



Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2025–2026 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2025–2026

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Caitlin Tough MLA

Addressed to: Peter Muir, Chair of the Official Visitors Board, ACT Official Visitors

In relation to: Official Visitors Board and agency responses

Hearing: 30 July 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pages 36-37

Transcript provided: 1 August 2025

Answer Due: 8 August 2025

Peter Muir took on notice the following question(s):

MS TOUGH: You mentioned adult mental health, you have just mentioned possibly disability. Which agencies are consistently less likely to engage with Official Visitors? If you need to take it on notice, that is also okay.

Mr Dulhunty: What do you mean by engagement?

Mr Muir: Feedback and—

MS TOUGH: Well, if you are giving feedback over and over again, which agencies are less likely to then respond and be constructive in that? Given the useful role Official Visitors are playing in highlighting issues to directorates and ministers, I am just interested which ones are not necessarily taking the feedback on board.

Mr Muir: I would like to give that some thought and come back to you on it and take that on notice and we will give you an answer.

MS TOUGH: Yes, yes, that would be fine.

Mr Muir: And I would like to have the wording of the OVs on that. If I can just indicate, one of the challenges obviously is the NDIS. That, I think, is one of the single biggest challenges, and that is not necessarily—

MS TOUGH: ACT government, but still—

Mr Muir: Yes.

MS TOUGH: Yes, yes, that is so helpful.

Mr Muir: There are services within the territory, funded by the commonwealth, the interaction with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. So there is a bunch of things. That is a really challenging space.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. I am happy for you to, yes, take it on notice and consider what you can respond with.

Peter Muir: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Official Visitors have identified a number of agencies that are less responsive.

Mental Health Official Visitors have not received a response from the Health Directorate nor the Health Directorate's Director-General, apart from the Chief Psychiatrist's office, with respect to the Mental Health Official Visitor's quarterly reporting and annual reporting.

Children and Young People Official Visitors found lack of responsiveness by Barnardos with respect to the CAP program after care support. Bimberi Youth Justice Centre often lacks responsiveness to feedback as there are very few changes in the Bimberi space in line with Official Visitor enquiries and suggestions. They also observed that Housing ACT provides inadequate properties to Out of Home Care providers and after care support providers. The properties are often in a poor state and require much maintenance and / or are in high crime / drug use areas, creating an unsafe environment for young people. This includes properties provided to young people exiting care and living by themselves for the first time.

Corrections Official Visitors have advised Housing ACT's lack of engagement with detainees who are incarcerated whilst having Housing ACT properties, which can mean loss of housing even if incarcerated for a short period of time. Further, lack of support to provide housing options prior to release is detrimental to some detainees released on probation. Housing ACT policies state detainees must first be released to be eligible for housing, while the probation policies state that the detainee must provide a suitable address. The two policies conflict resulting in significant difficulties for detainees.

The Homelessness Official Visitor observed lack of responsiveness to reporting issued to Minister Berry, as Minister for Homes and New Suburbs. The Homelessness Official Visitor has only met with Minister Berry once to introduce themselves. There has been no response, even to confirm receipt of reporting, from Minister Berry's Office for quarterly reporting or special reporting issued. The previous operational Minister had been more responsive.

The Disability Official Visitors observed that the Human Rights Commission may, occasionally, close complaint matters without advice of outcomes. The Official Visitors believe this may be due to restrictions regarding sharing of information. There is lack of action taken by Minister Orr, as Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services, to reporting and meetings. The Official Visitors Board has met with Minister Orr's advisors to assist in establishing a feedback loop with Directorates and key stakeholders, however, this has not yet been finalised.

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Disability Official Visitors have been advised of lack of communication from North Canberra Hospital to services providers, advocates and guardians with respect to persons with disability that use excessive emergency resources, or have complex comorbidities, requiring careful discharge planning. There is significant disability related overlap between the Health Directorate and the Community Services Directorate however they do not interact to the significant detriment of persons with disability.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates

Signature:



Date: 7 August 2025

By the Chair, Official Visitors Board, Peter Muir