



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025**

Ms Nichole Lawder MLA (Chair) Ms Suzane Orr MLA (Deputy Chair) Miss  
Laura Nuttall MLA (Member)

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative  
Assembly) Bill 2024-2025

Question on Notice (Committee)

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**Asked by:** Mr Ed Cocks MLA

**Addressed to:** Minister for Mental Health

**Redirect to:** Canberra Health Services

**Reference:** Chief Psychiatrist's Report, pages 63 - 64

**Date:** 23/07/2024

**In relation to:** Canberra Health Services and DMHU and GMHU Leave Panel

**Question Lodgement Date:** 23/07/2024

**Date Answer Due:** 31/07/2024

**Question**

- (1) How often does the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit and Gawanggal Mental Health Unit leave panel meet to determine the leave requests by patients at both Units?
- (2) Who is responsible for the appointment of the members of the leave panel and how are members appointed?
- (3) Have there been any changes to the process of considering and approving leave requests since the alleged assault of ANU students by a patient released on leave that occurred on the ANU campus in September 2023?
- (4) Were any members of the leave panel relieved of their duties in the aftermath of the ANU incident?

**Ms Davidson: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –**

1. The Forensic Mental Health Inpatient Services Leave Panel convenes weekly to consider new applications for leave from both units.
2. There is no legislation that governs the appointment or constitution of the leave panel. The leave panel membership is a CHS appointment and consists of the Senior Leadership Team of the two units. It is chaired by the Clinical Director of Forensic Mental Health Services (a Forensic Psychiatrist). Representatives from multiple professional disciplines and from both units attend the panel meetings. The extent of the authority of the Leave Panel to approve leave is dependent on the legal status of the individual consumer. Some decisions in

relation to leave require application to another authority such as the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal or ACT Corrective Services.

3. Following a review by the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, Forensic Mental Health Services has undertaken benchmarking and review of processes and documentation in relation to the information provided to the ACAT when reviewing conditions of release. While no changes have been made to leave panel processes at this stage, there is an opportunity to strengthen the nature and comprehensiveness of the documentation. The Chief Psychiatrist Review recommendations were specific to people subject to Conditional release orders (CROs); however, the leave panel considers applications for all DMHU and GMHU consumers. A number of other recommendations including potential legislative change are being considered by the Justice and Community Safety directorate.
4. No members of the Leave panel were relieved of their duties following the ANU incident.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature: *Emma Davidson*

Date: 5 August 2024

By Ms Emma Davidson, Minister for Mental Health