



# 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 TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by: Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Addressed to: Ms Angela Cartwright, Asthma Australia

Reference: Uncorrected Hansard Transcript page 43

Hearing Date: 22 July 2024

QTON lodgement date: 22 July 2024

Answer Due Date: 25 July 2024

**THE CHAIR:** I understand that, but why more in the ACT than anywhere else?

**Ms Cartwright:** It would mean due to the types of plants that are in and around the ACT. So for example, if you look at thunderstorm asthma, that is believed to be driven by certain types of pollen, which can travel hundreds of kilometres. So you do need—it is a combination of really kind of, I guess, the weather patterns that can bring in the pollen from far away. That is the ryegrass pollen, for example. But there are also lots of flowering plants in the ACT.

Lots of places have different types of pollens. There is lots of native pollen, for example, that can be irritating to people. So I would need to take on notice for you if you are interested to find out more about the specific pollens, but it would definitely be, I would say, a combination of what is both within the territory and what has the potential to enter because the ACT does have thunderstorm asthma. But it is known as the hay fever capital of the country for a reason. People with allergic rhinitis can be treated by other things, for example, like particulate matter from wood heaters or bushfires. All of these things are increasing, including pollens. So pollen patterns are changing as a result of climate change as well. So longer seasons, higher concentrations, different types of pollens, for example

Asthma Australia: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The statistic that the ACT has the highest rate of allergic rhinitis ('hay fever') nationally, with 29% of the population reporting symptoms of allergic rhinitis in 2017–18, comes from an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report which is cited in Asthma Australia's Pre-Budget submission (AIHW, 2020. [Allergic rhinitis \('hay fever'\)](#)).

This report references another AIHW report (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011. [Allergic rhinitis \('hay fever'\) in Australia](#). Cat. no. ACM 23), which details the the types of allergens that can cause trigger allergic reactions, and states “Allergens originate from a wide range of insects, plants, fungi, mammals and occupational sources”. On page 7, the report lists pollens to which people experiencing hay fever are commonly allergic. From page 9, the details the contribution of air pollutants to allergic rhinitis. The report notes the ACT has the highest rates of allergic rhinitis and states “Reasons for these differences between states are not clear, but they may reflect regional differences in allergen exposure” (page 14), as Ms Cartwright noted.

A report by the ABC from 2021 ([Canberrans with hay fever struggle through ACT's worst pollen season on record - ABC News](#)) quotes Dr Simon Haberle, Australian National University (ANU) with regards to the ACT's high levels of hay fever noting that factors include the ACT being landlocked, and being surrounded by grasslands, with rye-grass, or forest that are allergenic.

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

Signature: Angela Cartwright      Date: 26/07/2024

By the Policy Manager, Asthma Australia