

2020

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

STATEMENT

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028
- 2019 Annual Report

Presented by
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

I am pleased to present the first Annual Report for the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028* (the Agreement).

The overarching theme of the Agreement – as with the previous three-year Agreement 2015-2018 – is Strong Families. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, family is the foundation for a healthy, independent and culturally rich community. Connection to family, community and country is at the heart of success in all facets of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

My conversations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans continue to make clear the importance of strong families and the need to continue our focus and efforts to support families, children and young people.

Since the official signing and community launch of the new Agreement, the ACT Government has been progressing priority actions in each of the core and significant focus areas of the Agreement. This is reflected in the Agreement's first Annual Report.

The Quality Life Outcomes in the Agreement will be measured as we progress the Agreement's ten action plans, which were developed in partnership with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Measuring and reporting on outcomes is vital to understanding the impact of this work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT.

The Agreement provides a framework for ACT Government agencies and our partners to deliver actions that reflect the commitments under the Agreement's focus areas. Each ACT Government Directorate is reporting on the progress of actions outlined in the action plans.

The 2019 Annual Report details actions undertaken for the first eight months of Phase One of the Agreement. The implementation under the Agreement is over four phases, coinciding with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body elections.

The 10-year Agreement sets the long-term direction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in the ACT and recognises and responds to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT over-time.

Self-determination is the underlying principle of the Agreement. Our aim is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have the ability and resources to determine their own solutions, acknowledging that they are the experts in their own lives and cultures.

The first Annual Report demonstrates the genuine efforts of the Government to partner with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to harness cultural knowledge and build a respectful, fair and inclusive community.

It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress and activities undertaken by the ACT Government and our service delivery partners to deliver culturally safe and responsive services. Engaging with, collaborating in and understanding the lived experience of individuals, families and communities is essential to bring perspective to the intent of policies and programs. The first Annual Report reflects links between lived experience, policy intent and service outcomes.

The Annual Report highlights progress and some early achievements against the objectives and outcomes set out in the Focus Areas of the new Agreement. Some highlights include:

- the ACT Government has worked with the community to revitalise the main building, community area and Garden of Achievement at Boomanulla Oval to restore it as a focal point for cultural and community activities;
- in 2018, almost \$4.5 million was committed to build ten new culturally safe and responsive homes for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans at a new housing complex, building on the success of Mura Gunya, a five-unit complex opened in November 2016;
- the Government has continued to the conversation with Ngunnawal traditional custodians on a Treaty process for the ACT, paving the way to achieving greater self-determination;
- the Aboriginal-led *Our Booris, Our Way* review into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system was completed in December 2019, and the Government is now considering the final

recommendations while implementing responses to 15 interim recommendations made during the course of the review; and

- with ACT Government support, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services is building a modern new health facility so it can continue to deliver high quality, holistic healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the Canberra region.

I thank all members of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body for their continuing work with ACT Government directorates to support the wellbeing of the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.