

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 15

06 February 2026

Question No. 834

Ms Deborah Morris MLA: To ask the Minister for Corrections –

1. Has there ever been a process to assess detainees for literacy and numeracy levels, either on intake or otherwise, during the 17 years the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) has operated, given that the Brink Literacy Project cites studies which show that prisoners who engage with literacy programmes in prison are 43 percent less likely to reoffend.
2. In relation to the answer to question on notice No 617, (a) can the Minister detail the support provided by the volunteer referenced who provides literacy support to detainees at the AMC, (b) how much time does the volunteer spend with detainees on average in their weekly session, (c) what is the maximum number of detainees that support is available to during the weekly session and (d) how many detainees have made use of the support available in the 2024-2025 reporting period.
3. How many weeks of the 2024-2025 reporting period was the volunteer referred to in part (2) unavailable to detainees at the AMC.

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

1. The ACT Government recognises the critical importance of foundational literacy skills for individuals transitioning from custody into the community. Strengthening education and training opportunities within the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) remains a priority for the ACT Government. Access to education programs at the AMC operates through a self-referral model, where detainees can nominate themselves via the AMC Education Coordinator. In addition, where a literacy need is identified through the case management process, case managers proactively support detainees to request literacy assistance and engage with available education services.

Between approximately 2019 and 2021, all newly admitted detainees underwent a Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) needs assessment. This ceased in October 2021 when the education provider at the time withdrew their service delivery citing staffing shortage and inability to deliver services remotely during COVID-19-related restrictions. In 2023, ACT Corrective Services piloted the use of LN Robot as part of the Young Offender Reintegration Program Pilot, which aimed to support young offenders to successfully reintegrate into the community through targeted programs, including literacy and numeracy education. ACT Corrective Services is exploring options for a similar program this year taking the learnings from the earlier program.

ACT Corrective Services is actively working to expand literacy and numeracy support for detainees in both the short and medium term by aiming to put in place a more intensive and structured literacy and numeracy assessment and program. A provider has been engaged to provide a literacy and numeracy assessment and program for detainees. This will provide a base line to inform future medium and long-term requirements.

In the longer term, ACTCS is exploring the role that technology can play in improving educational outcomes, including the use of digital tools and innovative learning platforms to enhance detainees' literacy and numeracy capabilities. ACTCS continues to encourage detainee participation in all available education and training programs, including literacy support, as part of its broader commitment to improving rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes.

2. The volunteer referenced has been attending the Alexander Maconochie Centre on a weekly basis since 2013, providing more than 12 years of consistent service across all detainee categories. The person's role focuses on supporting detainees with foundational literacy needs. This long-standing volunteer contribution plays an important role in improving detainees' access to basic literacy support, complementing broader education services delivered within the AMC.

The support provided by the volunteer consists of 1:1 literacy support, working with individuals to build their confidence and skills in reading, writing and comprehension using simple, clear strategies such as guided reading and phonics practice. Sessions can run from 30 to 60 minutes, allowing for optimal engagement. The maximum number of detainees that can access this support during the week is variable and dependent on the volunteer's availability. ACT Corrective Services does not hold participant-level data for 2024-25, however is committed to improving data collection in this area.

3. As with all services delivered within the AMC, literacy support may be intermittently impacted by operational requirements. Sessions may be cancelled on occasion due to factors such as volunteer unavailability or competing activities scheduled within the education building.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



**Dr Marisa Paterson MLA
Minister for Corrections**

Date: 05/03/2026

This response required 4hrs 5mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$389.38