



Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by Leanne Castley MLA: Redirected to ask the Minister for Mental Health, 08 March 2022

[Ref: Mental Health services in Schools, ACT Health 2020-21, Mental Health services in non-government schools]

In relation to:

Topic: Government funded mental health services for students in non-government schools

Table 13 (p94-95) refers to the government's response to the Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2017-18 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-18.

Recommendation 112 (p95) says the Committee "recommends that the ACT Government undertake a review of the accessibility of ACT Government funded mental health services for students in non-government schools."

The 'Government response' stated that the government 'Agreed' to Recommendation 112 and that "ACT Health will provide advice to the Assembly in relation to mental health services for students in non-government schools."

However, under the section "Update", it states: "The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (OMHW) will commence this work in 2021-22."

Questions

1. Did the government undertake a review of its funded mental health services for students in non-government schools? If not, why not?
2. Given the report was tabled on August 15, 2017, why has nothing happened since then?
3. What, if any, ACT government funded mental health services are there for students in non-government schools?

Minister Davidson: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

Yes. In 2019 the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (OMHW) undertook a review of Children and Young People in the ACT (the Review) to understand the challenges facing our young community members in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. A key component of this Review included a landscape analysis of all services and programs available from 0-25 years of age, both within a school setting and out in the community.

Co-design was undertaken across 2018-19 to inform the Work Plan for the newly established OMHW. This considered community concerns and questions including accessibility of government funded mental health services across the board. Following this, in depth mapping, analysis and consultation was undertaken to inform the Review. Which specifically addressed mapping of mental health services for children and young people in the ACT.

The Review highlighted that there are dedicated services that offer promotion and prevention programs/activities/services in the ACT, including all schools. These are delivered as face-to-face targeted and universal education programs and via online resources for additional support. It was noted that there was a lack of programs available for primary age students and limited targeted programs for 8-12 year-olds.

In addition, the Review outlined that there are programs and services offered in schools that provide support for young people with mild to moderate mental health concerns including counselling and psychology, and a range of programs to help this cohort of young people within a school setting and out in the community. As outlined in the final report of this Review, all mental health education programs delivered in the ACT rely on individual school selection.

Following the feedback from the community through this Review, the OMHW made a commitment to enhance evidence-informed mental health and wellbeing education programs in schools. Information on some of these programs was provided in my response to Question Taken on Notice 106.

In addition, the OMHW also launched the 24/7 online youth navigation portal MindMap in October 2021. This resource supports people to navigate what resources are available to meet their needs and is accessible via <https://www.mindmap.act.gov.au>.

In my response to Question Taken on Notice 106, I also advised that the OMHW agreed to undertake a review of the mental health and wellbeing programs offered to primary school aged children, 8-12 years. This review was to include government, non-government and independent schools and was scheduled to take place in 2020, however due to the global pandemic this was put on hold. The OMHW are currently working with the Australian National University to undertake this commitment.

Information has been publicly released on mental health services for young people, including students in non-government schools as part of the Review. However, as the OMHW is continuing to progress work in this area, the status of Recommendation 112 is considered to remain 'In Progress'.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature: 

Date: 16/03/2022

By the Minister for Mental Health, Emma Davidson