

2009

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

TABLING STATEMENT

Government Responses to:

- **Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water:** Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008
- **Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs:** Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008
- **Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services:** Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008
- **Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety:** Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008
- **Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services:** Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008
- **Standing Committee on Public Accounts:** Report No 2 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008

**Presented by
Mr Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister**

15 / 10 / 2009

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to present the Government's Responses to the reports of all six Assembly Standing Committee reports on the 2007-2008 Annual and Financial Reports of ACT Government agencies.

In keeping with past practice, I am tabling the responses to all six Standing Committee reports together. This is because the Standing Committee reports generally cover more than one Minister and more than one portfolio and, in some cases, issues raised in the reports apply across departments and agencies.

Annual and financial reports are prepared by agencies in accordance with the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*, the *Financial Management Act 1996* and the Chief Minister's Department *Annual Report Directions*. In this regard, the Government seeks to ensure that annual and financial reports are continually updated to reflect best practice and full accountability.

The Standing Committees made 73 recommendations. The Government has agreed in full, in principle or in part to 35 recommendations, has noted 30 recommendations and not agreed with eight recommendations.

Mr Speaker, I commend the Government's Responses to the Assembly.

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL
SERVICES
REPORT NO 1**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2007-2008

**Presented by
Mr Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister**

15 / 10 / 2009

Government Response

Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services Report No 1 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2007-2008

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, Community and Social Services reviewed annual reports for:

- ACT Health; and
- Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.

The Committee made seven recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.10 The Committee recommends that the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services updates the information regarding the Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) on its website, as a priority, and provide direct links to current and past agreements.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services acknowledges the need for current information to be on the Disability ACT website regarding the National Disability Agreement that commenced on 1 January 2009. Disability ACT will link the new Agreement and reform areas to its website and maintain links to previous agreements under the CSTDA.

Recommendation 2

2.51 The Committee recommends that details about the number of women supported through the various grants be provided in future annual reports.

Government Response

Agreed.

The Office for Women has reported on the number of grants provided both to individual women through the Return to Work Grants Program and the Women's Directors scholarships and to organisations through the ACT Women's Grants Program in previous and annual reports. The 2008-09 Annual Report will also include reporting on the number of grants and scholarships provided to individual women through the Audrey Fagan Scholarships Program, as these were first awarded in the 2008-09 financial year.

Recommendation 3

3.8 The Committee recommends that ACT Health provide more information, in future reports, about initiatives in relation to addressing the shortage of general practitioners in the ACT.

Government Response

Noted.

The 2007-2008 Annual Report notes the activities and initiatives undertaken against each of the objectives of the ACT Workforce Plan 2005-2010, to address the shortage of general practitioners in the ACT.

The 2008-09 report will include a summary of general practitioner focused initiatives being undertaken to address ACT workforce shortages.

Recommendation 4

3.13 The Committee recommends that ACT Health provide more information, in future reports, on action being taken to address category 2 elective surgery patient waiting lists.

Government Response

Noted.

Previous annual reports have noted the considerable efforts undertaken to increase access to elective surgery and reduce waiting times for care. ACT Health annual reports have provided details of initiatives undertaken to meet Government commitments to reduce the number of people waiting too long for care as well as continuing to ensure that more urgent elective surgery cases are admitted to surgery within standard timeframes.

The Government's commitment to reducing the waiting time for care has shown results over recent years. The number of people waiting longer than one year for surgery has dropped by 46 percent over three years, from 1,085 in June 2006 to 586 in June 2009.

Despite this, the number of category 2 patients with waiting times greater than the standard waiting time for surgery remains too high. The Government will focus on this category of patients within its long waiting time reduction strategy during 2009-10. Reference to this will be included in the ACT Health annual report for 2008-09.

Recommendation 5

3.19 The Committee recommends that ACT Health provide further information, in future reports, relating to the strategies that will be adopted to meet the long term target of an 85 per cent bed occupancy rate.

Government Response

Noted.

Previous annual reports have noted efforts undertaken to improve bed occupancy rates, including the provision of the highest growth in bed capacity over the last five years since self-Government.

The main driver in reducing bed occupancy is the capacity to increase the number of beds quicker than the rate of growth in demand for services. While the Government has increased the bed capacity of our public hospitals by 25 percent over the four years to 2008-09 (*Australian Hospital Statistics*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare), demand for inpatient services had jumped 21 percent over the same period. This higher than estimated growth in inpatient demand has not enabled the Government to fully deliver on its commitment of reducing bed occupancy to 85 percent. However, despite the considerable increase in demand, the Government has managed to decrease our bed occupancy rate from 97 percent in 2005-06 to 89 percent in each of the last two financial years. The Government has committed additional funds in 2009-10 and across the forward estimates to further increase bed capacity as a means of reducing bed occupancy rates closer to the target of 85 percent.

Recommendation 6

3.25 The Committee recommends that ACT Health provide further information, in future reports, on strategies that will be adopted to meet targets set for triage category 3 and 4 in 2009–2010.

Government Response

Noted.

Previous annual reports have noted efforts undertaken to improve waiting times for emergency department services, including the establishment of new services which relieve pressures on emergency departments and the provision of additional hospital capacity (through additional beds) which provides better patient flows out of the emergency department to other services. However, this information has not been presented with the performance information on emergency department waiting times.

The 2008-09 report will include a summary of initiatives being undertaken to improve waiting times together with the emergency department performance information.

Recommendation 7

3.26 The committee recommends that ACT Health provide further information, in future reports, on category 5, non urgent patients, that leave the emergency department before treatment is received, in particular any information that relates to emerging trends.

Government Response

Not agreed.

It is not possible to accurately collect data in relation to people who present to an emergency department but do not wait for care.

Any information on the reasons for not waiting for care would only be anecdotal as it is not possible to capture data for people who leave without being seen by a clinician (or advising administrative staff). It would not be appropriate to include such anecdotal information within the Annual Report.