

**2020**

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

**STATEMENT**

**BIANNUAL UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE FINAL REPORT - INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE WORKPLACE  
CULTURE WITHIN ACT PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**

**Presented by  
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA  
Minister for Health  
27 August 2020**

This statement respects the commitment made by the former Minister for Health and Wellbeing on 16 May 2019 to provide the Assembly with biannual updates on the actions being taken in response to the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services.

In April 2020, I provided members with the second update on the substantial work that had progressed against the recommendations in the Review.

The impact of COVID-19 on the health system has had some impact on the progress of work over the last few months. However, today I will provide members with an update on the significant work that has progressed against the recommendations in the Review – at a system-wide level, and within each of the three arms of the public health system.

On 4 June 2020, I tabled the report of the Inaugural Annual Review that was undertaken by Mr Mick Reid from Michael Reid and Associates.

The two governance committees that oversee and drive the implementation of the recommendations of the Review, the Culture Review Oversight Group (CROG) and Culture Review Implementation Steering Group (CRISG), have been considering the findings from the Annual Review and incorporating this in their future planning.

As recommended from the Inaugural Review, the CROG held a strategic workshop on 25 August 2020. At the forum, we considered the roles and responsibilities of committee members, the CROG's future focus and how it will operate as a group collectively committed to delivering real and sustainable improvement in culture across the ACT health system.

As noted in the Inaugural Annual Review, significant culture reform requires sustained effort over several years, but positive improvements are already being seen.

The work occurring across the system will ultimately drive embedded and sustained cultural change. This will create an environment where our workforce feels supported, valued and empowered to deliver exceptional health care and enhance patient and consumer outcomes and experience.

### **Strong Governance to support our work**

A strong governance framework continues to oversee the program of work. The CROG, which I chair, has met on seven occasions with the purpose of the group being to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Final Report. The CRISG, chaired by the Director-General of ACT Health, facilitates the implementation of the recommendations of the Review and has met 11 times.

Engagement with key stakeholders across the health system continues through a range of forums including the:

- NGO Leadership Group;
- Clinical Leadership Forum; and
- Professional Colleges Advisory Committee.

### **Progress over the last six months**

Over the last six months, effort on a range of initiatives has progressed, commenced and will continue to develop over the coming months.

All three organisations in the ACT public health system continue to embed and incorporate their vision, values and desired behaviours into organisational and people-related practices. This has also included deliberate integration into organisation-wide strategic planning, cascading through to division and business unit planning, and ultimately being integrated into individual performance discussions and planning.

At Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, training for the 'Speaking up for Safety' program recommenced in July 2020 following a pause due to COVID-19.

Planning continues for the Senior Clinicians and Administrators' Summit. However, it is anticipated that the summit will be deferred to the first half of 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19 on clinical services and the availability of staff to attend. This offers significant opportunity for discussion and it is critical that we enable comprehensive engagement through having diverse attendance.

ACT Health Directorate has focussed on re-establishing open lines of communication with the non-government organisation sector in the ACT and has worked closely with the NGO Leadership Group through the pandemic response. This engagement has demonstrated the Directorate's positive commitment made to rebuilding trust amongst important service providers. Through this collaboration innovative solutions have been developed to address issues in a responsive and timely way.

In relation to recommendation eight, discussions continue between the ACT and NSW governments in renegotiating the memorandum of understanding for regional collaboration. These discussions are positive and continue to bode well for future collaboration.

In response to recommendation 11, Canberra Health Services has established the Choosing Wisely Low Value Care Steering Committee to provide leadership and coordination in adopting the Choosing Wisely program. The Steering Committee is implementing actions and initiatives in a coordinated and sustained manner across Canberra Health Services. Three projects have been identified for implementation, and the first of these 'Pathology Quality Ordering Project' has commenced.

In response to recommendation 14 of the Review, ACT Health Directorate has contracted Workplace Research Associates to undertake a review of the HR functions across all three organisations in the ACT public health system. The HR Review will enable the assessment of each organisation's current state and outline recommendations to support the maturity of HR models and their capacity to meet future organisational requirements.

It is anticipated that the HR Review will articulate the HR functions, resourcing requirements and capabilities required to deliver on both strategic and operational commitments. The consultation phase of this project was temporarily paused due to the impact of COVID-19 and the availability of staff, but all consultations have now been completed and the draft report is expected to be provided in early September 2020.

I have spoken previously about the range of foundational work that is being undertaken across the ACT public health system to strengthen the support networks available to our staff. This work has included mapping the application of the Respect, Equity and Diversity Contact Officer network and the complaints and grievance process to ensure there is consistent application of relevant policies, processes, procedures and role clarity. These activities are integral to building the confidence of our workforce and promoting a healthier culture and have been an important opportunity to explore how we can improve our processes. The mapping of the complaints and grievances process has been finalised with all three organisations currently developing action plans to implement.

### **ACT Public Health System Workplace Culture Framework**

Sustainable organisational and cultural change takes time. The partnership with the Australian National University's Research School of Management to develop the ACT Public Health System Workplace Culture Framework provides an evidence-based approach to inform organisational and cultural change. This has been an important part of our deliberate investment in a systematic and coordinated approach to improving the 'people' aspect of ACT public health services.

The Workplace Culture Framework was informed by the recommendations from the Independent Review and through the assessment of available evidence, such as literature reviews, as well as engagement with professionals through facilitated conversations to understand ACT-specific issues.

Work is now progressing on the translation and application of the Framework across the ACT public health system. This includes the development of an Organisation Culture Maturity Model which will enable each of the three organisations to assess their progress through their culture journey.

The Workplace Culture Framework and the supporting Workplace Skills Development Model provide the scaffolding for the health system to progress recommendations 13 and 16. This work includes developing new management and leadership training programs and undertaking a review of current people management training programs.

It is essential that workers across the ACT's public health services feel safe, supported, valued and engaged. For that to occur, communication needs to be frequent and relevant. The current Communications Strategy is supported by an Action Plan for each phase of the program, but a key topic of conversation at the CROG workshop on 25 August was how to better communicate the connection between changes staff are seeing on the ground and system-level reform.

There is a significant amount of work underway and planned for the coming months, with deliberate investment in developing and shaping positive workplaces across the ACT public health system. The gains achieved to date have been supported through the findings from the Inaugural Review earlier this year, while noting that there is more to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone across the ACT public health system for their commitment to developing initiatives and approaches to support positive culture change. In particular, I thank the members of the CRISG and CROG who are driving and overseeing this work, and the professional colleges, non-government organisations, clinical leaders and consumer and carer representatives who are closely engaged in the process and outcomes. We all recognise that cultural change will benefit the entire workforce of the three services, as well as patients, their families and carers and our non-government partners.

Our goal continues to be creating an environment where our workforce feels supported, valued and empowered to deliver exceptional health care and enhance patient and consumer outcomes and experiences.