



Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by: Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert

Reference: Hearing on 13 November 2023, Annual Report of Community Services Directorate

In relation to: Early Childhood Development and Public Autism Assessments at the Child Development Services (CDS)

It was stated during hearings that 'there isn't a specific breakdown that really delineates exactly how much money is spent on ASD'; instead, there is 'specific funding for positions for ASD services, and then in addition to that, there has been funding that has been allocated to telehealth services in the previous budget also, which is specifically for ASD. So there are so specific line items, but the cost of that service more broadly is more than just the staffing costs'.

- (1) In 2023-24, what is the total amount of line-item funding for positions for ASD services at the CDS, as stated during the hearing?
- (2) In 2023-24, what is the total amount of line-item funding that has been allocated to telehealth services specifically for ASD at the CDS, as stated during the hearing?
- (3) Beyond these two line items, what kinds of things contribute to the total cost of providing public ASD assessments at the CDS?
- (4) The CDS provided 128 autism assessments in 2021-22 (CSD Annual Report 2022, p. 90) but only 116 in 2022-23 (CSD Annual Report 2023, p.87). What accounts for this 9.4 per cent decrease in the number of assessments completed during the reporting year?
- (5) In numbers, what is the government's projection of per annum demand for public autism assessments over the next five years?

Minister Berry: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

- (1) In 2023-24 the total amount of line-item funding for positions for ASD services at the CDS is \$668,000.

- (2) The total amount of line-item funding allocated to telehealth services specifically for ASD at the CDS is \$624,000 over four years.
- (3) CDS allied health staff, including Speech Pathologists and Occupational Therapists, and the administrative workforce contributes to the total cost of provided public ASD assessments at CDS. These staff are involved in managing referrals and waiting lists as well as direct participation in hybrid and face to face ASD assessments. Purchase of assessment kits and consumables such as assessment record forms also contributes to this cost.
- (4) The decrease in the number of assessments completed in 2022-23 can be attributed to a decreased in the number of psychologists working with CDS as procured providers to deliver face to face assessments. Workforce challenges recruiting and retaining related qualified psychologist is a national issue.
- (5) CDS currently receive approximately 12-15 referrals for ASD assessment per month. This has remained relatively consistent for the last 3 years. There is no current evidence of any expected change in demand over the next 5 years.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature:



Date: 28/11/23

By the Minister for Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry MLA