



MEDIA RELEASE

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

## Delivery of ACTION Bus Services

The ACT Auditor-General, Mrs Tu Pham, has presented a Performance Audit report titled **'Delivery of ACTION Bus Services'**, to the Speaker for tabling today in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

ACTION, a business unit within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS) delivers bus services to the community of Canberra through a series of networks of major arterial trunk routes, connecting the town centres of Tuggeranong, Woden, Civic, Belconnen, and Gungahlin, and of suburban routes connecting with these town centres.

### AUDIT KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The audit concludes that TAMS has not coordinated and managed bus services delivered by ACTION in an effective manner.

#### Governance and management

- The delivery of bus services and associated infrastructure involves ACTION, other business units within TAMS (particularly Roads ACT and Transport Regulation and Planning) and other ACT Government agencies such as the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA). The various activities were not well coordinated and lacked proper planning.
- TAMS has not fully complied with key legislation including the *ACT Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act 2001* and Regulations, the *Minimum Service Standards for Bus Services*, the *ACT Discrimination Act 1991* and the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
- ACTION collected a significant amount of data but poor data management practices undermined the completeness and integrity of the data. This is likely to impede ACTION's ability to improve services and provide the ACT Government with sound advice on meeting current and future needs for public bus services in the ACT.

## **Timeliness and reliability of bus services**

- There were no performance indicators or standards established for the reliability of bus services to guide ACTION's operations and to increase its accountability.
- ACTION has considerable fleet management knowledge, but this knowledge was not supported by approved policies and procedures. For example, there were no approved guidelines for relevant staff about which bus runs should be cancelled. This was addressed mostly through the corporate knowledge of the staff involved.
- Each bus depot and interchange produced the daily Service Delivery Reports that identified which runs were dropped each day from bus routes. The data used for these reports was inaccurate and incomplete. As a result, the rate of bus failures reported to, or used by, ACTION management was likely to be under-estimated.
- Of the 500 cancelled services reviewed by Audit, cancellations were due to either a shortage of drivers (83 percent), or of buses (16 percent). There was no evidence of ACTION having developed and implemented strategies to effectively address these on-going issues.

## **Safety**

- ACTION did not report bus accidents to the Road Transport Authority as required by legislation. Bus accidents increased by 39 percent from 157 in 2008-09 to 219 in 2009-10. The rate of collision in bus depots (10 percent) and on roads in which liability was accepted by ACTION (23 percent) suggested that there was scope for improved safety through reducing preventable collisions.
- The *Road Transport (Public Passenger Service) Regulations 2002* requires pre-departure bus checks to be undertaken daily. ACTION was unable to supply documentation to confirm that such safety checks were conducted by bus drivers.
- There were no formal processes or policies in place to provide scheduled refresher courses for ACTION's drivers to update their knowledge and driving skills, or to refresh and develop their skills in other aspects of safety, security and customer services.
- ACTION has not prepared procedures for operations of its CCTVs on buses, to ensure protection of the privacy of the individual and prevention of possible misuse of the CCTVs.
- There were inadequate policies and procedures to address complaints about drivers with unsafe driving practices.

## **Ticketing**

- Problems with ACTION's current Automated Ticketing System have been documented for several years. Plans to introduce a replacement system have been frequently delayed. This has led to:
  - the collection of inadequate and unreliable data on types of passengers and their travel patterns;
  - a lack of reliable data to better plan, develop, fund and deliver services;
  - substantial losses of revenue; and
  - additional financial costs for maintaining outdated equipment.

- The ACT Government has announced a new ticketing system to be trialled in 2010. This system should be capable of capturing a substantial amount of data, for example, passenger travel patterns and fare types. Until this system is fully operational, there will be continued loss of revenue and a lack of reliable data for ACTION and the ACT Government to better plan, develop, fund and deliver services.

### **Bus infrastructure and services**

- Coordination between various business units within TAMS and other relevant ACT Government agencies for bus infrastructure and services was inadequate. For example:
  - there was no overall master plan to coordinate the planning and provision of bus infrastructure; and
  - there was no robust governance and accountability structure to clarify responsibilities for construction, maintenance, performance and reporting mechanisms for the management of bus infrastructure.
- Much of the bus infrastructure did not meet standards prescribed under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the ACT *Discrimination Act 1991*.

### **Customer service**

- ACTION provided a good front portal through Canberra Connect for receiving complaints and feedback
- ACTION responded to the majority of complaints on a timely basis. However, responses to complaints and feedback were not always accurate and appropriate actions were not followed.
- ACTION did not have a customer service charter that outlined the nature and standard of services, rights, and responsibilities of ACTION and passengers.

### **Recommendations**

ACTION and TAMS have agreed with all 12 recommendations of the Audit report and have commenced action to address the issues identified for improvement in this audit.

### **Office Contact**

For further information, please contact Ms Teena Roberts, Senior Manager, Performance Audits on 62070833. Copies of the report are available from the website of the Auditor-General's Office, [www.audit.act.gov.au](http://www.audit.act.gov.au) and from Level 4, 11 Moore Street, Canberra City.