

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Finance

Minister for the Public Service

Member for Kurrajong

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 7****16 May 2025****Question No. 458****MS JO CLAY MLA:** To ask the Minister for Health

1. Given the very low levels of the uptake of the Medicare Benefits Schedule: Item 715 the Aboriginal Adult Check and Child Health Check, which sits at about 17 percent and 10 percent respectively, how is ACT Health working with Aboriginal and Community Controlled Health Organisations Winnunga Nimmityjah and Yerrabi Yurwang to address this inequity.
2. How will ACT Health address the disparity between first trimester visits of First Nations Women in the northern parts of the ACT (41 percent in Belconnen, 48 percent in Gungahlin, and 41 percent in Canberra north) compared to southern parts of the ACT (63 percent in Tuggeranong, 60 percent in Woden Valley, 88 percent in Weston Creek, 86 percent in Molonglo Valley, and 71 percent in Canberra south).

MS RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The ACT Health Directorate continues to work closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Winnunga Nimmityjah, and Yerrabi Yurwang, to support delivery of holistic, culturally safe health and wellbeing services, including Medicare Benefits Schedule Health Checks. These partnerships support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT to have better access to community-led care that supports physical, social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing – helping to close the health gap and improve long-term outcomes.

It is also important to highlight there are significant caveats that must be considered when using and interpreting the data relating to Medicare Benefits Schedule: Item 715 the Aboriginal Adult Check and Child Health Checks. Differences between states and territories in the way the services are provided and funded, in the demographic of the populations, and how and where the 715 health checks are recorded means it is not as simple as comparing the ACT numbers to other states and territories. I am advised that this MBS item does not capture all health checks undertaken in the ACT.



2. The ACT Government is committed to providing Birthing on Country services to provide culturally competent care that will improve health outcomes for First Nations women and babies. The Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, in collaboration with a group of local ACT Aboriginal women community leaders, has been listening to Community to understand what principles are important to ensure culturally safe care. This information will inform the development of co-designed culturally empowered Birthing with Country models of care.

It should be noted that in the ACT, the first antenatal visit recorded is often the first hospital antenatal clinic visit. In many cases, earlier antenatal care is provided by the women's general practitioner or primary care provider, for example by Winnunga.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minster for Health

Date: 22/6/25

This response required 5hrs 10mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$508.20.