Cayman Islands
Government

STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT

By

Hon. KATHERINE EBANKS-WILKS, MP

Minister for Health, ENVIRONMENT
& SUSTAINABILITY

March 2026

Mister Speaker,

I rise to provide an update to this Honourable House and the public regarding the status of the several backlogged audits for the Ministry of Health, Environment and Sustainability that I inherited.

The Ministry appreciates the continued engagement and oversight of the Public Accounts Committee and acknowledges the constructive dialogue that took place during the Committee's witness session on 15 January 2026.

During that session, Mister Speaker, the Committee strongly recommended that the Ministry accept the offer of the Office of the Auditor General to issue a disclaimer of opinion for the backlogged audits covering the period 2020 to 2023. The Committee indicated that this approach would enable the 2024 and 2025 audits of the Ministry to be completed by the Office of Auditor General during the 2026 calendar year, eliminate the audit backlog, and ensure that current financial information is made available to the public in support of transparency and accountability.

As discussed, and outlined during the witness session, the Ministry's position regarding the backlogged audits has been guided by the requirements of the Public Management and Finance Act and the International Standards on Auditing. Within these established frameworks, there is no valid basis for the issuance of a disclaimer of opinion or for foregoing full financial audits for the backlogged years. This is especially the case, as financial statements for each of these years were submitted within the statutory timelines and the supporting records remain available to facilitate the conduct of the audits.

Notwithstanding this position, the Ministry acknowledges the Committee's recommendation to accept the Office of the Auditor General's offer to issue a disclaimer of opinion for the years 2020 to 2023. This course of action would mean that full financial audits for these years will not be conducted by the Office of the Auditor General.

While this approach does not reflect the Ministry's initial perspective, there is no doubt that much time and resources are required to carry out all of the outstanding audits and it is similarly true that the value of the financial information which these audits would provide is significantly diminished by the time which has passed. Accordingly, the Ministry accepts that on balance it is a better use of resources and a better outcome to draw a line on the outstanding audits to restore relevance and value of the financial information provided by the audit of the Ministry's financial accounts.

Mr Speaker that does not mean that the Auditor General's Office will ignore the several years of financial statements which would not have a full audit . In fact they will be reviewed and analysed to ensure that there are no red flags or obvious issues which would prompt a more thorough review but the investment in time and resources to do that will be considerably less than doing a full audit.

Mr Speaker, I am satisfied that this approach is a more efficient use of resources to get the Ministry audits back on track and current with their full value restored and I am grateful for the guidance of the Office of the Auditor General.

The Ministry is currently in communication with the Office of the Auditor General to agree commencement dates for the 2024 and 2025 audits. The 2024 Annual Report and financial statements were submitted in February 2025 by Ministry, while 2025 Annual Reports and financial statements were submitted in February 2026, as per statutory submission timelines. The Ministry stands ready to provide our full cooperation to commence these audits and to continue to work collaboratively with the Office of the Auditor General to support their timely completion.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.