

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Gaming Reform

Member for Murrumbidgee

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Questions on Notice Paper No 6

9 May 2025

Question No. 356

MR EMERSON: To ask the Minister for Corrections —

1. Given that women make up a relatively small but increasing cohort of detainees at Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), however, they are excluded from programs such as the Solaris Therapeutic Community, the Transitional Release Centre, and some employment options that are available to male detainees, will the Government commit to ensuring that women detained at AMC have access to equivalent services and facilities as male detainees; if not, why not.
2. Given that the Transitional Release Centre provides the only minimum-security accommodation at AMC, and higher-security accommodation is more costly to run, and also means that a person's incarceration may be overly punitive, more harmful and less rehabilitative than is appropriate in the circumstances, will the Government introduce minimum-security accommodation; if not, why not.

MARISA PATERSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Women make up a relatively small cohort of detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, and their numbers have been showing a sustained decrease in recent years, with the Report on Government Services showing that the average daily number of female detainees dropped from 30 in 2021-22, to 27 in 2022-23, to a low of 24 in 2023-24.

While there can be challenges providing services for small cohorts, the ACT Government is nevertheless committed to providing comprehensive and gender-responsive care for women engaged with ACT Corrective Services, with services tailored to acknowledge the

unique challenges they face and that are designed to ensure their safety, wellbeing and rehabilitation.

Women at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) have access to a wide range of meaningful and rehabilitative programs, services, activities, education, and work opportunities. This includes therapeutic interventions, educational workshops and practical support such as financial counselling and reintegration services. It is acknowledged that access to some education and employment opportunities may be impacted due to the low numbers of women in custody, the short average duration of stay for female detainees and the high proportions of remanded female detainees. However, ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) continues to be committed to ensuring female detainees have equal access to the various programs and opportunities available.

In relation to the Solaris Therapeutic Community Program, it is noted that this is a residential program delivered in a male accommodation unit and tailored towards the needs of men. As such, it is not suitable or available to women. However, the women have access to various alcohol and other drug programs such as the Toora Coming Home Program, the Alcohol Drug Awareness Harm Prevention Training (ADAPT) Program, Alcoholics Anonymous, the SMART Recovery Program and EQUIPS Addiction. ACTCS continues to seek further suitable programs which are tailored to the needs of women.

Finally, while accommodation in the Transitional Release Centre is only available to male detainees, women are able to participate in the Transitional Release Program from their accommodation area to support their reintegration into the community. This includes opportunities to engage in structured access to work in the community, maintaining family ties and education. Access to the Transitional Release Program and associated opportunities is not dependent on a person being accommodated in the Transitional Release Centre.

2. ACTCS received funding in the 2023-24 Budget to develop an AMC Masterplan which will provide a long-term strategy for future development of the AMC site. As part of this planning, there will be a specific focus on the accommodation needs of women, including longer-term access to transitional accommodation.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

M. Paterson

Marisa Paterson MLA
Minister for Corrections

Date: 3/5/25

This response required 1hrs 55mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$180.09

