



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

Reference: Uncorrected Hansard Transcript [Page 103]

In relation to: Further resourcing

Hearing Date: 5 August 2024

QTON lodgement date: 6 August 2024

Answer Due Date: 8 August 2024

MS NUTTALL: I have a supplementary. In terms of how many more staff and what further resourcing you think you might need, do you have a view to what that would look like right now or does it really need to be responsive to the demand of the community?

Ms Turnbull Roberts: I would like to take that I noticed to reflect after our conversation with round tables and priorities.

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

Currently I have budget funding for one Senior Officer Grade A, one Senior Officer Grade C, One Administrative Officer 6 and one Administrative Services Officer 4.

I understand that this staffing profile may have been premised on my office being co-located with the ACT Human Rights Commission where there would have been some economies of scale in being able to share some administrative resources such as reception staff with the Commission.

As co-location did not eventuate and independent premises have now been secured for my office, I do have some concerns that this allocation will not be sufficient to safely staff an independent office and fulfil my broad mandate.

My office is currently working from temporary accommodation at Nara House, but this is not culturally safe or publicly accessible and we are meeting with community on an outreach model.

When we move to our new premises, it will be necessary to have at least two staff members present when our office is open to the community, but this could hamper our ability to conduct outreach, attend external meetings or court processes.

My legislation provides me with a broad range of functions including individual and systemic advocacy, intervention in court proceedings and other decision making and conducting Inquiries, as well as being accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

I note that I am presently using my staffing budget to employ a senior case worker and a senior policy officer both at Senior Officer Grade C level and have a senior director about to commence at a Senior Officer Grade A level.

While I am very grateful for the exceptional staff that I now have working with me, I note the real difficulties attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members in a competitive market in the ACT. The work we do can also be extremely challenging and requires high levels of resilience, independence, skill, and sensitivity, even for administrative functions.

I believe that this requires the recruitment of staff at higher levels than allowed in my current budget, and further allocation of funding to meet the need of the legislation and ensure we can respond to the best of our abilities and practice for when it comes to Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander Children and Young people, families, and kin. Especially given the significant disproportionate rate of impacted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and young people subject to a variety of systems including but not limited to Child Protection health and Youth Prison.

There is also a very high demand for individual advocacy within the community that is not possible to meet with my current staffing profile.

To discharge these important functions and maintain an accessible office for community I consider that an adequate staff profile for my office would be, at a minimum.

- 1 Senior Officer Grade A
- 3 Senior Officer Grade C
- 2 Administrative Services Officer 6
- 1 Administrative Service Officer 5

I intend to raise these issues through the usual budget processes.

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

Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts

Signature: Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts

Date: 8 August 2024

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