



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Senate
Finance and Public Administration References
Committee report:

The administration and expenditure of funding
under the Urban Congestion Fund

May 2024

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Overview

The report on the inquiry into the administration and expenditure of funding under the Urban Congestion Fund was tabled in the Senate on 2 December 2021. The Government's response to the Report's recommendations is below.

Australian Government response

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Prime Minister table to the House of Representatives, no later than Friday 17 December 2021, a full explanation to the Parliament of the role that he, the Prime Minister's Office, the then Deputy Prime Minister's Office, and any other Ministerial Offices and staff played in the allocation of funding under the Commuter Car Park Fund.

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 the Australian Government conduct a review into the *National Land Transport Act 2014* and the provisions regarding Ministerial approvals for infrastructure projects and programs as part of the Urban Congestion Fund. The review should evaluate whether the Act has adequate provisions regarding:

- the investment principles and project selection process; and
- transparency, accountability and enforceability measures for infrastructure project identification and selection.

The review should put forward recommendations for legislative amendment where necessary to strengthen the transparency and accountability of the NLT Act and ministerial decision-making.

The committee recommends that the Australian Government introduce a bill to amend the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* to provide for reporting and tabling requirements for certain grants and expenditures, which have been approved by a Minister based on an application which an official has recommended should be rejected, or does not meet relevant selection criteria, or which have been approved by a Minister who is a Member of the House of Representatives, for a grantee in their electorate.

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 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications conduct an evidence-based, consultative analysis into how to best reduce outer urban congestion. The analysis should draw on research and expertise in the fields of urban geography, transport, demographics and related fields of expertise in order to establish the best approaches to reduce urban congestion.

The committee recommends that this analysis be made public once completed and be used to inform all future decision-making within the Urban Congestion Fund.

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 Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications develop and publicly release by no later than 31 January 2022, the investment principles and policy objectives for both the Urban Congestion Fund (UCF) and the Commuter Car Park Fund (CCPF). The Department should also issue guidance to project delivery partners detailing:

- eligibility requirements for funding under the *National Land Transport Act 2014*;
- requirements for delivery partners to outline their proposed funding contribution to the project; and
- any further information the Department considers necessary in order for it to make recommendations to the Minister around project eligibility.

The committee further recommends that delivery partners for the Commuter Car Park Fund (both confirmed and prospective) be required by the Department to provide information on how suggested projects under the CCPF will meet the stated aims of the Urban Congestion Fund.

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 establish, as a matter of urgency, a national integrity commission with the standing powers of a Royal Commission.

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, as part of its 2022-23 Audit Program, the Australian National Audit Office complete an audit of the Urban Congestion Fund and all its associated projects and programs.

The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures the necessary funding and resources are allocated to the Australian National Audit Office for it to:

- complete the audit of the Urban Congestion Fund as part of its 2022-23 Audit Program, and
- properly scrutinise government expenditure and activities.

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, within the first 18 months of the 47th Parliament, the Senate refer the ongoing administration of the Urban Congestion Fund to the appropriate Senate committee for further inquiry and report.

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