



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Public
Accounts and Administration

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Public Sector (Closing the Gap) Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Submission number: 16

Submitter: Aboriginal Community leaders

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

Via email: LACommitteePAA@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee

Inquiry into Public Sector (Closing the Gap) Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

We make the following submission in relation to the Public Sector (Closing the Gap) Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 on behalf of the undersigned.

While we appreciate the key role that Committee inquiries play in ensuring fair and democratic processes, the existence of this inquiry highlights one of the key reasons this piece of legislation is required. Another inquiry is neither appropriate nor necessary for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Cultural load refers to the additional emotional, intellectual and/or practical workload borne by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and community members. Often this workload is invisible, materialising as undue expectation placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to educate non-Indigenous colleagues about racism, to speak on behalf of all First Nations people, to organise cultural events, or to facilitate community engagement and cultural training.

At times this workload is overt. An inquiry such as this is a clear example of shifting the responsibility of working out what the Government needs to do on to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with no remuneration for time and effort, nor consideration of the additional emotional impact and subsequent fatigue from completing submissions to inquiries, from giving advice to Government, and from being expected to educate non-Indigenous colleagues over and over again without any change.

One key objective of this piece of legislation is to minimise the cultural load that First Nations people carry when working in the public service. The result of inquiring into this Bill is an increased cultural load, where we are being asked to do the same work and say the same things that we have done so many times before. It is your turn to carry this cultural load, and that is what this Bill will require.

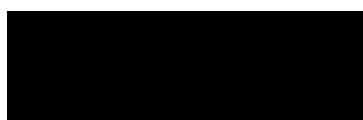
The answers this inquiry seeks already exist. We refer you to every hearing and report completed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (the Elected Body); to the recently completed Jumbanna review into the overrepresentation of First Nations people in the ACT criminal justice system; the Our Booris, Our Way review; the Productivity Commission's review of the National Agreement Closing the Gap; the recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review of the National Agreement, and many more. Multiple reviews have made recommendations that this Bill will give effect to, which is why we fully support its passage by the Assembly.

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It is not good process, it is not culturally safe and it is not appropriate to commission review after review, to sign agreements like the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement or the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, without ensuring action is taken, and adequate accountability is legislated for those who are in positions of power. Without this Bill, we will not see the systemic changes in the way the Government operates.

We have the answers, and we have been giving the Government the answers for a long time. It's your turn to listen.

Signed with written consent for and on behalf of the Aboriginal community leaders below;



Julie Tongs
Paula McGrady
Natalie Brown
Serena Williams
Beth Sturgess
Tracey Lea Harris
Rachelle Kelly-Church
Bill Bashford
Tanya Keed
Justin Church
Barbara Causon
Kim Davison
Maali Leon
Lynette Goodwin
Dion Devow
Priestly Obed

