

Dear [REDACTED]

### **DECISION ON YOUR ACCESS APPLICATION**

I refer to your application under section 30 of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (FOI Act), received originally by Community Services Directorate (CSD) and transferred under Section 57 of the FOI Act to the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) on **Wednesday 15 December 2021**.

This application requested access to:

*"Under the provisions of the ACT Freedom of Information Act 2016, asking for copies of all information relating to current "thin markets" for skills associated with autism diagnosis that is either a) held by the Child and Community Services Directorate, or b) provided to the ACT Minister for Disability, the ACT Minister for Health or the ACT Minister for Mental Health, over the past two years (30 November 2019 – 30 November 2021). Note: the Minister for Disability spoke about alleged "thin markets" in her speech, see <https://aod.parliament.act.gov.au/A95768> (soon after 3:44:58 pm)."*

I am an Information Officer appointed by the Director-General of ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) under section 18 of the FOI Act to deal with access applications made under Part 5 of the Act. ACTHD was required to provide a decision on your access application by **Monday 17 January 2022**.

I have identified one document holding the information within scope of your access application. My access decisions are detailed further in the following statement of reasons and the documents released to you are provided as Attachment A to this letter.

In reaching my access decision, I have taken the following into account:

- The FOI Act;
- The contents of the documents that fall within the scope of your request; and
- The *Human Rights Act 2004*.

#### **Decisions on access**

I have decided to grant full access to the one document.

#### **Charges**

Processing charges are not applicable to this request.

#### **Disclosure Log**

Under section 28 of the FOI Act, ACTHD maintains an online record of access applications called a disclosure log. The scope of your access application, my decision and documents released to you will be published in the disclosure log not less than three days but not more than 10 days after the date of this decision. Your personal contact details will not be published.

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/freedom-information/disclosure-log>

### **Ombudsman review**

My decision on your access request is a reviewable decision as identified in Schedule 3 of the FOI Act. You have the right to seek Ombudsman review of this outcome under section 73 of the Act within 20 working days from the day that my decision is published in ACT Health's disclosure log, or a longer period allowed by the Ombudsman.

If you wish to request a review of my decision you may write to the Ombudsman at:

The ACT Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Via email: [ACTFOI@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ACTFOI@ombudsman.gov.au)  
Website: [ombudsman.act.gov.au](http://ombudsman.act.gov.au)

### **ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) review**

Under section 84 of the Act, if a decision is made under section 82(1) on an Ombudsman review, you may apply to the ACAT for review of the Ombudsman decision. Further information may be obtained from the ACAT at:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal  
Level 4, 1 Moore St  
GPO Box 370  
Canberra City ACT 2601  
Telephone: (02) 6207 1740  
<http://www.acat.act.gov.au/>

### **Further assistance**

Should you have any queries in relation to your request, please do not hesitate to contact the FOI Coordinator on (02) 5124 9831 or email [HealthFOI@act.gov.au](mailto:HealthFOI@act.gov.au)

Yours sincerely



Sallyanne Pini  
**A/g Executive Branch Manager, Office of the Director-General**  
ACT Health Directorate

14 January 2022



**TALKING POINTS**  
**GBC21/785 - Assembly Business - Minister**  
**for Mental Health Talking Points - Private**  
**Members Motion - Private Members Bill**  
**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

*Date: 23 November 2021*

**SUBJECT: Assembly Business - Minister for Mental Health Talking Points - Private Members Motion - Private Members Bill Autism Spectrum Disorder**

**KEY MESSAGES:**

- **People with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience higher rates of mental disorders.**
- **ACT Health, in collaboration with the Office for Disability, are co-designing the ACT Disability Health Strategy with the ACT disability community to ensure better health outcomes for people with disabilities, their families, and carers.**
- **Canberra Health Services is also developing a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) which will embed improvements to access, inclusion and participation of people with a disability in our health services.**

**Talking points**

- We know that people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience higher rates of mental disorders, currently estimated to be between 50-70 per cent. Delayed diagnosis is likely to exacerbate psychosocial stress, with people reporting their experiences of being different, not fitting in, social challenges, increased isolation, misunderstood behaviours and challenges of coping with their environments, which may contribute to the development of mental health concerns and mental illness.
- People with ASD can have multiple comorbidities, and may be misdiagnosed, which could further contribute to the stresses they experience.
- It is important that healthcare professionals, across public and private settings, have the necessary skills to effectively be able to diagnose or refer individuals to appropriate diagnostic services. Ensuring there is adequate access and availability of this training for healthcare professionals is an important element of health workforce strategies.
- In 2020 the ACT Government committed to developing and implementing an ACT Disability Health Strategy (the Strategy) in the *Parliamentary and Governing Agreement 10th Legislative Assembly Australian Capital Territory 2020*.
- ACT Health, in collaboration with the Office for Disability, are co-designing the Strategy with the ACT disability community to ensure better health outcomes for people with disabilities, their families, and carers. This includes people with ASD, their families and carers. It will be influenced by the Social Model of Disability, the Principles of Universal Design, and the Principles of Reasonable Adjustments.

- The Strategy, which commenced in April 2021, will be delivered in three phases. Phase One consists of a Scoping Study to inform the Strategy and a Listening Report. Phase One will be completed in December 2021. Phase Two will see development of the Strategy and First Action Plan and this will be completed in 2022. Phase Three will see the launch and implementation of the Strategy and First Action Plan during 2023.
- The Disability Royal Commission is now due to deliver a final report the Australian Government by 29 September 2023. As such, a further Phase 4 may be undertaken by the ACT Health Directorate to determine if an annexure is required to further align the Disability Health Strategy with the Disability Royal Commission final report recommendations.
- Canberra Health Services is also developing a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) which will embed improvements to access, inclusion and participation of people with a disability in our health services. By developing and implementing the DAIP, CHS will focus on the needs of people with disability within CHS service delivery, offer and make reasonable adjustments and ensure information is made accessible.

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**Action Officer:** Maria Travers, Executive Branch Manager, Health Policy and Strategy

**Cleared By:** Michael Culhane, Executive Group Manager, Policy, Partnerships and Programs

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