



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

QoN No - 52

Asked by Elizabeth Kikkert: To ask the Minister for Families and Community Services

Ref: Child and Youth Protection Services, Budget Outlook, pp. 109, 155, Budget Statement G, pp. 5, 25, output class CSD 1.1 Inclusion and Participation, CSD 1.3 Strategic Policy, CSD 1.4 Quality, Complaints and Regulation, CSD 2.3 Child and Youth Protection Services

In relation to: Safe and Connected Youth (including Ruby's House)

1. In August last year, \$1 million was provided to refurbish a house to provide the supported accommodation element of the Safe and Connected Youth Program (BO, p. 155). This budget shows most of that money (\$876,000) unspent and shifted to this year's budget (BSG, p. 25). Does that mean that refurbishment of the house is behind where it was expected it to be at this point? If so, what has caused the delay?
 - a. When will this facility finally be ready to open for its intended function?
 - b. In the meantime, where are kids who need this service being accommodated?
 - c. If respite care is still being used, is that limiting the number of children who can be assisted? If so, what are the limits?
2. There is ongoing funding in this budget for operating the Safe and Connected Youth Program (BO, p. 155). In February the minister said that she didn't yet know what the procurement process would look like.
 - a. Has that process been completed now?
 - b. Who is running this program?

RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

1. The refurbishment of the property is behind the original timeline (completion during 2020-21). The original projection was preliminary, noting building experts needed to be engaged to assess the property in detail and understand the specific requirements.

Following the allocation of funding, a Safe and Connected Youth Respite Facility Steering Committee was established to oversee the refurbishment. Both government and non-government organisations are represented.

The Steering Committee endorsed a co-design approach to guide the refurbishment planning. The co-design approach included consultations with community sector partners, people with lived experience, young people who were engaged with the Safe and Connected Youth pilot program and representatives from Uniting Communities Incorporated which operates four Ruby's Houses in South Australia. While the collaborative approach did result in some time delays, it has led to a better refurbishment outcome.

Some building specific delays have also been experienced. These delays have included responding to additional damage due to vandalism and squatting, property certification requirements that resulted in the engagement of a Fire Engineer and greater liaison with mechanical, hydraulic and electrical sub-contractors, and modifications required to bring the house up to fire safety standards.

More recently, the project has experienced COVID-19 related construction delays including supply issues.

- a. The property refurbishment is due to be completed by the builder in December 2021. Internal fit out of the property with soft furnishings and appliances will commence in early 2022. The property will be ready for its intended function in the first half of 2022.
 - b. While these works are undertaken, the ACT Government has continued to fund the Safe and Connected Youth pilot program. This includes the continued provision of short-term respite accommodation for children and young people, through Marymead, where this is appropriate and required.
 - c. The use of respite accommodation is not limiting the number of children, young people and their families who are able to receive assistance in line with the Safe and Connected Youth Program Guidelines.
2. On 27 September 2021, I announced ongoing and expanded funding to deliver a coordinated service response for children and young people aged 8 to 15 years who are experiencing family conflict and may be at risk of homelessness. The expanded offering includes early preservation outreach, therapeutic respite accommodation and post-exit outreach.
- a. Work on the procurement of the Safe and Connected Youth: Coordinated Service Response is well progressed. The tender was released to market on 5 November 2021, with a closing date of 16 December 2021.
 - b. The existing service partners continue to deliver the pilot program while the procurement process is undertaken.

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

Signature:



Date:

30/11/21

By the Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

