

2019

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

MINISTERIAL 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
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Minister for Health
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Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to update Assembly on the work underway to develop a positive culture within ACT Public Health Services, in line with the commitment made by the former Minister for Health and Wellbeing on 16 May 2019.

Members will recall that in tabling the Government Response to the 'Final Report of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services' (Culture Review), the Minister committed to providing members of the ACT Legislative Assembly a biannual update on progress against the recommendations.

Madam Speaker, we will shortly mark one year since the establishment of the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services as separate entities. Much of the considerable work underway across the ACT Public Health System really commenced some 12 months ago, across these two organisations and within Calvary's public services.

At a high level, we are developing a system-wide approach within the ACT that recognises there are some things that differentiate the ACT public health system from other jurisdictions. The whole-of-system approach also acknowledges the organisational differences between the entities that comprise the system. The purpose of developing a system-wide approach is to deliver meaningful cultural change that can be sustained and measured over the medium to long term.

This work is being supported by immediate, detailed work within each organisation that specifically targets the challenges identified not only in the Culture Review, but by the new leadership of the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services.

Our goal is for the ACT health system's workforce to feel safe, supported, valued and engaged. This is directly related to enhancing patient outcomes and experience.

The considerable whole-of-system work underway is currently in the initiation and planning phase, with the focus being on establishing strong foundations to ensure success as the program develops and initiatives are implemented. The focus at this time has been on establishing strong governance processes, coupled with ensuring that executive leaders have been appointed to ensure that we have the right people in place to lead a contemporary health service across the ACT.

Madam Speaker, I would like to outline the foundational activities undertaken to date to progress this important work.

A strong governance framework is recognised as one indicator of a positive workplace culture. The Government established the Culture Review Oversight Group to support and oversee the implementation of the recommendations, in line with Recommendation 18 of the Review. To date the Oversight Group has met three times, with agreement at the most recent meeting on 4 September to increase the frequency being increased from quarterly to bi-monthly. It was certainly heartening to hear at the September meeting, which was my first meeting with the group, that people are feeling optimistic about the work underway.

As you may recall, on 16 May, the former Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Mental Health, Director-General ACT Health Directorate, Chief Executive Officer Canberra Health Services and Regional Chief Executive Officer Calvary ACT, signed a public commitment to collectively implement the recommendations from the

Culture Review to ensure that cultural reform remains a priority across the Public Health Services.

To further support this commitment, other members of the Culture Review Oversight Group unanimously agreed to state their commitment in supporting and driving a positive workplace culture across the ACT public health system. The organisation representatives on the Oversight Group signed a stakeholder commitment at the 4 September meeting. This supports Recommendation 17 from the Review.

To support the Oversight Group, the Culture Review Implementation Steering Group was formed. This is a forum that facilitates the implementation of the recommendations of the Review with a strong focus on implementation and application from a people perspective.

The Steering Group is chaired by the Director-General ACT Health Directorate and comprises the Chief Executive Officer Canberra Health Services, the Regional Chief Executive Officer of Calvary ACT, and the Human Resources executives of the three organisations.

The Steering Group meets on a monthly basis, with the inaugural meeting having taken place on 13 May 2019. To date, four meetings of the Steering Group have occurred.

The Culture Review highlighted the fact that clinical engagement throughout the ACT public health system needs to be significantly improved. We are acting on this in a range of ways. At the organisational level, the refreshed executive team in Canberra Health Services is in no doubt that engaging clinicians to participate in conversations about safety, quality and hospital performance is a core part of their job.

The Clinical Leadership Forum has also been established to provide direct feedback to me and the Minister for Mental Health. It held its inaugural meeting on 24 July 2019 and is meeting again this week. The Forum provides a significant opportunity to seek input from clinicians into planning for Territory-wide health service delivery. I am pleased to say that Forum members are enthusiastically embracing this opportunity and thinking hard about their role in engaging fellow clinicians; and about where they can make a difference in providing practical input on issues such as how ACT health services can work better with the Local Hospital Networks across southern NSW to improve patient outcomes.

In response to feedback from a number of the professional Colleges and Associations that they were keen to play a formal role in Culture Review implementation, and health system improvements more generally, I have also agreed to establish a Clinical Stakeholder and Advisory Committee, with the timing of meetings aligned to enable feedback from the Culture Review Oversight Group and input to the Oversight Group meetings. I look forward to attending the first meeting of this forum in the next few weeks.

These various forums provide a structured approach to engaging with key stakeholders to inform the development of initiatives that address the recommendations of the Culture Review. They also respond directly to those recommendations – particularly Recommendation 9.

Other fora that have been initiated include the ACT Health and Wellbeing and Partnership Board. The purpose of the Board is to discuss significant matters affecting health and medical research and workforce development across Canberra Health Services, ACT Health

Directorate, Calvary ACT, the University of Canberra and the Australian National University, with significant contribution from the Health Care Consumers' Association. This initiative is both reflected in and responds to Recommendation 7 of the Culture Review.

Work is also underway to re-establish positive relationships with our non-government organisation partners, in line with Recommendation 6. NGOs are vital to service delivery in so many areas and it is very important that these relationships are strong and built on open communication. I have been pleased to hear from the organisations I've met with so far that, again, they are optimistic things are improving.

Madam Speaker, the Review acknowledged considerable challenges with leadership across the ACT public health system. Over the last 12 months, there has been an emphasis on ensuring the right executives have been selected in the right roles to lead a contemporary health service across the ACT and support the strategic direction of the ACT public health system. I feel incredibly fortunate to have come into the role of Minister for Health with the leadership we now have in place.

The Culture Review recommended the introduction of an executive leadership and mentoring program to develop current and future leaders (Recommendation 13). Planning for a specific program is underway, but in the meantime there has been significant work done in identifying where executive staff need further support and working with them to ensure they have the skills and capabilities to support their teams.

In line with Recommendation 1 of the Review, all organisations within the ACT public health system have been concentrating on reviewing organisational visions and values. Efforts have been focussed on

working with staff to identify and recognise organisational values, develop a vision and work towards embedding the values in all aspects of their work and interactions.

Canberra Health Services commenced this work in January, starting with the development of a new shared vision for the organisation. Eighty staff from across CHS were trained and supported to have conversations with colleagues, patients and carers to develop the new CHS Vision and Role. On 14 May, the outcomes were announced, with CHS' new vision being "Creating Exceptional Health Care Together" and its role "To be a health service that is trusted by our community".

The next step was to develop the shared values of the organisation and the behaviours that reflect those values. On 22 August, the CEO announced that, after more than 7,700 conversations, CHS staff have identified their values and associated core behaviours as:

1. We are Reliable – we always do what we say.
2. We are Progressive – we embrace innovation.
3. We are Respectful – we value everyone.
4. We are Kind – we make everyone feel welcome and safe.

The Health Directorate has also conducted values workshops and round-table discussions to refresh its values. Recently, the Director-General issued a call for new Values Champions, who will play an active role in driving organisational change and creating new and interesting ways to cultivate the Directorate's values of Respect, Integrity, Collaboration and Innovation.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the thousands of CHS and Directorate staff for their engagement in the values refresh work. We know that having these shared values established is just the end of the beginning, and there is still much to do to ensure the values are embedded and lived by staff every day. But knowing what you should expect of your colleagues and being empowered to call it out when people are behaving inappropriately is an important foundation.

Madam Speaker, we have all been concerned about allegations of bullying and harassment that have arisen prior to and during the Culture Review. Effectively managing such allegations is crucial to building trust and embedding cultural change. But we also know that rebuilding trust within each organisation so that people feel safe to formally report issues will not happen overnight. That's why the recent establishment of the Employee Advocate position is so important.

The Employee Advocate role has been established to support staff within the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services. The purpose of the role is to assist staff who are experiencing workplace conflict, bullying, harassment or interpersonal issues in the workplace. The Employee Advocate provides support and advice about options available, assists staff to confidently progress options, arranges facilitated conversations to repair workplace relationships, organises mediation to settle longer-term disputes and refers matters for further assessment or investigation, if needed.

Other roles that have been established at Canberra Health Services include the Human Resource Business Partners; the Manager, Workforce Inclusion; and the Director, Workforce Planning. This directly

responds to Recommendation 14 of the review, which stated that the three arms of the health system should review their human resources staffing numbers and functions to improve timeliness of, and confidence in, HR procedures.

The ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services are also developing a methodology and approach to consistently manage staffing concerns. At the same time, Calvary has reviewed and updated its policies and procedures around the Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the governance and oversight work and the very practical work with staff that I have described, there has been considerable foundational work done to ensure we can keep building on the efforts to date.

The Culture Review Implementation Branch has been established with expertise in people and change; project management; communications; human resource management; engagement and workforce data. The purpose of the Branch is to support the development and shaping of a system-wide approach to reforming our culture. This is complemented by the commencement of a Project Director, Positive Workplace Culture at Canberra Health Services.

There has been considerable investment in the development of a partnership with the Australian National University's Research School of Management that will provide expertise founded in an evidenced-based approach to supporting people working in complex organisations. This will enable deliberate investment in a systematic methodology for facilitating, managing and sustaining cultural change.

The first phase of work will focus on the development of an ACT Public Health System Culture Change Framework – an evidence-based model to inform a positive workplace culture in the healthcare setting. This model will be researched, developed and evaluated in the ACT, based on international research and experience.

Madam Speaker, this represents a deliberate and considered approach to positively evolving the culture across our public health system. This will take time, but it is important if we are going to create long-term change. We are investing in a coordinated approach, that is based on the best evidence available and informed by our people. The Framework will inform specific initiatives from 2020 and enable improvements to be measured and reported on.

This work relates to Recommendation 3 of the Culture Review, which proposed that the ACT public health system adopt a model or program for promoting a healthier culture based on the Vanderbilt University Medical Center Patient Advocacy Reporting System and Co-Worker Observation Reporting System. In undertaking the work to develop a system-wide Culture Framework for the ACT, there will be a review and assessment of the Vanderbilt programs and others that have an existing evidence base.

Madam Speaker, the Review made clear that, in order for cultural change to be embedded across the ACT public health system, a robust and strategic approach to communications needs to be adopted. Communication will be integral to the engagement and ongoing support of our staff in understanding the context of change and to identify the vision of our system in evolving a positive culture system-wide.

A communications strategy has been developed that identifies our audiences and stakeholders, and how, when and where they will be informed about the implementation of the recommendations from the Review. This supports Recommendation 20 from the Review.

Our objective is for the hard-working staff across our health system to feel safe, supported, valued and engaged. For that to occur, engagement has been and will continue to be frequent, guiding the workforce through meaningful change to improve the culture.

Madam Speaker, as I have outlined, two recommendations of the Review have been completed (Recommendations 17 and 18) and significant work is underway to address the remaining 18.

I am confident that, with the leadership we now have in place and the goodwill of staff and stakeholders, we will see real, positive and lasting change in the workplace culture across our health system. This will not only be better for staff, but also for patients, carers and stakeholders.

In closing I want to record my thanks to everyone in the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services, Calvary ACT and the many consumer, clinical, professional, union and community partners who are all pulling together to ensure our system delivers both great health services and great places to work and train.

ENDS