Background

The independent review by Mr Philip Moss AM was a special investigation into matters that may be of interest to the community. The review could not look into the cause of Steven Freeman’s death because by law the ACT Coroner investigates all deaths in custody. The Coroner has held a separate inquiry and is due to hand down findings in April 2018.

The final review report is called “So Much Sadness in our Lives”, Independent Inquiry into the Treatment in Custody of Steven Freeman.

Some readers may find some of the information contained in this brochure and the Moss Review distressing as it deals with the death of a young Aboriginal man in custody.

The Dhunlung Yarra Service
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Where to from here?

This work is a priority of the Government and the community will continue to see improvements. The Minister for Corrections will keep the community updated.

The Government will also consider any findings by the Coroner from the Inquest into the death of Steven Freeman.
Introduction
This document is for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to explain the changes across Government that have improved the safety and wellbeing of all people that are in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC).

Following the tragic death of Mr Steven Freeman, a 25 year old Aboriginal man, on 27 May 2016 at the AMC, the Minister for Corrections Shane Rattenbury asked that an independent inquiry look into the care and treatment of Mr Freeman.

Mr Philip Moss AM provided his final report with nine key recommendations to the Minister in November 2016.

The ACT Government acknowledges the acute grief, loss and sadness that Steven Freeman’s family has experienced.

The Government also acknowledges the significant impact that this death has had on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services for detainees
The Government has partnered with Winnunga to offer detainees a holistic approach to their care alongside current ACT Health services. Female detainees were the focus of a new project in late 2017. The project will be expanded over time so that Winnunga’s health services are available to all detainees at the AMC.

The Government agrees Winnunga’s health services brings many benefits including:

- health care for detainees which can continue from the time they enter custody right through until they return to the community
- better sharing of information between health services to improve patient care
- improved cultural awareness and understanding for detainees and AMC staff.

Inspector of Correctional Services
An Inspector of Correctional Services has been created to regularly review the AMC and other correctional and custodial services. The Inspector will start early in 2018. Under new laws, the Inspector has special powers to enter places where people are detained. They also have powers to investigate a critical incident, such as when a detainee’s life has been in danger or after an escape.

The Inspector will report directly to the Legislative Assembly on what they find. These reports will be available to the community.

Detainees at the AMC will still be able to make complaints to the ACT Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission, the Public Advocate or an Official Visitor.

What has changed since the Review?
There have been lots of changes to how ACT Corrective Services, ACT Health and ACT Policing operate since the Moss Review with four recommendations fully implemented. Some of the biggest changes are:

Greater priority on assault investigations
ACT Corrective Services and ACT Policing have both strengthened how they respond to serious assaults in the AMC. Now they are able to share information between themselves more easily. This helps ACT Policing investigate serious assaults that occur in the AMC. It also means that they are able to get more evidence to charge detainees who seriously harm others.

CCTV cameras have been also been improved at the AMC to provide greater coverage. This helps to increase the safety of detainees. In also supports police to build a case for court against an alleged offender following an assault.

To ensure community confidence in Government action, the Minister appointed Mr Russell Taylor AM to independently chair an oversight steering committee.

Mr Taylor represents the interest of the community and reports directly back to the Minister for Corrections.

The full report, known as the Moss Review, a list of recommendations (Page 14), and the Government response can be found here: http://www.justice.act.gov.au