



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025**

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE  
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by: Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

Addressed to: Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Redirected to: N/A

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In relation to: Our Booris, Our Way

Hearing Date: 5 August 2024

QTON lodgement date: 6 August 2024

Answer Due Date: 8 August 2024

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you. In terms of the recommendations that came out as part of Our Booris, Our Way, how do you feel we are sort of tracking against them more generally? Do you think there are any areas that we particularly need to focus on right now?

**Ms Turnbull-Roberts:** If you do not mind, I would like to take that question on notice, because I would like to really go over that give you a really sound response, if that is okay.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. Beautiful.

Ms Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

While there has been progress in several areas, there remains significant work to fully implement the "Our Booris, Our Way" recommendations. The latest public report from the Our Booris Our Way Oversight Implementation Group was the six-Monthly Implementation Update for July to December 2023.

This report indicates that out of the 28 recommendations, only 8 have progressed to 'Monitoring and Evaluation', 6 have progressed to 'Close to Monitoring', 6 have progressed to 'Significant Progress', while 11 are still 'Progressing'.

All recommendations are vital, and we have yet to see 20 recommendations reach ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’. There is still a significant amount of work to be done to ensure all recommendations are fully implemented.

Based on the latest "Our Booris, Our Way" report, in my view the following recommendations require the most attention and improvement:

No.	Recommendation Title	Progress
1	Allocation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Cases	While the First Nations Support team has been established, ensuring all case workers are experienced and culturally intelligent remains a priority. Continued focus on training and resource allocation is essential.
8a	Culturally Appropriate Advocate Service	The approach to providing guidance appears to be reactive (case-by-case) rather than proactive (as a more systematic and structured approach). More work is needed to ensure these services are effectively implemented and accessible, despite guidance being provided to staff and families
9	Early Support Programs	Although early support programs have been mapped and new budget initiatives presented, continued development and implementation are necessary to provide timely and culturally appropriate support to families.
9a	Accessible Early Support Programs for Rehabilitation, Family Violence, Mental Health, and Trauma	Further funding, continued engagement with community and timely implementation are required for specific programs addressing drug and alcohol rehabilitation, family violence, mental health, trauma counselling, and cultural healing.
12	Pathways to Restoration	<p>A Restoration Taskforce has been established, but ensuring strengths-based restoration processes that consider family restoration is needed. Continued workshops and stakeholder engagement will be essential to strengthen the restoration process.</p> <p>I note that my office has continued to engage with alarming matters where restoration is possible and in the best interests of Aboriginal children, however almost all of these being resisted from Non-Indigenous foster carers in returning Aboriginal children. This remains a serious concern in its objective and practice moving forward.</p> <p>The office is of the position, that if restoration has been identified, and possible, then Aboriginal children must be restored, it is not up to Non-Indigenous carers to resist and fight the returning of Aboriginal children and young people, to</p>

		their place, community and belonging. This has unfortunately, not been the case.
13	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Father Inclusive Practice	The Cultural Services Team, in collaboration with AMC, has initiated projects to engage fathers in parenting programs and create tailored resources, including educational programs, cultural playgroups, and staff training on father-inclusive approaches. The focus will be on continuing these initiatives and working with OBOWIOC to design a quality monitoring approach across various practice-focused recommendations.
14	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Assessments	Prioritising annual health assessments (715s) and ensuring they are part of the annual review process are critical next steps.
16	Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Led Decision Making in Child Protection	Greater engagement of children and families in decision-making processes through conferencing mechanisms is needed. Continued collaboration with the OBOWIOC to design and implement a quality monitoring approach is needed.
23	Wreck Bay Consultation	<p>While I understand that progress has been made in negotiating and improving service access for the Wreck Bay community, ongoing efforts are needed to finalise the MoU and develop a comprehensive consultation framework.</p> <p>I emphasise that currently as Commissioner I have no funding or remit to advocate for Aboriginal children in the Wreck Bay community who are subject to interventions from ACT child youth and family services, despite this being an issue raised in the Our Booris Our Way Review and the co-design process that led to my role being established.</p> <p>I understand that providing me with this remit must be requested and agreed by the Commonwealth, but this issue of inequality for vulnerable Aboriginal children and families is of great concern and should be a central issue addressed through the MOU.</p>
27	Active Referrals and Follow-Up	Progress has been made in developing and implementing frameworks to enhance active referrals and follow-up in child protection. The next steps involve designing and implementing a robust quality monitoring approach to ensure continued improvement and effectiveness.
28	Family Connection Practices	Efforts to uplift family connection practices continue, but contemporary, evidence-based practices to support resilient family relationships are needed.

In addition to these specific recommendations, I note that the Chair of the Our Booris Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee has highlighted the following issues in the report:

- **Noticeable Improvements:** In the latter half of 2023, there have been noticeable improvements in implementing OBOW recommendations, with more positive community feedback. However, the FNT team needs more staff to meet the increasing demand.
- **Family Group Conferencing Services:** Families benefit from family group conferencing services but prefer accessing these services through Aboriginal organisations for safety reasons, rather than solely through the Directorate.
- **Kinship Carers:** There is increased acknowledgment of the importance of kinship carers within the Directorate, but more real changes are needed to empower and enable them. This is a current focus area for the Committee.
- **Legal Funding:** The Government has partially implemented the Committee's recommendation for care and protection legal funding, which has been allocated and benefited many children, young people, and families. The success of this funding highlights the need for ongoing and increasing allocation.
- **Referendum Impact:** The community experienced a rise in racism both leading up to and after the Referendum's defeat, impacting young people across various settings, including schools, public transport, and interactions with law enforcement.
- **Response to Racism:** There is a lack of adequate response to incidents of racism, with questions about who young people can turn to and what the jurisdiction is doing about racism. The absence of a school position on racism leaves children and young people without clear expectations or support.
- **Youth Justice Involvement:** Some young people in the out-of-home care system have become involved in Youth Justice due to incidents of racism that were not adequately addressed.
- **ACT Government's Approach:** While some progress has been made in implementing recommendations, parts of the ACT Government are still seen as making weak and ad-hoc efforts in systems that are outdated. A joined-up approach from the ACT Government is needed to realise the benefits of growing up strong and thriving on Ngunnawal Country. The Committee continues to press for and drive the implementation of its recommendations.

I note that experience of racism was also a major issue highlighted by my Office's youth forum and survey, and that our young people particularly reported experiencing racism at

school. Young people are calling for anti-racism initiatives in schools to be implemented and led by non-Indigenous individuals, so that the burden of combating racism does not fall on their shoulders or perpetuate colonial burdens.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

*Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts*

Signature: Signature: Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts

Date: 8 August 2024

By the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner, Ms Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts