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THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

Standing Committee on Social Policy - Report No. 02

Inquiry into Petition 017-25 and E-Petition 005-25: Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett

Government Response

Presented by
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health
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Introduction

E-Petition 005-25 and Petition 017-25 on the Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett were presented to the Assembly on 8 April 2025 and 10 April 2025 respectively.

The petitions received more than 500 signatures and were referred under Standing Order 99A to the Standing Committee on Social Policy (the Committee) for consideration. Based on Standing Order 99B, on 22 April 2025, the Committee decided to inquire into the petitions and called for submissions the following day. The Committee received 25 submissions.

On 14 May 2025, it was announced that Burrangiri would remain open for further two years until 30 June 2027. The new Service Funding Agreement was executed on 25 June 2025 for the ongoing operation of Burrangiri by The Salvation Army.

The Committee has made nine recommendations to the ACT Government that seek to highlight the importance of aged care respite within the broader healthcare landscape, improve future decision making and consultation processes in relation to the Burrangiri facility, and ensure that there is sufficient availability of quality aged care respite places for ageing Canberrans and their carers into the future. The Committee's report was approved for publication in October 2025.

The ACT Government acknowledges the value of extensive engagement and public discussion around the importance of aged care respite services in the ACT, including the role the Committee has played in the process. The Government has carefully considered each of the Committee's recommendations and is pleased to present its response, which:

- Agrees to three recommendations (Recommendations 2, 7 and 4);
- Agrees in principle to three recommendations (Recommendations 1, 3 and 6);
- Notes one recommendation (Recommendation 9); and
- Does not agree to two recommendations (Recommendations 5 and 8).

ACT Government Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1
In recognition of the considerable potential cost benefits to the ACT budget of specialist aged care respite, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government work closely with the Federal Government and community stakeholders to develop a sector plan, with the objective that 'sufficient aged care beds be provided to meet current and projected future demand', prior to finalising future funding decisions for the Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre.

Agreed in principle

The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of ensuring sufficient aged care beds to meet the needs of the Territory's growing older population. However, responsibility for planning, funding and regulation of aged care services, including residential aged care beds, rests with the Commonwealth. The Territory will continue to monitor local demand pressures and continue to advocate to the Commonwealth for adequate investment and improved system settings to ensure local capacity is growing to meet community need.

The ACT Government will maintain strong engagement with the sector and the Commonwealth and will raise emerging issues through established intergovernmental forums to support the effective operation of the aged care system in the ACT.

Recommendation 2
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalise future funding decisions for the Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre at least 6 months prior to the end of the new 2-year contract, and ensure any transitional arrangements are supported by clear communication with a focus on continuity of quality respite services, which could be informed by a new sector plan.

Agreed

The ACT Government will work closely with The Salvation Army to ensure clear and timely communication about funding decisions and development of transitional arrangements.

Recommendation 3
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that clients and carers at the Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre are adequately consulted and supported through any proposed changes to the service at least six months prior to the end of the new 2-year contract.

Agreed in principle

The ACT Government will work closely with The Salvation Army to ensure that clients and carers at Burrangiri are adequately informed and supported through any proposed changes to the service. This process will include clear and timely communication about changes and transitional arrangements, provided at least six months prior to the end of the contract.

In addition, the ACT Government will engage with consumers and carers about future aged care respite options and will continue to provide feedback to the Commonwealth about gaps, challenges and opportunities for improving aged care availability in the ACT.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include standard requirements, in any contract in which it provides funding for the delivery of services, including the new 2-year contract to fund the Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre services, that the funding recipient also consult with affected service recipients in a timely manner, and that they actively support any transitional arrangements.

Agreed

The ACT Government already incorporates transition-out requirements in all service delivery contracts to ensure continuity of services and support for affected service recipients.

These provisions require funded organisations to actively participate in planning for any transition. To ensure a smooth and well-planned transition out of service arrangements, it is expected that there would be clear, timely and transparent communication to all service recipients.

The ACT Government will continue to apply these requirements and practices consistently across relevant contracts.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government collect and regularly publish data on the supply of, and demand for, aged care respite services in the ACT. The data should include the total number of hospital bed days for persons who could have been accommodated in a respite care bed had one been available.

Not Agreed

As part of its responsibility for the aged care system, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for the collection and regular publication of data on the supply and demand for aged care services, including respite services. As the ACT Government neither collects nor holds the necessary data, this recommendation cannot be agreed.

The ACT Government acknowledges that a shortage in overnight respite beds is reported as a contributing factor to hospital admissions and extended stays. However, it would not be possible to accurately identify the number of hospital admissions that could have been avoided through use of residential respite, noting that admissions are almost always for genuine medical reasons. In regard to delayed discharge, most “stranded” long-stay older patients are awaiting a permanent residential aged care placement. For those able to return home, the Commonwealth funds the Transitional Therapy and Care Program, which is a 12-week program that may include up to four weeks of residential rehabilitation in the 14-bed Mullangarie Unit.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government take proactive steps to increase aged care respite beds.

Agreed in principle

The Commonwealth Government holds the responsibility for funding and regulating aged care services. However, the ACT Government remains committed to enhancing and strengthening respite care services across the ACT. This includes working closely with the Commonwealth Government, which has committed $10 million in additional infrastructure funding to deliver aged care respite beds in the ACT.

The ACT Government is actively working with the Commonwealth to explore sustainable models of respite service delivery that are responsive to the evolving needs of older people, their carers, and the changing aged care landscape.

<u>Recommendation 7</u>
The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the Federal Government, respite care providers, and residential aged care providers to explore ways to utilise existing facilities to provide dedicated, fit-for-purpose, temporary aged care respite services that respect the dignity and wishes of clients and their families.

Agreed

As indicated under the Government's Response to Recommendation 6, the ACT Government is currently working with the Commonwealth to ensure availability of respite services in the ACT beyond 2027. The ACT Government is also engaging with local providers to explore options for respite care in the ACT.

<u>Recommendation 8</u>
The Committee recommends the ACT Government ensure appropriate levels of dedicated aged care respite services are available in the ACT through additional government-owned services.

Not Agreed

The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of ensuring dedicated aged care respite services in the ACT. Any decision to invest in ACT Government owned or operated aged care services would require careful consideration of the costs and benefits to the Territory, including the opportunity costs of foregone investment in alternative facilities and services.

<u>Recommendation 9</u>
The Committee recommends the ACT Government provide incentives to encourage investment by private aged care providers for the construction of new dedicated aged care respite facilities.

Noted

National aged care reforms are driving new investment in the ACT, which is expected to result in new residential aged care homes becoming available in 2026. All residential aged care homes can provide aged care respite.

The ACT Government is responsible for land use planning and ensuring that suitable sites are identified and appropriately zoned for aged care facilities. This includes identifying locations that may be appropriate for aged care services, respite centres and retirement villages. Under the Territory Plan, residential care accommodation, including aged care, is permitted in several zones, including Community Facility Zones, all residential zones and most commercial zones.

In the *Statement of Planning Priorities 2025–2028* the ACT Government has indicated an intention to review CZ6, with consideration of allowing aged care uses. This change would support planning for aged care facilities near commercial centres and shops, improving accessibility and ensuring residential aged care facilities are located in suitable areas.

Expanding permissible zones for aged care will create more opportunities for providers to deliver facilities in locations that are practical, connected and aligned with community needs.