



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

QON No. 59

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
CHRIS STEEL MLA (CHAIR), ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), VICKI DUNNE MLA,  
CAROLINE LE COUTEUR MLA, MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA

## Inquiry into referred 2016–17 Annual and Financial Reports

### ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Ms Dunne:

In relation to: The Establishment of the Office for Mental Health

1. What were the unavoidable delays in progressing formal consultation on the Office for Mental Health?
2. How many psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals will be working in the Office for Mental Health when it is established next year?
3. What level of confidence do you have that all psychiatrist and psychologist positions in the Office for Mental Health [will be filled] when it starts operation next year?
4. What actions will you take to ensure that all vacant mental health professional positions in the operational areas for mental health, the Office for Mental Health and other government areas such as Corrections and ACT Education will be filled next year?

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Funding became available after the passage of the Appropriation Bill 2017-18 on 24 August 2017. Immediately following appropriation, ACT Health progressed formal consultation on the Office for Mental Health. This has included disseminating a Conversation Starter Consultation Paper whilst simultaneously undertaking a competitive procurement process leading to engagement of the consultancy company Synergia. Engaging a consultancy allows for independent consultation, design and development of the Office for Mental Health.
2. The purpose of the Office for Mental Health is not to provide health services. Therefore, it is not intended for psychiatrists, psychologist and other mental health professionals to be practicing as a part of the Office. The structure and staffing model for the Office for Mental Health will be determined as part of a consultation and development process.
3. See the answer to Question 2.



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 59

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
CHRIS STEEL MLA (CHAIR), ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), VICKI DUNNE MLA,  
CAROLINE LE COUTEUR MLA, MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA

4. Specialty mental health services, nationally, internationally and in the ACT, continue to face shortages of clinical staff and growth in services and service demand. To ensure that positions remain filled, ACT Health has established a Medical Workforce Working Group to develop a workforce plan incorporating analysis of current and future need, recruitment and retention strategies. This Working Group is chaired by the Executive Director, of Mental Health Justice Health and Alcohol and Drug Services (MHJHADS). It includes the Chief Psychiatrist, representatives of the medical workforce across the program areas of MHJHADS, the Australian National University, Human Resources and the unions. MHJHADS continues to advertise positions regularly and has frequent contact with a large number of recruitment agencies.

Additionally, I raised this issue at the Council of Australian Governments Health Council Ministers Meeting in August during discussions around the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. It was agreed that mental health workforce issues are being felt in other jurisdictions and that they would be considered by the Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council at a later date.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services

Signature:

Date: 21/12/17

By the Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury MLA