



## HCCA initial response to the ACT Budget 2019/20

Overall the Government has managed to deliver a budget that meets increasing demand for many health and hospital services through commitments to infrastructure and service development.

We know that there is significant pressure on our public hospital system. Canberra Hospital is one of the busiest Emergency Departments in the country. Calvary continues to experience increase in the number of people presenting there. And the Outpatients Departments are busier than ever. This Budget will go some way to addressing this need.

The ACT budget for health and hospitals is \$1.8 billion, almost a third of the total ACT budget (31%). The Budget addresses the need to renew or replace ageing infrastructure in the acute and community settings. We welcome this investment and are also pleased to see additional funding to improve access to services. A summary of the 2019-20 ACT Budget, highlighting the investments that the Government is making in the public health system is [available here](#).

In our submission to the ACT Budget we called for a range of initiatives to be supported. This is [available here](#).

Of these a number have been supported.

We advocated for the establishment of a **palliative care** ward at Canberra Hospital. If a Federal Labor Government had been in place this would have occurred. Still, we are very pleased to see a commitment given to INSPIRED program. And we welcome the commitment to expanding Clare Holland House.

We are also very pleased to see funding for the development of a **multidisciplinary transvaginal mesh service**. This will be codesigned with consumers.

We were seeking funds to support the development of a **patient navigation service** to better support people with complex and chronic conditions to access the care they need to keep them as well as possible and link to the health and support services that are critical to that. We are disappointed that there was no commitment given to progressing the development of such a service.

We are also disappointed that there was no announcement about the **expansion of the Canberra Sexual Health Centre**. We had called on the Government to increase funding for the Canberra Sexual Health Centre and establish a publicly available sexual health centre on the northside of Canberra.

A very high proportion of people using public adult mental health services have experienced single or multiple incidents of trauma. **Trauma-Informed Care and Practice** offers a framework for providing services to individuals who have experienced trauma. All aspects of the service are informed by the recognition and acknowledgement of trauma, an understanding of its prevalence, and an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the physical, emotional and psychological needs of consumers.

HCCA and the Mental Health Consumer Network requested funding in the budget to embed trauma-informed care and practice in the AMHDS. This request has not been met. We will continue to advocate for this through the work related to the Culture Review, the project at Canberra Health Services on reducing violence and agreeing in their services and through the adoption of Safewards.

We had advocated for more services for people living with **chronic pain**. The current Pain Clinic at Canberra Hospital Pain management services Australia-wide are unable to meet demand, and the situation is worse for people using publicly funded services. We know this is the case in the ACT. In our budget submission we called in the government to increase funding for the Canberra Hospital Pain Management Unit. Our request was not met but there is support in the Budget for \$1.6m over four years to increase staffing for **rheumatology services** at The Canberra Hospital. This will help meet demand and reduce waiting times, as well as providing alternative care pathways to prevent avoidable Emergency Department presentations. This will go some way to supporting people living with pain but is more work to do.

We are pleased to see there is flexible funding to support the implementation of the final report of the Independent Review into the **Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services**. The ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and Calvary Health Care have made a commitment to work together to improve culture of public health services and the \$4m has been allocated for each year across the next three financial years. We will be expecting to see this money used to support the introduction of [Safewards](#) across mental health services as well as the introduction of [Choosing Wisely](#)

In the next pages we set out a number of the funding commitments that will improve access to health care for people in the Canberra Region.

The budget papers also allows us to examine the performance of the health system in light of the performance indicators outlined in the budget papers, and this is discussed below.

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5 June 2019

## Highlights

The following commits are welcome. They are for relatively small amounts of money but will make a significant impact.

### **Establishment of the Transvaginal Mesh Service (\$771k over four years)**

Euphemistically referred to as “More specialised women’s health care” This is an excellent announcement to establish a dedicated multidisciplinary Transvaginal Mesh Service. This service will be codesigned with consumers and will provide ongoing support and clinical care for women affected by transvaginal mesh procedures. HCCA looks forward to working with Canberra Health Services on this initiative.

### **Palliative Care for Older People Living in Residential Care (\$1.6M over four years)**

This is a good announcement that will make a difference to the lives of many people. It supports the delivery of the INSPIRED program in all ACT residential aged care facilities. The program supports residential facility staff to integrate specialist palliative care into their practices and will respond to growing demand for services that sensitively and respectfully support older Canberrans with their end of life needs. HCCA is a great supporter of this program and very pleased to see this supported.

### **More staffing for the Fracture Clinic at Canberra Hospital \$4.1m over four years)**

This funding will increase staffing across a range of disciplines including orthopaedic surgeons, register nurses and administration staff so additional clinics can be run. There has been unprecedented growth on the number of fractures in recent years and the existing service has struggled to cope. Consumers can also use Walk in Centres for simple fractures as well as going to general practice.

### **Expanding Services for People with Eating Disorders (\$2.2m over four years)**

The Government will establish an Eating Disorders Specialist Clinical Hub and a community-based intervention support service to expand the range of eating disorder services available in the ACT and make these available to more Canberrans.

### **More support for families travelling for healthcare (\$1.8 over four years)**

The Government will provide more support for families of paediatric patients who must travel interstate to access specialist healthcare. This funding will expand the level of support provided through the Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme so that two people can travel with a sick child, and increase the subsidies available for accommodation and parking.

## **Increasing Services at Public Hospitals**

### **More beds at Canberra Hospital (\$47.1m over four years)**

The Budget includes funding for 12 beds at Canberra Hospital to meet demand for acute inpatient services. The new beds will be added in medicine, surgery, and aged care. This builds on the additional 68 beds funded in the 2018-19 Budget.

Two additional Senior Staff specialists will be recruited for the Emergency Department in recognition of the increased demand. This builds on the 14 additional staff funded in the 2018-19 Budget.

There is also funding for four additional Intensive Care Unit beds to meet growing demand for intensive care services.

### **Increasing capacity at Cavalry Public Hospital Emergency Department (\$21.9m over four years)**

The 2018-19 Budget provided funds for expansion of the Emergency Department at Calvary Public Hospital. This Budget funds more staff for the Emergency Department to support faster access to care for people on Canberra's North and continue to help reduce waiting times Territory-wide where possible.

### **More operating theatres at Calvary Public Hospital (\$12.6m over four years)**

The funding in this Budget will enable more elective surgery to be completed at Calvary Public Hospital. It is estimated 250 more surgeries a year will be performed. This is in line with Territory-wide work to distribute surgical activity more appropriately across the ACT to improve timely access to care. HCCA supports building elective surgery capacity at Calvary to take pressure off Canberra Hospital.

### **More urology services at Calvary Public Hospital (\$5.9m over four years)**

The expansion of urology services at Calvary Public Hospital and the implementation a new urology model of care will provide capacity for additional minor day procedures and provide co-located outpatient services.

## **Mental Health Services**

Last year the Government committed to establishing three community-based mental health accommodation facilities to provide long-term care for people who need 24-hour support and a Step-Up-Step-Down facility on the south side of Canberra to provide short-term residential and clinical treatment for people discharged from hospital. They also committed to refurbishing the 10-bed Extended Care Unit at the Brian Hennessey Rehabilitation Centre. This year the funding focus is on other areas:

### **Expanding public inpatient mental health care (\$6.9m over four years)**

The Government will boost allied health and nursing staff in the Adult Mental Health Unit, as well as administration staff. This will ensure inpatients are provided more comprehensive psychosocial care, while supporting improved clinical care standards and stronger workforce development.

### **7-day-a-week Mental Health Consultation Liaison service (\$4.6m over four years)**

There is funding to expand the Mental Health Consultation Liaison service to operate at The Canberra Hospital seven days a week, increasing the support available for people with mental illness.

### **Strengthening capacity for mental health carers (\$457k over two years)**

The Government will recruit two Carer Engagement Clinicians to pilot a range of support and psychosocial education activities to build capacity for the families and carers of people with mental health conditions. This is a great initiative but needs to work very closely with Carers ACT.

### **Electroconvulsive therapy service within the Adult Mental Health Unit (\$2.6m over four years)**

There is funding to support the establishment of an electroconvulsive therapy service within the Adult Mental Health Unit at Canberra Hospital. This is currently available at Calvary Hospital. This new service will provide access on Canberra's Southside to necessary therapy for patients experiencing mental health concerns like depression and psychosis.

## Infrastructure

During the election campaign in 2016 Health featured strongly and the ACT Labor Party released a range of election commitments as part of their [Ten Year Health Plan](#). This Budget continues to build on that plan although a few of the details have changed. There is significant infrastructure investment with the design and construction of SPIRE, a new, an extension of the women and children's hospital, more Walk in Centres and funding for additional operating theatres and an expanded emergency department at Calvary Public Hospital.

### **SPIRE**

On 28 May the Chief Minister and Minister for Health and Wellbeing announced additional investment for SPIRE. They have expanded the scope after consultation with clinicians. The SPIRE Centre will have

- 114 Emergency Department treatment spaces (39 more than are currently available at Canberra Hospital)
- 60 ICU beds (twice the number currently available.)
- four new paediatric ICU beds and a family zone to provide support services for families who have children in the ICU.
- 22 operating theatres (nine more than are currently available)

Media Release is [available online](#).

The Australian National University (ANU) also announced a new building that will boost the teaching, training and research presence on Canberra Hospital campus. There are no further details currently available.

SPIRE was initially announced in the 2016 election campaign and at that time it was planned to open in 2020/21. There have been delays in this work due, in part, to the completion of the workforce strategy, specialty services plans and the digital health strategy. These are critical components to any expansion of health services. And there has been further consultation with clinicians to ensure the \$500m investment is made wisely.

SPIRE is planned for completion in 2023/24.

### **Centenary Hospital for Women and Children**

This Budget has allocated \$30m in 2020/21 and \$20.5m in 2021/22 for the expansion of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

### **Calvary Hospital**

On 29 May the Minister announced \$40.5 million investment in Calvary Public Hospital over the next four years. This includes building two more operating theatres at Calvary Public Hospital to enable more people to undergo elective surgery at the hospital. One operating theatre will come online in 2019-20 and the second theatre in 2020-21. The Emergency Department will also increase with more treatment areas and staff. They are also expanding urology services at Calvary with additional staff

Media Release is [available online](#).

### **Walk in Centres**

On 1 June 2019 the Chief Minister announced a new nurse walk-in centre in Dickson by late-2020. It will be in the Dickson Community Health Centre.

### **Expanding Clare Holland House to strengthen palliative care**

With the support of the Federal Government (\$4m) and The Snow Foundation (\$2m), the Government will expand Clare Holland House. The ACT Government has committed to 46m over three years. The expansion will deliver up to 12 additional inpatient beds as well as improved administration and clinical support spaces. It is scheduled to be completed by December 2020. This was [announced](#) in September 2018.

## Technology to support health care

Technology is also an important element of a high performing health service. In May the Digital Health Strategy 2019-2029 was launched so we were expecting announcements in the Budget relating to this. The Strategy is online <https://health.act.gov.au/digital/strategy>

The Budget this year says:

*“The Government will procure and implement a Digital Health Record for ACT Government-funded public health services. The Digital Health Record will provide a single point of reference for patient clinical records, supporting more consistent care and effective case management by replacing current electronic and paper-based systems.”*

(Source: 2019-20 Budget Paper No.3 p155)

There is a significant investment of around \$90m for this. \$70.4m has been allocated for new works between 2019/20 – 2022/23. There also is \$19.9m for systems to support this work. The completion date for the new works is June 2027 so we can expect there will continue to be investment in technology for the foreseeable future.

This is a good news story for consumers. We really need a program name that is better than “ACT Health Core IT Systems to align with the Digital Health Strategy”. While the fact that it aligns with the Digital Health Strategy is music to our ears, it is a mouthful.

The path to having a technology enabled health service has not been smooth. eHealthy Futures, first announced in 2009, had \$90.2 million allocated over four years for eHealth initiatives. It was described as an “unprecedented level of investment” by the then Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher MLA. eHealthy Futures to ensure our health system was better positioned to meet the needs of the ACT community at the time and into the next decade. There is a final allocation of funds to complete the works associated with the eHealthy Futures program of work.

We are very focussed on how technology can improve the quality, safety and efficiency of the health care we rely on. We know it is difficult as it costs large amounts of money and requires changes in clinical and administrative practice. It is worth the investment to help people have better experiences and outcomes of care and improve the connection between our very fragmented health system.

## What do the Budget Papers tell us about the performance of the health system?

The Budget Statements for 2018 – 2019 did not anticipate the restructure of ACT Health Directorate and the creation of Canberra Health Services. This Budget is the first to address the new arrangements. This presents challenges for the community as many of the strategic indicators are either new and do not have previous data or are being phased out. There is a clear need to look at the **accountability indicators**, so they are meaningful for the public. A high performing health system is committed to transparency and the accountability indicators need to be set by the community – the users and funders of the services, not only those people working in the system

The ACT Budget does two things – it tells the community about the income and expenditure of Government, but it also includes a range of performance measures. These performance measures are often not particularly meaningful to consumers but there are some of the current measures, referred to as accountability indicators that are worthy of closer attention.

There are two indicators we are concerned about. One relates to access to radiation therapy and the other is the rate of seclusion in mental health inpatient facilities. Both are unacceptable.

**Strategic Objective 2 *Reducing the Usage of Seclusion in Mental Health Episodes***. This measures the effectiveness of public mental health services in the ACT over time in providing services that minimise the need for seclusion. The Government reports the proportion of mental health clients who are subject to a seclusion episode while being an admitted patient in an ACT public mental health inpatient unit (Strategic Indicator 2.1)

The rate of seclusion is significantly higher than the target of less than 5% for 2018-2019. The estimated rate stated in the Budget Papers in 16%.

This indicator will change next year to use a new counting methodology of rate per 1000 bed days. We are interested to know how the rates of seclusion are being considered in the work relating to minimising violence and aggression at Canberra Health Services, the Nursing and Midwifery Culture Strategy and the implementation of Safewards.

We would encourage the Chief Psychiatrist and the Office of Mental Health work with the service and consumers and carers to develop solutions to this unacceptable situation.

**Strategic Objective 9 *Improving Timeliness of Access to Radiotherapy Services***. This reports on the percentage of cancer patients who commence radiotherapy treatment within standard timeframes. While it is comforting to see that every person who requires emergency radiotherapy treatment receives this we hold deep concerns about the delays to treatment for people seeking access for palliative treatment or radical treatment. There needs to be additional explanation about this performance and exploration in the Estimates process.

- Palliative — treatment starts within 2 weeks - Target 2018-2019 90%  
Estimated Outcome 70%
- Radical — treatment starts within 4 weeks Target 2018-2019 90%  
Estimated Outcome 50%

There is an explanation for the delays provided in Budget Statements C (p.38). These includes the impact of increasingly complex treatment techniques and related treatment delivery times; an increase in palliative cases and long course treatments requiring additional treatment and there have been more cases seen in clinics this year compared with last year. Also one of the four linear accelerators is being replaced. This machine has been unavailable for the past 6 months. There have which also impacting the ability to meet demand for this service.

## General information

Chief Minister and Treasurer Andrew Barr MLA brought down his eighth budget on 4 June 2019, his fifth as Chief Minister.

Alan Thomas and Darlene Cox attend the community budget briefing for HCCA.

The Chief Minister spoke about the sustained, long term economic growth in the Territory and that we can have economy that is growing faster than the rest of Australia and performing better than the long-term ACT average. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. While public sector continues to be an important contributor to the ACT economy the private sector has been driving employment and economic growth. Our community has been growing by around 8,000 people a year and this is set to continue. We are seeing significant population growth in Gungahlin and Belconnen and there will be more people living in the Inner North, with the commitment to urban infill around the light rail corridor. We will see more people moving to Weston Creek and Molonglo which will require more investment in the coming budgets. [Ginninderry](#) development in West Belconnen will also see the population of Belconnen continue to grow.

From next year the Budget will include both economic metrics and wellbeing indicators. In his Budget Speech the Chief Minister said that the wellbeing indicators will enable us to track performance against issues such as “improving access to housing, strengthening family cohesion and growing the social inclusion of older people”. The wellbeing indicators will inform government decisions about where we need to focus so that all Canberrans can share in “the benefits of our prosperity”.

The ACT budget for health and hospitals is \$1.8 billion, almost a third of the total ACT budget (31%). Education is also a significant cost, accounting for 24% of the total budget.

## For more information

The Budget Papers are online: <https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/budget>

The Chief Minister’s Speech is available here

[https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/1206644/Budget-Paper-1-Budget-Speech-2018-19.pdf](https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1206644/Budget-Paper-1-Budget-Speech-2018-19.pdf)

The Government’s glossy overview of the health and hospitals budget is available here: <https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/budget-2018-2019/budget-in-brief/health-and-hospitals>

The Budget Papers for Health Directorate are in Budget Statements C and available here [https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/1206602/C-Health-Directorate.pdf](https://apps.treasury.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1206602/C-Health-Directorate.pdf)