



Australian Territory to Take Over Catholic Hospital in Pursuit of “Reproductive Justice”

An Australian territorial government plans to take over a Catholic hospital to make way for a new, government-run facility — and to ensure that “reproductive justice,” i.e., abortion, marches on.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which encompasses Canberra and its environs, [announced](#) May 10 that it would spend over \$1 billion to build a new hospital on the site of the current Calvary Hospital, a facility run since its 1979 inception by the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary. Furthermore, since the hospital would not agree to the government’s terms, ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith introduced legislation that would enable the government “to acquire the Calvary Public Hospital land, and transition existing Calvary staff and assets to the Territory.”

Stephen-Smith, of course, couched this brazen confiscation of church property in language about “better coordinat[ing] our health systems” and “distribut[ing] resources effectively.”

While there may be some truth to that, underlying the whole affair is the progressive ACT government’s increasing disenchantment with anyone who fails to toe the Left’s line *du jour*. In April, a legislative committee issued a [report](#) that excoriated Calvary for its opposition to “reproductive justice.”

“It is problematic that one of the ACT’s major hospitals is, due to an overriding religious ethos, restricted in the services that can be delivered to the Canberra community,” penned the committee, which went on to decry the government’s “ethically fraught dependence on the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary for provision of health services.”

The report recommended “that the ACT Government advocate Calvary Hospital to provide full reproductive health services in accordance with human rights” — gestating humans not included.

Thus, when the government says that it simply has to absorb Calvary because its negotiations with the hospital “were not successful in delivering an outcome consistent with the evolving needs of the ACT community,” it isn’t hard to figure out which “needs” the sisters balked at meeting.

To be fair, Calvary has been the recipient of a great deal of government funding over the years. According to the committee report, the ACT government gave Calvary \$261 million in 2021-22. The hospital could hardly expect to go on receiving taxpayer largesse forever — it still had 75 years left on



Dfadden/Wikimedia Commons
Calvary Hospital, Canberra, Australia



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 29, 2023

its contract with the ACT — without eventually ceding control to the powers that be.

Nevertheless, the government's sudden takeover of the hospital (assuming it happens) was so shocking and unexpected that it raised many eyebrows.

Local Catholics certainly understood the significance of the move. The archbishop of Canberra, Christopher Prowse, wrote a [letter](#) stating, in part, "This extraordinary and completely unnecessary government intervention could set the scene for future acquisitions of any faith-based health facility, or, indeed, any faith-based enterprise including education or social welfare."

Some politicians also took note of the incident. Acting Opposition Leader Jeremy Hanson called the decision "outrageous thuggery," while former Prime Minister Tony Abbott [tweeted](#), "What on earth is happening to our country when a perfectly well run hospital can be nationalized at whim without discussion and without any real notice? Quite apart from being evidence of overbearing and arrogant government this looks like yet another assault on the Church."

The usual suspects favored the takeover. The Community and Public Sector Union, salivating over new dues-paying members, applauded it, as did the Australian Medical Association, whose president [told](#) ABC radio that "it was important to deliver public healthcare services without being bound by ideology" — by which he meant any ideology other than progressivism.

On the other hand, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation, which represents doctors, told ABC that "many of its members were distressed by the takeover news."

"Some members have worked previously for the ACT government at [Canberra Health Service] and have had bad experiences there, and are concerned about the implications for them and returning," said the federation's ACT executive officer, Steve Ross.

Indeed, one of the other ACT hospitals, which is run by the government, has a "long history of workplace culture problems ... ranging from bullying to widespread racism," noted the [Mandarin](#).

"They've got great trouble running their own public hospital at the moment," Father Tony Percy of ACT's Catholic diocese told ABC. "Why would you have confidence in them running another public hospital?"



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