



Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023 **ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE**

Asked by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA on 17 November 2023 Peter Muir, ACT Official Visitors took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: Hansard [uncorrected] proof transcript 17 November 2023 [PAGE 10]

In relation to:

DR PATERSON: I have had concerns raised with me about Justice Health and about healthcare provision within AMC. I was just wondering has any issues come up through official visits that would be worth raising here in this forum?

Mr Dzwonnik: Our colleague should be joining us.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, we did have someone—Vickie Quinn.

Mr Muir: She is the Corrections official visitor who can answer that question for you.

MR BRADDOCK: Would you like me to ask a question whilst we wait for her.

THE CHAIR: I guess you could take it on notice. If Ms Quinn appears, she can answer that.

Mr Muir: We will get the details. Part of my activities in coming as the chair is certainly to meet with all the relevant stakeholders. I have met with the Director-General of the Health Directorate this week and working my way through to Justice Health to talk with them, and the purposes of that is to understand systemic issues which is part of the board's remit, is to identify systemic issues and certainly that is on my agenda, but the specifics I think we would have to take on notice and get back to you.

ACT Official Visitors: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

There have been many and varied issues raised with Official Visitors about health care provision within AMC by Justice Health, including:

- Delays commencing normal medication regime upon detention due to long wait to access records from external providers.
- Lack of assistance to complete health request forms, when many detainees are illiterate or have comprehension issues. This, along with lost forms, results in delays to see a doctor.
- Inconsistent or inappropriate medication dispensary timings – e.g., night medication to assist with sleep being dispensed from 15.30 and required to be taken in front of nursing staff.
- Lack of privacy in discussing health issues as the regular opportunity for discussion with nursing staff is through small dispensary windows with other detainees around.
- Detainees feeling disrespected or dismissed by Health staff, resulting in later hospitalisation.
- Delays on weekends in accessing healthcare particularly for pain related issues. The Doctor on call frequently provides phone consults rather than in person assessments.
- Delays and difficulties accessing specialist services such as psychological treatment, physiotherapy, dentist, optometrist and podiatrist.
- Corrections Officers within the Crisis Support Unit (CSU) feeling dismissed when contacting Health staff about their observations of detainees.
- Lack of culturally appropriate health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) detainees from Justice Health and delays transferring to Winnunga Health Care. ATSI detainees on methadone or buprenorphine must remain with Justice Health for their ongoing health care needs.

These issues have all been raised with Justice Health and many of them also with senior Corrections staff. In addition to individual situations, Official Visitors have raised systemic issues through regular meetings and in contributions to the development of an ACT Detainee Health and Wellbeing Strategy during 2022.

Often issues are resolved on a case by case or temporary basis, but these matters are not resolved on a systemic or permanent basis

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

Signature:



Date: 28 November 2023

By Mr Peter Muir, Chair of the Official Visitors Board, ACT Official Visitors