Taxation Office (presented on 14 August 2012)

Bills debated

Appropriation Bill 2012-2013
Summary: This bill will provide for the appropriation of monies for the ACT for the 2012-13 financial year.
After more than eight hours of debate the bill was passed by the Assembly on 24 August 2012 without amendment.

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2012-2013
Summary: This bill will provide for the appropriation of monies to the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

Civil Unions Bill 2011
Summary: This bill will enable couples who are unable to marry under the Marriages Act 1961 (Cwlth) to enter into a legally recognised relationship.
Proceedings: During debate on the bill on 22 August 2012 the Opposition stated that they would not be supporting the passage of the legislation through the Assembly and outlined their reasons for not doing so. The ACT Greens informed the Assembly that they would be supporting the bill and stated that they believed it represented another step towards full equality for same sex couples in the ACT. In closing the in principle debate the Attorney-General outlined the purpose of the legislation. The bill was agreed to in principle after a vote of the Assembly. During the detail stage several minor and technical amendments were moved by the Government which were agreed to.
The amended bill was passed by the Assembly.

Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2011
Summary: This bill will amend the Gaming Machine Act 2004 and the Gaming Machine Regulation 2004 by introducing a medium to longer term target of 4,000 machines for the Territory and to formalise an automatically reducing gaming machine cap.
Proceedings: The Opposition indicated that they would support the passage of the legislation when debate resumed on 23 August 2012, however, they did state that they would be moving amendments during the detail stage. The bill did not receive tri partisan support with the ACT Greens stating they would not be supporting the bill. The bill was agreed to in principle after a vote of the Assembly.
During the detail stage a number of amendments were moved by the Government with the Minister stating that the amendments addressed issues raised by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts during its inquiry into the bill and other issues raised since the legislation’s introduction. Amendments were also moved by the Opposition. All amendments were agreed to.

The amended bill was passed by the Assembly.

Human Rights Amendment Bill 2012

Summary: This bill will amend the Human Rights Act 2004 to expand the Act to include the right to education.

Proceedings: When debate resumed on the bill on 22 August 2012 the Opposition and the ACT Greens indicated that they would be supporting the bill in principle but would be moving amendments during the detail stage. In closing debate on the in principle stage the Government thanked Members for their support of the legislation. The bill was agreed to in principle. During the detail stage amendments moved by the Opposition and the Government were agreed to. Amendments moved by the ACT Greens were not passed by the Assembly.

The bill, as amended, was agreed to by the Assembly.

Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Amendment Bill 2011

Summary: This bill will amend the Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Act 2008 to establish a modern, evidence based statutory entitlement process in substitution for general damages in the case of relatively minor injuries.

Proceedings: When debate resumed on the bill on 23 August 2012 the Opposition stated that they would not support the bill in its current form but would be moving amendments during the detail stage. During debate the ACT Greens stated that whatever the outcome of the debate, they were of the view that there should be consistent incremental improvements to the scheme. The bill was agreed to in principle. Debate continued on the bill on 24 August in the detail stage. Amendments were proposed by all parties in the Assembly with a number of them being agreed to.

The amended bill was passed by the Assembly.

Taxation Administration Amendment Bill 2012

Summary: This bill will permit the exchange of taxpayer information between the ACT Revenue Office and the Australian Taxation Office

Proceedings: Debate resumed on the bill on 22 August 2012. The bill received tri-partisan report and was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

Other bills considered and passed by the Assembly on 23 and 24 August 2012 included:

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2012

Election Commitments Costing Bill 2012

Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2012

Private Members’ business

Includes all items presented to the Assembly by all non-Executive Members, including bills and motions

Bills debated

Financial Management (Investment) Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

Ms Meredith Hunter MLA (Ginninderra—ACT Greens)

Summary: This bill proposes to amend the Financial Management Act 1996 and the Territory Superannuation Provision Protection Act 2000 by prohibiting the investment of public money in tobacco, arms or armaments, cosmetics that are tested on animals and the manufacture or sale of products using labor in breach of international labor obligations.

Proceedings: Debate resumed on this bill on 22 August 2012. During debate the Government indicated that they would not be supporting the bill and stated that its view was that legislation in the area covered by the bill was not required because matters of responsible investment are more appropriately addressed by way of documented investment policies. The Canberra Liberals also stated that they would not be supporting the bill as they believed there were substantial holes in the proposed legislative framework.
The bill was negatived at the agreement in principle stage after a vote of the Assembly.

**Retirement Villages Bill 2012**

Ms Mary Porter MLA (Ginninderra—Australian Labor Party)

**Summary:** The bill proposes a framework for the regulation of existing, proposed and future retirement villages in the Territory.

**Proceedings:** During debate on 22 August 2012 the Opposition commented that they would be supporting the bill but would be moving an amendment during the detail stage. The ACT Greens also supported the legislation. The bill was then agreed to in principle. During the detail stage the Opposition moved their amendment which sought to commence the legislation on 1 March 2013 to enable sufficient time for the changes to be implemented. Neither the ACT Greens or Government supported the amendment.

The bill was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

**Motions debated**

On 22 August 2012, Ms Vicki Dunne MLA (Ginninderra—Canberra Liberals) moved a motion concerning the Canberra Symphony Orchestra. The motion sought to highlight the importance of the Orchestra and to call on the Government to attempt to secure a commitment from the Commonwealth to increase its funding for the Orchestra. When speaking during debate the Government stated that they had advocated on a number of occasions on behalf of the Orchestra for Australian Government funding and will continue to do so to ensure that the Orchestra receives Commonwealth funding that is comparable to other States. The ACT Greens also supported the motion and outlined their reasons for doing so.

The motion was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

Other matters discussed on 22 August related to:

- **Homelessness**—Ms Amanda Bresnan MLA (Brindabella—ACT Greens)
- **Payroll Tax administration**—Mr Brendan Smyth MLA (Brindabella—Canberra Liberals)

**Road safety at schools**—Mr Alistair Coe MLA (Ginninderra—Canberra Liberals)

**Assembly business**

Includes any business relating to the establishment or membership of a committee or the proposed referral of a matter to a committee. It also includes business which proposes to amend, disallow, disapprove or declare void any instruments which are made under specific Acts agreed to by the Assembly. Assembly business also includes any notice or order of the day which deals with the administration of the Assembly or how the Assembly conducts its proceedings.

**Motion debated**

On 23 August 2012, a motion was moved relating to the consideration of statutory appointments. The motion included provisions requiring Assembly committees that consider statutory appointments to make a statement to the Assembly, on a six monthly basis, and present a schedule listing appointments considered during the relevant period. The motion also outlined what information the schedule should include.

The motion was agreed to by all parties and was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

**Papers presented**

The following is a list of papers of interest that were presented:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement 2010-2013 (presented by the Attorney-General on 22 August 2012)
- ACT Chief Health Officer’s Report 2012 (presented by the Minister for Health on 24 August 2012)
- ACT Disabled Parking Study 2008—Report to the Assembly on the progress of recommendations (presented on behalf of the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services on 24 August 2012)
- ACT Government Responsible Investment Strategy (presented by the Treasurer on 22 August 2012)
- ACT Local Hospital Network Council—Annual report for the 2011-2012 financial year (presented by the Minister for Health on 23 August 2012)
Approvals of Variations to the Territory Plan—
Variation No 312—Hume West Industrial Estate—Hume, Section 30, Blocks 1 to 8—
Change of zoning from IZ1 general industrial zone to IZ2 industrial mixed use zone
Variation No 313—Calvary Hospital Car Parking—Bruce Section 110 Block 1 (part)—
Change of zoning from non urban NUZ3 hills, ridges and buffer zone to community facility zone
(presented by Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development on 22 August 2012)

Auditor-General’s Reports—
2 of 2012—Whole-of-Government Information and Communication Technology Security Management and Services
3 of 2012—Early Childhood Schooling
4 of 2012—Development Application and Approval System for High Density Residential and Commercial Developments
5 of 2012—Management of Recycling Estates and E-waste
6 of 2012—Emergency Department Performance Information
(presented by the Speaker on 14 August 2012)

Narrabundah Park—Final Report on Options for the Future Ownership and Management of the Park (presented by the Minister for Economic Development on 24 August 2012)

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—
Report 5 of 2012—ACT Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme—Compliance and Operation of the Scheme for the 2011 Compliance Year (presented by the Treasurer on 23 August 2012)

Review of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory (presented by the Speaker on 14 August 2012)

Review of the need to expand drug and alcohol rehabilitation services in the ACT—
Final report

ACT Health Directorate response to final report (presented by the Minister for Health on 22 August 2012)

Other matters
On 14 August 2012 the Chief Minister moved a motion relating to forced adoption practices. During the motion the Chief Minister stated that “Today the Government moves to apologise, on behalf of the Assembly and the community, to ACT residents, past and present, who have been affected by practices of forced adoption.”.

Mr Zed Seselja MLA (Molonglo—Canberra Liberals) and Ms Meredith Hunter MLA (Ginninderra—ACT Greens) also spoke in support of the motion.

The Leader of the Opposition lodged a motion of no confidence in the Chief Minister on 14 August 2012. As provided for in the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 and the standing orders of the Assembly, the motion would be debated at least one week after the lodging of the motion. The motion was moved and debated on 22 August 2012 and was negatived after a vote of the Assembly.

Committee activities

Committee reports presented

ACT Supermarket Competition Policy—Select Committee

In accordance with the order of the Assembly of 7 June 2012, the committee’s report was tabled on Friday, 24 August 2012.

The report made 18 recommendations covering aspects of the implementation of the ACT Supermarket Completion Policy (SCP), and the need for greater transparency and accountability in the SCP’s implementation. The committee also recommended that the SCP be reviewed in 2013 with a report on the review being tabled in the Assembly in early 2014, to provide the Assembly and the community with an assessment of the achievements of the SCP.
Other recommendations of the committee were framed around the issue of maximum floor areas for supermarkets in smaller local centres in Canberra, and the need to address the increasing domination of the Canberra supermarket sector by the two major supermarket operators, Woolworths and Coles. In this regard, the committee recommended that the ACT Government write to the Commonwealth Government asking it to address the issues of market domination with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

Further recommendations made by the committee related to the need to ensure that local centres continue to provide supermarket and convenience store facilities to the local community and ensure the territory plan makes provision for that goal.

**Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee**

The committee’s report on the **review of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988** (Cwlth) was presented to the Assembly on 24 August 2012. During the inquiry the committee received 24 submissions and heard from 12 witnesses at public hearings. The report makes 10 recommendations suggesting changes to the Self-Government Act.

**Climate Change, Environment and Water—Standing Committee**

Report 7—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2010-2011

On 24 August 2012, the committee chair presented the report on the **annual and financial reports 2010-2011** of the ACT Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate and the statutory offices of the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna, the ACT Environment Protection Authority, and the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

The report made 11 recommendations which range across a number of matters. They cover, for example, issues regarding the ACT Government’s:

- evaluation of implementation of the **Plastic Bags Ban Act 2010**;
- purchase of GreenPower;
- assistance to owners of units/apartments to increase the energy efficiency of their dwellings;
- review of the **Environment Protection Act 1997**;
- mapping and management of sites contaminated with asbestos and other hazardous materials;
- referral of activities impacting on ecological communities listed under the **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999** (Cwlth) to the ACT Conservator of Flora and Fauna and to the Commonwealth Government;
- monitoring of trends in tree-damaging activities; and

One recommendation also addresses the power of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment to effectively compel ACT agencies to provide information the Commissioner needs to conduct investigations and resolve complaints.

Report 8—Inquiry into Current and Potential Ecotourism in the ACT and Region

On 24 August 2012 the committee chair presented the committee’s report of its inquiry into **current and potential ecotourism in the ACT and region**. During the inquiry the committee received 30 submissions, and held three public hearings where it heard from 16 witnesses.

The report considered definitions of ecotourism; the extent of current ecotourism activity in the Australian Capital Region, by government, private sector and community organisations; risks and benefits to the environment from ecotourism; contributions to the economy; regulation and accreditation; and the ways in which ecotourism operators can be encouraged and supported to base their business on principles of ecological sustainability.
Included among recommendations made by the committee were those recommending that:

- ecotourism be given a higher profile within tourism marketing for the ACT;
- the participation of community organisations in ecotourism be supported where possible;
- new nature parks be considered for the northern part of the ACT and an area surrounding Ginninderra Falls;
- that infrastructure such as tracks and signage be given priority within nature parks;
- the Government increase its capacity to capture, analyse and publish data on ecotourism in the ACT;
- the Government promote and facilitate certification of operators by Ecotourism Australia;
- the Government facilitate and participate, more actively, in partnerships in ecotourism; and
- it consider further ways to support further information and training on ecotourism in the ACT.

**Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee**


The committee’s report on *Annual and Financial Reports for 2010-2011* was presented to the Assembly on 23 August 2012 and made eight recommendations which addressed a number of issues involving the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and administrative issues within the Education and Training Directorate. The committee also made two recommendations relating to the Community Services Directorate and its current administration of youth affairs.

**Report 10—Accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT**

This report of the committee on *accommodation needs of tertiary education students* was presented to the Assembly on 23 August 2012 and resulted from an inquiry conducted in late 2011 which had focused on how the major tertiary institutions in the ACT, the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and the Canberra Institute of Technology, provided support to the large number of interstate and international students undertaking all levels of tertiary education in Canberra.

The committee made 10 recommendations in its report and focussed on a number of aspects of provision of high-standard and affordable accommodation for all tertiary students. The committee particularly recommended that the ACT Government review and amend, if necessary, applicable tenancy legislation in the ACT to ensure that tertiary student tenants were not disadvantaged in dealings with private landlords; a matter of some concern during the committee’s inquiry.

**Estimates 2012-2013—Select Committee**

**Report—Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2012-2013**

During its inquiry the committee conducted public hearings on 15 days. Two of these fell within the period covered by this issue of Matters of Public Importance—your Assembly @ work. The first, on 2 July, was a recall hearing of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs about evidence on the Billabong Aboriginal Development Corporation that was discussed at the hearing on 22 June 2012. The second, on 5 July, was a recall hearing of the Minister for Health about waiting times in The Canberra Hospital Emergency Department.

The chair of the committee presented the committee’s report in the Assembly on 14 August. In it, the committee made 151 recommendations on matters related to the ACT Budget 2012-2013, which was presented by the Treasurer on 5 June 2012.

These recommendations were wide-ranging, covering the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for all of the ACT Government Directorates and related agencies, and for the Office of the Legislative Assembly, as well as general matters regarding the presentation of the Budget Papers.
Health, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee

Report 8—The Provision of Social Housing in the ACT

On 23 August 2012 the committee’s report considering the provision of social housing in the ACT was presented. This inquiry highlighted the constant struggle for balance that the ACT faces when it comes to ensuring that the most vulnerable within our community have access to safe, secure, affordable housing. The committee held two public hearings and received 20 submissions. Twenty-eight recommendations were made by the committee based on the evidence presented and Australian and International best practice models. The report suggested that with improved stock management practices, and a long term asset management strategy, the ACT Government can aim to expand the life cycle of existing stock. The committee also made a number of recommendations regarding the processes associated with applicants and tenants of social housing. A large number of the recommendations do not require systematic change, but a re-examination of the current system to identify areas for improvement.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee


On 22 August 2012 the committee chair presented the report reviewing Auditor-General’s Report No 1 of 2011: Waiting Lists for Elective Surgery and Medical Treatment. The Auditor-General’s report summarised the results of a performance audit that reviewed the effectiveness of the processes for supplying and developing land for residential purposes in delivering government objectives. In its report, the committee acknowledged that residential land supply and development within the ACT is a complex activity which involves several ACT Government agencies and methods of land supply, including Land Development Agency estates, private developer estates and joint ventures. The committee also appreciated the importance of land supply and development to the Territory in terms of the structure of the ACT economy.

The committee believed the audit had been important in assessing the degree to which the processes for supplying and developing land for residential purposes deliver on a range of government objectives. The committee made nine recommendations that addressed the following matters:

- management of residential land supply and release;
- financial objectives of residential land supply and release;
- social objectives of residential land supply and release; and
- reform of the ACT taxation system.


On 22 August 2012 the committee’s report reviewing Auditor-General’s Report No 1 of 2011: Residential Land Supply and Development was presented. The Auditor-General’s report summarised the results of a performance audit that reviewed the effectiveness of the processes for supplying and developing land for residential purposes in delivering government objectives. In its report, the committee acknowledged that residential land supply and development within the ACT is a complex activity which involves several ACT Government agencies and methods of land supply, including Land Development Agency estates, private developer estates and joint ventures. The committee also appreciated the importance of land supply and development to the Territory in terms of the structure of the ACT economy.

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- management of residential land supply and release;
- financial objectives of residential land supply and release;
- social objectives of residential land supply and release; and
- reform of the ACT taxation system.

On 22 August 2012 the committee’s chair presented its report reviewing Auditor-General’s Report No 3 of 2011: The North Weston Pond Project. The Auditor-General’s report presented the results of a performance audit that reviewed the effectiveness of processes used by ACT Government agencies in planning, designing and constructing the North Weston Pond in the Molonglo Valley. The committee considered the Audit to have been both timely and of benefit not only to the agencies concerned but also to non-audited agencies. The committee came to the view that the challenges and difficulties encountered in this high-risk infrastructure venture provide valuable lessons and that such problems should not be repeated in any similar infrastructure project. In particular, the committee formed the view that the Audit raised important issues about the management of asbestos in the Territory per se and highlighted the impost on the ACT taxpayer of costs incurred in cleaning up asbestos contaminated sites transferred to the Territory from the Commonwealth at the commencement of self-government.

The committee made eight recommendations in relation to the findings of the Auditor-General’s report concerning: management of asbestos contaminated sites; management of exposure to asbestos; responsibility for cleaning up contaminated sites in the ACT; use of advice provided by consultants to government agencies; record keeping; risk management; and project management.


On 23 August 2012 the committee’s report reviewing Auditor-General’s Report No 5 of 2011: 2010–11 Financial Audits was presented. The Auditor-General’s report provides a summary of the results of this annual program of audits of financial statements and reviews of statements of performance for 2010–11 and an assessment of the quality and timeliness of reporting by agencies. It also provides a summary of major audit findings and details on progress made by agencies on addressing findings made in previous audits. The committee considered the Auditor-General’s annual report on financial audits valuable as it provides an independent opinion on the results of the annual program of audits of financial statements and reviews of statements of performance. An independent opinion is essential to ensure an appropriate level of accountability to the Legislative Assembly and the ACT community for public finances and performance. Independent opinions as provided in the Auditor-General’s annual report on financial audits form an integral part of an effective system of accountability for the stewardship of public funds, for how those funds are spent, and the quality of decision making that underpins that spending. The committee made four recommendations in relation to the findings of the Auditor-General’s report.


On 21 August 2012 the committee presented, out of session, an interim report reviewing Auditor-General’s Report No 6 of 2012: Emergency Department Performance Information. The Auditor-General’s report summarised the results of a performance audit that examined the circumstances associated with the alleged manipulation and misreporting of Emergency Department performance information at the Canberra Hospital. The committee made 16 recommendations—across three themes:

(i) immediate issues associated with the alteration and misreporting of performance information;
(ii) the issue of performance measurement as it applies to health care; and
(iii) the wider system/context in which health care is delivered.

The committee was of the view that the circumstances surrounding the alteration and misreporting of performance information must be considered as part of a wider inquiry into how the health system operates. This includes in a climate of increasing demand for health care with bounded constraints on its supply.
Due to the time constraints, the committee had not been in a position to progress an inquiry of this scale and scope. The committee tabled an interim report and suggested that the Eighth Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts give due consideration to conducting such an inquiry.

Report 30—Report on Community Activity—Seventh Assembly

This report of the committee was presented on 24 August 2012.

Scrutiny Committee—

Scrutiny Report 54, dated 6 August 2012 (presented 14 August 2012)

Scrutiny Report 55, dated 20 August 2012 (presented 22 August 2012)

Committee inquiries

Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee

Inquiry into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 306: Residential development, estate development and leasing codes (DV306)

The committee held seven public hearings on its inquiry into DV306 on during July 2012. The draft variation is proposing a number of changes to the Territory Plan, including new solar access provisions, certain restrictions on RZ2 multi unit developments, the introduction of ‘secondary residences’, a new form of residential development, and a dwelling replacement policy for multi unit development in established areas.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses including:

- Heart Foundation;
- Master Builders Association;
- Planning Institute of Australia;
- Property Council;
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects;
- Housing Industry Association;
- Purdon Associates & Cox Architecture;
- Australian Institute of Architects; and
- Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development and planning officials.

A range of issues were raised during the hearings including the complexity, structure and volume of the variation documentation, dissatisfaction with the public consultation process, the removal of references to Neighbourhood Plans and Statements of Intent, the impact of the new RZ2 provisions on the viability of redevelopment in those areas, and the effect of the new solar access provisions on built form outcomes.

The committee is due to present its report when the Assembly is not sitting on 24 September 2012.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee

On 24 August 2012 the chair of the committee made a statement relating to inquiries about the following Auditor-General’s reports currently before the committee:

No. 6 of 2009: Government office accommodation

No. 6 of 2011: Management of food safety in the ACT

No. 1 of 2012: Monitoring and minimising harm caused by problem gambling in the ACT

No. 2 of 2012: Whole-of-government information and communication technology security management and services

No. 3 of 2012: Early childhood schooling

No. 4 of 2012: Development application and approval process for high density residential and commercial developments

No. 5 of 2012: Management of recycling estates and E-waste

No. 6 of 2012: Emergency department performance information

Government responses to committee reports

Climate Change, Environment and Water—Standing Committee

Report 6—Inquiry into the ecological carrying capacity of the ACT and region

Estimates 2012-2013—Select Committee

Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2012-2013

On 22 August, the Treasurer presented the Government’s response to the report. In it, the Government responded to each recommendation, giving reasons for each of those responses.
In these responses, the Government: noted 62 of the Committee Report's recommendations; agreed with 36; agreed in-principle with 29; did not agree with 21; and partly agreed, agreed in principle, noted or disagreed with other single recommendations.

The Government’s response also commented on the Dissenting Report of two committee members that was an appendix to the committee’s report.

**Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee**

Report 11—Inquiry into Liquor Fees and Subordinate Legislation

**Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee**


**Public Accounts—Standing Committee**

Report 22—Inquiry into the Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Amendment Bill 2011

Report 24—Inquiry into the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2011

**Speaker’s response to committee report**

**Estimates 2012-2013—Select Committee**

Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2012-2013

On 22 August, the Speaker presented his response to the one recommendation pertaining to the Office of the Legislative Assembly. The response agreed to that recommendation.

**Parliamentary Education**

The Strategy and Parliamentary Education Office has conducted a range of activities for community groups, ACT public servants, groups from whom English is a second language and ACT teachers and students during July and August.

On 3 July and 7 August the office conducted sessions for fifty adult migrant students from the Language, Literacy and Numeracy program at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

These sessions focussed on the importance of democracy and voting and how the Hare Clarke electorate system operates in the ACT. Students participated in a mock election and visited the Chamber.

Many participants reported that they felt more confident in being able to cast their vote in the upcoming election on 20 October.

Twenty ACT public servants from the Economic Development Directorate attended a half-day seminar (21 August) on the roles and functions of the Assembly with presentations from the Committee Office, departmental liaison officers from ministers’ offices, the Chamber Support Office and the Strategy and Parliamentary Education Office. Participants also visited the Assembly Library and attended question time.

The office conducted a professional development session for teachers on 19 July, a visit from Dickson College students on 10 August, and another visit from Canberra Grammar School students on 17 August. The professional development session for teachers provided sixteen participants (primary and secondary teachers) an insight into the sorts of programs that the office can offer to their student groups. The Dickson College students debated various topics under the theme of World debates in the Chamber with the Speaker chairing the two hour session and providing feedback to the students on the arguments that were presented in the debates. Forty-one year 9 students participated in a mock election during their visit and viewed the film, One of a Kind.

On 2 and 3 August the office, in combination with other cultural institutions, hosted the annual 2012 Constitutional Convention. Over the two day period forty-four year 11 students participated in the convention which included seminars, discussions and role plays. The activities concluded with students participating in a referendum on the question “Should the Commonwealth Government have specific powers to legislate for the environment?” This major event attracts interest from both government and non-government schools with a majority of students commenting that they learnt a great deal about the Australian constitution, how Australian parliaments develop and pass laws, as well as the separation of powers in our democracy.
Members of the University of the Third Age participated in a full day seminar entitled *Getting to know your Assembly*. Activities included viewing the film *One of a Kind*, participating in a mock election, finding out about how committees and question time work and visiting question time. MLAs also participated in this event.

Five members from ACTCOSS joined the group for the visit to question time.

**Next sitting**

The Assembly will sit sometime after the ACT election on 20 October 2012.