

2019

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE
INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE WORKPLACE CULTURE WITHIN
ACT PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**

**Presented by
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Minister for Health and Wellbeing
16 May 2019**

Madam Speaker, I rise today to table the Government's response to the Final Report of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services.

Members will recall that I tabled the Final Report of the Review on 19 March 2019.

As foreshadowed upon the release of the Final Report, the Government has agreed to all 20 recommendations put forward by the Panel, and to the broad implementation timeline included in the Report.

This Response is the Government's formal endorsement of those recommendations in the Final Report.

It is the next step in cementing the Government's commitment to improving the workplace culture within our public health system and through that, enhancing the level of service to the Canberra community.

Members will recall that I established the Independent Review on 10 September 2018, and that the Terms of Reference for the Review and details of the Independent Panel were released by me on 21 September 2018.

I remind Members that the Terms of Reference for the Review tasked the Independent Panel to:

- Examine and report on the workplace culture of public health care services in the ACT and provide advice on any systemic and institutional issues.

This examination was to consider any examples of best practice workplace culture and professional conduct in the delivery of public health care in the ACT, nationally and internationally.

- Examine claims made in relation to inappropriate conduct and behaviours.
- Examine and report on the existing workforce policies and complaints management practices to ensure their relevance and appropriateness. AND
- Provide recommendations for further improving workplace culture across the ACT public health system, and any additional support systems required for staff and management.

The Panel delivered its Interim Report to me on 30 January 2019 and it was subsequently released publicly on 1 February 2019.

The Final Report was released publicly on 7 March 2019 and, as I said earlier, tabled here on 19 March 2019.

The key themes highlighted in the Report indicate that:

- Staff members within the public health system have been subjected to inappropriate behaviours, including bullying and harassment, in the workplace;
- There are inefficient processes to manage complaints handling;
- Additional training is required to support management in dealing with inappropriate workplace practices;
- There is an inability to make timely decisions;
- Some Human Resource practices are inefficient and inappropriate;
- Historically there has been a lack of effective leadership and management throughout the ACT Public health System; and

- There is a need to ensure greater clinical engagement to ensure that the system can benefit from expert knowledge and input of individuals.

The Review Panel recognised in the report that, over the last 12 months, work has already begun to improve workplace culture.

The panel also acknowledged the positive effect that this has had within the workplace.

This Government Response marks the formal endorsement and commitment to implement the recommendations made by the Independent Panel.

This implementation phase will officially take place over the next three years, but the ongoing work in ensuring that the ACT public health system as an excellent workplace, will be enduring.

The ACT Government recognises the importance of working closely with staff and stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in a way that drives the enduring change we need to see.

And work towards establishing the implementation has already begun.

The Government has already established a strong governance framework to ensure that implementation of the recommendations made by the Review Panel is effective, efficient and accountable.

The ACT Health Directorate, as system steward, will lead the response to ensure that a consistent, territory-wide approach is taken.

The Government has ensured that there will be governance oversight at the highest level. The Culture Review Oversight Group will provide leadership and scrutiny of the implementation process.

The inaugural meeting of the Culture Review Oversight Group was held on 28 March 2019, chaired by me, with the Minister for Mental Health as the Deputy Chair. It included key senior stakeholders and the senior executive leadership team of the public health system - in line with Recommendation 18 of the Final Report of the Independent Review.

At this first meeting of the Culture Review Oversight Group, we spent time ensuring the structures for the Oversight Group would enable it to operate effectively, and this included expanding the membership to include the Deans of the Faculties of Health from the Australian National University and the University of Canberra, and also the presidents of the ACT chapters of ASMOF and the VMOA.

The membership of the Oversight Group today is:

- Professor Russell Gruen, Dean, College of Health and Medicine ANU
- Professor Michelle Lincoln, Executive Dean, Faculty of Health, University of Canberra
- Mr Matthew Daniel, Branch Secretary, ANMF ACT
- Dr Antonio Di Dio, President, AMA ACT

- Ms Madeline Northam, Regional Secretary, CPSU
- Ms Darlene Cox, Executive Director, Health Care Consumers Association ACT
- Dr Richard Singer, President, ASMOF ACT
- Dr Peter Hughes, President, VMOA ACT
- Mr Michael De'Ath, Director-General, Health Directorate
- Ms Bernadette McDonald, Chief Executive Officer, Canberra Health Services
- Ms Barbara Reid, Regional Chief Executive Officer, Calvary ACT

I am the Chair of this group, and Minister Rattenbury is the Deputy Chair.

The meeting considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Oversight Group in line with the recommendations of the Independent Review, which will be finalised following the next meeting of the Oversight Group, and members committed to overseeing the implementation of the Independent Review's recommendations in a timely manner.

The Culture Review Oversight Group will meet every three months.

The Oversight Group will be supported in its work by the Culture Review Implementation Steering Group, which is made up of senior executive leaders from across the ACT public health system.

The Steering Group met on 13 May 2019 and began the mapping of the work towards implementation of the recommendations.

The senior executive leadership team has established a dedicated Culture Review Implementation team within the Directorate to support, coordinate and facilitate implementation across the public health system.

The executive structures within the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce have been, or are in the process of being, reformed to ensure that we have the right people in place to lead a contemporary health service across the ACT.

There has been rigorous focus on stabilising and refining organisational structures, working closely with all staff.

The Government was pleased to read in the Final Report that cautious optimism was expressed by many within the service regarding the new leadership.

Recognising the territory-wide focus, re-engagement with staff will occur across each of the three arms of the ACT Public Health System.

In line with Recommendation One of the Final Report, Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate are embarking on projects to review their vision, values, role and behaviours.

These projects will seek to ensure that, with the recent transition of ACT Health to two organisations, the vision and values of the new organisations are contemporary and clearly understood. This work will be completed by September 2019, and there will be significant staff engagement as these projects are rolled out with a view to embedding the vision and values from November 2019.

As Members are aware, Calvary Public Hospital's values and vision are in line with the Little Company of Mary.

As a key partner in the delivery of territory-wide services, Calvary will undergo re-engagement with staff to ensure the vision and values are understood and embedded.

Madam Speaker, the Independent Review panel fundamentally addressed and understood the core of the culture issues in the ACT public health system, and has allowed staff and stakeholders to be heard, to share their experiences, their stories and contribute in a positive way to real change.

The Final Report has provided a clear way forward for the Government.

The Government would like to again acknowledge and thank the Independent Panel members: the Chair, Mr Mick Reid, Ms Fiona Brew and Professor David Watters for their expertise, leadership and compassionate approach in their conduct of this Review.

Madam Speaker, I wish to re-iterate that the Government has agreed to all the recommendations and the broad implementation timeline.

Many of the initiatives will be ongoing and are aimed at embedding best practice and continuous improvement throughout the ACT Public Health System.

And I would like to take this opportunity to assure staff, stakeholders and the community that the Government will implement the recommendations of the Independent Panel and will do so in the same spirit of sincerity with which it embarked on the Review.

In line with the Recommendation 17 of the Final Report, and the tabling of the Government Response myself, the Minister for Mental Health, the Director-General of ACT Health Directorate, the Chief Executive Officer of Canberra Health Services and the Regional Chief Executive Officer of Calvary ACT will today make a public commitment to collectively implement the review's recommendations to ensure ongoing cultural improvement across the ACT Public Health System.

Madam Speaker, the government is committed to providing Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly with a biannual update on progress in implementing the Recommendations over the next three years.

I look forward to sharing with you all the work that is underway to implement the recommendations contained in the Final Report in my first biannual update, later this year.

I am confident that there will be further improvement and change in the workplace culture across our health system, which will further improve the good work that is currently underway across the system.

The effect of this will be a better public health system for the Canberra community, and a healthier staff culture.

ENDS