



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA: To ask the Minister for Families and Community Services

Ref: Budget Statement G, p. 22

Hearing Date: 28 July 2023

In relation to: Supporting Public Access to Government Information

- (1) In the hearing, it was said that discussions are occurring regarding whether the freedom-of-information process is the right process for people seeking access to personal information held by human services sections of government. Can the minister please summarise what has been discussed to date and what the next steps for this discussion will/might be?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

Discussions have occurred with former Minister Ramsay and with Minister Steel regarding the operation of the Freedom of Information Act 2016, as well as Budget measures seeking additional or ongoing resources for FOI teams. Work on modernising the Children and Young People Act is also considering information sharing and access provisions.

The Community Services Directorate (CSD) is taking a multifaceted approach to improve access to government information. For example, the Directorate is:

- Taking a bespoke approach to incoming FOI applications with a view to being able to provide individuals with helpful information more quickly. This new approach has been tested and is supported by the ACT Ombudsman's Office.
- Investigating the development of smart forms and an improved CSD website to help direct applicants to the most effective means of getting their information.
- Looking at the viability of longer-term solutions such as portals for people to access personal information.
- Workshops that include FOI, care and protection, youth justice and housing staff to map current pathways for information release and analyse case studies, as part of working to implement more client friendly options.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "R. Stephen-Smith".

Date:

17/8/23

By the Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA