

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Report on recent reports concerning the mental health system

OCTOBER 2003

Report 6

Committee membership

Ms Kerrie Tucker MLA, Chair

Ms Karin MacDonald MLA, Deputy Chair

Mrs Jacqui Burke MLA

Secretary: Ms Siobhán Leyne

Administration: Mrs Judy Moutia

Resolution of appointment

To examine matters related to hospitals, community, public and mental health, health promotion and disease prevention, disability services, drug and substance abuse and targeted health programs.

Terms of reference

To inquire into and report on the proposed quarterly reporting on the implementation of the recommendations of the reports into the ACT mental health service.

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Summary of recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

2.4. The Committee recommends that the Government brief the Standing Committee on Health on a quarterly basis on its implementation of the recommendations of the following reports –

- **Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner report entitled: *Investigation into risk of harm to clients of mental health services* (November 2002); and**
- ***Review of the design and operation of the psychiatry services unit (PSU), Canberra Hospital, December 2002 – January 2003.***

1. Introduction

1.1. On 4 October 2002, the Standing Committee on Health, with the agreement of the then Minister for Health, toured the services offered by Mental Health ACT, meeting with Managers and staff.

1.2. The Committee was impressed by the dedication of the staff of Mental Health ACT, particularly given the difficult working environment in which most staff manage every day.

1.3. The Committee was particularly concerned about the design of The Canberra Hospital's Psychiatric Services Unit. Several members of the Committee had previously toured the unit and expressed the concern that the renovations of the previous years had not yielded much improvement to the physical environment. Staff working on the day also expressed similar concerns.

1.4. On 12 December 2002, the then Minister for Health tabled the Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner report entitled: *Investigation into risk of harm to clients of mental health services (November 2002)* (the Patterson report).

1.5. Acting on a recommendation of this report the Government commissioned a review and released the report on the *Review of the design and operation of the psychiatry services unit (PSU), Canberra Hospital, December 2002 – January 2003* (the Mann/Laroche report) on 22 May 2003.

Conduct of inquiry

1.6. The Standing Committee on Health is responsible to examine matters related to mental health under its resolution of appointment. The Committee takes this responsibility seriously and has previously discussed its concerns about the state of mental health services in the ACT of the life of this Assembly.

1.7. However the Committee has been loathe to conduct a full inquiry into this issue, because it was aware that the Government was undertaking a significant amount of work on this matter and feels that at this stage, it would not be useful for the Committee to undertake a full inquiry.

2. Quarterly reporting

2.1. When tabling the Patterson report, the then Minister for Health, made a commitment to providing the Assembly with a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations in December 2003¹.

2.2. The Committee commends this commitment, and feels that it is appropriate that this occur as it is aware that all Members along with large sectors of the community have a keen interest in the implementation of this report. However, the Committee feels that given its responsibility to examine matters relating to mental health, it would be appropriate for the Government to brief the Health Committee on the implementation of the Patterson report on a quarterly basis.

2.3. Additionally, the Government's response to the recommendations of the Mann/Laroche report have significant impact on its ability to implement the Patterson report and the Committee feels that the Government must include its response to both reports conjointly.

Recommendation 1

2.4. **The Committee recommends that the Government brief the Standing Committee on Health on a quarterly basis on its implementation of the recommendations of the following reports –**

- **Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner report entitled: *Investigation into risk of harm to clients of mental health services* (November 2002); and**
- ***Review of the design and operation of the psychiatry services unit (PSU), Canberra Hospital, December 2002 – January 2003.***

Kerrie Tucker MLA
Chair
16 October 2003

¹ Tabling Statement, Jon Stanhope MLA, Minister for Health. *Investigation into Risk of Harm to Clients of Mental Health Services*. December 2002