

2011

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
REPORT NO 6**

REPORT ON ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2009-2010

**Presented by
Ms Katy Gallagher MLA
Chief Minister**

Government Response

Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services Report No 6 – Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2009-2010

Introduction

The Annual Reports of All ACT Government agencies are referred to the Standing Committees of the ACT Legislative Assembly for examination and report.

The Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services reviewed annual reports for:

- ACT Health (now the Health Directorate); and
- Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (now the Community Services Directorate).

The Committee made nine recommendations.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.7 The Committee recommends that ACT Health include information regarding elective surgery waiting lists in its annual report or include a reference to where the information can be found.

Government Response

Agreed.

In the 2010-11 Annual Report, the Health Directorate will provide summary information in relation to the numbers waiting for elective surgery as well as noting where additional information in relation to the number of people on the waiting list can be found (the Health Directorate Website - in the Quarterly Health Services Performance Report).

Recommendation 2

2.26 The Committee recommends that any new infection of Hepatitis C confirmed while a person is detained at the Alexander Maconochie Centre be further investigated to determine where the infection was acquired, if possible.

Government Response

Agreed.

All pathology results are reviewed by a medical officer. If the previous tests have been performed at ACT Pathology, historical results are provided on the same report. If it is evident that the individual was previously hepatitis C negative, and has become antibody and PCR positive in the last two years, the case is classified an "incident" case. This automatically triggers contact tracing by Health Protection Branch. If the person is in custody, Justice Health Services do this in tandem with Health Protection Service.

Recommendation 3

2.36 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health tables in the Assembly the results of the evaluation of the nurse-led walk-in clinic when completed.

Government Response

Noted.

The independent Evaluation of the Nurse-led Walk-in-Centre's initial 12 months of operation has been completed by representatives of the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI). The evaluation report was placed on the Health Directorate's website. The Health Directorate has now engaged in a six week public consultation period. The ACT Government will use the information received to inform the continued development of this service.

Recommendation 4

3.9 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services update the Assembly in the August 2011 sitting period on the work being conducted to address unmet need for people with disability.

Government Response**Agreed.**

The Minister for Community Services will update the Assembly on this matter to coincide with the tabling of the Government Response.

Recommendation 5

3.10 The Committee recommends that in future annual reports the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services include information on studies being conducted in the reporting period. The information should include the title, terms of reference and expected completion date.

Government Response**Agreed.****Recommendation 6**

3.50 The Committee recommends that the Chief Minister's Annual Report Directions be amended to require agencies to report on their progress against the relevant strategic directions set out in the ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Ageing 2010–2014.

Government Response**Agreed.**

C.24 ACT Strategic Plan for Positive Aging 2010-2014 of the Annual Report Directions 2010-11 includes requirements to report on the ACT Government's goal for a coordinated approach across Government and the community to support positive ageing and an age-friendly city where older people are respected, valued and supported to actively participate. Directorates must report against key focus areas, namely, information & communication, health and wellbeing, respect, valuing and safety, housing and accommodation, support services, transport and mobility, work and retirement. A review of the Annual Report Directions would consider how well directorates have complied with these directions.

Recommendation 7

3.57 The Committee recommends that direct actions and outcomes of the refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian committee be reported in future Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services annual reports.

Government Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 8

3.62 The Committee recommends that the Office for Multicultural Affairs take a coordinating role in the provision of cross-cultural training and the use of interpreters for all employees and contractors of ACT Government departments and agencies.

Government Response

Agreed-in-part.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs will work with Directorates on the use of interpreters but expects Directorates to organise/ outsource cross- cultural training for their staff through their respective training areas.

Recommendation 9

3.85 The Committee recommends that diversion strategies to reduce custodial sentences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people be reported in future Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services annual reports.

Government Response

Noted.

The Community Services Directorate recently released a Discussion Paper: *Towards a Diversionary Framework in the ACT*. The discussion paper provides information on current data, legislation, services and processes for young people involved in the ACT criminal justice system. Practices in other jurisdictions are also considered. Possible diversionary approaches are outlined and a number of options for different ways of supporting young people at risk of being remanded in custody are discussed.

Following release of the Discussion Paper a consultation process occurred with both Government and non-government stakeholders.

Consultation methodologies included a range of stakeholder meetings as well as an invitation for written submissions. Feedback was sought on five key areas:

- Service system;
- Models of diversion;
- Data on diversionary activity;
- Embedding diversionary principles and practices; and
- Legislative reform.

The consultation report is currently being considered by the Community Services Directorate.

As part of the Divisionary Framework, Community Youth Justice has received \$2.07m over four years to improve after-hours response capacity, to assist young people at risk of remand and help divert them from custody.

The proposed after-hours response service is broadly modelled on the Victorian Central After Hours Assessment and Bail Placement Service (CAHABPS) and the New South Wales Bail Assistance Line. One of the benefits of these models is that they provide a single point of contact when police are considering refusing bail to a young person outside of business hours. During business hours, existing arrangements would continue to apply and police could contact the Youth Justice Court Officer or Community Youth Justice as required. The Directorate is envisaging the commencement of the After Hours Bail Service by the end of September 2011.