

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 9

5 September 2025

Question No. 612

Ms Chiaka Barry MLA: To ask the Minister for Children, Youth and Families

In relation to the response to question on notice No 317,

- (a) have the Marymead CatholicCare Safer Youth Response Service (SYRS) arrangements been assessed by the Therapeutic Support Panel; if so, what was their assessment,
- (b) what research and evidence gathering processes have been initiated by the ACT government in response to the Therapeutic Support Panel's concerns,
- (c) what is the roadmap and timeframe for a decision on the establishment of a permanent Therapeutic Protection Place,
- (d) has the Director-General provided any guidance to the Therapeutic Support Panel on the making of recommendations that Intensive Therapy Orders be sought; if so, can the Minister provide a copy of that guidance, and
- (e) has the Therapeutic Support Panel made any recommendations to the Director-General; if so, has the Director-General declined to follow any such recommendation.

Mr MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (a) No. The Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People does not have an assessment role in relation to the Safer Youth Response Services (SYRS).
- (b) In response to matters raised in the Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People 2024 Report, the ACT Government continues to undertake research and evidence gathering, through the dedicated policy team and the six-weekly cross-government meetings of the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) Senior Officers Working Group (SOWG).

Each meeting focuses on a specific theme or topic related to the report, led by the relevant directorate, team or community service with subject matter expertise. These discussions are informing the design and direction of the broader MACR service system in response to the report's findings.

- (c) As outlined in the response to QON 317, the *Justice (Age of Criminal Responsibility) Legislation Amendment Act 2023* removed references to Therapeutic Protection Places and introduced provisions for intensive therapy places.

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Importantly, the issuance of an interim Intensive Therapy Order (ITO) does not automatically require the establishment of an intensive therapy place or the use of confinement directions. Intensive therapy places may be established only when deemed suitable and appropriate for the individual's therapeutic needs.

Such facilities are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment to stabilise harmful behaviours and prevent exposure to unsafe situations; however, their use should be limited, as removing children and young people from their home, family, kin, and social connections may not necessarily result in behavioural change.

At this time, there is no confirmed roadmap or timeframe for a decision regarding the establishment of a specific intensive therapy place. The ACT Government is currently assessing the need and prioritising individualised responses based on the therapeutic requirements of each child or young person as required.

As evidence continues to be gathered and best practices are refined, temporary therapeutic, safe, and stable environments may be established where appropriate.

- (d) The process for ITOs is set out in the *Children and Young People Act 2008*. It does not provide for the Director-General to provide guidance to the Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People on recommendations for ITOs.
- (e) As above, the process to apply for ITOs is governed by the *Children and Young People Act 2008*. Under the legislation, a function of the Therapeutic Support Panel is to recommend whether applications for an ITO should be made. This process has been followed to date; however, individual details regarding specific ITO applications are confidential.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Michael Pettersson MLA
Children, Youth and Families

Date: 25-9-25

This response required 1hrs 55mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$189.47.