

2020

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

TABLING STATEMENT

**ACT PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES CULTURAL REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION
INAUGURAL ANNUAL REVIEW – MAY 2020**

**Presented by
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health
4 June 2020**

Madam Speaker, Members will recall that in tabling the Government Response to the *Final Report of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services* (known as the Culture Review), a commitment was made to provide members of the ACT Legislative Assembly regular updates on progress made.

To date three biannual updates have been provided; in March and September 2019, and March 2020. In my Statement in March, I noted that Mr Mick Reid of Michael Reid and Associates had been commissioned to undertake the first annual, independent review of the implementation and impact of the Culture Review, in line with Recommendation 19. This recommendation was:

'That the 'Culture Review Oversight Group' auspice for the next three years, an annual, independent and external review of the extent of the implementation of the recommendations of the Review and consequent impact on cultural changes within the ACT Public Health Services.'

The scope of the terms of reference of this inaugural review was considered and agreed by the Culture Review Oversight Group. The review was to examine and make findings and recommendations in relation to the following:

- Record any changes or amendments to the recommendations of the Independent Review of a not insubstantial nature and the reasons for making such changes or amendments;
- The extent of the progress made with the culture review implementation process against the original plans outlined in the Final Report;
- The impact on the workforce culture of the changes introduced to date; and
- The effectiveness of the initiation and planning phase of the culture review process undertaken including:
 - What has worked well and why, and has there been any early impact?
 - What has not worked well and why, and has there been any impact?
 - What may therefore need to change or be improved?

- What has been learned so far and how can these insights and experiences be leveraged to improve the process and outcomes/impact of the culture review implementation process?

Mr Reid was, of course, the Chair of the Independent Panel that undertook the Culture Review, and so was well placed to undertake the first annual review of its implementation. The Culture Review Oversight Group agreed that, as the implementation of the Final Report had only been in progress for 12 months at the time of commencing the inaugural review, the review would occur by:

- A desktop review of all documentation produced as part of the culture review implementation process; and
- Interviews with members of both the Oversight Group and the Culture Review Implementation Steering Group and other nominated key stakeholders.

However, it was acknowledged that the second annual external review next year will require a more comprehensive review of the perspectives of cultural change from a broader base of staff, including members from the clinical and administrative areas, and members of the community.

The Inaugural Annual Review addresses four areas. These are:

- Assessment of the governance framework to oversight implementation;
- Assessment of the progress on the recommendations of the Review;
- Review of the evidence of the impact on culture; and
- Recommendations for the next phase of implementation.

In summary, Mr Reid has found that, given the limited timeframe since the commencement of implementation, there has been pleasing progress. This was supported by most people interviewed and by the early quantitative evidence.

It was also noted that substantive culture change takes time, and that we are early in our journey of positive change.

Mr Reid acknowledged the significant impact of both the bushfires through December 2019 and January 2020 and COVID-19, on the ACT public health system and more broadly on society. He noted that these factors had impacted the progression of some of the recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I will not go through all of Mr Reid's findings. However, I will briefly touch on the key overarching messages.

I am pleased to say that there was agreement and acknowledgement by nearly all of those who were interviewed that, given the relative short period of time since the commencement of implementation, progress to date has been generally effective. The governance framework is found to be soundly based and generally well enunciated.

Nevertheless, there is opportunity to further consider the role of the Oversight Group and other governance structures and to improve their operation. The report proposes a review of the Terms of Reference of the Oversight Group and clearer articulation of the relationship between the Oversight Group and the Clinical Leadership Forum, the ACT Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board and the Non-Government Organisation Leadership Group.

I look forward to working with the Oversight Group, the other forums and the three arms of our public health system to consider these findings.

Mr Reid's assessment is that, on balance, there has been considerable progress in progressing the implementation of the recommendations. There were some minority views indicating some delay in progress and inconsistency in implementation of recommendations between the three arms of the ACT public health system. However, the overall view was that positive progress had occurred in the first year.

Mr Reid found that progress is particularly evident within each of the three health services on vision, values, altered workplaces policies and human resource functions. However, some of the inter-agency or whole-of-system recommendations have not progressed at the same pace and they will require increased focus over the next year.

Mr Reid notes that significant culture reform requires sustained effort over several years. He acknowledged that as this Review has been undertaken relatively early in the culture reform journey, it was unlikely that substantial improvement at this time was likely.

However, he reported that there were two areas across the three services that indicated early positive improvement. These are: the focus on reported alleged clusters of poor culture and poor behaviour; and some quantitative evidence of health service improvement, as outlined in the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services' results in their Workplace Culture Surveys (both undertaken in November 2019).

Further, the report finds that virtually all members of the Oversight Group reported some evident improvement in overall culture with:

- less bullying and harassment across the three organisations;
- improved executive leadership of the leadership team;
- improved clinical engagement; and
- better human resource functions.

Overall, Mr Reid has found that one year into implementation of the Final Report's recommendations is too short a timeframe to expect significant improvement in ACT Public Health Services' workplace culture. Notwithstanding this brief timeframe, however, he also found that the sustained focus on 'hot spots' by the three service executives has been commendable and, at CHS at least, some overall small gains in culture metrics across the organisation is evident.

Findings to support the next phase of Culture Review implementation include that:

- The Oversight Group should sustain a continued focus on the implementation of the 20 recommendations of the Review for at least the next year;
- The Steering Group should propose to the Oversight Group which of the recommendations should be implemented portfolio-wide in a common format;

- The role of the Cultural Review Implementation Branch should pivot to be an increased resource for initiatives which are being implemented in CHS, Calvary and the ACT Health Directorate. A primary role, however, should be to continue to service the Steering Group and Oversight Group;
- Implementation of the approved Communications and Engagement Strategy should be expedited; and
- An agreed portfolio-wide dashboard of monitoring measures should be developed and promulgated.

The report proposes that the Oversight Group convene a strategy workshop to consider the issues raised in this Review. This will be discussed, along with the other findings of the review, at the next Culture Review Oversight Group meeting later this month.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Reid for undertaking the Inaugural Annual Review. I would also like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the review, despite the workload associated with responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, I thank everyone across the ACT public health system for their commitment to developing initiatives and approaches to support positive culture change, recognising that this will benefit the entire workforce of the three services, as well as patients and their families and carers.

[ENDS]