

2018

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**Update on ACT Health transition and Australian Council on Healthcare
Standards (ACHS) Accreditation**

**Presented by
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Thank you Madam Speaker.

Today I would like to update the Assembly and the broader community on the significant work that has been going on across ACT Health to improve workplace culture and to cement the organisational values of Care, Excellence, Collaboration and Integrity.

Madam Speaker, March 2018 marked a significant turning point for ACT Health for a number of reasons which I will outline today.

It was in March 2018 that the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) conducted an organisation wide survey of ACT Health as part of the re-accreditation process.

I will go into greater detail on this shortly, but it is fair to say this site visit and the resulting “Not Met” report were the catalyst for a profound shift in the organisation, one which has resulted in an outstanding accreditation result and a glowing external assessment of ACT Health’s culture, leadership and commitment to continuous improvement.

It was also in March 2018 that the Minister for Mental Health and myself announced ACT Health would become two distinct organisations from 1 October 2018.

The organisational reform will build on the outstanding improvements we have seen through the re-accreditation process, and will be an opportunity to re-set and re-focus the organisation on its core purpose and values.

Madam Speaker, as part of the reform, the Interim Director-General is leading an extensive piece of work focussed on the cultural needs of the organisations, in particular for the first six months of operations.

I will go into further detail on both the progress of the transition and the work to improve ACT Health's culture and cement its values shortly.

ACCREDITATION

But first to accreditation.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier ACT Health underwent a re-accreditation assessment in March 2018 against the 10 National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

All public and private hospitals in Australia undergo this important, rigorous process.

The process is part of a continuous cycle of improvement to ensure we deliver safe and high quality health care to Canberrans.

It is an opportunity to identify areas for improvement that will make health services even better.

As part of the process, the ACHS conducted an organisation wide survey of ACT Health between 19 March and 23 March.

During this survey, ACHS assessed ACT Health's implementation of the National Standards.

ACT Health was assessed against 256 actions, 209 of which are core under the National Standards. While ACT Health met 176 of the core criteria, the surveyors assessed it as not meeting 33 of the core criteria under five of the 10 National Standards.

Subsequently, ACHS provided ACT Health with a period of 90 days to remediate those matters that did not meet the 33 core criteria.

ACT Health was re-assessed on its implementation of these not met criteria through a process called an Advanced Completion survey.

Two surveyors from ACHS conducted this survey on site at Canberra Hospital and Health Services between 3 and 5 July, 2018.

Madam Speaker, ACT Health staff have risen to the challenge to address the 33 core criteria and I can advise you that ACT Health has made all the improvements necessary to achieve re-accreditation.

I can further advise that ACT Health has been awarded re-accreditation for a further three years, which is the maximum allowable period.

The surveyors were highly complementary of the improvements ACT Health and its staff have made since the initial site visit in March 2018.

The final Accreditation Survey Report observed that ACT Health underwent significant transformation to address the improvements required. It further noted that ACT Health has taken the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of sustainable systems and processes that provide direction and strong governance from both a corporate and clinical governance perspective.

The surveyors acknowledged and were impressed by the extensive work undertaken, staff engagement, leadership and commitment to achieve this result and to drive positive change in the culture of the organisation.

ACT Health was observed to have a positive culture of cohesion and teamwork, as well as a commitment to the delivery of safe and effective care. This has enabled the organisation to achieve great outcomes for all Canberrans. The surveyors are confident ACT Health will sustain these achievements due to the systems and processes implemented and its commitment to delivery of excellent and safe health care.

Examples of the exceptional improvements ACT Health have achieved include the active management of ligature points by ACT Health whilst still ensuring a recovery-focused environment for the consumer. The surveyors acknowledged the leadership of the Mental Health Justice Health Alcohol and Drug Service (MHJHADS) Division and the large body of work undertaken to address the recommendations.

The staff and leadership team in food and environmental services at ACT Health demonstrated to surveyors a “Can Do Approach” through the implementation of sustainable improvements. Surveyors commended ACT Health staff on their collaboration, leadership and commitment to improve the standards of care evident across the multidisciplinary team.

The surveyors applauded ACT Health for the positive and direct action that has occurred over the past three months in improving compliance with the use of the Surgical Safety Checklist. A robust and sustainable policy, including performance escalation pathways for ongoing individual non-compliance has been implemented. Effective communication and education processes have also been implemented to support staff and ensure they sustain this improvement.

Surveyors were impressed by ACT Health’s commitment to ensuring the delivery of quality patient care through improving timely completion of discharge reports. The work undertaken by an ACT Health General Practitioner (GP), with extensive forensic mental health qualifications and clinical experience, to review and complete complex mental health discharge summaries was recognised as outstanding.

Madam Speaker, the surveyors are so impressed by the improvements ACT Health has implemented they have encouraged ACT Health staff to publish and submit the improvement activities for national Quality Improvements Awards.

Minister Rattenbury and I have both congratulated and thanked ACT Health staff for their enormous effort, professionalism and dedication to this achievement.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Madam Speaker, improving quality and safety is an ongoing process in the health system that doesn't start or end with accreditation.

This is certainly something that ACT Health recognises.

ACT Health has already begun preparatory work for the next re-accreditation process, where it will be assessed against new and even more stringent National Standards – a challenge it is more than up to.

ACT Health's commitment to continuous improvement was recognised by the surveyors, who commented that the systems and processes put in place over the past few months will assist staff and the leadership to drive towards excellence and safety in all patient care services.

TRANSITION

Madam Speaker, as Minister for Health and Wellbeing I am committed to overseeing a health system that is constantly striving to improve safety and quality.

That is a big part of why the government took the decision in March to reform ACT Health into two distinct organisations.

As I have previously outlined, one organisation will be responsible for the clinical operations and will focus on the operational delivery of quality health services to the community.

It will be responsible for the delivery of healthcare in ACT Health acute, sub-acute and community health settings, as well as responsibility for driving continuous improvement in health service delivery.

The other will be responsible for strategic stewardship of the ACT's health system.

It will oversee the health system as a whole, set the strategic direction for health services, and health research and innovation and drive a preventative health approach, as well as provide health protection services.

Both organisations will be committed to keeping our community healthy through person-centred care, quality, innovation, engagement and accountability.

Madam Speaker, this organisational reform will ensure we have a sustainable health system that is better able to respond to our community's future health needs as we continue to grow and as our community changes.

There will be greater autonomy and clarity by having two organisations that are appropriately resourced and focused on what they need to do.

Madam Speaker, myself and Minister Rattenbury are being regularly updated on the progress ACT Health is making as we move towards 1 October 2018.

A Transition Office is facilitating the program of work to create the two new organisations.

The formation of two organisations means that some of the existing functions within ACT Health will either move or be restructured, while others will be required in both organisations.

As a result, an area of focus for the Transition Office has been on the enabling functions of ACT Health. This will ensure that the organisations are appropriately resourced to perform their specific functions.

A steering committee formed by ACT Health executive leaders has been established to guide the progress of the transition and to ensure effective decision making and governance.

A number of working groups have also been formed, utilising the subject matter expertise within the organisation to develop and progress detailed action plans to ensure the transition will be conducted in a timely manner.

Importantly, the Transition Office has factored many opportunities for staff engagement and consultation into its plans. This is to minimise disruption to the workforce, increase understanding of the changes being made and improve workforce readiness.

A series of workshops have commenced with leaders across ACT Health to ensure strategic alignment with the vision and objectives of the change, to create a guiding coalition of change leaders and to seek their engagement and input into the design of the organisations.

A set of design principles have been developed to guide the development of the structures.

On 14 August 2018, more than 140 leaders from across ACT Health came together for a collaborative leadership event. They discussed the importance of their roles in positively leading ACT Health staff through this time of change.

This event was an opportunity for leaders from across the broad spectrum of ACT Health to have input into the functional design of the two new organisations.

A draft functional design of the two new organisations was discussed and refined.

This was an important step in the design of the organisational structures.

Leaders also participated in process mapping exercises in order to get a greater understanding of how the organisations will interact under various scenarios.

I am pleased that recruitment for the positions of Director-General, ACT Health and the Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Hospital and Health Service is progressing for two such key leadership positions. I look forward to the announcement being made in the near future, following a national and international search.

Madam Speaker, transparent and accountable decision making will be key to the success of the transition program.

The Interim Director-General has provided, and will continue to provide, regular updates to staff on the transition via staff bulletins, face-to-face forums and a dedicated intranet page.

More detailed consultations around the structure of the two organisations will be conducted through the Transition Office in the coming weeks.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Madam Speaker, over the past three months, the ACT Health leadership team has worked hard to improve the organisational culture, particularly through the re-accreditation process.

The commitment from the leadership team is showing signs of a significant shift in the positivity of the workforce culture across the organisation.

Developing a high performing culture where people feel valued and are able to contribute and build effective partnerships is a high priority for ACT Health's leadership.

As part of the preparatory work for 1 October 2018, the Interim Director-General is leading a significant piece of organisational development work.

This work is focussed on the cultural needs of the organisations, in particular for the first six months of operations.

It is underpinned by a focus on values and genuine engagement with staff and leadership across the organisations. It will enable us to embed an even more positive culture across our health system.

This work includes a focus on building a cohesive, values-based executive team and on building an environment where collaboration can thrive.

There will be an increased focus on engagement and communication with staff and an increased focus on identifying and promoting the many instances of great care and service which happen across ACT Health every day.

There will also be a strong engagement with our tertiary stakeholders to ensure that we continue to be focused on learning and development. One particular initiative that is being driven by the Interim Director-General, ACT Health is to establish a Policy, Practice and Research Summit to develop health systems thinking. The inaugural Summit will take place in November 2018.

Madam Speaker, it is clear the culture within ACT Health has been improving greatly.

We want staff to feel safe and confident about raising issues, and there are a number of mechanisms currently available to staff to seek support. However I acknowledge, as does ACT Health, that sometimes people may not feel confident to go through these established processes.

That is why the Interim Director-General has met with the Health Services Commissioner to see what other avenues can be opened to staff who wish to raise concerns. The Health Services Commissioner is another option for staff to raise issues of culture if they so choose, and I am confident these measures – and the changes in Health’s leadership more recently – are improving the culture within the ACT Government’s largest organisation.

GENERAL

Madam Speaker, an enormous amount of work has occurred across the ACT Health Directorate to achieve accreditation. The final accreditation report details the outstanding achievements ACT Health have made over the last few months.

Staff have stepped up to this challenge, demonstrating outstanding commitment to the delivery of safe and effective care to the Canberra community.

In the words of the surveyors “this is no mean feat and everyone needs to recognise this achievement in a positive, productive light”.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, the final accreditation report and achievement of accreditation is a significant accomplishment for the ACT.

The outcome reflects the high quality of work being performed daily basis and the dedication of ACT Health to delivering Canberrans the safe and quality health care services they expect and deserve.

March 2018 marked a point in time when ACT Health staff at all levels stood up and said “we are proud and we are committed to delivering the best possible health care to our community”.

Significant improvements have been made during the re-accreditation process and all staff should feel proud.

The organisational reform will ensure we continue to see profound improvements in our health system and will ensure our community continues to receive the quality and safe health care it expects and deserves.

Because we know as our community grows that our community’s changing health care needs must be met. This years’ Budget continues to invest in our community’s health, spending ACT taxpayers’ money responsibly and sustainably.

We will continue to invest in clinical capacity, such as additional beds at our hospital, more nurse led walk in centres, more mental health services and a major expansion of Hospital in the Home. We will keep investing in our health system as well; planning truly territory wide health services, improving health literacy through individual and environmental health literacy, and continuing our focus on prevention. The important work in mental health led and driven by Minister Rattenbury and

including the establishment of the Office for Mental Health, will also continue to be a priority.

As I have also outlined above we will invest in our health workforce by insisting on a positive organisational culture, building leadership capacity and engaging with staff. We will work side by side with our workforce and their representatives to improve access to training and development and ensuring safe staffing levels. We will find new and exciting ways to support and encourage clinical research and innovation, and to leverage the ACT's unique and rich tertiary sector, especially by deepening our engagement and collaboration with the Australian National University and University of Canberra.

We will work closely with the primary care sector and strengthen our collaboration for the benefit of patients and their families. And we will continue to work with our valued community sector partners, many of whom not only deliver vital healthcare services but also provide insight and advocacy on behalf of many members of our community.

We do this because we know deeply on this side of the chamber that a person's health is affected by social and economic conditions and that is why a universal healthcare is so vital for the health and wellbeing of our community. We know we must continue to meet our community's healthcare needs and that the best way we can do this is to invest in a healthcare system that focuses on keeping people healthy and well, on supporting them to access healthcare closer to home, and investing in care to keep people out of hospital. This sets us apart from others, who seek to cut health services and take a narrow lens about what keeps our community healthy and well.

As we continue to invest in this future for our community and I would like to acknowledge and thank again, on behalf of Minister Rattenbury and myself and the ACT Government all of the staff at ACT Health for their commitment and effort throughout the accreditation process and in the work they do every day, dedicated to the health of our community.