



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Select Committee on Social Policy

Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into Petition 017-25 and E-Petition 005-25: Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett

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Submitter: ACT Government

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ACT Government Submission into Standing Committee on Social Policy Inquiry
Inquiry into Petition 017-25 and E-Petition 005-25: Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett.

The ACT Government welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry into Petition 017-25 and E-Petition 005-25 regarding the planned closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Facility in Rivett.

The ACT Government recognises the concerns raised by the community in these petitions and representations made to Members of the Legislative Assembly regarding the future availability of respite and other community-based services and can assure the Committee that the initial decision to close Burrangiri was not taken lightly.

As stated to the Assembly on 14 May 2025 by the Minister for Health, following the receipt of advice from the Government Solicitor's Office, the ACT Health Directorate is preparing the necessary paperwork for the Delegate to consider a single select tender for The Salvation Army to continue the delivery of the Burrangiri respite service for a further two years.

As has been canvassed previously in debates and other forums, the decision to close the Burrangiri facility carefully considered advice that the 35-year old facility would need significant refurbishment to extend its useful life and bring it up to modern standards. There is a direct connection between the condition of the building and service delivery. The facility currently lacks the capability to support the increasing number of clients with complex needs.

In June 2024, the Directorate advised that continued use of Burrangiri as a respite care facility into the longer term would require a significant scope of work. To undertake these works, the facility would need to be vacated. This remains the case.

This came together with the scheduled expiry of The Salvation Army's contract on 30 June 2025 and advice from the ACT Health Directorate in December 2024 recommending against further extensions of the Service Funding Agreement.

The Committee would be aware that a significant amount of information is available regarding Burrangiri and the decision-making process through a response to a 213A motion supported by the Government in the Assembly and a freedom of information response that is available here: https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2847062/ACTHDFOI24-25.10-ACTHD-Response_DL.pdf.

The future viability of the current Burrangiri model as a standalone 15-bed respite facility remains questionable, particularly given the changing landscape of aged care reform and funding in Australia and the ACT.

Aged care respite is a Commonwealth responsibility and national aged care reforms are seeing significant new investment in the ACT which will result in more residential aged care beds opening by the end of 2025.

The Commonwealth Government has also made a \$10 million commitment to deliver purpose-built respite care in the ACT in either an existing or new facility. This significant commitment has influenced changes what options are available on the future of respite services in the ACT, including Burrangiri.

The ACT Minister for Health has written to the re-appointed Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing to prioritise the progress and scope of this work and determine the best use of the funding to increase capacity for aged care respite. This includes seeking a Commonwealth contribution to the cost of delivering the extension of Burrangiri services, as well as encouraging the Commonwealth Government to expedite delivery of its broader commitment.

The ACT Government will continue to call on the Commonwealth to work with the aged care sector to facilitate additional capacity for respite in existing and new residential aged care in the short, medium and long term. This is consistent with the ongoing advocacy from all state and territory health ministers for the Commonwealth to address the challenges in aged care that are placing pressure on our public hospital systems.

The two-year extension of Burrangiri would allow the ACT Government to work with the Commonwealth Government on more sustainable solutions for respite in the ACT and best use of the funding available.

The ACT Government will also continue to consider options for investment in care for older people and work with the Commonwealth Government in relation to national aged care reforms and future needs of older Canberrans and carers.

In addition, the ACT Government is working with Carers ACT to explore options to identify land for a purpose-built respite centre. The Government has been assured by Carers ACT that this would not require ACT Government capital or operational funding as it would be developed and run under Commonwealth funding arrangements.

The ACT Government is committed to improving health and community-based services for older people in the ACT and their families and carers. For example, the ACT Government is supporting several innovative and evidence-based programs to help people remain living independently at home. These include the *Sustainable Personalised Interventions for Cognition, Care and Engagement program* which is an active therapeutic and rehabilitation program for people living with dementia and their carers run by Canberra Health Services in partnership with the University of Canberra.

The ACT Government is also pleased to support a new development for the Territory's first dementia village in Curtin. A competitive tender process is underway to design and build a facility that will offer best practice, village-style care, potentially including community or commercial facilities, for people with dementia, their families and visitors.

The ACT Government acknowledges the work of The Salvation Army and the Burrangiri staff and thanks them for their work to deliver quality respite care. We are grateful for The Salvation Army's assistance in reaching a positive outcome for the community.

In closing, we also thank the carers and consumers who have advocated for themselves and their loved ones through these petitions and in other ways.