



Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Minister for Children, Youth and Families
Minister for Health
Minister for Urban Renewal
Member for Kurrajong

Mr Tom Duncan
Clerk
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear ~~Mr Duncan~~ Tom

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2019 regarding petitions numbered 10-19 and 18-19, lodged by Mrs Giulia Jones MLA to "...keep the hydrotherapy pool at the Canberra Hospital open and maintained until a new dedicated hydrotherapy pool is built on the south side of Canberra". In response to the petition, I offer the following information.

On 7 August 2019, I met with Arthritis ACT and representatives from the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services about hydrotherapy services. At the meeting, the report *Access to Hydrotherapy in the ACT* undertaken by Nous Group (external consultants) was presented. I also raised this matter in the Assembly on 13 August.

The ACT Health Directorate engaged Nous Group to undertake an assessment of access to hydrotherapy in the ACT and report on their findings. The ACT Health Directorate is addressing the four recommendations outlined within the report, and a copy of the report was released publicly at the 7 August 2019 meeting.

The proposed closure of the Canberra Hospital pool in 2018 was based on several factors including:

- the relocation of all public rehabilitation health services to UCH;
- the plant and equipment supporting the pool being located underneath the pool area in a confined space that has a single egress point. This presents sub-optimal maintenance access compared with contemporary pool plant room designs, and presents an unacceptable staff safety risk in the event of emergency, such as a fire or pool chemical spill; and
- the infrastructure supporting the pool, particularly the electrical, and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) plant, is aged and without spare part backup in the event of likely failure of the equipment.

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There is a commitment from the ACT Government to keep the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool open until access at other suitable locations could be found. Canberra Health Services extended the hydrotherapy pool user agreement with Arthritis ACT until the end of September 2019. This has ensured continuity of access for the pool users while the Nous work was underway, and until a way forward could be identified. The ACT Government intends to go to the market and explore innovative options for potential hydrotherapy pools into the future.

The ACT Health Directorate will continue to work with Arthritis ACT to review existing pool options available in the community to manage the needs of users in the short-term; and undertake assessments with current users of the pool to inform consideration of longer-term hydrotherapy service arrangements in the south of Canberra.

This work will take place as a priority over the next few months. Once complete, the ACT Government will announce the timeframes for the pool closure and the next steps in ensuring long term access to hydrotherapy services for the ACT community. We will ensure that the process going forward engages pool users proactively and constructively, based on a shared understanding of the issues and with a primary focus on their needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RSSH', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

4 SEP 2019