

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 8

27 JUNE 2025

Question No. 516

SHANE RATTENBURY MLA: To ask the Minister for Health

1. How will the ACT Government assist with the implementation of recent changes to blood and platelet donation eligibility approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration that will allow gay and bisexual men and people taking PrEP to donate plasma or blood without a wait time, including changes to the new gender-neutral assessments.
2. When does the ACT Government expect the new gender-neutral assessments to be completed.
3. Are there any other changes required to remove barriers for LBGTIQA+ Canberrans to donate blood and plasma.

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

1. On 18 June 2025 the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood (Lifeblood) announced that the first tranche of the blood donation rule changes would be implemented from 14 July 2025 and that this action will remove all sexual activity wait time deferrals for plasma donations.

The world-first Plasma Pathway initiative will allow gay and bisexual men and transgender women, together with people taking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection), to donate plasma without any deferral or delay, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria.

Lifeblood also announced that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has recently approved Lifeblood's proposal for Australia's adoption of the Gender Neutral Assessment (GNA) approach for determining donor eligibility for the donation of fresh blood products (such as red blood cells and platelets). This is an approach the ACT Government has consistently advocated for and welcomes.

Under the GNA approach:

- a. most people in a sexual relationship of six months or more with a single partner will be eligible to donate fresh blood products; and
- b. most people with new or multiple partners will also be able to donate blood, if they have not had anal sex in the last three months.

Implementation of the GNA approach involves a significant change to the sexual activity screening questions in the Donor Questionnaire so that all donors are asked the same screening questions, independent of gender or sexuality. Lifeblood will work with states and territories to ensure that the new Donor Questionnaire can be implemented simultaneously across Australia.

In the ACT, the Donor Questionnaire is a Disallowable Instrument approved by the Chief Health Officer under the *Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act 1985*, s 10(3) (Approved Forms). The process to update the Disallowable Instrument will take place when Lifeblood has provided jurisdictions with a copy of the new Donor Questionnaire. ACT donation centres will make the adjustment when the Donor Questionnaire update is completed and notified. As noted above, the timing of this change is subject to processes being completed across all jurisdictions to ensure national consistency is maintained.

2. Although there is currently no specific implementation date for the GNA approach, Lifeblood has indicated that GNA will be implemented in 2026. The ACT Government will continue to advocate for the expedited introduction of GNA for blood donation in Australia.
3. Although Lifeblood's GNA approach is based on data that demonstrates the six-month wait to be the safest option for donating fresh blood products, Lifeblood has affirmed its commitment to reviewing the six-month deferral period as more evidence becomes available.

However, unlike other countries, the existence of the Plasma Pathway means that most people in Australia who are asked to wait to donate fresh blood products will still be able to donate plasma immediately, providing they meet other eligibility criteria.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Health

Date: 31 | 7 | 25

This response required 2hrs 10mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$248.71.