



## Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

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

Asked by: **Ms Leanne Castley MLA**

Reference: Hearing on 16 November 2023, Annual Report of ACT Health Directorate

In relation to: Digital Solutions Division and AETHER and RHAPSODY

- 1) In relation to AETHER (a) what functions was it expected to perform (b) how much has been spent on it (c) how much was spent on contractors (d) was AETHER stable (e) what issues were experienced with AETHER (f) was AETHER converted to an asset (g) has it been decommissioned (h) how much of AETHER has been written off: if not, will it be written off (i) have funds been requested from Treasury to cover this: if so, how much?
- 2) In relation to AETHER (a) how many days was it in use (b) how many days did it fail to send out referrals and pathology results (c) how many (i) referrals (ii) pathology results did it fail to send out (d) did patients miss care or appointments as a result: if there an estimate of how many patients?
- 3) Has a solution been purchased to replace AETHER: if so, what process was followed in this purchase?
- 4) In relation to RHAPSODY (a) what was the purpose of its acquisition and what functions is it expected to perform (b) did Digital, Data and Technology Solutions (DDTS) already have RHAPSODY (c) did Digital Solutions Division (DSD) purchase a new iteration of RHAPSODY (d) could (i) RHAPSODY (ii) an upgraded RHAPSODY have been purchased through DDTS: if not, why not (e) how much did it cost DSD to acquire RHAPSODY (f) has data been successfully migrated from AETHER TO RHAPSODY (g) have any issues been experienced with RHAPSODY: if so, what issues?

**Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

On advice from the ACT Health Directorate:

- 1)
  - a. AETHER was an open-source technology platform for integrating health systems. It was designed to utilise open API's (Application Programming Interface) and HL7

(Health Level 7) that enable different IT systems to send health information between each other.

- b. Total expenditure for the AETHER project was \$3.767 million (GST exclusive).
- c. Total expenditure of \$2.761 million (GST exclusive) was spent on contractors.
- d. Yes - AETHER was stable for the functions it was designed to deliver and processed on average up to 100,000 transactions per day.
- e. There were issues with the function to replay messages in the event of a connection failure or downstream system problems. This impacted pathology results and referrals; however, the integration team was able to replay and resend messages manually where this happened. Work to remediate this issue occurred between November 2022 and January 2023. Standard processes were implemented from that time to capture any issues with failed messages and these were addressed daily.
- f. Yes.
- g. Yes.
- h. \$0.821 million (excluding GST) was written off in May 2023. AETHER was an asset in use for 436 days with an expected lifespan of 5 years.
- i. No funds have been sought from Treasury.

2)

- a. AETHER was in use for 436 days.
- b. AETHER had failed messages daily between 12 November 2022 and 15 December 2022.
- c.
  - i. 863 of 41,500 referrals failed over the use of AETHER.
  - ii. 6,966 Pathology reports failed to send due to interface errors to 15 December 2022. 5,817 of these reports were successfully resent with 1,119 reports not resent as they did not meet the conditions for sending via the interface (i.e., the tests were performed as inpatients or as an ED visit and as such these results were added to the ED Summary or the Discharge Summary rather than sent to GPs). The remaining 30 reports were sent manually.
- d. ACT Pathology took a risk-based approach and reviewed over 13,000 Pathology results to ensure there were no clinical risks associated with failed Pathology Report messages. ACT Pathology was confident that any critical results had been phoned through to referring clinicians for follow-up as per the standard process to ensure no care for patients was missed. Canberra Health Services Central Health Intake (CHI) reviewed the 863 referrals to ensure no patients missed being scheduled for appointments.

3) No solution has been purchased to replace AETHER – all functionality has been transferred across into Rhapsody.

4)

- a. Rhapsody was acquired to provide integration of systems with the DHR. Rhapsody receives and sends Health Level Seven (HL7) international standard messages used to integrate health information systems.
- b. Yes.
- c. Yes.
- d. (i-ii) No - The contract did not permit the use of the DDTS provided Rhapsody for the DHR.
- e. \$0.182 million (GST exclusive) for implementation and annual subscription of \$0.300 million (GST exclusive).
- f. Yes.
- g. Yes - One incident received on 18 May 2023 which was attributed to a hardware fault and resolved immediately.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:



Date:

21/12/23

By the Minister for Health, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA