



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and
External Territories report:

Telling Australia's story – and why it's important: Report on the
inquiry into Canberra's national institutions

MAY 2024

Australian Government response

The Australian Government's response to Telling Australia's story – and why it's important: Report on the inquiry into Canberra's national institutions:

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that Canberra's national institutions develop and articulate a shared narrative that directly connects them with Australia's story. That expression of shared value should underpin the work of all of the national institutions, individually and in collaboration.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that Canberra's national institutions make a stronger concerted effort to undertake collective branding and marketing, including the use of joint campaigns capitalising on major events and exhibitions occurring during the same season. These initiatives should be organised through structured collaboration, and based on the best available visitor data.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services and in conjunction with Canberra's national institutions, develop a program that encourages new migrants to Australia to visit Canberra's national institutions.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training undertake a comprehensive review of the PACER program, to include consideration of:

- ways to increase capacity to enable participation by all interested schools and students;
- criteria for prioritising applications and funding support;
- the funding level provided to the program overall and for each student; and
- governance of the program including membership of its education advisory committee.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 5:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with Canberra's science-focussed national institutions, develop a program to encourage and promote engagement in science education by school students visiting Canberra.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 6:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government review the objectives, roles and functions of the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Electoral Education Centre and the visitor and education services at Parliament House; and consider the merits of their closer administrative and operational alignment.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 7:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider expanding the facilities and resourcing of the Parliamentary Education Office and the National Electoral Education Centre, to allow them to offer regular programs to public visitors as well as school groups, and the NEEC to also offer a walk-up experience for impromptu visitors.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 8:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government examine the present objectives and activities of the Museum of Australian Democracy, with a view to ensuring that the Museum is appropriately focused on its core responsibilities: to tell the story of Australia's remarkable democratic heritage, and inspire citizens' engagement in democracy.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 9:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with political parties to create centres for each political party, located at MoAD, to collect, preserve, research and make available publications and exhibitions on the parties' history, campaigns, policies and achievements.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 10:

The Committee recommends that during the 2019-2020 financial year the Australian National Audit Office conduct a follow-up audit of Canberra's National Collecting Institutions, with a particular focus on monitoring their implementation of relevant recommendations made in the ANAO's 2005 and 2018 reports relating to the national collections.

The Australian National Audit Office responded directly to the Committee on this recommendation on 5 August 2019.

As an independent officer of the Parliament, the Australian National Audit Office's responses to Committee Inquiry report recommendations are provided directly to the Committee and do not form part of the government response.

Recommendation 11:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with Canberra's national institutions, the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government, develop a formal consultative structure for national institutions, to pursue the alignment of their strategic planning and policy, explore efficiencies and sharing resources where appropriate, and provide for joint advocacy, negotiation and collaborative marketing.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 12:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a business case for the establishment of a natural history museum in Canberra.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 13:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government relocate the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) from its current location on the Acton Peninsula to a new location in Canberra's Parliamentary Zone; and expand the remit and facilities of AIATSIS to constitute a comprehensive national institution focused on the history, culture and heritage of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This should include public exhibition facilities, and a national resting place for repatriated ancestral remains that cannot immediately return to Country. The institution should be developed under the leadership and in comprehensive consultation with Indigenous Australians.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 14:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government revisit the recommendations of Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Report 413, *The Efficiency Dividend: Size does matter*, with a view to adopting measures to offset the disproportionate impact of the efficiency dividend on small agencies including Canberra's national institutions. This may include setting a threshold amount for institutions' annual expenditure below which the efficiency dividend would be excluded or reduced.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 15:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government reassess the Average Staffing Level caps on Canberra's national institutions, to reduce the cost and skills-retention impacts these are presently having, and avoid the need for institutions to undertake less efficient temporary labour hire arrangements.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 16:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider the adoption of a strategic and coordinated approach to the management and maintenance of national institutions' buildings and facilities.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 17:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government coordinate and support the development of a permanent shared collection storage facility for Canberra's national institutions, to replace the current piecemeal and inadequate arrangements and create maximum efficiency. This should be developed and implemented in close consultation with relevant institutions to ensure it is fit-for-purpose to meet their current and future needs.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 18:

The Committee recommends that Canberra's national institutions ensure that their plans and budgets include clear and documented processes to account for the whole-of-life costs of collections and acquisitions. Assessments of whole-of-life costs need to form part of strategies for managing institutions' existing collections, and also consideration of potential new donations and acquisitions.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 19:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in conjunction with national institutions, develop a new shared exhibition space on suitable national land in Canberra.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 20:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government acknowledge the need for the digitisation of analogue audio-visual items in the collections of the institutions, to ensure that all such material is digitally preserved by 2025, and develop a clear and coherent whole of government strategy across institutions to get this done.

The Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.