



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION  
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JONATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

**Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22  
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Elizabeth KIKKERT: To ask the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Ref: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Budget Statement G, pp. 1–2, output class CSD 3.1 Strategic Policy

In relation to: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander treaty process

1. In the hearing, the minister mentioned that there has been a delay in recruiting a facilitator for the treaty process, a position that was funded in the last budget.
  - a. What has caused this delay?
  - b. What is currently being done to complete this recruitment process?

RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

Treaty negotiation is a long-term process and Aboriginal peoples need to agree on the purpose of a Treaty before deciding if and how to make one, and what it should contain. A Treaty can recognise the ancient sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples as Australia's First People.

The recruitment of a facilitator forms an important part of this process. The ACT Government is guided by and continues to engage with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC) on the selection of a facilitator to commence conversations with traditional custodians and Aboriginal peoples who have a connection to Country. A combination of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Sorry Business, have significantly affected our capacity to progress conversations with UNEC, which has in turn delayed the engagement of a facilitator.

Unfortunately, a recent scheduled meeting with the UNEC Co-chairs had to be postponed for personal reasons. However, I expect to meet with them again soon and hope that this meeting will provide an opportunity to agree on a path forward in appointing a facilitator.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date:

3/11/21

By the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA