



## Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–24

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Mr Chris Steel MLA

Redirected to: Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Reference: Minister for Health – ACT Health Directorate

Hearing: 19 February 2025

In relation to: Community Transport

Question received: 25 February 2025

Answer Due: 4 March 2025

I have had constituents raise concerns that their access to Community Transport has been cut off. This includes terminally ill people who have had access to Community Transport that they used to attend hospital appointments ceased with little notice.

1. Can you advise whether the eligibility rules for Community Transport have changed in the last 12 months?
2. What was the reason for restricting access to Community Transport?
3. Can discretion be applied by decision-makers in deciding who to authorise for access to Community Transport?
4. If no discretion exists, how do you avoid unintended consequences?
5. What are the appeal mechanisms for people who are denied access to Community Transport?
6. How many requests for Community Transport were made and how many were denied in 2024?
7. What are the main reasons for denial of access to Community Transport?

Minister for Health: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The eligibility rules for ACT Government funded community transport programs have not changed in the last 12 months.
2. The Community Assistance and Temporary Supports (CATS) Program, managed by the ACT Health Directorate, assists ACT residents requiring temporary (up to six months), low intensity supports (up to five hours a week) to remain safely in their homes while they recover from a short-term illness, injury, or temporary deterioration of an ongoing condition. This can include transport services.

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While there have been no changes to eligibility to the CATS Program in the last 12 months, in 2024 it became apparent a cohort of people using CATS funded transport services were not eligible for the program. This is because CATS is designed to provide temporary support and these consumers require longer-term transport support to attend medical appointments. People were advised of this by community providers in early 2025, and since this time work has been underway to identify and connect them with alternative transport options.

3. The ability to exercise discretion with transport programs is specific to each program and will depend on individual program guidelines and eligibility criteria.
4. When unintended consequences arise, how they are managed will depend on individual program guidelines and eligibility criteria. In regard to community transport provided through CATS, I have met with a provider and sought further advice from the ACT Health Directorate about options to address the issues identified for consumers.
5. Appeal mechanisms available will depend on individual program guidelines and eligibility criteria.
6. There are a number of community transport programs in the ACT, funded through the ACT Health Directorate, Community Services Directorate, My Aged Care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, in addition to the Flexible Bus service and Taxi Subsidy Scheme. As each community transport program has different service guidelines, eligibility criteria, and entry pathways, data is not available on every request for service.
7. The reasons for service denial will vary depending on individual program guidelines and eligibility criteria. People may be unable to access transport services because they are ineligible for the program they are seeking to access, because requests for transport are being made at short notice (such as on the same day the transport is required), or the request is made for transport outside the hours of operation.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services



Signature:

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith

Date:

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