



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Andrew Braddock MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Reference: Emergency Services

Hearing: 20 November 2025

In relation to: Disaster resilience – Closing the Gap

Question received: 27/11/2025

Answer Due: 04/12/2025

Monash University's National Indigenous Disaster Resilience has released a Disaster Preparedness Scorecard which flags various concerns regarding how well the government is delivering on its commitment to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples before, during and after disasters through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This scorecard denotes that local emergency management plans in the ACT do not formalise any engagement with Indigenous people. Further, there are no local emergency management plans in the ACT that even include Indigenous peoples and their priorities in the plan.

- (1) Do you have a plan to include Indigenous people in decision-making around emergency planning in the next financial year?
- (2) Furthermore, governments are not funding Indigenous-led projects under the Disaster Ready Fund, and local emergency management planning and decision-making is not inclusive of Indigenous peoples and communities. What is being done to address these multidimensional concerns?

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) is committed to including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in emergency planning through multiple mechanisms. This commitment is reflected in:

ACT Government and JACS Cultural Engagement

- The ACT Government works to align cultural engagement protocols and consult through the JACS Cultural Advisor on any matters impacting First Nations communities.
- Engagement occurs at both executive and officer level, including Public Information and Engagement, operational planning, and emergency management business areas.

Existing Governance and Representation

- The ACT Government works with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body for advice and feedback on emergency planning.
- Additionally, ESA will build on initiatives such as ACT Fire & Rescue's First Nations Workforce and Community Collaboration (WCC) and the Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) to strengthen representation and participation.

ESA Inclusion and Belonging Committee

- ESA recognises the need to mature and develop our inclusion practices to enhance a sense of belonging within the Agency. The ESA Inclusion & Belonging Committee, established by the ESA Commissioner, supports this progress.

Indigenous Ranks Slides for ACTF&R and ACTAS

- As part of the ESA Committee to the priorities set out within the JACS Reconciliation Action Plan and the Closing the Gap Reform 3, ACTF&R and ACTAS engaged with local Indigenous artist to design rank slides for their service.

Strategic Bushfire Management Plan

- The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP) is the document which sets out how bushfire risk is managed in the ACT.
- SBMP recognises the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and notes that this is one of the key factors expected to play an increasing role in bushfire risk management. It also recognises that the land known as the ACT has been occupied, used, and enjoyed for millennia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in accordance with their traditions.

Bushfire Operations Plans

- Many cultural and heritage assets are important to members of this community in the ACT. These include Aboriginal sites, artworks, scar trees, ring trees, and areas dedicated to land management by traditional custodians. These assets are identified for protection in Bushfire Operations Plans.

National-Level Engagement

- The ACT Government works closely with relevant national-level bodies to enhance inclusion and cultural safety. ESA actively participates in AFAC-led initiatives that promote Indigenous engagement and knowledge sharing across emergency services nationally. Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) have worked closely with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to lead national bodies of work that promote greater decision-making and inclusion within emergency management.
- ESA contributes funding to Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA) and will leverage this partnership to support research projects that integrate First Nations knowledge into disaster resilience and emergency planning. NHRA's First Nations research stream includes cultural burning, community-led preparedness, and culturally appropriate warning systems.

Continuous Improvement


- The ACT Government works with JACS Cultural Advisors and national partners to ensure engagement is culturally safe, co-designed, and embedded in planning processes.
- Outcomes of engagement are documented and reflected in planning and resilience strategies.

- (2) In addition to the above activity, the ACT Government is delivering the project 'Community and Country: A First Nations partnership to culturally based risk' through SEMD, funded by the Disaster Ready Fund.

The project aims to integrate traditional knowledge into disaster resilience planning and risk reduction and develop culturally safe engagement and emergency planning tools. The project has been led by an Aboriginal project officer and applies co-design principles through engagement with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The ACT Government continues to engage with many community sector organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, on opportunities available through the Disaster Ready Fund. This engagement will continue in 2026 as proposals for funding under Round Four of the Disaster Ready Fund are developed.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs

Signature: 

Date: 10/12/25

By the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

