

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 4

21 MARCH 2025

Question No. 233

MR RATTENBURY MLA: To ask the Minister for Health

- 1) When will the Minister make a decision regarding whether to extend the contract with the Salvation Army to run Burrangiri Respite Service.
- 2) What options is the Minister considering to ensure that there will be (a) the continued level of capacity for respite service in the ACT and (b) an increased level of capacity for respite service in the ACT.

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

- 1) A decision has been made in relation to the closure of Burrangiri Respite Service. In regard to a potential contract extension, the ACT Health Directorate explicitly recommended against this in a brief in December 2024, due to procurement rules, insufficient funding being available to cover escalating costs, and feedback from the Salvation Army. All these issues remain relevant.
- 2) The ACT Government recognises that accessing quality respite care is important for older Canberrans and their families. Suitable alternative facilities to Burrangiri were explored for some or all the services, but unfortunately no appropriate locations were identified.

In the absence of a dedicated facility, alternative models of service delivery were also explored, including allocating ACT Government funding for residential aged care respite through a Health Directorate contract with one of more providers or by establishing a broker model. However, this option was not ultimately supported, given the Commonwealth's responsibility for aged care, the existing role of Carers ACT and that Canberra Health Services already purchases aged care beds for hospital discharge, creating a risk that a Health Directorate program would duplicate existing capability. Consideration has been given to expanding this capability and conversations with aged care providers are continuing.



Respite programs funded under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme which can be accessed through the Carer Gateway Services, run by Carers ACT, include the following:

- Respite care can be accessed for short periods through a number of residential aged care facilities for either planned or unplanned respite care. In the ACT there are currently 29 residential aged care facilities that can receive Commonwealth funding for these places, with more due to open soon.
- Carers ACT provides short stay respite care through their *Cottage Respite program* to support enable carers of people who are ageing and/or have dementia. A recent media statement from Carers ACT indicated it was now taking bookings for May and June.
- Baptist Care and Uniting Care Australia are also funded to deliver centre-based day care services.
- There are also several providers funded for flexible respite care which can be provided at a person's home.

The Commonwealth and the ACT Government also jointly fund the Transitional Therapy and Care Program, a short-term rehabilitation program for up to 12-weeks to assist eligible people, 65 years and over, or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, after being in hospital. In the ACT there are 78 transitional care places, 14 residential and 64 community. People can either receive supports directly in their homes or can transition via the 14-bed residential rehabilitation facility.

Respite services typically exist alongside or as part of other care initiatives funded through the Commonwealth aged care system and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Commonwealth's new \$4.3 billion 'Support at Home' program will come into effect on 1 July 2025, providing for an increase in aged care services, including respite. In addition, new aged care facilities are opening in the ACT over the next 18 months, with the first due to open in June 2025 and at least 218 new beds scheduled to open by the end of 2025. The new provider's website states that it has respite rooms in every Residential Aged Care Home.

The ACT Government is committed to working with Carers ACT to explore options to allocate land for a purpose-built respite centre and I have started this conversation with Carers ACT.

I am pleased that Federal Labor has also committed \$10 million in new funding for aged care respite beds, either through a new facility or the extension of an existing facility.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health

Date: 24 / 4 / 25

This response required 5hrs 40mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$590.93.