



Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Rebecca Vassarotti MLA

Addressed to: Attorney-General

Reference: Attorney-General

Hearing: 22/07/2026

In relation to: FASD screening

Question received: 27/07/2026

Answer Due: 06/08/2026

- (1) Minister Pettersson recently updated the Assembly on the implementation of the minimum age of responsibility and said that Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is now a clear system priority. Can you explain if and how screening for FASD is occurring in the justice system, whether that is in courts, AMC, Bimberi or in any other capacity?
- (2) Can you provide statistics on how many detainees in the AMC and in Bimberi (on average, or at a point in time) are affected by FASD?

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Alongside the nation leading reform to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 in the ACT on 1 July 2025, the ACT Government introduced other important reforms to prevent children and young people becoming involved with the justice system (or courts, police, youth detention) in the first place. A key reform was the establishment of the Therapeutic Support Panel (TSP) in March 2024. The TSP is a multidisciplinary expert panel that assesses the needs of children and young people referred to it, and co-ordinates the provision of services to diagnose and address those needs.

In the TSP's 2025 annual report, FASD was identified as a known factor in the lives of numerous TSP clients. The TSP were undertaking actions to grow awareness of the issue, consult on approaches to address FASD, build capability of service providers, and identify key stakeholders to facilitate assessments, develop plans and implement responses.

In November 2025, the Therapeutic Support Panel engaged panel member, Dr Hayley Passmore to provide a collaborative workshop *"Reframing the behaviour of young people with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder"*, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the ACT including ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, and the Office for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner ACT.

It is important to acknowledge that assessment is only one response to support young people, while many forms of support or intervention do not require complex assessment or diagnosis to be recommended and effective.

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) has an intake and induction screening process designed to identify where assistance is required to support a detained person's ability to live independently at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). This process aims to identify key support needs and services required, which leads to referral and intervention pathways. The screening process is not a medical screening tool to diagnose conditions, but rather a functional assessment.

Canberra Health Services (CHS) provides primary health and custodial mental health services within the Alexander Machonohie Centre (AMC) and Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (BYJC) but does not undertake any specific screening for FASD. While Justice Health Services (JHS) and Custodial Mental Health Services (CMHS) do not specifically screen for FASD, it may be considered in the context of someone's presentation to either of these services.

2. Bimberi's role is to undertake initial screening and facilitate access to assessments, rather than provide clinical health assessments. All young people admitted to Bimberi are screened using the Tool for Identifying Reasonable Adjustments (TIRA) during induction to identify potential support and reasonable adjustment needs and determine whether further assessment may be required.

Responsibility for health assessments and clinical screening rests with Canberra Health Services (CHS), which provides health services within Bimberi. CHS is required to conduct an initial health assessment, including a mental health assessment, within 24 hours of admission and is responsible for undertaking any further clinical screening, assessment, and treatment as required.

Where additional developmental, health, disability, or therapeutic needs are identified, Bimberi works with CHS and the young person's care team to facilitate access to appropriate assessments. This may include arranging for assessments to occur within the Centre through visiting health and specialist providers, as well as coordinating escorted attendance at external appointments where services are not available onsite. Assessment outcomes inform the young person's Support and Engagement Plan and any reasonable adjustments or supports required during their time in custody.

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CHS does not have any statistics on detainees in the AMC or young people in BYJC affected by FASD.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026–2027

Signature: 
By the Attorney-General, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA

Date: 12/8/26