

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 5

9 May 2025

Question No. 374

MR EMERSON: To ask the Minister for Corrections —

1. In relation to the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), who is responsible for ensuring that policies, operating procedures and practices are trauma- and disability-informed, and what qualifications do these staff members have.
2. Given that evidence shows crime is significantly linked to illiteracy, that targeted literacy and numeracy programs have been proven to reduce recidivism rates, and that there are low literacy and numeracy capabilities in AMC detainees compared to the ACT's non-prison population, does the Government have any plans to improve and increase the education pathways available to detainees.
3. Given the strong correlation between ADHD diagnosis and criminal behaviour, some jurisdictions routinely screen detainees for ADHD to ensure they have access to appropriate treatment, will the Government consider introducing formal neurodiversity screening for detainees at the AMC.
4. Given that ADHD medication can be highly effective at reducing impulsivity, drug seeking behaviour, and prison misconduct, and has been recommended for use in prisons, is it commonly withheld from prisoners in AMC who have been prescribed the medication; if so, why.

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

1. Working with many subject matter experts, the ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) policy team has overarching responsibility for ensuring ACTCS policies and procedures are developed and reviewed in a systematic and comprehensive manner. In ACTCS, using a trauma-informed

approach underpins key strategic policies, including several related to disability and other vulnerable groups. The qualifications and experience of subject matter experts are diverse and include individuals with lived experience, clinicians (including, but not limited to psychologists, social workers and nurses), front line staff working with detainees and offenders with additional needs, community partners and advocates, health services and oversight bodies.

ACTCS policy officers are recruited for a range of skills, knowledge and experience including human services policy development, corrective services, social sciences, law, diversity and intersectionality. Subject matter expertise is further supported by jurisdictional scans, desktop research and literature reviews.

Operational responsibility for the assessment and delivery of programs and services for detainees with additional needs lies primarily with ACTCS' Offender Reintegration Division. Within this division, the Supports and Interventions Unit (SIU) provides support to detainees with mild to moderate mental health needs and detainees with disability and complex care needs. The SIU is staffed by various roles with qualifications in a health or allied health discipline, such as registered nursing, psychology, occupational therapy, and social work, as well as allied health assistants with qualifications in related fields.

2. ACTCS recognises the need to improve educational and employment opportunities at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). To address this, a Strategic Projects team has been established to lead initiatives that enhance accommodation and increase detainee access to programs and services. This includes short-term projects like refurbishing program rooms. A key focus is expanding education, industries, and programs to maximise structured day activities within the AMC and the community. The newly formed Detainee Education, Industry and Rehabilitation (DEIR) executive governing board will oversee this work, including auditing current programs, assessing industry gaps, proposing improvements, reviewing staffing, and exploring digital programs. An internal audit is underway to assess and enhance the educational and industry offerings at the AMC.

To increase literacy and numeracy support in the short to medium term, ACTCS is currently going to market with a RFQ seeking a more intensive offering. Longer term, ACTCS is also exploring ways in which technology may contribute to enhancing literacy and numeracy outcomes for detainees.

3. Currently, there is no routine screening process in place for ADHD at the AMC and an open-access approach, based solely on screening results, is not aligned with best clinical practice.

Screening for ADHD in custodial environments presents unique challenges. These settings are particularly vulnerable to overreporting, and current screening tools are not reliable. Relying on screening outcomes alone risks a high rate of false positives, particularly due to the presence of co-occurring conditions. Additionally, while ADHD treatment can be beneficial on

an individual level, the evidence for its impact on reducing offending at a population level remains inconclusive.

Justice Health Services (JHS) and Custodial Mental Health Services (CMHS) conduct a dual induction screening process within 24 hours of a detainee's entry into the AMC. This includes a comprehensive mental health assessment, primary health assessment, drug and alcohol screening, medical history review, confirmation of diagnoses, and documentation of all current medications. All self-reported medical diagnoses and medications, including an ADHD diagnosis and ADHD medications, are cross-checked with the detainee's community healthcare provider (where one exists) to confirm diagnoses and treatment including medication prescription.

Additionally, if a person would like to see a Primary Health General Practitioner to discuss their health concerns and/or symptoms, they can self-refer at any time. Once a health request is received, it is triaged accordingly to determine the appropriate health service response required.

4. ADHD treatment options are informed by a comprehensive assessment which considers the person's current circumstances, as well as a comprehensive personal history inclusive of socioeconomic, medical and physical factors. Treatment is also informed by existing treatment protocols.

JHS and CMHS have processes in place to assess, determine suitability and carry out risk assessments for people requiring ADHD medication as a treatment option.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Marisa Paterson MLA
Minister for Corrections

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