

Mr Brendan Smyth MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
ACT Legislative Assembly Committee Office
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Smyth,

Testimony at Standing Committee on Public Accounts

I am writing in relation to my evidence at a hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on 29 April 2014 concerning the Inquiry into Appropriation Bills 2013-14 (No. 2).

At the hearing I provided the following response about the ACT Funeral Assistance Program in response to a question from Dr Bourke:

***Mr Matthews:** The funerals scheme is available for low-income earners. Like most of our concession programs, it is linked to being a recipient of a pension card, either through veterans affairs or a Centrelink pension card, or being a commonwealth healthcare card holder. As a general rule, up to \$500 is available to pay for a respectful and low-cost funeral. But consideration is given to meeting any cultural requirements that might also need to be addressed, in particular, whether there might be a requirement for people to travel, in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So there is some flexibility around the scheme, but generally it is to support that one-off financial expense in the form of around a \$500 concession.*

I would like to make the following correction:

The ACT Funeral Assistance Program is provided for ACT residents in financial hardship unable to meet the full costs of a funeral for immediate family members. Eligibility for the Program is determined through an application package which requests details of both the deceased and the applicant regarding any concessions held and a financial assessment inclusive of income, expenditure and assets.

Under the Program, families may make a contribution of up to a maximum \$500 towards the cost of the funeral. This is an elective contribution. The Territory meets

the remaining expenses against an agreed pricing schedule the Territory has with each contracted funeral provider for approved services.

The Territory provided financial assistance for 28 funerals in 2013-14. The average funeral expense paid by the Territory was \$5,847.42, with the maximum expense being \$9,559.00.

I regret the provision of incomplete information to the Committee and would appreciate your acceptance of the corrected information I have provided.

I have advised the Minister for Community Services of this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a long, wavy horizontal line that ends in a small loop.

David Matthews
Senior Director
Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy

2 May 2014