



Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Elizabeth Kikkert:

In relation to: Provision of Personal Protective Equipment
Budget Paper 3, page 47; CSD Annual Reports 2019–20, page 70.

1. As part of COVID-19 health support measures, the ACT Government provided personal protective equipment for people with a disability and community sector providers. The recommendation of wearing face masks in public has made for an extra challenge to the deaf and hard of hearing community. Was there any provision of clear face masks or face shields to relevant communities who engage in lip-reading?
 - a. If yes, how many were provided and to which organisations and communities?
 - b. If no, why not and did the ACT Government receive any requests for the provision of clear face masks?
 - c. Although there is currently no community transmission of COVID-19 in the ACT and the use of face masks is not generally required, the situation may change in the future. Are there any plans to provide for the deaf community should the need arise?

Emma Davidson MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. Clear face masks or face shields were not made available to people who are Deaf and/or hard of hearing. These items are more usefully taken up by those providing support and services to people who are Deaf and hard of hearing people who lip read, such as those who work in health care and retail settings involving contact with members of the public.

1a. N/A.

1b. The ACT Government has not received any requests for the provision of clear face masks through the program that provides Personal Protective Equipment to people with disability and their supporters.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 55

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JONATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Through the Office for disability the viability and provision of clear masks for enabling lip reading was investigated as a possible reasonable adjustment. This was not pursued as advice indicated that people who use lipreading to communicate would need all service providers, health professionals and anybody they sought to communicate with to wear a clear mask. This was not viable in a fast-changing pandemic environment where access to non-clear masks was challenging in itself.

1c. There are no plans at present to provide clear face masks. ACT Health guidelines state that it is acceptable to remove your mask in order to communicate effectively with a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, noting that social distancing rules must also be adhered to in doing so.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature: *Emma Davidson*

Date: *24/03/2021*

By the Minister for Disability, Emma Davidson MLA