



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
CHRIS STEEL MLA (CHAIR), ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), VICKI DUNNE MLA,
CAROLINE LE COUTEUR MLA, MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA

**Inquiry into referred 2016–17 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by MS CAROLINE LE COUTEUR:

Community Services Directorate Annual Report, Housing and Community Services

In relation to Housing Affordability:

- 1) There is currently a Senate inquiry into the Social Services Legislation (Housing Affordability) Amendment Bill 2017, which is in part considering an Automatic Rent Deduction Scheme. What is the ACT Government's position on this issue?
- 2) The Community Services Annual Report 2016-17 states on page 78 that the ACT Government exceeded the target for improving employment outcomes for homeless people. How was this achieved and what was done differently from previous years?
- 3) The Community Services Annual Report 2016-17 states on page 83 that 457 HACT tenants moved to alternative accommodation. Can you advise what type of accommodation these tenants moved to? eg: community housing, private rental, interstate etc

YVETTE BERRY MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

- 1) The ACT Government is aware of work being undertaken by the Commonwealth to introduce a Compulsory Rent Deduction Scheme for social housing tenants who receive statutory income support payments.

The ACT Government has previously advised the Commonwealth that it will not be participating in the Scheme due to concerns about the compulsory aspects of the Scheme and its possible incompatibility with the *ACT Human Rights Act 2004*.

In the ACT, social housing tenants already have access to a voluntary rent deduction scheme. This existing scheme conveniently deducts rent from a tenant's Centrelink payments but allows the tenant to 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' of the scheme as their needs change.

While the proposed Compulsory Rent Deduction Scheme being progressed by the Commonwealth would allow tenants to voluntarily 'opt-in' to the Scheme; the proposal removes tenants' ability to stop these deductions without seeking permission from the relevant government housing provider.

The ACT Government are of the view that the compulsory aspects of the proposed Scheme may limit tenants' right to privacy and their autonomy to make decisions about their own financial affairs.

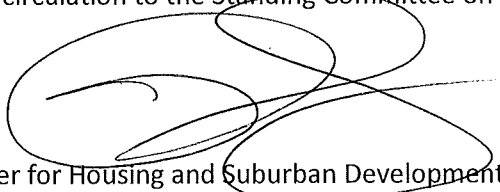
The existing voluntary scheme will continue to run in the ACT alongside the new Compulsory Rent Deduction Scheme once implemented. The ACT Government's decision not to participate in the implementation of this new scheme will therefore not prevent tenants from voluntarily accessing this form of automatic rent payment should they choose to do so.

- 2) Over the past two years, Housing ACT has worked closely with the ACT Specialist Homelessness Sector to transition service delivery from a crisis response to early intervention support. In the 2016 co-design processes, tenancy and support functions were separated for homelessness service delivery. This has allowed services to divert valuable resources to support service users to access training, education and employment activities.
- 3) In 2016-17, 457 households moved to alternative accommodation as follows:

Reason	Number	Percentage
Purchased their own home in the ACT	25	5%
Purchased their own home interstate	3	16%
Moved to rent in the ACT	76	44%
Moved to rent interstate	71	1%
Moved to a nursing home or aged care facility	82	17%
No reason given	200	18%
Total	457	100%

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services

Signature:



Date: 12/12/17 .

By the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Yvette Berry MLA