

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 9

5 September 2025

Question No. 589

Ms Chiaka Barry MLA: To ask the Minister for Children, Youth and Families

In relation to the response to question on notice No 333 and the Safer Youth Response Service (SYRS) pilot,

- (a) how is the after-hours crisis youth work and emergency accommodation service funded,
- (b) what contractual arrangement is in place covering the provision of this service,
- (c) when will the 18-month trial of this arrangement cease,
- (d) will the arrangement with Marymeade CatholicCare be extended,
- (e) will an evaluation be conducted before the arrangement is extended,
- (f) how many referrals have there been from ACT police for urgent care arrangements under this trial,
- (g) has any child objected to being placed with Marymeade CatholicCare,
- (h) what is the process (induction/search/management) at an ACT Police station for a child eligible for the SYRS pilot,
- (i) what is the average length of time in an ACT Police station of children eligible for placement under the SYRS pilot,
- (j) have any children eligible for an SYRS placement been held in a cell at an ACT Police station before being transferred to Marymeade CatholicCare,
- (k) what is the average response time from ACT Police making a request, and the child being collected by Marymeade CatholicCare,
- (l) once a child has been referred to this service, is it ACT Police or the Therapeutic Support Panel who takes the lead on managing the child's welfare and case management, and
- (m) in relation to "cross-over kids", how would a claim raising concern about a CYPs placement be addressed by the SYRS process in relation to "cross-over kids".

Mr MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (a) Funding for the Safer Youth Response Service (SYRS) was provided in the 2023-24 Budget.
- (b) A service agreement is in place for the provision of SYRS.
- (c) The initial contract period for the pilot expired in mid-2025; however, to ensure continuity of services when the MACR was raised to 14 on 1 July 2025 and whilst an evaluation was undertaken of the pilot, a Deed of Variation was executed to extend the contract until 6 June 2026.
- (d) The contract with Marymead CatholicCare is current until 6 June 2026.
- (e) An independent review of youth crisis supports and the SYRS Pilot model is underway, with findings expected to be delivered in late 2025. The findings from this independent review will inform future service design for the program.
- (f) Most support provided by SYRS is for crisis youth work and case management, with emergency accommodation comprising a small, but important part of service provision. In most circumstances SYRS can provide crisis youth work to deescalate situations and liaise with family or other appropriate adults to collect the child or young person, avoiding the need for emergency accommodation.

As the number of children or young people who have accessed the emergency accommodation component of the service is less than 5, the number cannot be provided due to risks of identification.

- (g) Children and young people are not subject to 'placement' through SYRS; rather, they may have access to case coordination or emergency accommodation when needed, on a voluntary basis, as part of the range of supports that SYRS provides.
- (h) Police officers are able to contact SYRS at any point in their engagement with a young person.

The SYRS pilot is a program providing on-call youth support, crisis accommodation, and case coordination for vulnerable children and young people who cannot immediately return home. The young person may have come to the attention of ACT Policing due to exhibiting risky or harmful behaviours or may be at risk of interacting with the youth justice system.

Police officers are able to contact SYRS at any point in their duties whether at a station or in the community. ACT Policing is able to contact SYRS for immediate assistance and can also make a proactive referral to SYRS shortly after an interaction with a young person.

- (i) Police Officers requesting immediate assistance may contact SYRS at any time. This may be within the first hour of engagement with a young person or it may be longer depending on the circumstances of the engagement. Due to the fact no interaction with youth is the same, there is no average length of time that can be measured as each response will vary due to the complexity and individual needs of the matter. When speaking with SYRS, an agreed plan

is discussed which outlines the level of assistance and any requirement for attendance.

- (j) No. The policy position of ACT Policing is that detaining children and young people at the ACT Watch House is only to be utilised as a mechanism of last resort. ACT Policing will engage with SYRS and other support services as long as necessary to determine a support plan and response for the young person, which may include the young person not attending a police station at all.
- (k) Due to the fact no interaction with youth is the same, there is no average length of time that can be measured as each response will vary due to the complexity and individual needs of the matter. Factors that influence/impact the timeframes can be time of day, number of operational requests, availability of other support services and other individual variables.
- (l) Children and young people engage with SYRS on a voluntary basis. They may access the service via a referral from ACT Policing if they require crisis youth work support, accommodation or case management support. Both ACT Policing and SYRS can make referrals to the Therapeutic Support Panel if they think the child or young person meets the relevant referral criteria.

Whether SYRS or the Therapeutic Support Panel is the lead on case management will depend on the individual circumstances of the child or young person. ACT Policing does not provide case management services.

- (m) The term “cross-over kids” was used in the Therapeutic Support Panel’s 2024 Report, highlighting that many children and young people who come to the attention of ACT Policing for harmful behaviours have also been involved in the care and protection system, therefore ‘crossing over’ into multiple areas of support needs.

SYRS has no role in coordinating, responding to, or reviewing Children, Youth and Families placements.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Michael Pettersson MLA
Children, Youth and Families

Date: 2-10-25

This response required 2hrs 50mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$316.15.