

1 SHARPS DISPOSAL SERVICES IMPROVEMENT

Mr Werner-Gibbings, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) the ACT has a strong history of evidence-based public health policy, including harm-reduction approaches that prioritise community safety, prevention and dignity;
 - (b) sharps waste, including needles, syringes and lancets, is generated by a wide range of Canberrans, including people living with diabetes, people undergoing medical treatments at home, people who use injectable medications and people who inject illicit drugs;
 - (c) safe and accessible disposal of sharps, regardless of the source, is essential to protecting public health and ensuring the safety of sanitation workers, park maintenance staff, community workers and members of the public;
 - (d) inadequate access to sharps disposal bins can contribute to unsafe disposal practices, including the discarding of sharps in household rubbish, public toilets, parks, car parks and other public spaces, which can cause serious concern in the community;
 - (e) demand for sharps disposal services is increasing as a result of population growth, an ageing community, higher rates of chronic illness managed at home and increased use of injectable medications; and
 - (f) increasing the availability of sharps disposal bins is a practical, preventative and cost-effective measure that reduces risks before harm occurs; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
 - (a) commit to working on increasing the number and accessibility of sharps disposal bins across the ACT;
 - (b) undertake a review of current sharps disposal locations to identify gaps, areas of unmet demand and opportunities for expansion;
 - (c) develop a plan to increase the provision of sharps disposal bins in public and community settings, with a focus on safety, accessibility and visibility;
 - (d) engage with relevant stakeholders, including health services, community organisations and worker representatives, to inform best practice placement and ongoing management;
 - (e) ensure that any expansion of sharps disposal infrastructure is accompanied by clear public information about safe disposal options available in the ACT; and
 - (f) report back to the Assembly on progress toward improving sharps disposal access as part of the ACT's broader public health and community safety objectives by the end of 2026.

Debate ensued.

Mr Emerson, by leave, moved the following amendments together:

1. After paragraph (1)(f), insert:

“(g) the *Healthy Prison Review of the Alexander Maconochie Centre 2025* found that 35 percent of detainees strongly agreed or agreed it is easy to access needles. The review acknowledged the high risk of blood-borne virus infections due to shared needles, stated that the right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty encompasses a right to equivalent health care in prison to that provided in the community, and recommended the introduction of a needle and syringe program; and”.

2. After paragraph (2)(e), insert:

“(f) ensure detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre have access to sharps disposal services commensurate to those available for the broader ACT community; and”.

Debate continued.

Amendments agreed to.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

“That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT has a strong history of evidence-based public health policy, including harm-reduction approaches that prioritise community safety, prevention and dignity;
- (b) sharps waste, including needles, syringes and lancets, is generated by a wide range of Canberrans, including people living with diabetes, people undergoing medical treatments at home, people who use injectable medications and people who inject illicit drugs;
- (c) safe and accessible disposal of sharps, regardless of the source, is essential to protecting public health and ensuring the safety of sanitation workers, park maintenance staff, community workers and members of the public;
- (d) inadequate access to sharps disposal bins can contribute to unsafe disposal practices, including the discarding of sharps in household rubbish, public toilets, parks, car parks and other public spaces, which can cause serious concern in the community;
- (e) demand for sharps disposal services is increasing as a result of population growth, an ageing community, higher rates of chronic illness managed at home and increased use of injectable medications;
- (f) increasing the availability of sharps disposal bins is a practical, preventative and cost-effective measure that reduces risks before harm occurs; and

- (g) the *Healthy Prison Review of the Alexander Maconochie Centre 2025* found that 35 percent of detainees strongly agreed or agreed it is easy to access needles. The review acknowledged the high risk of blood-borne virus infections due to shared needles, stated that the right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty encompasses a right to equivalent health care in prison to that provided in the community, and recommended the introduction of a needle and syringe program; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) commit to working on increasing the number and accessibility of sharps disposal bins across the ACT;
 - (b) undertake a review of current sharps disposal locations to identify gaps, areas of unmet demand and opportunities for expansion;
 - (c) develop a plan to increase the provision of sharps disposal bins in public and community settings, with a focus on safety, accessibility and visibility;
 - (d) engage with relevant stakeholders, including health services, community organisations and worker representatives, to inform best practice placement and ongoing management;
 - (e) ensure that any expansion of sharps disposal infrastructure is accompanied by clear public information about safe disposal options available in the ACT;
 - (f) ensure detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre have access to sharps disposal services commensurate to those available for the broader ACT community; and
 - (g) report back to the Assembly on progress toward improving sharps disposal access as part of the ACT's broader public health and community safety objectives by the end of 2026."—

be agreed to—put and passed.