

2022

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

**REPORT NO.6 OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY
WELLBEING
INQUIRY INTO ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2020-21 - GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE**

**Presented by
Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister**

Introduction

On 16 September 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed an amendment to the 2 December 2020 Resolution of Establishment (clause 3(A)), referring the Annual and Financial Reports 2020-21 to the seven Standing Committees (the Committees) for inquiry and report by 31 May 2022.

The 2020-21 Annual and Financial Reports were reviewed by the relevant Standing Committees, and each Committee held hearings and reported separately.

The below Government Response addresses the recommendations which relate to the 2020-21 Annual and Financial Reports.

The following Annual and Financial Reports or sections of annual reports, were referred to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing (the Committee):

- ACT Health Directorate;
- Canberra Health Services;
- Community Services Directorate; and
- Major Projects Canberra.

Response to Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government report to the Assembly on the outcomes of MindMap, including how many referrals it has generated and whether it has led to an uptake in the use of mental health services.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The ACT Government agrees to report the outcomes of MindMap to the Assembly including relevant data of usage and uptake of the MindMap portal. It should be noted that where possible this can include referrals into other services, however this data is limited as it is up to the young person or the family to engage with the right service for their needs. We do not capture this data unless a warm referral from the MindMap team has been required.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in the hiring of more staff across the alcohol and other drug treatment sector, including peer support workers.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The ACT Government makes ongoing and significant investment in the alcohol and other drug sector to ensure adequate supports and contemporary approaches to harm reduction and client care. Since the 2019-20 Budget, the ACT Government has invested more than \$32 million in new funding to expand existing services, upgrade facilities and establish new services. This includes over \$13 million in the 2022-23 Budget to deliver a range of harm minimisation measures including:

- The next steps to redevelop the Watson health precinct, including the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential rehabilitation service;
- A residential service at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm;
- Establishing a support service for families and carers of individuals with alcohol and other drug issues;
- Expanding targeted treatments for methamphetamine dependence; and
- Improvements to Canberra Script.

The ACT Government is currently developing the second Drug Strategy Action Plan under the National Drug Strategy 2017-2026. Through development of the next Plan the Government will consider workforce requirements, including peer workers, across the alcohol and other drug sector.

In the commissioning process for the alcohol and other drug treatment sector, staffing and service levels will also be a key consideration.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalise and publish the territory wide health services plan as soon as possible.

Government Response – Agreed

The ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030 was released on 8 August 2022. The Plan outlines the key changes across four reform areas the ACT Government has identified through extensive consultation to deliver.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to provide regular and timely updates on elective surgery targets and waitlists.

Government Response – Agreed

The ACT Government agrees to continuing to provide regular and timely updates on elective surgery targets and waitlists through regular Territory wide reporting mechanisms. Data is currently included in quarterly performance reporting as well as Annual Reports and Budget Papers.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to promote COVID-19 vaccination uptake.

Government Response – Agreed

The ACT Government continues to provide clear messaging for the community to encourage booster vaccine uptake, focusing on promotion and education. Recent communications have also focused on the benefits of receiving both COVID-19 and influenza vaccines for protection against both respiratory illnesses. The Government is also working with the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to ensure alignment of vaccination communication campaigns.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase efforts across Canberra Health Services to address workplace culture, especially regarding bullying and harassment.

Government Response – Agreed

There has been considerable investment on shaping and developing positive culture in CHS over the last three years. This focus will continue, with ongoing work and reporting embedded in business as usual.

CHS will continue to address unacceptable behaviours through the continued implementation of the Speaking Up for Safety Program, the Respect At Work training program and the

implementation of the Promoting Professional Accountability Program. In addition, the Workplace Resolution and Support Services and the Respect, Equity and Diversity Contact Officer Network will continue to provide CHS staff with support and information on CHS policies and procedures to address unacceptable behaviours.

A range of initiatives are being implemented within each organisation in the ACT public health system to address workplace change priorities. Each organisation is addressing the priority areas through applying targeted initiatives. It is expected that targeted initiatives will continue to be monitored and evaluated by each organisation to understand the impact of relevant initiatives on incidences of bullying and harassment reported in the workplace.

The 2021 Workplace Culture Survey showed an overall improvement in workplace culture, and there was a significant decrease in survey respondents who indicated they had experienced unacceptable behaviours over the past 12 months.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continues to support the establishment of a veterans' wellbeing centre in the ACT.

Government Response – Agreed in-principle

The ACT Government supports the establishment of a Veterans' Wellbeing Centre and have advocated to the Federal Government in line with this.

The ACT has the highest proportion of DVA clients per capita in Australia, with estimates suggesting DVA clients make up approximately 50% of the ACT's veteran population.

For 2022-23, DVA's budget allocates additional funding for the provision of further Veterans' Wellbeing Centres across Australia. The 2022 Federal election campaign included a Labor commitment to establish a Veterans' Wellbeing Centre in Queanbeyan.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in additional Common Ground projects.

Government Response – Noted

The ACT Government acknowledges the considerable need for more accommodation provision for people experiencing homelessness.

The ACT Government is open to options for Housing First models and takes the view Housing First principles should be applied across the spectrum of homelessness service provision, where appropriate.

Common Ground has been operating now for 6 years and the model has been very successful in fulfilling its objectives for achieving outcomes.

However Common Ground is not the only model for the delivery of Housing First concept. It can be an expensive model to implement and deliver on an ongoing basis.

The ACT Government continues to explore a range of options for providing homelessness solutions. CatholicCare's Axial Housing program has also achieved significant success in reducing homelessness by housing people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional culturally appropriate public housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Government Response – Noted

The ACT Government has delivered 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons' housing projects.

The commitment to provide more public housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older persons was made in the ACT Housing Strategy (the Strategy) and was completed consistent with phase 1 of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 (the Agreement). The ACT Government's focus will now shift to completing other commitments made in the Strategy, including progress toward the development of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) which supports culturally appropriate public and community housing accommodation options and support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

In progressing the relevant actions under the Strategy and in relation to the Agreement, Housing ACT will continue to work with relevant stakeholders in the ACT Government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the community to determine the future priorities for meeting needs including considering any further projects delivering public housing for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expand the Health Justice partnership.

Government Response – Noted

The HJP received funding for an expansion in the 2021-22 Budget - allowing for the partnerships to move into the Calvary Emergency Department. The three existing HJPs are being reviewed by an external independent provider. This work will be complete at the end of 2022. We support the further expansion of the services in principle but recommend this be informed by insights arising from the review. An initial internal review and the experience of establishing the existing HJPs has shown the work to build a partnership between legal and community/health partners is critical to the success of the service. The time needed to build these relationships is a consideration for an expanded roll-out.