

**2019**

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY  
SERVICES INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF  
HEALTH FUNDING IN THE ACT**

**Presented by  
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Minister for Health and Wellbeing  
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The ACT Government is committed to providing an efficient and effective health care system that provides quality, sustainable care that meets the health needs of people in the ACT.

The ACT Government has demonstrated record levels of investment in ACT public health services in recent years. We are modernising health services, making sure we can deliver services when and where they are needed and making sure we have the health infrastructure we need to meet the future health needs of Canberrans.

The government will continue to invest in health infrastructure and in health services right across our city, as well as invest in prevention, primary health care, community-based health care, and acute and specialist care, with a focus on delivering territory-wide health services.

A rapidly expanding and ageing population, increases in prevalence of chronic disease and significant and ongoing co-morbidities challenge health systems around the world, and their associated funding models.

The ACT Government recognises the need for modern health systems to place high value on early access and prevention models of health care to reduce the burden of disease and demand on the health system. This will mean health systems can operate in a system which shifts the focus to prevention as well as primary care, noting that the federally funded nature of Australia's public health system places most of the levers for this in the hands of the Commonwealth.

The instability of the National Health Reform Agreement federal funding models undermines the potential of public health systems, with the uncertainty that backcasting brings, and reduced hospital funding placing additional pressure on state and territory health systems. Further, the extended freeze on the Medicare rebate has had significant impacts on primary health care providers. Nevertheless the ACT Government is ensuring the sustainability of ACT public health services in the future, in an environment of rising healthcare costs and rising demand on health services.

The ACT Government is considering how to better utilise available resources to greater effect. The government has initiated a number of innovative policy and service changes designed to influence a move towards primary care and prevention, whilst at the same time ensuring demand for acute services is met and appropriately managed. The ACT Government has also invested significantly in service delivery in the community, recognising that care can be delivered outside of the acute hospital setting, offering multiple benefits to patients as well as a sustainable, affordable alternative to hospital stays. Such initiatives include:

1. Significant investment in and expansion of Hospital in the Home
2. The establishment of alternative primary care services such as the ACT Nurse led Walk-in Centres.
3. Undertaking a number of projects and programs designed to improve the health literacy of Canberrans leading to stronger ability to manage and respond to their own health conditions effectively and reduce the burden on the health system.

The ACT Government remains committed to innovation in the delivery of health services for the ACT, looking beyond the delivery of acute services towards the effective delivery of health prevention programs and better access to care in the community.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER	RESPONSE	COMMENTS
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate the AIDS Action Council in providing mechanism for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer community to access practices that provide inclusive services.</p>	<b>NOTED</b>	<p>Whilst recognising that primary health care is an Australian Government responsibility, the ACT Government is working actively in the LGBTIQ space. The Minister for Health and Wellbeing committed to commencing consultation on the development of a Transgender Youth Clinic. ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) is developing a position statement on gender services. Initial internal consultation with Canberra Health Services (CHS) key stakeholders is progressing. An LGBTIQ HealthPathway has been developed by Capital Health Network.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government look into the benefits of increased funding for preventative health interventions.</p>	<b>AGREED</b>	<p>The ACT Government is committed to preventive health and will continue to explore opportunities across the Territory and across Government for innovation and investment in preventive health interventions (building upon existing, highly regarded services).</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth continue to fund the Commonwealth Home Support Program. If the Commonwealth does cease payments through the Commonwealth Home Support Program, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government fund this program.</p>	<b>NOTED</b>	<p>ACTHD supports the continued funding of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and welcomes the October 2018 announcement that \$50 million in growth funding would be made available to CHSP providers to increase service delivery in identified areas of need, including home maintenance, home modifications, meals, transport and domestic assistance.</p> <p>On 18 January 2019 the government announced an additional \$15 million will be offered to existing CHSP home modification provider to deliver changes to a client's home to increase or maintain the person's functional independence.</p> <p>This is primarily the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, The ACT Government announced in the 2018/19 mid-year Budget Review a territory-wide expansion of the Geriatric Rapid Acute Care Evaluation (GRACE) pilot. The expansion of the GRACE program is a result of the Government's priority to ensure older Canberra's receive appropriate care and reduce avoidable Emergency Department presentations and hospital admissions.</p>

		ACT Health is committed to procuring all services through appropriate and competitive processes that seek the best value for money and quality service provision for the ACT.
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4</b>	<b>AGREED</b>	The ACTHD Digital Health Strategy is a territory-wide digital health strategy and well advanced in its development with launch expected early in 2019. This Strategy will provide a contemporary understanding of the strategic direction of the enabling functions that technology can provide to ACTHD and CHS into the future. It will inform the prioritisation of future investments and contribute towards ACTHD and CHS's primary focus of person centred, safe and effective care.
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate digital reform to provide a strategy for improving communication between acute services, community-based services, general practitioners and the patient and their carer.		
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5</b>	<b>AGREED IN PART</b>	ACTHD will continue to work in partnership with appropriate government and non-government organisations to explore opportunities to deliver peer-based HIV, STI and BBV testing for gay and bisexual men to help meet goals and targets established in the National HIV Strategy.  There is evidence that peer-based HIV testing interventions are well received, however previous programs have demonstrated that an emphasis on HIV testing alone can come at the expense of other related STI and BBV testing important for this group (gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia). Data from 2015 to 2017 show a decrease in the number of new HIV infections in this group, while the number of new cases acquired from heterosexual sex is increasing.  Therefore, planning of any peer-based testing program requires the consideration of multiple factors including current data, the demand for and provision of clinical support, and the mitigation of unintended consequences, for example decreased testing for other STIs and BBVs. ACTHD commit to working with stakeholders in the ACT to address issues related to STIs and BBVs in all at risk populations.
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide peer-based HIV testing for gay and bisexual men to help meet its goals and targets established in the National HIV Strategy.		
<b>RECOMMENDATION 6</b>	<b>AGREED</b>	ACTHD has developed a Territory-wide Health Services Strategy 2018-2028. The Strategy is in its final stages and will be released to the public and made available to the Committee.
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensures the development of a territory wide health		

<p>strategy, which is made available to the Committee and the public as soon as possible.</p>		<p>The Strategy has been formed with input from the Territory-wide Health Services Advisory Group, established in 2018 and comprised of community sector and ACTHD representatives.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7</b></p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p>	<p>The ACTHD Governance Framework has the Strategic Goal 1: Putting patients at the centre of everything we do. This sets the expectation for the cascading of this strategic goal throughout all services.</p>
<p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government consider adoption of patient-focused service delivery, as patient-focus services encourage the development of more efficient models of care.</p>		<p>ACTHD’s Vision is “Your health - Our priority”. Improving the quality of healthcare across the ACT is a key priority for ACTHD, with the aim to be the safest healthcare system in Australia, delivering high-quality, person-centred care that is effective and efficient.</p> <p>The ACTHD Clinical Governance Framework outlines the principles employed to ensure high quality, person-centred, safe and effective health service delivery, underpinned by a strong system of clinical governance. These principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person-centred – improving the experience of care</li> <li>• Patient Safety – proactively seeking a reduction in patient harm</li> <li>• Effective care – best evidence of every person, every time.</li> </ul> <p>The ACT Health Quality Strategy (the Strategy) aims to deliver person centred, safe, effective and efficient care with the quality ambition to be a high performing health service that provides person centred, safe and effective care. The Strategy provides a framework through which improvements in services we offer to people can be focussed and measured. This Strategy has been the result of an extensive staff and consumer engagement and consultation phase which has informed the strategic priority areas and aims, making explicit ACTHD commitments through its adoption and implementation.</p> <p>The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (the Standards) were developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) with the Australian Government, state and territory partners, consumers and the private sector. The primary aim of the Standards is to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of health care. They describe the</p>

		<p>level of care that should be provided by health service organisations and the systems that are needed to deliver such care. Version two of the Standards came into effect on 1 January 2019 and addresses gaps identified in the first version including mental health and cognitive impairment, health literacy, end-of-life care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers describes the systems and strategies to create a consumer-centred health system by including consumers in the development and design of quality health care.</p> <p>CHS have established a governance committee, with a consumer Chair, to be accountable for the introduction of the new Partnering with Consumers Standard. A mapping exercise will be conducted in the first half of 2019 to identify key achievements to date and areas for improvement. The criteria from the Partnering with Consumers standard includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical Governance and quality improvement systems to support partnering with consumers</li> <li>• Partnering with patients in their own care</li> <li>• Health Literacy</li> <li>• Partnering with Consumes in organisational design and governance.</li> </ul> <p>From 1 October the Consumer Feedback and Engagement Team was realigned to the Patient Experience Unit within Quality Safety Innovation and Improvement. A working group is being established to review, in partnership with consumers, consumer feedback mechanisms to ensure a person-centred approach. CHS staff are provided with appropriate resources to achieve the Strategic Priority 1: Person-centred – Improve the experience of care. The Consumer Handout Committee continues to review consumer information to ensure the publications are person-centred and adheres to health literacy principles.</p>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 8</b>	<b>NOTED</b>	

<p>The committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in a mandated minimum nurse/midwife to patient ratio.</p>		<p>The ACT Government has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) to develop a ratios framework that will support a strong and sustainable nursing workforce into the future.</p> <p>The MOU demonstrates the Government’s commitment to safe patient care, and to exploring nurse and midwife to patient ratios in our public hospitals so that we can continue to deliver safe staffing levels and the highest quality care to patients. Through the MOU, ACTHD, Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce will review and evaluate existing nursing hours per patient day and assess workload models, including ratio models, from other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Ratios are one of a number of mechanisms that factor in the acuity and workload of specific clinical areas to ensure appropriate staffing levels, with patient safety and quality of care at the core of this work.</p> <p>To progress this work as a priority, a technical review group between ACTHD, Canberra Hospital, Calvary Public Hospital Bruce and the ANMF has been established as part of the MOU. This group is jointly chaired by the ACT Chief Nurse and the ANMF. The focus is on determining an appropriate methodology and process to ensure safe patient care is maintained.</p> <p>The Nurse Safety Strategy was launched late in 2018 to support the rights of nurses and midwives working in ACT public health services to be safe and protected in their workplaces. The Strategy demonstrates a commitment to working towards minimising risks in health and hospital workplaces across the ACT and ensuring a positive safety culture across the ACT public health system.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9</b></p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p>	<p>ACTHD is progressing work to improve access to primary and community health services. This work includes the analysis of the policy levers available to the ACT Government to influence the supply of the health workforce and the demand for primary and community health services.</p> <p>ACT Health commenced a project in June 2017 to develop a Workforce Strategy, to respond to the influences shaping the health system; to position ACTHD to</p>
<p>The Committee recommends that, as the ACT has less than the national in average primary and community health services providers, the ACT Government develop a workforce strategy to build on existing numbers.</p>		

		<p>achieve its strategic goals and meet future demands; and to support the delivery of ACT Government priorities.</p> <p>The Strategy provides useful insight and recommendations into the existing culture and performance of the organisation that can be harnessed to inform and enhance ACTHD.</p> <p>The transition into two organisations provides an opportunity to reset the culture, refocus on person-centred, safe and high-quality care and to create a high performing and collaborative culture for the two organisations with a critical establishment period between now and 2020.</p> <p>The Report of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services has also provided a number of recommendations that aim to enhance the workplace culture of the ACT's public health system to support workforce attraction and retention.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10</b></p>	<p>a) <b>AGREED</b> b) <b>NOTED</b></p>	<p>a) The hospital system is becoming more efficient, with the average cost per weighted separation in the ACT decreasing by around 18 per cent in five years, from \$6,854 in 2012-13 to \$5,598 in 2016-17. The program of work that supports these annual average costs include identifying opportunities for improvement. Further, over the medium-term, ACTHD will progressively implement an Activity Based Management (ABM) framework as the basis for defining and allocating funding to commission services across the system and to measure financial performance. Through the ABM structure, activity and cost information will be used to support strategic and operational objectives to further improve patient care and outcomes. Central to this will be a comprehensive review of the cost drivers of providing health services in ACT public hospitals.</p> <p>b) The work described above will provide robust analysis of the cost drivers sought by the Legislative Assembly, as per this Recommendation.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 11</b></p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p>	

<p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish procedures and protocols to ensure patients treated on time in emergency departments meet the national average benchmark.</p>		<p>The ACT Government has a focus on delivering emergency services within clinically recommended timeframes, and procedures and protocols are in place to ensure patients are treated on time, according to the urgency of their clinical needs.</p> <p>ACT Health continuously reviews the processes for managing growing emergency department (ED) demand across the territory. Strategies are focused both on managing the flow of patients into EDs (diversion to alternative forms of treatment strategies) and improving the operational management of patients once in the ED. Such strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of alternate forms of clinical treatment through Walk -in Centres to allow for the right treatment in the right place;</li> <li>• Initiatives such as the Hospital in the Home (HITH) and more specifically the Geriatric Residential Acute Care Evaluation (GRACE) program which will provide treatment in residential aged care facilities RACF to reduce the flow of elderly patients into EdDs;</li> <li>• Communication strategies and public education to keep consumers informed of their treatment options as an alternative to EDs;</li> <li>• Targeted initiatives for known high demand pressure periods such as a dedicated Winter Plans which incorporates additional beds and staffing to respond to the flu season through the winter months; and</li> <li>• At the operational level, daily strategies to improve patient flow and discharge which includes the use of</li> <li>• The Australasian Triage Scale is used to ensure that patients are treated in the order of their clinical urgency and allocated to the most appropriate assessment and treatment area.</li> </ul> <p>ACT Health will continue to focus on access to emergency services and care, reducing waiting times, and optimising the seamless transfer of patients to the most appropriate clinical environment.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 12</b></p>	<p><b>AGREED</b></p>	

<p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish procedures and protocols to ensure that patients receive elective surgery in according with the national average benchmark.</p>		<p>The ACT Government has a focus on delivering elective surgery within clinically recommended timeframes, and procedures and protocols are in place to ensure that patients are treated on time, according to the urgency of their clinical needs. ACT Health continuously reviews the processes for managing surgical demand across the territory. The Territory Wide Surgical Management Committee, which plans and monitors elective surgery waiting list performance across the territory, has developed an elective surgery plan to manage the increasing demand for elective surgery in the ACT over the next several years. Additionally, the development of Speciality Service Plans will promote a smooth and logical journey through the health system.</p> <p>Other elements of the strategy to manage increasing demand have included conducting additional surgeries, partnerships with the private hospital sector and reviewing current infrastructure.</p> <p>Updated modelling is being used to set targets for elective surgery into the future, with the delivery of approximately 14,000 elective surgery procedures anticipated for the 2018-19 financial year. This will be the highest number of elective surgery cases ever completed in the ACT in one financial year.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 13</b></p> <p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government, in conjunction with Health Care Consumers Association, establish a forum to discuss value-based health care.</p>	<p><b>AGREED IN PRINCIPLE</b></p>	<p>ACTHD supports values-based health care which is a key component to the National Health Reform Agreement. ACTHD continues to work with consumer groups and non-government organisations (NGOs), including Health Care Consumers Association, to pursue the best quality and value health care for the ACT community.</p> <p>ACTHD is currently working to establish the Clinical Leadership Forum (The Forum). The Forum will provide strong leadership independent advice to the Ministers to contribute to the continuous improvement of the ACT’s public health services. The Forum will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the Ministers with advice on relevant clinical considerations in the sustainability, development and improvement of the ACT’s health system, including input into planning and infrastructure considerations;</li> </ul>



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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider and advise the Ministers on steps necessary to ensure that the ACT's health system has access to a sustainable, well trained and valued clinical workforce</li><li>• Consider and advise the Ministers on developments in other health systems that may provide lessons for the ACT health system.</li></ul> |
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