



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by **Ms Leanne Castley** on 16 November 2023: Ms Cross took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: Hansard uncorrected proof transcript 16 November 2023 [PAGE 35]

In relation to: Therapy dogs

MS CASTLEY: And then on to therapy dogs. I know that there were some measures that were put in place to support staff because of their stress levels and burnout. How many sessions? How did that work? How many dogs?

Ms Cross: I would have to take that on notice. We had a wellbeing team in place in the directorate that was looking at wellbeing in the COVID response team as well as in DSD and so there were a range of supports available but the details of the therapy dogs I would have to take on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you. I mean, I have heard of therapy dogs for aged care homes but not workplaces. How did it come about?

Minister Stephen-Smith: It is not at all unusual in a health environment.

Mr Peffer: Yes. So, we use therapy dogs extensively across our facilities. They are very well received by our workforces. It is a simple way to put a smile on people's faces and benefitting.

MS CASTLEY: So, we can measure that it was definitely worth the time that—

Minister Stephen-Smith: I think there is quite a bit of evidence on the benefits of therapy dogs.

MS CASTLEY: For this particular team that allayed the stress and the burnout that they were going through?

Ms Cross: I will take on notice and see what feedback we have but most, I think all of the wellbeing measures that were put in place were well received by people. Some people liked one form of wellbeing. You know, if I run a session and I do mindfulness half of my team love it. The other half wonder why we are doing it. So, we had a range of wellbeing measures but I think that they were genuinely all well received.

MS CASTLEY: And can you just take on notice and let me know what the cost for the therapy dogs for the DSD group was?

Ms Cross: I do not know that we specifically had them for the division but I will check for you.

MS CASTLEY: Great.

Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

On 22 July 2021, the Digital Solutions Division (DSD) signed a contract with Delta Therapy Dogs at a cost of \$16,380 (including GST) for 90 minutes fortnightly visits over a 12-month period.

Delta Therapy Dogs are widely used by various organisations. They have shown social, emotional, and psychological benefits on health and wellbeing, as they bring people together over a positive interaction that involves a friendly paw shake and a chat with Delta volunteers.

The number of dogs varied each visit based on the availability of dogs and their owners. During the visits, the dogs and their handlers would move around the floor and workstations so that staff members can engage with the dogs and their handlers.

While DSD never sought formal feedback from staff about the impact of Delta Therapy Dogs visits, anecdotal feedback from staff was that the initiative had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:



Date:

27 / 11 / 23

By the Minister for Health, Ms Rachel Stephen Smith MLA