



# Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

## Answer to question taken on notice

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Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

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

In relation to: Primary Health Care Providers

Hearing: 20 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 42-43

Transcript provided: 27 February 2025

Answer Due: 6 March 2025 5:00PM

Minister Stephen-Smith took on notice the following question:

MS CLAY: So the only thing we have learned from this is that presentations at ER and walk in centres are increasing and costing a lot and less people have access to a GP. This is probably the only conclusion we can draw.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I mean, I think Ms Clay, we are in furious agreement that access to GPs in the community and access to bulk billing is a problem, and it is creating pressure on our tertiary system. I am not sure that you could take this indicator as proof positive for that proposition because the fact that people cannot name a GP does not mean they do not have a practice, does not mean that they—they may have simply made a choice not to record who their GP is, or you know, there might be reasons why people do not do that, and more and more people are probably attending practices or going to multiple different GPs to try to find somewhere where they can get a bulk billed appointment and are not necessarily accessing that continuity of care in primary care that we all would hope that they would be accessing.

So I understand the point you are making. We all can agree that access to general practice and bulk billing is really problematic in our community. This may be an indicator that that is the case but I think taking it as a definitive would be a stretch.

MS CLAY: Perhaps on notice you might take what Canberra Health Service did or what you did when you saw those two figures. What action did you take to find out what was going on. I am happy for that to be on notice because we have had a long—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Well, I certainly did not take any action when I saw those two—that figure. As Mr Pepper says, that is a self-reported thing that is collected on presentation, and I am already aware that people do not have sufficient access to general practice in our community and we are taking action constantly to seek to address that issue.

So this is not an indicator that I would use to then, you know, result in further action on top of what we are already doing to address a known issue.

THE CHAIR: If you could take on notice the 2022-23 figure that is not in the annual report. I think we had 21-22 and we want 23-24.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I suspect that that is probably something that was unable to be reported as a result of the implementation of the digital health record in November 2022 so there would have been a break in the capacity to collect that data.

THE CHAIR: Would you mind confirming that on notice and you can just come back to it—that is fine.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, that is fine, we will take that on notice.

**MINISTER FOR HEALTH:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The 2022-23 proportion of patients who presented to Canberra Health Services Emergency Department or a Walk-in Centre who have a recorded registered primary health care provider was 91%.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

21/3/25

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith