



Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

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

Asked by Kikkert MLA: To ask the Minister for Early Childhood Development

Ref: Early Child Development, CSD Annual Report 2020—21, pp. 80—82

In relation to: Autism Assessments

1. During the hearing, it was stated that the Child Development Service does not refer a very high number of young people age 12+ for private autism assessments. Is the number of such assessments tracked? If so, what is the actual number over the past few years? And if not, why not?
2. An Assembly motion from 24 November 2021 calls on the ACT Government to 'increase the likelihood of early diagnosis of ASD by taking steps to increase awareness of both parents and professionals'. In the hearing, there was some discussion of hoping to increase parental awareness through the First 1,000 Days strategy, but what is being done to increase awareness by professionals?
3. Australian researchers Vicki Gibbs et al. (2019) wrote that successful 'education strategies and policy aimed at facilitating early diagnosis in a particular community' require an understanding of 'what factors are associated with age of diagnosis in that community and where any delays are occurring'. Does the ACT Government have any data regarding such factors or delays? If so, what are they, and if not, what is being done to obtain these data?
4. It was stated in the hearing that knowing the number delayed ASD diagnoses in the ACT would not be helpful, but in the absence of such information, how will the ACT Government know it is successfully increasing the likelihood of early diagnosis?

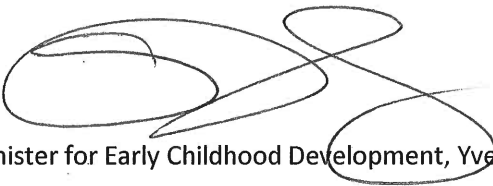
MS BERRY: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

1. The Child Development Service (CDS) does not track the number of enquiries regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment for children 12+, as this is outside the scope of the service. Anecdotally, CDS Intake Officers report very few enquiries regarding these services.

2. The CDS provides information sessions on the importance of early identification and referral processes for development assessments, including ASD diagnostic assessment, to key agencies that may be a point of contact for families who have concerns regarding their children's development, such as Child and Family Centres, Children's Hearing Services, Child Youth Protection Service workers and Maternal and Child Health nurses.
3. The CDS does not specifically collate data on children who may be considered to have a delayed diagnosis. The CDS does promote the importance of early identification and referral processes to key agencies as outlined in answer 2.
4. The CDS collects data regarding age of child at referral within the scope of the service (i.e. under 12).

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

Signature:



Date: 09/06/22

By the Minister for Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry MLA