

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 6

9 MAY 2025

Question No. 353

MR EMERSON MLA: To ask the Minister for Health

- 1) Has the ACT Pathology Home Visit Service discontinued; if so, when was it discontinued.
- 2) What advice has been given to patients about its discontinuation.
- 3) What replacement services are being provided to patients like the 85-year-old mobility-impaired constituent who advised he will now struggle to travel to his required testing each month, and will the Government guarantee that he and other patients who are mobility impaired will be adequately supported.

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

- 1) ACT Pathology continues to provide home visits for collections. These have not been discontinued. However, following incidents of occupational violence across the organisation during home visits and an investigation by Worksafe, Canberra Health Services (CHS) implemented staff safety policies effective from 18 March 2025. As a result, patients are now encouraged to attend collection centers if they are able to do so.
- 2) Responding to the staff safety concerns has required consideration of individual patient needs and communication with all patients booked for home collections was done via phone call.

Initial changes in response to the Worksafe prohibition notices resulted in a reduction in the number of home-based collections which could be undertaken. The changes to home visiting protocols since that time has enabled the volume of home collections to return to normal levels. The number of home collections performed now is similar to the number performed at this time last year.

If patients are no longer able to receive services in their home due to identified risks to CHS staff, they are advised of this by staff undertaking the risk assessment.

- 3) ACT Pathology has collection facilities in community centres across the ACT, making them accessible to many. People are encouraged to attend collection centres where possible, enabling mobility impaired patients and those with clinical need to be prioritised when home-based collections are planned.

In addition to a clinical needs assessment, ACT Pathology undertakes risk assessments for each home visit. Where a potential risk is identified and clinical factors limit the ability to attend collection centres, the preferred approach is mitigating this risk. Strategies may include improving the safety of the home environment, the use of personal protective equipment, having trusted carers or additional ACT Pathology collectors present. When the risk assessment identifies that it is not safe to undertake home collection, the safety of CHS staff is the priority.

The pre-visit assessments involve active engagement with patients and/or carers by telephone, so changes to individual service provision are communicated personally.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



**Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health**

Date: 30/5/25

This response required 6 hours 45 mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$661.05.