

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No. 19****10 June 2022****Question No. 862****Asked by MS CASTLEY MLA –**

- (1) Is the Government considering free flu vaccinations to more at-risk groups in the ACT.
- (2) What information did the Government use to inform its decision to deny a free flu vaccine to seniors under 65 who are self-funded retirees.
- (3) What is the average length of stay for emergency department presentations due to influenza.
- (4) What is the average cost of an influenza presentation to ACT's public hospitals.
- (5) How much is the Government spending on flu vaccinations.
- (6) What is the expected total cost of flu vaccinations.
- (7) How much has been budgeted for the program and where is the money coming from.

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

- (1) Annual influenza vaccine is available through the Commonwealth funded National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people most at risk of complications from influenza. This includes children aged 6 months to less than 5 years; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over; pregnant women; people aged 65 years and over; and people with certain medical conditions.

In 2022, the ACT Government is also providing free influenza vaccinations to additional members of our community who are most at risk of poor health outcomes and for those where significant barriers to access remain. These individuals may not be eligible for vaccination under the NIP and includes people with disability, their support workers and carers, and concession card holders.



The decision of the ACT Government to offer free flu vaccinations to these vulnerable members of the community is in response to the increase in cases of influenza anticipated during 2022. Vaccination for eligible individuals is available at the Access and Sensory Clinic in Weston Creek.

- (2) Self-funded retirees less than 65 years are eligible to receive a free flu vaccine if they are identified in the NIP, live with disability (including being a carer), or are a concession card holder.
- (3) See combined response below for questions 3 and 4.

The average cost of influenza emergency department presentations in 2019-20 was \$1,246.21 (261 presentations) and in 2020-21 was \$836.69 (12 presentations). The average length of stay for an emergency department presentation was 435.61 minutes in 2019-20 and 352.16 minutes in 2020-21.

2021-22 data will be finalised after the national submissions are completed and activity is reconciled with National Health Funding Body. This is likely to occur after November this year.

- (5) Purchase of influenza vaccines for the ACT program was at a total cost of \$148,500 for a small number of additional vaccines funded by ACT Government to fill a gap that the NIP did not cover. The majority of vaccines for the ACT are provided by the Commonwealth under the NIP.
- (6) The ACT Influenza Program is an opportunistic vaccination program, administered in conjunction with the COVID-19 Vaccination Program (Co-administration). Free vaccines are administered at the Access and Sensory Clinic alongside COVID-19 vaccines and is therefore already staffed by appropriate nurse immunisers. Administration costs associated with the program are therefore expended from the COVID-19 Response budget.
- (7) The cost of influenza vaccines purchased to support the program is \$148,500. Costs for program administration are shared by the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services and funds are allocated from the 2021-22 COVID-19 Response Budget as part of Access and Sensory Clinic delivery.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health

Date:.....1/8/22.....

This response required 215 minutes to complete, at an approximate cost of \$340.17.