



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA (Chair), Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Ms Jo Clay MLA

**Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22**  
**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**  
**27 October 2021**

Asked by Elizabeth Kikkert MLA on 27 October 2021: Mick Gentleman MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Transcript 27 October 2021 [PAGE 26-29]]

In relation to:

**MRS KIKKERT:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. My question is in regards with the reintegration centre. Last budget, there was \$30 million allocated for the centre, but then it was put on hold. Minister, can you tell us the status of the reintegration centre as it is now? Is it still on hold? And when will the government intend to being the process of its development?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, it is on hold just at the moment whilst we do some other work around the AMC. So we want to make sure we can fund the facilitation of some critical repair and improvement to the AMC following the storm damage and the damage that you have heard earlier from incidents that have occurred earlier on.

In addition to strategic assessment of the long-term future accommodation needs of the facility as well. So the reintegration centre has been deferred to allow that work to occur. During this period, ACT Correctional Services will work to optimise the utilisation of the existing transitional release centre, and that work is being done to modernise and improve programs and services available to detainees as well.

Investment, of course, in these areas will assist in reducing recidivism and will better support detainees transitioning back into the community from their custodial setting. So the budget does include an allocation of funds for improved reintegration and wellbeing initiatives, and that will enhance services and support available to detainees at the AMC.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Right. So can I clarify, minister, that the reason why it is on hold is because the \$30 million that was budgeted for the reintegration centre is being put towards the repairing of the damages caused by the riots and the hailstorm at AMC?

**Mr Gentleman:** Some of those funds, yes.

**MRS KIKKERT:** And where is the rest of the funds going to?

**Mr Gentleman:** Sorry, no. Those funds are being allocated from our insurance costs. So the funds still sit there at the moment. It is just a deferral of the integration centre. But the reason for the deferral is so we can focus on the other work.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Okay. And so with the transitioning centre, are you in the process of expanding it too as well as improving the programs that is in the transitioning centre?

**Mr Gentleman:** That will be some further work. At the moment, it is on hold whilst we look at what we can do into the future.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Right. So the reintegration centre is on hold as well as the transitioning centre is on hold within—

**Mr Gentleman:** No, we are using a transitional release centre.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Yes.

**Mr Gentleman:** It has 20 beds at the moment.

**MRS KIKKERT:** It has 20 beds. But the expansion of that is also on hold?

**Mr Gentleman:** Of the?

**MRS KIKKERT:** The expansion of the transitioning centre, the release centre.

**Mr Gentleman:** The transitional release centre?

**MRS KIKKERT:** Yes.

**Mr Gentleman:** Well, we have 20 beds there at the moment. If we need more, we can certainly expand on that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** No, but you were saying before that the expansion of that is being put on hold.

**Mr Gentleman:** It is the reintegration centre that is on hold.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Okay. Okay. Now that you just clarified that, thank you. And so when the reintegration centre was first announced, it stated that it had 80 beds. Does it still have 80 beds? Because I heard that it was going to be cut down to 60 beds.

**Mr Gentleman:** I might ask the commissioner to give you some more detail on that.

**Mr Johnson:** Thank you, minister. Look, I think noting that the reintegration centre was also part of the transitional release process, as I understand it, there is no plan to change what was originally proposed in the reintegration centre. So I would have to take on notice actually my memory whether it was 60 or 80 beds. But whichever it was originally proposed to be, it will still be in the current version of the plans.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Right. Okay. So my understanding of a reintegration centre, it is basically built to help detainees build skills such as woodworking, metalworking and whatnot. Is that the idea of the reintegration centre, is to build up skills for detainees in that sort of environment?

**Mr Gentleman:** Well, overarchingly, it is to build detainees' resilience in preparation to re-enter the normal community. So it is more of a wraparound service. It does include skills-

based as well, but there is a lot more service to support them, to provide them with an entrée, if you like, to move back into functioning in community.

**MRS KIKKERT:** All right. Was there a design for the reintegration centre?

**Mr Gentleman:** There certainly was. Yes. There was a great deal of work that occurred prior to its announcement and, indeed, the funding options were well-reported.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Is that available to the public?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, you can look at previous budget papers. That will show you what was involved in that, and I would imagine there would be some documents available that would show you the announcements at the time. We can certainly point you towards those.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I understand about the announcement. I am more interested in what will be the contents, what will be inside the reintegration centre, the design of it. If that is available, that would be great if you could table it for the committee or put questions on notice.

**Mr Gentleman:** I do not think, Mrs Kikkert, that those plans have been finalised. So, as I mentioned, it is put on hold at the moment. So there is still some work to be done.

**MRS KIKKERT:** And, minister, when do you think it will begin to start the process of developing or designing the reintegration centre after it has been on hold?

**Mr Gentleman:** We have not organised a timeline yet. It is still in progress.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Well, what is stopping it?

**Mr Gentleman:** Further work—

**MRS KIKKERT:** Except for the damages being done and needs to be repaired?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, that is the key component of that aspect of when it would be delivered and the plans for it.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Okay. So are you saying that once the repair at AMC has been completed, you will have a rough idea of when the reintegration centre will be developed?

**Mr Gentleman:** There is quite a bit of work to do as well as the repair work at AMC. We will look at staffing and the programs that would be available for the integration centre.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Can you put a question on notice, minister, what sort of work that also needs to be done to make sure that the reintegration centre is being done besides repairing the damages at AMC?

**Mr Gentleman:** Well, it is still in plan so there is quite a lot of work to be done and I do not know how much detail we could give you on notice but we will see what we can do for you.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Great, thank you.

Mick Gentleman MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Further work on the proposed expanded Reintegration Centre accommodations has been paused in response to changing circumstances and accommodation priorities at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC).

The deferral of this project will allow for priority focus on facilitating repairs and upgrades to existing critical infrastructure at the AMC, including repairs to accommodation units as a result of the storms in January 2020 and incidents which occurred in November 2020 and May 2021.

The deferral will also be used to focus on reintegration and rehabilitation programs, to continue the support for detainees to transition back to the community. Significantly ACTCS will seek to optimise the use of the Transitional Release Centre (TRC) in this context.

Finally, pausing the construction of the Reintegration Centre will allow the development of a strategic, medium to long-term accommodation plan for the AMC, which reflects current and projected detainee population and cohorts. This work will result in more sustainable investment in both building and program infrastructure going forward. This will equip the ACTCS with the tools necessary to drive real improvements in therapeutic and reintegrative programs and facilities aligned with the Government's stated priority of *Reducing Recidivism by 25% by 2025* (RR25by25) as well as supporting and aligning with efforts to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the ACT justice system.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date: 8/11/2021

By the Minister for Corrections, Mick Gentleman MLA