



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2022-2023

Mr James Milligan MLA (Chair), Mr Andrew Braddock MLA (Deputy Chair),
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

MS LEANNE CASTLEY MLA: To ask the Minister for Health

Ref: Health, ACT Health

In relation to: Radiation Therapy Waiting Times

FOI documents reveal that waiting times for radiotherapy services are not meeting national benchmarks.

- 1) What is the compliance rates against the Maximum acceptable Wait Time Targets (MWAT) for (A) Radical (B) Palliative (C) Emergency between February and July 2022?
- 2) How many Linac machines are operational as of the 23/8/2022?
- 3) How many patients use the Linac machines broken down by (A) Radical (B) Palliative (C) Emergency?
- 4) How many new patients have been added to the radiotherapy services wait list since the 1st of January 2022?
- 5) Page 43, 44 talk about a number of strategies that have been initiated to improve patient access, for each strategy can you provide details on what consultation the Radiation Oncology team went through?
- 6) Has the Radiation Oncology team limited palliative patients to single doses? If so how many patients have been limited to single doses?
- 7) Do palliative patients use radiation therapy as a means for reducing pain?
 - a. What other reasons do palliative patients use radiation therapy?
- 8) Has the Radiation Oncology team hired any additional Linac machines to cope with the wait times? If so,
 - a. How many Linac machines have been hired?
 - b. What is the cost to the territory government?
- 9) Has the Radiation Oncology team referred any patients to private Radiation Oncology providers? If so,

- a. How many patients have been referred?
- b. What is the cost to the government broken down by (A) Radical (B) Palliative (C) Emergency?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

- 1) From 1 February to 31 July 2022, compliance rates with MAWT were:
 - a. Radical – 82%
 - b. Palliative – 84%
 - c. Emergency – 100%
- 2) As of 23 August 2022, three linacs were operational at Canberra Region Cancer Centre.
- 3) From 1 February to 31 July 2022 the breakdown of patients according to triage category were:
 - a. Radical – 419
 - b. Palliative – 188
 - c. Emergency – 30
- 4) 895 new patients have been added to radiation therapy services since 1 January 2022.
- 5) All strategies were discussed with the Executive of Cancer and Ambulatory Support. In addition, all affected staffing groups were consulted with regard to the extended operational hours, in addition to consultation with relevant unions prior to implementation of any measures. The external, private radiation therapy provider, ICON was also consulted.
- 6) No. This is a clinical decision made on a case-by-case basis by the treating Radiation Oncologist. From 1 February to 31 July 2022, 117 palliative patients have been provided a single dose of radiation therapy as was deemed appropriate for their symptoms. For the majority of patients, one treatment is sufficient.
- 7) Yes. The primary reason is pain and symptom management.
- 8) No. Linacs are extremely complex pieces of medical equipment that are not available for hire. They require a multi-million-dollar bunker in which to be housed and take many months to install and commission for safe use.
- 9) Yes

- a. 11 patients have been referred to ICON Cancer Centre for radiation therapy after being seen by a Radiation Oncologist at Canberra Region Cancer Centre. Of these, five were referred for stereotactic radiosurgery and six for radical or palliative treatment.
- b. To date, there has been no cost to government. Canberra Health Services has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICON Cancer Centre to provide radiation therapy services on an as needed basis. This MOU ensures patient treatments can occur in the event of linac breakdown or periods of unmanageable high demand. Radiation Therapy for emergency indications would not be transferred to ICON Cancer Centre as this service does not offer after-hours emergency radiation therapy.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023

Signature:



Date:

4/9/22

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA