



STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY
Ms Leanne Castley MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by LEANNE CASTLEY MLA:

Ref: Government strategy and policy, CMTEED Part B, Organisation overview page 19

In relation to: Positioning ACT Government and Supporting Workforce Capability

Topic One: Positioning ACT Government as “the most progressive jurisdiction in Australia for the way we work”.

Under the heading “*Building our current and future workforce capability and shaping workplace culture*”, the report refers to transitioning 3000 staff into offices at 480 Northbourne Avenue Dickson and 220 London Circuit.

It also refers to progressing the development and implementation of a “*flexible work strategy*” which “*will position the ACT Government as the most progressive jurisdiction in Australia for the way we work.*”

Questions

1. What does it mean when you refer to “*the most progressive jurisdiction for the way we work?*” What will that look like in practice?
2. Is the “*flexible work strategy*” complete and did you consult with the small business community given it impacts them?

Topic Two: Supporting workforce capability

Under the heading ‘Supporting workforce capability’ (p23) you refer to “*developing policies, guidance and programs that address the risks associated with COVID-19 and our changed working arrangements.*”

Questions:

1. Have these policies been shared with the small business community so they understand what “the changed working arrangements” are for so many of their customers?
2. Have you sought small business input and feedback about changed working arrangements and how WFH affects them?
3. Have you identified that as a priority area to examine?
4. Was any report or investigation into the impacts these “changed working arrangements” will have on business? If not, why? If so, what impacts did the report find?

Topic Three: Workforce Transformation Program

Under the sub-heading “Highlights” (p34) you refer to “*leave entitlements for those employees who experience an adverse reaction to the vaccination*”.

Questions:

1. How much leave has been taken by staff who experienced an adverse reaction to their vaccination?
2. How much leave has been taken by staff affected by getting COVID-19 or caring for someone with COVID-19?

ANDREW BARR MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Topic One: Positioning ACT Government as “the most progressive jurisdiction in Australia for the way we work”.

1. The ACT Government aims to provide its workforce with greater access and options for flexible working arrangements than any other Australian public sector workforce. In addition to home-based work, flexible options will include opportunities for job sharing, flexible start and finish times, as well as the establishment of fully equipped ‘flexi offices’ in all regions of the ACT to enable staff to work at a location of their choosing.
2. The strategy to embed and support flexible working practices in the ACT Public Service does not have a set completion date. The ACT Government will continue to explore further opportunities to enhance flexible working opportunities across the ACTPS. Consultation with the small business community has not occurred.

Topic Two: Supporting workforce capability

1. Policies relating to the safe return of staff to the workplace, such as the *COVID-19 transition policy* are publicly accessible through the ACTPS Employment Portal.
2. No.
3. No.
4. The ACT Government has not conducted any investigation into the impacts of “changed working arrangements” on business, nor are there any current plans to do so. Internal ACT Public Service workforce policies consider the efficient and effective operation of the Public Service and the impacts of those policies on its workforce. The ACT public service is dispersed across schools, healthcare services, depots, and office space. Those based in town centres form a comparatively small proportion of the total workforce within each region. As a result, it is not feasible to isolate the impact of internal workforce policies on the community.

The ACT Government releases economic indicators into Business Impacts of COVID-19 across the entire community. These are published on the treasury website (treasury.act.gov.au/snapshot)

Topic Three: Workforce Transformation Program

1. ACT Public Sector employees are able to access COVID-19 leave if they experience an adverse reaction to their COVID-19 vaccination and also for the purposes of attending a vaccination appointment. Their reason for application for leave in these circumstances is made under the selection of leave “for COVID-19 vaccination related purposes”. There have been 1333 instances of leave for COVID-19 vaccination related purposes, but this data includes leave for both reasons of vaccination appointments and adverse reactions.
2. The ACT Public Sector employment framework provides an entitlement to personal leave for employees who are ill or injured or who are caring for an immediate family member who is ill or

injured. For privacy reasons, data is not collected from our employees on the reasons why this leave is taken, and so fulsome data is unable to be provided in answer to this question. Recently, in response to implementation of the test, trace, isolate and quarantine arrangements, the government has created a new entitlement to one week of COVID-19 leave where an employee receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. The entitlement has taken effect on 6 January 2022 onwards, and since then there have been 127 instances of leave taken.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender Equality

Signature: 

Date: 17.3.22

By the Treasurer, Andrew Barr MLA