



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023-24

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: MR ED COCKS MLA

Addressed to: Ms Leesa Croke, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Cabinet Division

In relation to: CABINET SUBMISSIONS – DELAY IN RELEASING RECORDS

Hearing: 17 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 37, 38

Transcript provided: 24 February 2025

Answer Due: 3 March 2025

Ms Croke took on notice the following questions:

Mr Cocks: Have you undertaken any work to proactively go through documents and ensure they are available, rather than waiting until the requests come through?

Ms Croke: So after the 10 year mark, so almost from—are you saying from Canberra Day, just to make sure I have understood? So from Canberra Day, that we would actively work to release documents rather than being requested? We would still need to wait for the 10 year mark, though.

Mr Cocks: No. No, that is right. I am saying, are you doing any work to be prepared ahead of that date to ensure that when you get a request on that date, you are able to respond more quickly?

Ms Croke: I think if we were up to date, there would be an opportunity for that. But given we are behind, we have to work kind of first in, first served. So we are still working through requests, from memory—I am just going to quickly look. We are still processing some requests in from 22-23, so that financial year. So we are not really at that chance to be able to be more proactive in that release, because we are still working through those requests that we have got to hand.

Mr Cocks: Okay, so what would it take to actually catch up?

Ms Croke: I would have to take that on notice. I would not be able to estimate that. It is many hours. Many, many hours.

Mr Cocks: Okay. And you said that every directorate is now involved in this process. What are you doing to ensure you have got consistency in decision-making across the directorates?

Ms Croke: So we have guidance that we have provided to the directorates, and we work with them as they are working through the requests. They do come back in. I am reflecting on the clearance processes within CMTEDD, so I might need to take on notice that the way that decisions are made within directorates is exactly the same, but for example, within CMTEDD, once cabinet submissions that fall within my kind of remit from 10 years ago, once they have been looked through by my

team, they can come to me as the delegate to make a decision about whether or not the documents are fully released or released with redactions.

What I cannot be entirely certain of is the guidance is provided to directorates, but does every directorate follow that same decision-making? I would need to take that on notice, just to be sure about that.

Mr Cocks: And if you can just take on notice any steps being undertaken to ensure that is consistent across all directorates?

Ms Croke: Yes, certainly. I can take that on notice.

MS RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA, MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

There are no legislated timeframes for the provision of Executive Documents. The ACT Public Service (ACTPS) works to release documents as quickly as possible. However, the volume and complexity of the material and engagement with third parties can impact the release of information. As such reallocating resources to undertake this work would not directly assist in 'catching up'.

In response to the significant number of documents requested since 2022 the following steps have already been taken to realise process efficiencies in the release of materials:

- the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) centrally coordinates and monitors requests for all Executive Documents;
- the function of Principal Officer for Executive Document release under the *Territory Records Act 2002* has been delegated to Directors-General across the ACTPS and Deputy Directors-General within CMTEDD, increasing capacity to consider the release of requested material (previously the Head of Service was the sole responsible Principal Officer for all applications); and
- CMTEDD coordinates engagement with applicants about the status of their requests including the publication of released Executive Documents to the Open Government Website.

To achieve a consistent approach to processing requests for executive documents, CMTEDD centrally coordinates requests. CMTEDD works with other directorates to complete reviews of requested material and provide advice to Principal Officer decision makers. It does this by providing guidance, templates and support.

CMTEDD also continues to monitor requests for and release of Executive Documents to identify opportunities for further efficiencies.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration

Signature:



Date:

6/3/25

By the Minister for the Public Service, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA