



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Mental Health

In relation to: Child admissions to the Adult Mental Health Unit

Hearing: 11 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 9-10

Transcript provided: 14 February 2025

Answer Due: 21 February 2025 5:00 pm

Minister Stephen-Smith took on notice the following question:

The Chair: On that line of inquiry, is there any plan to discontinue that practice or to provide some kind of other solution? I understand that you are protecting people who are around these individuals, but obviously, issues were raised about the safety of the individual being accommodated with adults. Is there any plan for changing that practice?

Mr Aloisi: Look, currently, I would say that there is no current plan to change that practice. Obviously, we do try and minimise it, as we pointed out. And often that is around looking at what other supports we can put in place in the Child and Adolescent Unit as well, if we can maintain that. So we do try and do that, but at the moment, sometimes, unfortunately, there is a necessity because the risk is too great.

The Chair: It could be helpful with that question on notice if we got a bit of a comparison over recent years, so perhaps we could expand the scope to ask over the last five years, in each year how many incidents have occurred of transferring children to the Adult Mental Health Unit.

Mr Peffer: The Child and Adolescent Unit was not operational—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Well, I think in order to do that, because the Child and Adolescent Unit is quite new, the number of admissions of young people under 18 to the Adult Mental Health Unit over the last five years?

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

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

Over the last five years there were 98 young people (under 18 at the time of admission) with 183 admissions to the Adult Mental Health Unit (AMHU), meaning some young people were admitted more than once. The table below breaks it down into the last five years.

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
23	39	37	48	36	183

Adolescents who require high dependency care cannot be admitted to the Child and Adolescent Unit (CAU). They will be admitted to another Canberra Health Service (CHS) Mental Health unit and can be transferred to CAU when suitable for a lower dependency environment.

Some older adolescents may be assessed as more appropriate for admission to the AMHU based on their level of independence and psychosocial development.

At times due to the prevailing CAU ward patient mix, the overall ward acuity and risk level, and bed availability it may not be possible for an adolescent who requires admission to be admitted to the CAU. Arrangements will be made for admission to another appropriate unit. The wishes of the adolescent and their parents and carers will be considered in any decision relating to admission.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

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By the Minister for Mental Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith