



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Children and Young Persons

Commissioner

Redirected to:

In relation to: Community engagement

Hearing: 13/11/2025

Answer Due: 11/12/2025

(1) Noting that engagement with the community has been raised as an issue, what strategies are you implementing to ensure broader and more effective community engagement?

The answer to the question is:

Whilst the office is still rebuilding, we have prioritised community engagement and being highly responsive to issues raised by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Office has actively advocated on behalf of individuals and community. If we see or hear about something happening that is impacting on children and young people in our community, we do not wait for someone to contact us, we take a very proactive approach of reaching out to see how we can assist. As an example, the Ag Commissioner met with the young person, involved in the recent police incident on a public bus, by identifying him through our networks and reaching out to his family. The Ag Commissioner was then involved in community meetings with other local advocates and assisted the family in dealing with the media when they were ready to go public, including drafting of a press release, attending press conference with the family and speaking publicly and in media interviews with a focus on child rights. The Ag Commissioner also met with the Chief Police Officer (CPO) about this incident and had meetings with the Ombudsman to assist in their understanding of the impact of that incident not only on the child and his family but also on the whole local Aboriginal community. The Ag Commissioner will have further meetings with the CPO in the new year and has offered to meet with the First Nations Police Liaison team who were also impacted by this incident.

One of the most common and useful ways of engaging with our local community is through word of mouth and having conversations which we see the results of, as more community members come directly to us for advice and support. We accept referrals through numerous sources including email,

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phone, website, community organisations, non-Aboriginal organisations, Courts, the Child Youth and Families (CYF) Division of the Health and Community Services Directorate, personal advocates, importantly from young people themselves, at local events and anywhere that we interact out in the community. There is no wrong door to be able to access our support, and we strive to always operate in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner and with a trauma informed approach.

There are now four Aboriginal staff members, including the Commissioner, in the Office and all have been recruited locally and have strong ties and connections to the Aboriginal community in the ACT.

The Office is hoping to establish the previously proposed Youth Advisory Council in the new year to further seek input into our operations and outreach arrangements from young people themselves. The Office accepts that there is more work to be done to ensure that everyone in the community is aware of the role of the office and how we can support our children and young people. We are currently looking at updating our website to ensure that it provides more information for the community and will be updating community facing information for distribution. We will continue to look for opportunities to be present at community events in 2026 to help in promoting the office and our role.

(2) How will you ensure that your office reflects the views and concerns of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the ACT?

The answer to the question is:

The Office is very conscious of the importance of children to our families and communities and understands that the whole local Aboriginal community want to be assured that our kids rights are being protected and upheld across all systems, programs and services and that they are being supported to navigate these complexities.

Noting the information provided above, the Office is committed to being representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. We continue to be cooperative and collaborative with existing Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations and whilst we are always prepared to take incoming referrals, we often need to reach out to see how an organisation can assist a young person, that we have become aware of, who might not be connected to programs and services that could assist them.

The Ag Commissioner is also a member of the Our Booris Our Way Implementation Oversight Committee and participates in regular discussions around improving the child protection system outcomes for our children, young people and their families. The Office has good relationships with senior leaders in CYF and regularly seeks information in relation to our children and young people

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who are vulnerable or at risk, including those currently detained in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Our young people detained in Bimberi appear to appreciate our weekly visits and often ask us to follow up on matters for them, including legal and personal.

The Ag Commissioner is also a member of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates who meet regularly with an aim of promoting and protecting the rights, safety and well-being of children and young people and ensuring that their best interest are considered in public policy and program development.

There is not always consensus in views across our community, however this Office will always consider the best interests and rights of the child or young person as a priority.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date: 11/12/2025

By Barb Causon, Acting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner

