



Standing Committee on Health

Inquiry into the 2001-2002 Annual & Financial Reports

Report No. 3

ACT Government Response

July 2003

19 August 2003

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Inquiry into the 2001-2002 Annual and Financial Reports, February 2003

Introduction

The Annual Reports of all ACT Government agencies are referred to the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly for examination and report.

The Standing Committee on Health considered the reports of the ACT Department of Health and Community Care, ACT Health and Community Care Service, Community and Health Complaints Commissioner and Healthpact. The Committee has raised several matters of substance where it felt reporting could be improved and where issues were raised by members of the public and at the public hearing. The Committee made no comment regarding the Healthpact Annual Report.

The Committee conducted a public hearing on 16 January 2003 and tabled its report in the Legislative Assembly on 18 February 2003.

Of the Committee's eleven recommendations, eight are agreed to by the Government and the remaining three are noted. The Government's response to the Standing Committee's recommendations is provided below.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

- 2.13 The Committee recommends that, when major reviews or restructures take place, the impact these reviews be outlined in the annual report.**
- 2.14 Furthermore, the Committee recommends that all reviews undertaken by, for, or within the Department be included as an appendix.**

Government Response:

Agreed that impact of major reviews or restructures be included in the annual report and that a listing of reviews will be included as an appendix.

RECOMMENATION 2:

2.17 The Committee recommends that, where major organisational restructures take place late in the reporting year to commence in the new reporting year, at least an organisation chart be included in the annual report to demonstrate what changes will take place.

Government Response:

Agreed that organisational restructures occurring late in the reporting year or in the subsequent reporting year be included in the annual report.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

2.27 The Committee recommends that the department review its performance measures and use numerical measures only where appropriate and also ensures consistency in the use of particular types of measures across the various volumes of the annual report.

Government Response

Agreed. ACT Health will be reviewing its performance measures as a result of the restructure. These will then be used consistently in the annual report in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

2.33 The Committee recommends that in future years, ACT Health use the model of reporting as used by the Chief Minister's Department and the Department of Urban Services in their 2001-2002 reports.

Government Response

Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

2.39 The Committee recommends that future reports adhere to the requirements of the Annual Reports Directions and provide details on the implementation of agreed recommendations of Legislative Assembly committee reports.

Government Response

Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

- 2.44 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide funding for outreach workers that all services, including ACT Housing, can refer to in order to support people in the community who have mental health issues or who are otherwise isolated from the community.**

Government Response

Noted. Outreach services enable providers to work in a flexible manner, offering seamless pathways between services and providing support that is portable and capable of following clients to assist them to sustain improved outcomes.

Enhanced outreach support to link clients with specialist services would aid in addressing ongoing support needs such as financial management, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health problems and the provision of assistance in relation to employment, education and training programs.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

- 3.10 The Committee recommends that future reports be edited to ensure that information is not presented in a confusing or potentially misleading manner.**

Government Response

Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

- 3.17 The Committee recommends that future annual reports include a brief explanation of the links between performance measures and outcomes and where each measure sits within the strategic vision of the agency.**

Government Response

Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

- 3.24 The Committee recommends that the Government respond to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Care's (Fourth Assembly) inquiry into Respite Care Services in the ACT.**

Government Response

Noted. The Government is aware of the Standing Committee's findings and has increased the level of funding for respite care by \$1m, from 2002/03. The Government plans to provide a copy of its review into respite care to the Assembly as soon as it is available.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

- 4.3 The Committee recommends that in future reports, the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner combine the statistical information with the discussion of issues to give more meaning to the statistics.**

Government Response

Agreed. The Commissioner has agreed to combine this information in future.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

- 4.6 The Committee recommends that in future reports, the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner use a case study model similar to that used by the Discrimination Commissioner or the ACT Ombudsman in the annual report.**

Government Response

Noted. The Commissioner, when preparing future annual reports, will take this recommendation into consideration. Given the confidential nature of complaints, together with the small jurisdiction that the Commissioner covers, it is essential to retain the privacy of both consumers and health service providers. In addition, section 79 of the *Community and Health Services Complaints Act 1993* requires the Commissioner to give any person who could be identified in a report about whom an adverse comment is made in a report - including the Annual Report - the opportunity to comment.