

Actions Speak

ACT Revenue Office

Implementation of recommendations
in the Investigation into the transparency
of commercial land valuation decisions
in the ACT

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.



Why did we do this report?

Our [Investigation into the transparency of commercial land valuation decisions in the ACT](#), published in August 2020, identified the need for improved decision-making and greater transparency by the ACT Revenue Office (ACTRO) when making land revaluations.

We made 9 recommendations to ACTRO about improving the consistency and transparency of decision-making, better record-keeping, and providing clearer public information about land valuation processes and determinations in the ACT. ACTRO accepted all 9 recommendations.

In October 2022, in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, we assessed ACTRO as having implemented 3 and partially implemented 6 of those 9 recommendations.

This report assesses ACTRO's implementation of the 6 outstanding recommendations.

How did we assess implementation?

We conducted a desktop review of ACTRO's implementation of the 6 outstanding recommendations. This involved assessing the project plan for the new Valuation Office Information Technology Modernisation (VOITM) system, reviewing copies of documents and ACTRO's internet site. Where our review led to further questions, we sought additional information from ACTRO, including a demonstration of VOITM.

What did we find?

We found ACTRO had implemented 5 of the 6 outstanding recommendations and partially implemented one recommendation, with full implementation of that recommendation on track for completion later this year.



Implemented – 8 (in total)



Partially Implemented – 1

Next steps

Systemic improvement in public administration can be an incremental process.








VOITM is a significant reform to how ACTRO performs its work, moving land valuations from a manual assessment to an automated process. Despite not all stages being fully deployed, it is already having a positive impact on ACTRO's decision-making and transparency.

ACTRO's phased approach to implementation has allowed it to adapt during development. We encourage ACTRO to continue to periodically review the system and make further improvements where needed. To this end, we were pleased to observe the VOITM project plan includes an iterative improvement phase through to July 2025 to extend functionality and incorporate user enhancements in the system.

We will monitor the effectiveness of VOITM through routine engagement with ACTRO and by assessing any complaints received by our Office.



Recommendations summary

<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>ACTRO establish a policy which provides transparency and guidance about how the commercial land valuation process occurs.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The new policy should be accompanied by an updated procedures manual, with data entry and quality assurance processes, to provide guidance and consistency in the decision-making process.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Where decisions are made to increase the Unimproved Value (UV) of a commercial property block, the details of the new valuation and the reasons for the change are clearly recorded.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>ACTRO consider making reasons for UV increases available to commercial property owners, prior to the objections process.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>ACTRO provide clear advice about its threshold for accepting an objection, and the information that must be provided to 'sustain' an objection.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>ACTRO (CMTEDD) publish the recommended policy as per its open access obligations under the <i>Freedom of Information Act 2016</i> (FOI Act).</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>ACTRO (CMTEDD) review whether it is meeting its open access obligations under the FOI Act</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>ACTRO review its website information on property valuation in the ACT.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>ACTRO publish on its website a summary of the changes that have led to revaluations following the annual revaluation exercise.</p>	



ACT Ombudsman assessment

ACT Revenue Office's implementation of recommendations



Recommendation 1

ACTRO develop and maintain a policy which provides transparency and guidance about how the commercial land valuation process occurs, including where a regrading program is undertaken for a particular suburb. This policy should outline the high level policy framework

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

Assessed as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, published October 2022. ACTRO's website has continued to be updated to ensure current information is available about the concepts of land valuation and ACTRO's high level policy framework for land valuations.



Recommendation 2

The new policy should be complemented by an updated procedures manual, including data entry and quality assurance processes, to provide guidance to decision-makers and promote more consistent decision-making and documentation.

The new procedures should outline requirements in terms of valuation analysis and documentation of decisions.

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

ACTRO's new system for land valuations, called Valuation Office Information Technology Modernisation (VOITM), was deployed in



November 2023, with subsequent deployments planned throughout 2024-25. VOITM delivers documentation of land valuation decisions, mass valuations of residential, non-residential, and commercial properties, the Commissioner's determinations, and quality assurance capabilities.

The Valuer's Portal is operational and being used for residential and commercial valuations. The system steps users through the data entry requirements with in-built prompts and guidance for valuation analysis and documentation of decisions. Staff have access to easy-to-follow video guidance to support them using the new system.



Recommendation 3

Where decisions are made to increase the Unimproved Value (UV) of a commercial property block on an individual basis, the details of the new valuation and the reasons for the change are clearly recorded

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

VOITM includes various prompts for recording the details of decisions to change a valuation for a commercial property block and a place for uploading relevant documents (such as evidence, analysis and other materials that informed a valuation decision). Staff have been using the new system functionality to record details of valuations, including reasons, and supporting evidence.



Recommendation 4

ACTRO consider options for making reasons for UV increases available to commercial property owners upfront, prior to the objections process. This should be done as a priority for property owners impacted by significant increases (that is, more than 20 per cent).

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

Assessed as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, published October 2022. ACTRO's [Land Valuations](#)



webpage has continued to be updated annually to reflect the information relevant to the current year's determination of the Unimproved Value (UV) for commercial properties. Links to additional information on individual commercial property values have also been included since our 2022 assessment report



Recommendation 5

ACTRO provide clear advice to the community via its website and in relevant correspondence regarding:

- the threshold for accepting an objection
- the information that must be provided in order to 'sustain' an objection.

Status: Partially Implemented



Ombudsman comments

ACTRO is progressing implementation of the Client Portal component of VOITM, which is due for deployment in August 2024. Once deployed, the Client Portal will provide property owners with relevant sales information and the calculations that led to the UV determination of their property. The system will allow ACTRO to specify how the information can be used, the threshold for accepting an objection, and what additional information would be required to support an objection.



Recommendation 6

Once finalised, ACTRO (CMTEDD) publish the recommended policy as per its open access obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (FOI Act) or provide reasons why publishing the policy is not appropriate.

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

Assessed as partially implemented in the [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report. Publication of the recommended policy (Rating and Taxing Procedures Manual) has been superseded by ACTRO updating



their website with a policy framework, and the rollout of VOITM. We are satisfied ACTRO has met the intent of the recommendation.



Recommendation 7

ACTRO (CMTEDD) review whether it is meeting its open access obligations under the FOI Act and consider a more pro-active approach to releasing policy documentation in alignment with the objects of the FOI Act.

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

In March 2022, ACTRO conducted an internal review of its compliance with its open access obligations under the [Freedom of Information Act 2016](#) (FOI Act). With evidence of a review of their compliance, and consideration of proactive information sharing, we are satisfied ACTRO has met the recommendation.



Recommendation 8

ACTRO review its website information on property valuation in the ACT. As part of this review, ACTRO consider providing tailored information for commercial and residential property owners on separate web pages. Information provided should meet accessibility standards and be clear and easy to understand.

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

Assessed as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, published October 2022.

ACTRO continues to improve its website content. This includes creating separate sections on its '[Land Valuations](#)' webpage for 'Residential Values', 'Commercial Valuations', and 'Rural Valuations', which are updated after each annual property valuation process.



The website also includes more detailed information at the suburb and links to individual property level details.



Recommendation 9

ACTRO publish on its website a summary of the changes that have led to revaluations in particular suburbs following an annual revaluation exercise.

Status: Implemented



Ombudsman comments

ACTRO provides a detailed explanation of land valuations and the annual revaluation process in the [Land Valuations](#) section of its website. The section is updated annually and summarises how and why values are reassessed, and the data used to calculate the Unimproved Value (UV) of properties. Greater context on why values change has been published on the website. Those seeking additional information on the valuation process are guided to the [Unimproved Values](#) webpage, which includes a look up tool as well as ACTRO's contact details to seek further information, if required.



ACT Revenue Office's response



Our ref: CMTEDD2024/2944
Your ref: A2403185

Mr Iain Anderson
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Cc: Ms Kathy Leigh
Head of Service and Director-General
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
By email: Kathy.leigh@act.gov.au

Dear Mr Anderson

**Implementation of recommendations from investigation report:
*Transparency of commercial land valuation decisions in the ACT***

I refer to your letter of 27 June 2024 concerning the report described above.

I note that you found that 5 of the 6 outstanding recommendations have been fully implemented with one partially implemented and on track to be completed later this year.

I thank you for your work on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Hocking
Under Treasurer
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
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09 July 2024

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