

Grace Concannon
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services
ACT Legislative Assembly

Via email: grace.concannon@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Ms Concannon,

Thank you for the invitation for ACTCOSS to participate in the Standing Committee Inquiry into Calvary Public Hospital Options. My apologies for the delay in responding, it is understood public hearings for this inquiry have already commenced.

While ACTCOSS is aware of a range of issues relating to health services, resources are not currently available to provide detailed analysis on the specifics of the Inquiry. However, please find below some general comments regarding public hospital arrangements.

ACTCOSS supports further work, as outlined under option 4, on planning and analysis of the hospital requirements for the north side of Canberra. The proposal put forward by the Health Care Consumers' Association for such hospital provision to focus on sub-acute care and to link with the University of Canberra is also worthy of further exploration and consideration.

ACTCOSS aims to provide a voice for and with people living with disadvantage, and as such is interested to ensure the most vulnerable people in our community are able to access primary and acute health-care services. This involves not just having the services available, but also ensuring they are readily accessible.

A holistic approach, addressing the *social determinants of health* is important in formulating policy to address the current situation relating to the provision of hospital services on the north side of Canberra. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. According to the World Health Organisation:

The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.¹

Significant evidence exists for a social determinants approach to health care planning.² This approach would encompass all sections within and across government departments, agencies and organisations to develop and deliver integrated healthcare processes. However it does not appear ACT Health is working towards the development of such processes. Significant

¹ World Health Organisation, *Social Determinants of Health*, <http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/>

² World Health Organisation, *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health*, 2008

reform to the way health services are planned and delivered for the ACT is required to ensure that the ad-hoc development strategies and services become more streamlined.

Health services need to be accessible: by a variety of transport, including public transport; and available at a range of times over the day and across a year. Services need to be responsive to a variety of social needs and cultural understandings. It is not feasible for every health 'campus' within the ACT to provide all services, however communication and transfers need to operate smoothly to facilitate the best treatment possible for the community. When developing future health services, ensuring equitable access must be considered in the planning phases. A consumer's ability to access health services needs to be seen in a whole of system way when services are developed, as the availability of services directly impacts upon the utilisation of others.

To this end ACTCOSS is supportive of the prospect of "maximis[ing] the opportunities for rational role delineation between [health] facilities and [the creation of] cross networked, cross territory services"³ as outlined in option 4 of the proposals put forward by the Minister for Health.

Health services would benefit from greater coordination and linkages across the acute and public health service providers. Such linkages could be facilitated with greater ease if there was clarity on public hospital services being provided in Canberra.

Yours sincerely,

Roslyn Dundas
Director

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³ ACT Minister for Health *Proposed Options for the future ownership of and management arrangements of the Calvary Public Hospital* August 2010