



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by Mr PARTON on 17 July 2023: Ms Anke van der Sterren of ATODA took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: Uncorrected Proof Hansard Transcript 17/7/23 PAGE 16-17

In relation to: Drug and alcohol services - the decriminalisation of possession of small quantities of hard drugs - is there not a concern that if you as the peak body are not aware of additional structures that are point in place to deal with that change, that sure we are about to suck it and see but we might end up seeing some circumstances arise that are sub-optimal? [ATODA has been involved with an implementation group]

THE CHAIR: I am interested in your responses to those questions because—because, I do not know, they are—obviously you see the changes here as innovative and quite positive.

Ms Van der Sterren: Yes.

THE CHAIR: But is there not a concern that if you as the peak body are not aware of additional structures that are point in place to deal with that change, that sure we are about to suck it and see but we might end up seeing some circumstances arise that are sub-optimal?

Ms Van der Sterren: So I should clarify. ATODA has been involved with an implementation group.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Van der Sterren: It is just this my first day as Acting CEO, so I have not been—

THE CHAIR: Is that right? Welcome to the job.

Ms Van der Sterren: I have not been involved in that, and so I am not privy to—because it is confidential—I am not privy to what has gone on within those proceedings, but I can get back to you on that.

THE CHAIR: All right. Thank you. Okay.

Ms Van der Sterren: If you like, I can take that on notice.

Ms Anke van der Sterren (ATODA): The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

As per answer to QTON 9:

ATODA is a member of the ACT Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022 Implementation Group, which is convened by the ACT Health Directorate and includes representatives from ACT Policing, Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Canberra Health Services. The role of this group is to advise the ACT Government on the implementation of the Act, and ATODA appreciates having input into those discussions.

ATODA is mindful that the commissioning of ATOD services in the ACT is intended to ensure that needs are identified and addressed through a comprehensive service system. A timely and genuinely co-designed commissioning process is critical given upcoming implementation of decriminalisation which has the potential to impact the treatment and harm reduction sector.

Decriminalization may increase diversion to the Illicit Drug Diversion Program, through which an intervention is provided by the Alcohol and Drug Service, Canberra Health Services. ATODA is aware that Canberra Health Services have recruited an additional AOD counsellor to support this program.

ATODA is also aware of ongoing work in relation to communications ahead of implementation of the Act.

ATODA welcomes the funding announced in the 2023-24 Budget for an evaluation of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Use) Amendment Act 2022. This evaluation should consider the implementation process.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature: 

Date: 31 August 2023

By the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Ms Anke van der Sterren