



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
2 March 2022

Asked by Leanne Castley MLA on 2 March 2022: Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA took on notice the following question(s):

[Ref: Hansard Proof Transcript, 2 March 2022 [PAGE 93-94]]

In relation to: Canberra Hospital Expansion timeline

MS CASTLEY: Yes. I know that there has been reshuffling and moving and things like that, but this was a promise back in 2016. Why has it taken until 2022 to get to the point where there is a hole in the ground? It does not add up to me that other structures, other hospitals, have been built in that time and we are just at the hole-in-the-ground stage. Minister, can you enlighten me?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Ms Castley, if you would like, maybe we can take on notice the timeframe for the process. You might recognise that you were not a member in the last Assembly. The commitment that was made in 2016 related to a particular part of the Canberra Hospital site. Some further due diligence was done following the election in 2016 to determine whether that was the appropriate site for the new build. It was determined that that was not going to be the best site and that the site of the former building 5 and building 24 would be a better site for multiple reasons, not least of which was the need to not move the helipad twice, and because those buildings 5 and 24 were not largely clinical service buildings. It was a site that enabled the construction to go ahead without disrupting clinical services. Obviously, there have been some moves of services and administration as part of the early works. New buildings were built and other areas of the hospital refurbished, so there has been a lot of work that has happened since that decision in late 2018 that finalised the site, and all of that early work around planning, building those new buildings and refurbishing the sites to decant the services that were in building 5 and 24 that needed to be demolished. Alongside that was the work around design for the new building identifying an early partner, which was Multiplex, and then working with Multiplex through the further design development, getting it to the point of development application and then going through that process before you can even start knocking anything down. So there were a couple of parallel tracks around the early works to decant the buildings to enable them to be knocked down at the same time

as we were doing the design work of what was going to be built on the new site. As I alluded to earlier, that evolved over the period where we were engaging the community in that design work. My understanding is that we are pretty much on track to where we thought we were going to be when the final decision was made in late 2018 about where the critical services building was going to go.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you, Minister. As a voter back in 2012, though, when I first started hearing about this, I am disappointed that 10 years later we are still just at the point where there is a hole in the ground. I am just wondering what you say to Canberrans about that.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have just given you a detailed explanation of the process that we have gone through. I will take on notice to give you, in writing, a timeline of the things that have happened since 2016, or since 2018 when the decision was made about where the critical services building was going to be best located on the campus. I recognise that there have been alternative views about that, but one of those alternative views would have involved knocking down buildings 2 and 3, which are buildings that provide clinical services and beds and wards to our hospital community. The plan that the Canberra Liberals took to the election in 2016 would have seen us go into the pandemic with a big hole right in the middle of Canberra Hospital. Right in the middle of Canberra Hospital we would have had fewer beds, we would have had longer waiting lists and we would have gone into the pandemic with a big hole in the middle of Canberra Hospital campus. If that is the choice you wanted to make, that is fine, but if you want to keep going back to that choice, which would have led to a big hole—

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

Early planning work occurred from 2016 to mid-2019 for the Canberra Hospital Expansion (CHE) Project, formerly known as the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency (SPIRE) project. This is well documented in the publicly available ACT Government submission to the Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Planning for the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre (SPIRE) and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds. The submission is available on the Legislative Assembly website.

Following approval of the project's business case in May 2019, Major Projects Canberra (MPC) released a Request for Expressions of Interest to the market in December 2019.

Following the shortlisting of respondents, a Request for Tender was released to shortlisted tenderers in April 2020. The preferred tenderer was announced in August 2020, with an early works contract signed shortly thereafter.

Following the early works phase, the main works contract was entered into in June 2021. Demolition activities commenced and were largely completed by November 2021.

Excavation and construction activities have followed.

In parallel, significant enabling works have been undertaken across the campus, including the construction of two new buildings – Buildings 8 and 28 – and refurbishment activities in Buildings 3, 4 and 9, as well as the construction of a new temporary carpark.

Throughout this time, considerable planning and design work has been undertaken, including multiple public consultations, ongoing community engagement and the submission of development applications for early works and the Critical Services Building. A timeline of this engagement is available on the Canberra Hospital Expansion YourSay webpage (<https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/hospitalexansion>).

These timelines reflect the reality that major hospital redevelopment projects are highly complex, particularly on brownfield sites. The planning, design and early works phases are critical, and it is not unusual for these to take some years. As a point of comparison, the NSW Government announced initial funding for the redevelopment of Westmead Hospital's complex and critical care facilities in November 2013, released the design concept in September 2015, appointed a contractor and commenced demolition works for the Central Acute Services Building in April 2017, and officially opened the Central Acute Services Building in March 2021.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:



Date: 10 / 4 / 22

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA