

Michael Pettersson MLA

Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries

Minister for Children, Youth and Families

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations

Member for Yerrabi

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 5****Friday, 11 April 2025****Question No. 333****MS BARRY:** To ask the Minister for Children, Youth and Families —

1. In relation to the Therapeutic Support Panel (TSP) for Children and Young People 2024 Report, how has the two phased approach to implementation enabled the TSP approach been revised prior to the commencement of Phase 2 (on 1 July 2025).
2. What evaluation of the initial approach has been conducted.
3. What changes has the Minister made to the initial TSP arrangements as a result of their experience.
4. Given the Minister referred to the need to clarify the roles of TSP in regard to the responsibilities of CYF in relation to cross-over kids, what were the overlapping responsibilities and how have these been resolved.
5. How will the TSP be engaged when a person affected by MACR is identified by police out of business hours, given the TSP is not a crisis service.
6. What are the new initiatives and pilots to understand and address afterhours crisis support needs.
7. Why does the Panel only meet every two months and does this enable appropriate oversight of this vulnerable cohort.
8. How regularly does the TSP meet to discuss individual cases?
9. What are the qualifications and experience of each TSP Member, and does each member have a WWVP Card.
10. Can the Minister confirm current staffing of the Case Management Team (CMT).
11. Can the Minister advise their caseload planning figures for the CMT, and how many active cases will each Therapeutic Case Manager have when the system is fully implemented.
12. What plans are in place to develop the therapeutic facility for police to assist with Intensive Therapy Orders.



Michael Pettersson MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. As outlined in the yearly report tabled in March 2025, the Therapeutic Support Panel (the Panel) commenced operations on 27 March 2024. In its first year of operation, it has consolidated the role of the Chair, the functions of multi-disciplinary Panel, and the focus of the Therapeutic Case Management Team. The Panel operates under a continuous improvement model, where it is continually reviewing and refining its model of practice under the CYP Act.

The Panel is part of a broader initiative by the ACT Government to reshape the service system to address the root causes of harmful behaviours in children and young people. The staged approach to the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) reforms has allowed time for the Government, in partnership with the community sector and the Panel, to develop and embed elements of the service system to support the outcomes for 10 and 11-year-olds in stage one, and 12 and 13-year-olds in stage two.

Central to this is the referral pathway that has been developed in collaboration with the Panel and the Community Services Directorate's Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) Division, to prioritise early and supported transitions for those children and young people aged 12 and 13 who will transition to being under the MACR on 1 July 2025. The Panel is already working with these children and young people, and this work will continue up to and beyond 1 July.

Additionally, to support clients to reengage with education, students of compulsory age working with the Panel are now offered referral pathways to Targeted Support from the Education Directorate. Re-engagement plans are devised in collaboration with the Panel, the child or young person, and their families and kin, and ongoing targeted supports are provided to address barriers and maintain attendance.

2. Per Section 98 of the *Justice (Age of Criminal Responsibility) Legislation Amendment Act 2023* (the Amendment Act) – which increased the MACR and established the Therapeutic Support Panel – a review of the operational and effectiveness of the reforms made by the Amendment Act will commence as soon as practicable after the Act has been in place for 5 years and must be completed within 12 months.
3. No changes have been made to these arrangements during this term of Government.
4. It was reported in the Therapeutic Support Panel's 2024 Report, that many children and young people who come to the attention of the police and justice system for harmful behaviours may have also been involved in the care and protection system.

As engagement with the Panel is based on voluntary participation, a collaborative approach is used between the Panel and CYF. In the circumstances where a care and protection order or youth justice order alone cannot meet the therapeutic needs of the child or young person, the Panel may assess and coordinate therapeutic service responses via a therapy plan in order to

compel other service involvement outside of the Community Services Directorate to be involved. This practice will continue to be refined in response to need on an individual case-by-case basis.

5. The Safer Youth Response Service (SYRS) pilot was established to address the need for an after-hours crisis response for children and young people affected by changes to the MACR, who come to the attention of police and cannot return home for safety or other reasons. This involves SYRS working with ACT Policing to trial an immediate, after-hours crisis youth work and emergency accommodation service. A future evaluation of the pilot is planned.

Additionally, when an after-hours crisis response is needed for children and young people subject to care and protection orders, support and practical arrangements are provided by the Children Youth and Families After Hours Support team.

6. The SYRS pilot has been stood up to provide immediate, after-hours crisis youth work service and short-term accommodation for children and young people who come to the attention of police and cannot return home for safety or other reasons.
7. Under the terms of reference, the Therapeutic Support Panel meets *at least* every two months. Additionally, the Panel may hold out-of-session meetings at the discretion of the Chair to discuss individual cases, inform internal assessments, develop therapy plans, consider recommendations and inform applications for intensive therapy orders, as per the CYP Act.

Oversight of the children and young people working with the Panel is provided by the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner and, when the child is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner. This is enabled by functions and powers conferred under the *Human Rights Commission Act 2004*, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner Act 2022*, and the *Children and Young People Act 2008*. Additionally, when a child or young person is subject to an interim intensive therapy order or intensive therapy order (ITO), ACT Courts provide judicial oversight.

8. Individual cases of children and young people referred to the Panel are reviewed during bi-monthly sessions and additional out-of-session meetings as needed. The Chair may also consult individual members or external consultants based on their expertise to inform specific cases.

During the bi-monthly panel meetings, the Panel reviews all referrals, receives client updates, and determines if further meetings are necessary to address any individual matters requiring additional action.

The Therapeutic Case Management Team meets with the Chair at least weekly, and as needed, to discuss individual cases, including new referrals and actions for current clients that may need the Chair's advice or approval.

Additionally, the Chair and members of the Therapeutic Case Management Team regularly meet with the Youth Justice area of CSD Children Youth and Families, SYRS, and other relevant cross-

government groups, and participate in individual case meetings led by government and non-government agencies to provide advice and share information.

9. Yes, every person undertaking the work of the Panel with direct contact with children and young people has a WWVP card.

The biographies of the Panel members are available at [ACT Legislation Register](#) in Explanatory Statements of active Disallowable Instruments.

10. There are 4.0 FTE in the Case Management Team, including a Team Leader and 3 Case Managers. The full complement of staffing at 4.0 FTE was finalised in January 2025.
11. The amount of support required for each child or young person referred to the Panel varies greatly depending on their individual therapeutic needs. As such, caseloads are determined in response to need on a case-by-case basis. Due to the initiative being in its early phase of development, the Panel will continue to monitor and review caseloads to determine what approach is most effective in providing appropriate supports.

The case load of the Case Management Team is not expected to change significantly when the minimum age is raised to 14 on 1 July 2025, as the Panel is already providing support to children and young people aged 12 years and above, including those who may have engaged with the Youth Justice system and will be impacted by raising the MACR. As of February 2025, the Case Management team was working with 29 active clients aged 8 – 17 years with 4.0 FTE staff in the team.

12. The Amendment Act 2023 removed references and provisions related to Therapeutic Protection Places and introduced new legislative provisions to establish and guide the operations of intensive therapy places.

When an interim ITO or ITO is issued, it may include directions for a child or young person to attend an intensive therapy place for assessment and/or treatment according to their therapy plan; however, this does not necessarily require the establishment of an intensive therapy place or the use of confinement directions.

Under provisions introduced by the Amendment Act, intensive therapy places may be established if they are deemed suitable and appropriate for the individual child or young person's therapeutic needs. These places aim to provide a safe and supportive environment to stabilise harmful behaviours by addressing therapeutic needs, thereby preventing exposure to unsafe situations. It is important to use these facilities sparingly, as removing children and young people from their home, family, kin, and social connections may not result in change to the harmful behaviours of the child or young person.

As evidence is gathered and research is conducted to ensure best practices, temporary therapeutic, safe, and stable environments may be established as needed.

The role of the police in assisting or supporting the implementation of interim ITOs and ITOs will be negotiated with ACT Policing on a needs and individual case by case basis, regardless of whether or not an intensive therapy place is required.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Michael Pettersson MLA
Minister for Children, Youth and Families

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This response required 107 mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$1,666.36.