



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Children, Youth and Families

Redirected to: Minister for Education and Early Childhood

Reference: HCSD

Hearing: 12 November 2025

In relation to: First 1000 Days Strategy

Question received: 14 November 2025

Answer Due: 27 November 2025

The government has indicated consultation has commenced for Phase 2 of the First 1000 Days Strategy.

1. What evaluation has been carried out for Phase 1 of the Strategy?
2. What funding has been allocated to evaluate phase 1?
3. A planned consultation session with families was apparently cancelled recently because there was insufficient public interest/signups. What did the government do to advertise and meaningfully engage with that cohort prior to the planned event, and will the consultation be rescheduled?
4. What outcomes will be reported about phase 1, and will they be published?
5. What funding was made available to implement the phase 1 action plan, and what funding will be made available for the actions that will come out of phase 2?

Ms Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. No evaluation is planned for the individual phases of the Best Start Strategy, rather it is intended that a full evaluation be undertake upon the strategy's completion. This will provide an opportunity to review and understand the Strategy's overall impact on children and their families during their first 1,000 days.
2. As no evaluation of Phase 1 is proposed, no funding has been allocated.
3. The Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) has engaged with key stakeholders across the government and community sector to inform consultation design and delivery. This includes organisations such as Families ACT and the Perinatal Wellbeing Centre, and representatives from across ACT Government directorates.

HCSD invited the following community organisations who work with children and families to attend a parent and caregiver consultation in November:

- Karinya House
- CFR Ministerial Council
- Baringa Early Learning Centre
- Playgroups ACT
- CC Cares – Canberra College
- Maternity In Focus Advisory Group
- Perinatal Wellbeing Centre
- Maternal, Child and Family Health (MACH) client cohort
- ACT Children and Young People Commissioner
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children & Young People Commissioner

This consultation session was scheduled during business hours at a child friendly venue. HCSD recognises that this time and method of engagement may not have suited all parent and carers.

HCSD remains committed to engaging with parents and caregivers, including priority cohorts (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), people with disability, gender diverse people) and young parents, to hear their experiences and suggestions.

In November and December 2025, HCSD will seek the view of parents and carers via the following avenues:

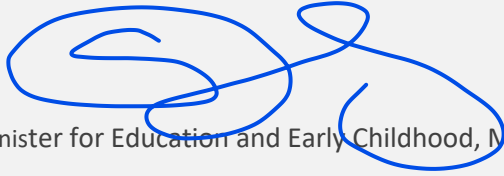
- In person conversations with parents and caregivers, including CC Cares and playgroups.
- Online survey – shared through the Best Start Stakeholder list (160 contacts) and in Child and Family Centres.

4. A progress report is intended to be published following conclusion of the Phase 1 Action Plan.
5. The Best Start strategy provides an overarching framework that brings together and aligns actions, initiatives, and priorities from across multiple ACT Government Directorates, their strategies, plans, and programs. Rather than operating as a standalone initiative with its own budget, Best Start is designed to reflect and support existing government commitments. The development of the Phase 2 Action Plan will build on these achievements to deepen reach, coordination, and sustainability across the ACT. If additional funding is required to deliver this second phase, funding will be sought through future budget processes.

OFFICIAL

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

Date:

28/11/25

By the Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Ms Yvette Berry MLA