

2016

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL
SERVICES REPORT
REPORT NO 7**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2014-2015

**Presented by
Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services Report No 7 – Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2014-15.

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, Ageing, Community and Social Services reviewed annual reports for:

- Community Services Directorate; and
- Health Directorate.

The Committee made 15 recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to work with disability service providers, including tier-two services, in receipt of block grant funding to ensure long term viability after the ACT's transition to the NDIS is complete.

Government Response - Agreed

The way disability services are funded has changed under the NDIS. Individuals now receive tailored supports through their participant plan. Individuals can choose the provider of their supports. Organisations that were previously funded for Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) services which align with the national framework will receive transitional funding in 2016-17. From 1 July 2017, ILC (previously known as Tier 2) will be funded through a grants round administered by the NDIS.

The ACT Government has provided a range of sector development opportunities to organisations in the ACT, including Tier 2 organisations.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report on the staffing profile of Disability ACT and Therapy ACT to the Committee on a regular basis until the ACT's transition to the NDIS is complete.

Government Response - Agreed

A six monthly report is provided to the Legislative Assembly. The most recent update was provided to the Legislative Assembly in February 2016.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government collect more detailed demographic data on Project Independence applicants in order to facilitate better understanding of the demand profile.

Government Response - Agreed

As a registered housing provider Project Independence will be managing the application process and tenancy management of the housing model. The ACT Government will request demographic data from Project Independence; however, the level of detail will be up to Project Independence.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government further explore how to adapt the concept of equity-based housing used in Project Independence to improve social housing needs of other disadvantaged groups.

Government Response - Noted

Since the introduction of the NDIS, the ACT Government has been promoting the exploration of innovative housing solutions for people with disability and their families, as an alternative to existing housing arrangements. Future Affordable Housing Strategies are likely to include equity-based housing options to help address the housing needs of disadvantaged groups.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider pathways for the lead workers in the Strengthening Families Program to receive accreditation for their training.

Government Response - Agreed

The Community Services Directorate is in the process of transitioning the Strengthening Families initiative to business as usual, to ensure key elements of the Strengthening Families approach are embedded across the human services sector. Planning for this transition will include consideration of future requirements for training of Lead Workers in both the government and community sectors and training delivery options.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider developing initiatives to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement within Directorates.

Government Response – Agreed-in-principle

Increased employment and private enterprise for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT is a quality life outcome identified in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015- 2018. Achievement against this quality life outcome will be monitored and reported through the Agreement’s implementation plan.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, in collaboration with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, develop a strategy to:

- *increase awareness of the Elected Body’s role and functions;*
- *increase eligible voter turnout at Elected Body’s elections; and*
- *review polling places.*

Government Response - Agreed-in-principle

The ACT Government has a vital role in increasing awareness and voter turnout for Elected Body elections. The ACT Government is preparing a response to the recent independent review of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2008, for the purpose of engaging with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on proposed amendments to the Act.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government/Transport Canberra agency further explore how future integrated public transport can be optimised to assist as many older residents and people with a disability as possible.

Government Response – Noted

Following the Motions from the 2014 Older Persons Assembly it was recommended that the ACT Government co-operate with community groups and businesses to develop a regular, efficient, affordable, and easily accessible (within 100 metres of their place of residence) system of off peak community buses servicing local communities. Considerable work is being done to address the recommendations.

The ACT Government is always working to improve the accessibility of public transport, particularly for vulnerable people groups such as older residents and people with a disability. Public transport is about enabling access for everyone.

Transport for Canberra has six principles that guide the ACT's transport policy, including creating a transport system which is 'accessible for everybody whatever their level of mobility at any time or place' and ensuring that the system 'is safe for moving people however they get around'. Guided by these principles, the Government is continuing to plan and develop the future integrated public transport network so that it is accessible for as many people as possible.

The *Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT 2013-2018* also contains actions to guide the ongoing transition to a more accessible public transport system, such as providing more accessible transport infrastructure and a vehicle replacement strategy for buses to transition to accessible buses.

The Community Transport Coordination Centre has been established to find solutions for people with these transport difficulties, following the 2014 *Act Community Transport Study*. It is a central point where residents can access alternative public transport options, including the Flexible Bus Service. The Flexible Bus Service is a localised bus service available to Canberra residents who have limited access to public transport options.

The Government is investing in the first stage of the light rail network from Gungahlin to the City, to ensure Canberra's public transport system is increasingly more accessible, comfortable and reliable into the future. *The Transport Canberra – Light Rail Network Plan* considers how light rail can be expanded across Canberra's frequent public transport network. Light rail network will be well-integrated with the bus system, so there is ease of connection between modes and the two systems work together to deliver the best possible public transport system for Canberra.

The needs of users, particularly people with a disability or limited mobility, are being considered in the planning and design of the integrated public transport system. Interchanges will be an important part of the system. How they can be made easy and seamless for all passengers is a

key consideration. Light rail stops and bus interchanges will be co-located and connected to provide convenient connections for passengers between light rail and buses.

Light rail stops will be designed to maximise comfort and accessibility for passengers. Light rail vehicles will have a low floor vehicle design and multiple doors for alighting. There will be wayfinding signage at stops and bus interchanges to make it simple for users to transfer between buses and light rail. Buses and light rail timetables will be aligned and light rail will be integrated with the ticketing system used in ACTION buses. Real-time information will be displayed on vehicles, showing route and stop locations. People will be able to 'turn up and go' with light rail services running at least every 15 minutes during operating hours.

With light rail, buses will be freed up, which can then be used to provide better feeder services connecting to the light rail network or to service other destinations.

The ACT Government is also working to make neighbourhoods more accessible. The integration of transport and land use planning provides the opportunity to create desirable living environments that provide local access to goods and services, and reduce the need for motorised transport.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Community Services Directorate should develop a strategy to attract more interpreters, particularly in languages such as Dinka and Urdu, where there is demand but a lack of available interpreters.

Government Response – Agreed

Consistent with the Actions of the 2015-2020 Multicultural Framework a review of the *ACT Languages Policy* will be undertaken, with a view to restate obligations regarding the use of interpreters, multilingual staff and translated material.

The Community Services Directorate is actively identifying and subsequently supporting suitably qualified people in the community who are willing to be trained and accredited language interpreters, particularly in those languages that are in short supply.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the Community Services Directorate's budget allocation for interpreters and consider an increase from the \$25,000 allocated in the 2014-15 financial year.

Government Response – Agreed-in-principle

Twenty five interpreters were trained in the 2014-15 financial year and where there is a demand, the ACT Government will consider funding a further number.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government explore ways to reduce the inefficiencies of having a large number of unused beds at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

Government Response – Agreed

Bimberi is a declared place of detention for young people. The Youth Justice Blueprint has driven down the number of young people in detention. Low rates of occupancy reflect the success of the Youth Justice Blueprint early intervention and diversion strategies. The ACT Government is exploring how resources might be used flexibly to ensure rates of detention remain low.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that ACT Health investigate any negative effects upon graduate nurses from the current 12-month contract employment arrangements.

Government Response - Agreed

ACT Health agrees to monitor the progress of new graduate nurses to determine any negative effects from 12 month employment contracts.

In the February 2015 to February 2016 new graduate nurse programs (Transition to Practice Programs), the total number of Enrolled Nurses was seven and there were 51 Registered Nurses. Upon successful completion of the program, all Enrolled Nurses were re-employed and 47 Registered Nurses of the 51 whose contracted ceased after 12 months, were re-employed.

ACT Health does not believe there have been any negative effects on the graduate nurses since moving the employment of graduates to 12 month contracts. The EN and RN programs remain competitive attracting many applications from local graduates as well as many from interstate.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that ACT Health survey staff attitudes to diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through its three-yearly survey and report its findings in the ACT Health Annual Report.

Government Response – Agreed

ACT Health agrees to evaluate attitudes to diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the inclusion of specific questions in its next Workplace Culture Survey provisionally scheduled for late 2018 and will report the findings in the ACT Health Annual Report following the next survey.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that ACT Health explore the reasons behind low completion rates for traineeships and for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs.

Government Response - Agreed

The previous whole of Government Indigenous Traineeship was coordinated through OATSIA in the Community Services Directorate. The last program was undertaken in 2012-2013 and had 13 Trainees. ACT Health had three placements, two completed the traineeship, and one withdrew.

The whole of Government Indigenous Traineeship Program is now being coordinated through the Workforce Capability and Governance Division in CMTEED. ACT Health has taken on one Trainee within the People Strategy and Services Branch. Reviews of previous Indigenous traineeships identify that some of the reasons for trainees not completing programs was the lack of support, development and pastoral care. This is one of the key areas of support focussed on by the coordinators of the program and the workplace in new traineeships.

The new ACTPS Indigenous Traineeship commenced in August 2015 with permanent positions available to the trainees on completion of the traineeship. There are 11 trainees across the ACTPS and one is employed by ACT Health.

Several of the unsuccessful applicants from the ACTPS selection process also identified as having a disability, have been contacted and encouraged to apply for the Disability Inclusion Employment Traineeship that is proposed in 2016-17.

The new Indigenous Traineeship Program allows for a variety of certification qualifications to be achieved based upon the needs of both the individual trainee and the directorate that the trainee will be placed with upon completion of the traineeship. An Alumni will also be created to accurately show the success of trainees if they move on from the program.

The next whole of Government Indigenous Traineeship is proposed to start in 2016-17.

Last calendar year ACT Health placed six Australian School Based Apprentices (ASBAs) within the People Strategy and Services Branch, three identifying as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander and three identifying with a disability. One of the Indigenous apprentice left the program early to undertake a university bridging course that would assist with starting university earlier to undertake nursing studies. The remaining five apprentices completed and graduated the program. Currently ACT Health has two apprentices identifying as having a disability.

Work is being undertaken to secure more placements within ACT Health. This is in line with the creation of an ASBA register pool, for areas/units within ACT Health to obtain potential placements in their areas.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that ACT Health require ACT Health Promotion Grant applicants to list on their applications any other grants applied for.

Government Response - Agreed

The ACT Health Promotion Grants Program will include a question in the application forms of both the Health Promotion Innovation Fund and Healthy Canberra Grants requesting information on other grants applied for. This will commence with the next Health Promotion Innovation Fund closing on 20 October 2016.