



Inquiry into endometriosis and other pelvic pain conditions

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Ms Caitlin Tough MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Health

In relation to: School Youth Health Nurses

Ms Stephen-Smith took on notice the following question(s):

MS TOUGH: I want to start by talking about school nurses and the role they play in education in schools, but also as a point of contact for adolescents navigating when they have pelvic pain, either before they have started their periods or when they have started their periods—a trusted person to go to and help them when they ask, “Where to from here?” I want to know how prevalent nurses are in schools and whether they have an education role. What is their role around pelvic health?

Ms Wakefield: Canberra Health Services has a service called School Youth Health Nurse. The nurses are in public high schools in the ACT, and their role is around health promotion and early intervention. It provides young people the opportunity to access a health professional in a school setting. Those School Youth Health Nurses have a program that they have developed on menstrual health. It is a health promotion package. It includes information about endometriosis and painful periods. They also use the Period ImPact and Pain Assessment tool. They meet with students, one-on-one if necessary, and go through that tool, and they help them to access other health services. It may be primary health care, for example, if the tool comes back with a signal that they might need more help.

MS TOUGH: Do they have a role in referring straight to the Canberra Endometriosis Centre or do they go back to a GP, primary health, and then to the centre?

Ms Wakefield: Access to the Canberra Endometriosis Centre tends to be by referral by a GP.

MS TOUGH: They provide that information to the student on how to get that help?

Ms Wakefield: Yes—how to take the tool with them to their GP appointment to help them talk about some of the ratings that they got on that tool.

MS TOUGH: That is in all public high schools?

Ms Wakefield: We are in the process of broadening the School Youth Health Nurse program across more high schools, and that is part of some funding we got from the government to expand the School Youth Health Nurse program.

MS TOUGH: How many schools have them at the moment?

Ms Wakefield: It is a moving feast, so we do not have a specific number. They are working with principals all the time around where the areas of need are and how many days are needed—upping or downing based on the student profile at that time.

Ms Stephen-Smith: We will take your question on notice. I took a question on notice last week during the sitting around a similar issue, but we will take the question on notice in relation to whether there are any schools that do not have a School Youth Health Nurse at all at the moment and how many days the School Youth Health Nurses are available.

Rachel Stephen-Smith: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:

Twelve ACT Government high schools currently have a School Youth Health Nurse (SYHN) service, with availability ranging from two to three days per week, while ten high schools do not have a SYHN at present.

School	SYHN availability (days per week)
Amaroo School	2 days
Gold Creek High School	3 days
Harrison School	3 days
Canberra High School	3 days
Kingsford Smith	2 days
UC High	2 days
Mt Stromlo	2 days
Telopea	2 days
Calwell	2 days
Caroline Chisholm	3 days
Lanyon School	3 days
Wanniassa High School	2 days

All high schools can access the health promotion activities regardless of whether a nurse is located in the school. Two high schools have declined an offer of SYHN on site for reasons associated with need and space.

In the 2025-26 Budget, ACT Government invested in the expansion of the SYHN Program. This investment is supporting an increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to ensure equitable access to the SYHN Program for all public high school students across the ACT.

The planned phased growth from 2026 to 2029 has been designed to allow sufficient time for comprehensive workforce planning, targeted recruitment, and structured orientation of new staff. This approach will support the delivery of a high-quality, sustainable, and well-integrated service as the program expands.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

11/6/26

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA