



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked By: Ms Leanne Castley MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Health

Reference: Health

Hearing Date: 25/07/2024

In relation to: ACT Health and Wellbeing budget statement

QON lodgement Date: 26/07/2024

Answer Due date: 05/08/2024

At a 27 June budget debrief on health measures conducted and convened by ACT Health with the non-government sector the ACT Health representatives present were asked a question about the ACT Budget 2024-25 Wellbeing Budget Statement about the impact this has on budget allocations and decisions and how it is developed, noting that the Wellbeing Budget Statement includes the following:

A wellbeing approach recognises that a strong economy and well functioning institutions are crucial to the wellbeing of our people and our overall wellbeing as a community. It also considers other aspects of our quality of life, such as our access to healthcare and education, our level of social connection, and our safety within our communities – which the community told the Government mattered most to them (page 2 of the statement)

And further (on page 2):

In the lead-up to the 2024-25 Budget, the Government identified six priority areas where investment will make a particular difference to wellbeing. These are: Housing, Physical and mental health, Women, Early years, Cost of living, and Addressing marginalisation and disadvantage.

On how this process is conducted:

To realise this aspiration, the ACT Government has embedded wellbeing considerations in its policy development, decision-making processes and service delivery. Wellbeing Impact Assessments (WIAs) are now integrated into key decision-making processes, including the Cabinet process (page 4).

And:

Central to embedding wellbeing is working with the community and with stakeholders to ensure that our wellbeing considerations reflect the issues that matter most to Canberrans. (page 4)

As part of the 2024-25 Budget process, the Government met with over 70 local organisations, representing the Canberra community, to understand the issues they are experiencing and how these are affecting their membership and their clients. (page 4)

There's then a specific section (pages 9 – 10) on Physical and Mental Health.

The response to the question from ACT Health officials was to take the question on notice, which it was noted has happened every year this question has been asked since the advent of the Statement.

My questions therefore are:

How can it be that ACT Health officials at a briefing on the budget appear to have no understanding of how this statement has been used to influence the budget, particularly if this isn't the first time this question has been asked? Is it that the incorrect officials were at the briefing; or that ACT Health is not involved in developing that statement – that it sits with Treasury? If the right ACT Health officials weren't there, then who is actually inputting into this process in ACT Health? If it's because it's sitting with Treasury, then how are health related priorities communicated to Treasury, and is it appropriate that Treasury should be determining what are health priorities?

Does ACT Health use Wellbeing Impact Assessments – as noted in the Budget Statement that these are integrated into key decision-making processes? If so, can you provide details of how this is being conducted, and by what section of ACT Health? If not, then why not and does that mean the Budget Statement is not correct in saying it is embedded in decision-making processes?

The Statement says it reflects the issues that matter most to Canberrans, and that the Government met with over 70 local organisations to understand these issues. Can you provide information on who these organisations were; who met with them; and any record of the issues raised? Noting this is likely to be across portfolios but would assume ACT Health was involved and across the discussion as health is a major part of the Statement

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

I am advised the questions raised with the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) at the non-government sector briefing on 27 June 2024 related to how the 2024-25 Budget's investment in health was guided by the ACT Government's Wellbeing Framework and how the investments will meet the outcomes outlined in the Wellbeing Framework.

The Government requires all agencies to develop Wellbeing Impact Assessments (WIAs) as part of Budget Business Cases. WIAs are prepared by the same line area that develops and prepares the respective Business Case. WIAs assist the ERC and Cabinet by providing detailed information on the wellbeing impacts of a proposal to support Government's decision-making, including providing assurance that necessary cross-agency collaboration has taken place in developing proposals. ACTHD officials understand and complete the WIA as part of all Business Case Submissions to ACT Government.

Cross-agency groups review WIAs for Budget proposals, providing decision-makers with advice on the strength and depth of wellbeing considerations. This advice helps to inform decisions on priorities and investment taken by the Government as part of Budget processes.

The Wellbeing Budget Statement in the 2024-25 Budget was developed by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate with input received from directorates, including ACTHD, taking information from WIAs into account.

As part of the Budget consultation process, the Government seeks input and feedback from the community about where investment should be targeted. Community members, businesses and local organisations were invited to share their ideas for the 2024-25 Budget by completing an online survey or providing a written submission via the [YourSay website](#).

Over 70 local community and business groups also met with ACT Government officials in early 2024 to discuss their priorities. This included groups representing the ACT community sector, arts sector, business sector, environmental organisations, local community councils and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Some of the key issues raised were around rising cost of living pressures, housing affordability, physical and mental health, public amenities and infrastructure, climate action and environmental protection, job creation and supporting the local economy, and supporting marginalised and disadvantaged members of the community. More details on what Government heard through the community consultation process will be made available through the *2024-25 Budget Consultation: What we heard report*, which will be published on the [YourSay website](#).

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature:



Date:

6/8/24

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA