



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QToN No. 3

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Inquiry into Recovery Plan for Nursing and Midwifery Workers
HEARING TRANSCRIPT EXTRACT FOR QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE (QToN)
14 June 2023

Asked by **MS LEANNE CASTLEY MLA** on 14 June 2023: Mr Cullen took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: *Hansard transcript* 14 June 2023, page 47

In relation to:

- *ACT Health Workforce Strategy - Workforce planning data - details regarding requests by ANMF [to ACT Govt] for workforce plan/numbers over last 6 or 7 years - for 2/5/10 year plans (numbers, skill gaps [ward level])*

MS CASTLEY: I have a supplementary, if I can?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Ms Castley.

MS CASTLEY: Just on the workforce plan and just to paraphrase a comment that is written in there. It says, the ACT government holds insufficient and inconsistent data which means there are gaps to be able to provide a clear workforce plan. And so then they have decided to go with the strategy.

I am just wondering, how long the ANMF has been fighting for a workforce plan? How long have you been asking the government to do this? And how long you have been aware that there is insufficient data to formulate a workforce plan strategy?

Mr Daniel: I would say it is patchy, because we have been sort of—probably five to eight years ago, we were just sort of looking ourselves at almost knee-jerk reactions. But we could see that things were on the horizon. And I think about the more consensus. We could see that there was a problem with attraction and retention of nurse practitioners into that space. There were some, sort of, we would call them band aid solutions to try and get nurses into that space through education programs and so on. But there was not a really comprehensive approach to understanding what the need for the workforce is and those walk-in centres and what would need to be done to address those needs.

So, we were raising—sending up the red flag about that probably six-seven years ago, from memory. But in terms of a comprehensive call for—sorry, a call for a comprehensive workforce strategy—do you want to help me?

Mr Cullen: Look, I would like to take that one on notice. It has been some time.

MS CASTLEY: Okay.

Mr Cullen: Perhaps we would have to—we would have to review back over the years to ascertain exactly what we have called for specifically. However, in terms of a comprehensive plan I know Mr Daniel has been on record several times saying, where is the two, five, and 10 year plans for these things. That is what we have consistently sought for a number of years, long term plans, clear long-term plans.

The answer to the Member's question is as follow:

The ANMF ACT Branch (ANMF) has been calling for a clear and comprehensive workforce plan for some time. This is evident through publicly available comment – both in written correspondence and in the media – either directly or through commenting on related matters such as workplace culture and service delivery. The ANMF maintains that it has also called for clear and comprehensive workforce planning at a significant number of forums, from as early as 2018 to as recently as this year. Our internal research indicates that publicly available comments from the ANMF about concerns regarding workforce planning were made as far back as at least September 2016, where the then ANMF ACT Branch Secretary said, of an ACT Government health-related project, that it “would help meet a number of the federation's concerns about gaps in infrastructure and workforce planning”. In 2018, in its submission to the independent review of the workplace culture within the ACT Public Health Services, the ANMF outlined that it had “long advocated for policy planning to have a clear and comprehensive ‘long-term’ focus”, and that “if policy for service delivery is being planned, that this is decidedly weighed against the likely exponential increase of the ACT (and surrounding) population (and its associated acuities and co-morbidities) utilizing a service over the next 5, 10 & 20 years.” In 2019, as a part of its submission to the 2020-21 ACT Budget consultation process, the ANMF reiterated that the ACT Government must “develop a comprehensive and strategic workforce development program that improves the public healthcare system’s capacity, [in particular] to address current and future demand for midwifery services”, and that this work would include “the development of a 3-year workforce development strategy that drives the tertiary sector to educate the right number of highly skilled Nurse/Midwives and Midwives for now and into the future”. More recently, in May 2022, the ANMF made a number of public comments including that “one of the

union's main concerns was around workforce planning, which ...had "fallen off the wagon" over the past two years", and that "a clear plan needed to be developed for each ward across Canberra's public hospitals". At the same time, the ANMF also maintained that "we see some workforce planning that's done based on some principles and some general thinking, but it's not based on evidence".