



# Inquiry into the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

## Answer to question taken on notice

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Asked by: Ms Jo Clay MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Health

In relation to: Health and Percentage of budget spend on preventive health

Hearing: 5 March 2026

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 21-23

Transcript provided: 12 March 2026

Answer Due: 19 March 2026

**THE CHAIR:** What proportion of our health budget at the moment are we spending on preventative healthcare?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That's a good question.

**Ms Hudson:** I do not really have the answer to that question, I am afraid. My name is Robyn Hudson. I am the Deputy Director-General of the Health and Community Services Directorate, and I recognise the privilege statement.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that a question you could take on notice, perhaps, what proportion of the health budget is being spent on preventative health versus acute health?

**Ms Hudson:** We could provide a number in that direction. We would have to recognise the commonwealth contribution as well.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes, I think there is probably multiple challenges in drawing a conclusion around that in a definitive way. Yes, the commonwealth—this is often a space where the commonwealth has primary responsibility, so it is probably not—like that will be a very small part of the story of what proportion of our budget is spent in that space, given that the split of responsibilities, but also, as we know, the social determinants of health often are not in the health system. So when we talk about health promotion, prevention—

**THE CHAIR:** It may be in somebody else's budget. Understood.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** You are actually talking much broader than the health budget. So yes, we can find the answer—

**Ms Hudson:** We could find out our proportion.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I do understand the complexity. We had one witness suggest that maybe five or ten per cent of the health budget should be spent on prevention, or possibly I would have to go back and check the transcript. They maybe meant five to ten per cent of the budget—I am not sure—but we have had witnesses suggest a metric, and it is difficult for us to know if we have an acknowledgement that yes, it is better value to spend more money on preventative health than acute health, if we do not have like— government must surely be measuring this to get a different outcome, so we would love any information that you can provide on that, and how you are monitoring that now and how you are changing the settings to make sure, understanding that we will have to do the double investment, but how you are increasing our expenditure on preventative health right now, how you are costing that.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes. I mean, I think what we can say, just as a bit of information for the committee, that data that we have indicates that as of March this year, there's around \$83 million committed to 80 community health organisations across about 120 individual contracts. There is investment in—we know that one in two Canberrans lives with a chronic disease, and so there is investment in chronic disease support, and then there is investment in preventative health in programs like the infant pilot program around evidence-based health literacy, intention to promote healthy eating, so babies to two year olds. There is all of the e-cigarettes and healthy choices work and e-cigarette vaping and smoking cessation, healthier choices around healthy eating, First Nations preventative health, school-based health promotion resources, Healthy Canberra Grants, and then there are things like preventative screening, so things like the newborn blood spot screening program which is funded by the commonwealth. You might not think of it as being preventative health, but it is—so I guess that is going to be the complexity, as what do we—you know, there is bowel cancer screening, there is lung cancer screening, immunisation. There is a whole bunch of things and where we draw the line around that is going to be—

**THE CHAIR:** It is a great list. I am happy for you to use your discretion as to where you draw the line. I feel like it is a better thing to come back on notice, but the question is going to the heart of how much are we spending, what proportion are we spending on preventative healthcare as a number versus acute healthcare as a number, and maybe has that proportion shifted, and I am not going to give you a really prescriptive timeline, but maybe in the last three years or in the last five years or something like that, so that we can see, having had this point raised so many times, what is going on.



**Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The ACT reported to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare the following levels of preventative health expenditure as a proportion of total healthcare expenditure for the period 2019-20 to 2023-24.

| Year    | Preventative Health Expenditure (\$m) | Proportion of Total Health Expenditure (%) |
|---------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 2019-20 | 79                                    | 4                                          |
| 2020-21 | 96                                    | 5                                          |
| 2021-22 | 179                                   | 8                                          |
| 2022-23 | 154                                   | 6                                          |
| 2023-24 | 101                                   | 4                                          |

The increases in 2020 to 2023 are largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the Fiscal Sustainability of the ACT

Signature:

Date:

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By the Minister for Health, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith