



Inquiry into Caretaker Conventions

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: MS LEANNE CASTLEY

Addressed to: RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA, MINISTER FOR HEALTH

In relation to: CONTACT BETWEEN ACTHD AND MINISTER FOR HEALTH'S OFFICE DURING CARETAKER PERIOD

Hearing: 11 June 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 16

Transcript provided: 17 June 2025

Answer Due: 24 June 2025

RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA took on notice the following question(s):

MS CASTLEY: So the CHS CEO contacted your chief of staff by phone on 4 October, which was a few days before pre-polling began, to discuss preliminary and inconclusive health data. This was followed up with an email on the same day. Can you let me know when you were informed about that—you, not your chief of staff—and who told you, and how did that interaction go?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, I will do that. Before I get to that, I signed a response to a question on notice to you, Ms Castley, on 15 April indicating that during the period from 13 September to 6 November 2024 there were 15 phone calls between me and my office and the CEO of Canberra Health Services. Four of those occurred after the election but before the official swearing in. In addition, my office and I received 10 text messages from the CHS CEO during the period, of which one was received after the election. All regular briefings with CHS ceased during the caretaker period. And I am advised that CHS sought advice from CMTEDD in relation to briefing ministers during the caretaker period and that the provision of advice to me and my office was in line with the caretaker conventions. I have not got information in front of me in relation to contact between myself, my office and the Health Directorate. If you would like us to take it on notice, we can do that. I am happy to do that.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you. That would be great, yes

Ms Stephen-Smith: Okay, I will take that on notice.

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

The ACT Health Directorate has recently responded to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request that provided the details of contact between ministerial offices and the directorate during the Caretaker period. The release of information has now been published on the disclosure log as per standard practice and legislative requirements, and is available at the following link: [ACTHDFOI24-25.13-ACTHD-Response_DL.pdf](#)

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It should be noted that this request covered both my Office as Minister for Health and Ms Davidson's Office as the former Minister for Mental Health and Population Health. You will note from the release that across both offices a total of 105 documents were released, including emails, text messages and Microsoft Teams messages.

Most points of contact, as seen in the documents released, were emails from third parties provided by my office onto the directorate for information, awareness and appropriate action.

In addition to the information released in this noted FOI there were a small number of emails provided by my office to the directorate for Director-General response to constituent enquiries, in line with the Caretaker Conventions. The total number of constituent requests referred from my Office for Director-General response, not included within the scope of the FOI, was six.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions

Signature:



Date:

22/6/25

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA