



ANNUAL STATEMENT 2025

OFFICE OF THE ACT ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSIONER

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner wish to acknowledge and pay its deepest respect to the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the land that we live and work on. We thank the local community elders for their wisdom and guidance. We also acknowledge and value the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the community, who continue to be the focus of our work every single day.



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COMMISSIONER VANESSA TURNBULL-ROBERTS



Commissioner Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts was the Inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner for the ACT. The establishment of this role was an important step in providing oversight and advocacy on behalf of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Children and Young People.

Commissioner Turnbull-Roberts is a proud Bundjalung woman who advocated strongly on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People across the ACT, in response to the critical need of our young people and their families to have voice in decisions that impact them. Commissioner Turnbull-Roberts was deeply committed to ensuring that our children were not unnecessarily removed from their families and that connection and culture were at the forefront of decision making to support their best interests. She was a staunch advocate for our young people in the youth justice system and regularly visited the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, where she was able to take up a number of individual and systemic issues on behalf of our young people in detention.

Commissioner Turnbull-Roberts actively promoted self-determination and the need to ensure that more decision making is made at the community-controlled level. The importance of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and the efforts of front line workers within those organisations was continually highlighted.

During Commissioner Turnbull-Roberts time in the role, her activism, advocacy and cultural lens assisted our children and young people, and their families to navigate complex systems and have voice in decisions. There is no doubt that she will continue to be strong advocate for the rights of children and young people in any future role.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE



Welcome to the 2025 Annual Statement for the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner (the Office). My name is Barb Causon, and I commenced acting in the Commissioner role in October 2025, whilst Commissioner Turnbull-Roberts was on leave. I am a proud Wiradjuri woman who has worked in various roles in Aboriginal Affairs, over the last 40 years, both locally and nationally. I also chaired the Our Booris Our Way (OBOW) review of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT child protection system.

One of the recommendations of the OBOW review and following many years of advocacy from the local community, was to establish the Commissioner's Office. The recommendations of the OBOW review continue to relate very closely to the work we undertake and we are committed to working with the OBOW Implementation Oversight Committee to ensure agreed recommendations are put into practice.

Through a complement of systemic and individual advocacy we aim to influence all systems impacting ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, to increase their wellbeing and close the gap in all target areas.

The role of the Office is significant in that it has considerable legal powers to compel information, intervene in actions and advocate for change. With those powers comes considerable responsibility. I want to assure the local community that we take our roles very seriously and enact these powers to influence positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people we advocate for. For some of our children and their families this might require long term intensive support, for others it may be more of a short-term injection of advocacy. Every child and every family circumstance is different, and we must take the time to understand these individual needs if we are going to achieve good outcomes.

The Office relies strongly on support from the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to work with us to achieve improved outcomes and we place real value on these partnerships. There is no doubt that right across our community there is a deep commitment to keeping families safely together and supporting our children and young people throughout their lives.

We would like to say thank you to our local community members and organisations who have welcomed and supported the Office since it was established. The collaboration, that we have witnessed, is just so essential to improving outcomes for our children and young people. Ensuring that our children and young people are connected and supported requires all of us to work together to provide the right services at the right time.

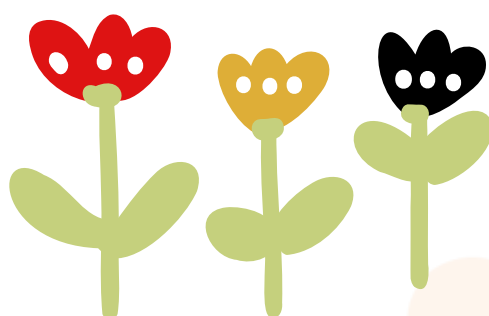
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body are also critical to our work given their voice to government and mandate around holding agencies to account in improving outcomes for our community, including children and young people. The Office commends the published report “Truth through Transparency” for its detailed analysis of issues impacting our community, including our children and young people against the Closing the Gap targets.

The Office maintains good working relationships with the ACT Human Rights Commission, in particular the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner and appreciates their expertise and support.

The Office has been grateful for the level of engagement from local community members, including parents and family members of our young people (teenagers), who provide sensitive information to us based on our shared concerns about their safety and well-being. This connection to families has allowed us to be across emerging issues very quickly and provides us with guidance on community-based solutions which we can take forward. We have so many parents across the community who simply want the best for their teenagers, we all want them to be safe and none of us want to see them caught up in the youth justice system. There is so much more that needs to be achieved in the ACT, if we are to provide culturally appropriate activities, programs and diversionary pathways for our young people.

The ACT government continues to support the role of the Commissioner and the importance of the Office, including its independent role in advocating for our Children and Young People and has demonstrated its willingness to respect the key role played in giving voice to their needs.

Throughout 2025 the Office benefitted greatly from the expertise of a number of temporary staff and their contribution cannot go unrecognised. Special thanks to Gabrielle McKinnon, Bill Bashford and Margy Duke for all your work in the Office supporting our children and young people!



Whilst it is often hard to see significant system change quickly, we are pleased to see some pockets of change, and a growing understanding in various spaces, about the importance of culture, community and connection for our children and young people. We do, however, know that there is much more to be done if we are to create a society that universally values our children and young people and embraces the need to support them to stay connected and grow up strong in identity and being.

By the end of 2025, the Commissioner's Office had four Aboriginal staff with extensive experience across child and youth issues. We are committed to being highly responsive to local community needs and doing everything in our power to assist and advocate for improved outcomes for our kids, their families and community.



With the appointment of a new Commissioner in 2026, we can expect to see the Office continue to provide not only the vision for the future of our children and young people, but also the action to bring that vision to life.

“Most importantly we want to express our deep appreciation and admiration for our children and young people, who represent our future, our hearts and are central to our families and communities. We acknowledge that some may need additional supports from the Office to help reach their full potential. Our kids are the reason the Office exists and the reason we are committed to ensuring that the systems you navigate are fair and safe, that your voices are heard and that your rights are protected. We wish all of you the brightest of futures and we are honoured to support you along the way!”

BACKGROUND

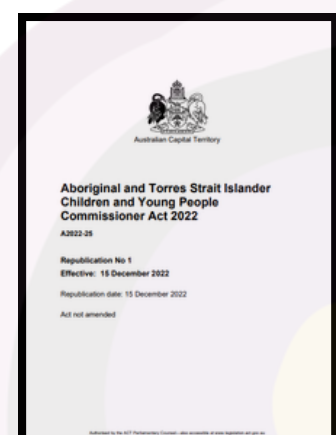
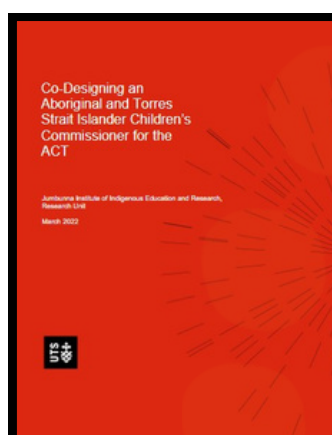
The Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner is an independent statutory agency dedicated to advocating for the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT.

The Commissioner's role was established following years of staunch advocacy from the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and was a recommendation from the Our Booris Our Way review. It followed a process of community co-design facilitated by the Jumbunna Institute.

The report, Co-Designing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner for the ACT, (Jumbunna, 2022), outlined the recommendations by the community, to be included in the development of the legislation for the Commissioner.

The recommendations were incorporated in the development of the Office and its overarching legislation; the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young people Commissioner Act 2022 (the Act). Significantly functions of the Office identified in the report and incorporated in the Act include the following:

- 1.Focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people noting the importance to family, community, culture and Country;
- 2.Oversight and powers of Inquiry and Investigation;
- 3.Advocacy which includes Individual and systemic; and
- 4.Co-operation and information sharing with the ACT Human Rights Commission.



FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

The Commissioner's powers, functions and responsibilities are set out in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner's Act 2022 (the Act).

Under the Act (section 11) the Commissioner has the following functions:

- To advocate on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, individually and collectively;
- To intervene on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in relation to decisions that will affect their rights or interests, including in relevant court proceedings;
- To inquire into matters relating to the rights, development, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- To promote the enjoyment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and their families, of their rights;
- To advise the government about policy, services and other matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and their families; and
- Any other function given to the Commissioner under this Act or another territory law.

The Act also provides that in exercising their functions, the Commissioner must:

- Consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families in ways that promote their participation in decision-making;
- Listen to and seriously consider the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- Ensure the Commissioner is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; and
- Engage regularly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

ANNUAL STATEMENT REQUIREMENT

Section 12 of the Act, requires that the Commissioner must prepare an Annual Statement each calendar year about the operation of the Commissioner's Office including:

- The number and kinds of advocacy matters the Commissioner's office engaged in during the year;
- A summary of the inquiries the Commissioner conducted during the year;
- A summary of the activities of any advisory committee assisting the Commissioner during the year;
- A summary of the community engagement undertaken by the Commissioner's office during the year;
- Anything else the Commissioner considers appropriate; and
- Anything else prescribed by regulation.

All activities identified in the Annual Statement, are underpinned by the following legislation and principles:

- Section 7 of the Act, which refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Principles;
- Section 27(2)- Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT); and the
- SNAICC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL PRINCIPLES

People exercising functions under the Act, must follow the prescribed Aboriginal and Torres Islander Cultural principles, outlined in Section 7. The Office applies the principles to all areas of practice and recognises that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people need strong connections with culture, family, Elders, communities and Country to develop and thrive and to be protected from harm;
- It is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to maintain their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural and linguistic environment, and their set of values (including Aboriginal tradition or Island custom);
- It is important to respect the kinship rules of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as identified by reference to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person's family and kinship relationships and the community with which the child or young person has the strongest affiliation; and
- It is important to acknowledge the spiritual, social, historical, cultural and economic importance of Country to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and the traditional, customary or historical affiliation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with particular areas.

Human Rights Act 2004

The ACT Human Rights Act 2004, Section 27 (2), refers to the cultural and other rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other minorities.

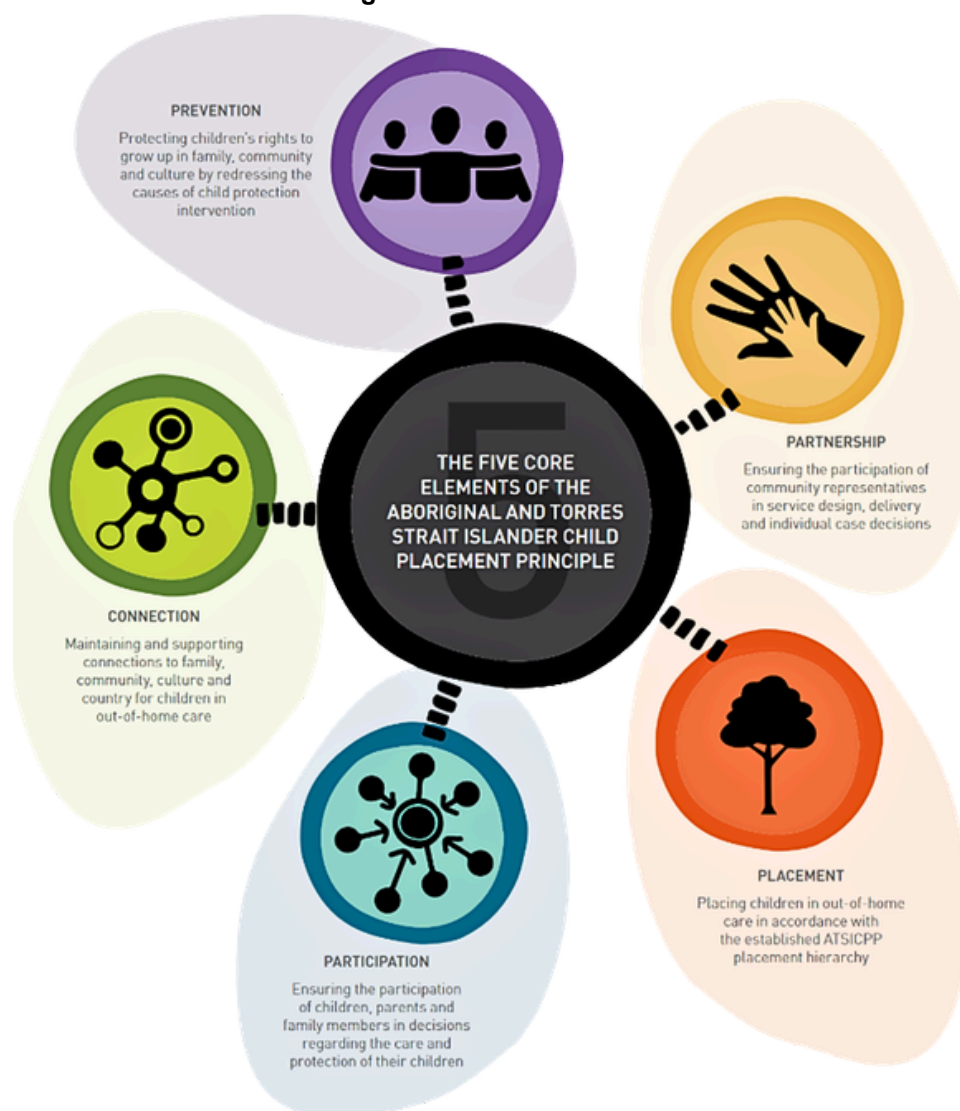
It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right to:

- Maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage and distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs and teachings, language and knowledge and kinship ties; and
- To have their material and economic relationships with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs recognised and valued.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is a national framework ensuring the safety, well-being, and identity of our children by keeping them connected to family, community and culture. It was developed through sustained advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, families and community-controlled organisations and is now embedded not only in legislation and statutory policy frameworks but also in national child protection reform agendas. The Office monitors the implementation of each of the ATSICPP elements in how systems work with our children, young people and their families.

The Five Core Elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle



SOURCE: SNAICC, (2017). UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILD PLACEMENT PRINCIPLE A RESOURCE FOR LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

OVERSIGHT FUNCTIONS

The Office receives, requests and shares information in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and young people to support its oversight and advocacy functions. The powers to share or compel information are incorporated in the following legislation:

- *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*;
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner Act 2022 (the Act)*; and
- *Human Rights Commission Act 2005*.

One legislative tool the Office utilises on a regular basis is Section 879 of the *Children and Young People Act*. This legislation mandates ACT child welfare services provide information, advice, guidance, assistance, documents, facilities or services in relation to the physical or emotional welfare of children and young people. The Director General, their delegates and other child welfare services must promptly assist the Office in providing requested information as soon as possible.

This legislative provision is essential for the Office in monitoring and supporting the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT and ensuring that their rights, safety, cultural identity, and best interests are upheld. It strengthens external oversight and ensures that decisions affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are informed, lawful, and culturally appropriate.

The Office receives regular information and notifications relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to ensure the Office has oversight of relevant matters where intervention or advocacy may be required, including but not limited to -

- **Emergency Action**

Emergency Action (EA) is the immediate statutory response undertaken when Children, Youth and Families (CYF) or ACT Policing remove a child or young person from a parent or carer where they believe that the child or young person is in immediate need of care and protection. Emergency Action is inherently traumatic for the child or young person, their parents, families, and community.

Under section 408(3)(c) of the Children and Young People Act 2008, if the Director-General takes Emergency Action in regard to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child or young person, or is informed that a police officer has taken EA, the Director-General must notify the Office as soon as practicable.

The Office reviews each notification to assess whether the child or young person's safety, wellbeing, and cultural needs were appropriately considered at the time of the Emergency Action.

- **Internal Review of Decisions**

From 1 July 2025, legislation was introduced with regard to decisions by Children, Youth and Families ACT, establishing an internal review process. Long-term and significant decisions eligible for review may include among other matters, visitation for a child, with whom and where a child lives and the cultural rights of a child. Such decisions are notified to impacted family and the Office, within 5 business days.

This notification process ensures that the Office can exercise oversight and intervene where necessary to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

- **ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal**

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner will also be notified of applications to ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young People Act 2008 for review of a decision, if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person is involved.

This allows the Office to:

- Monitor proceedings that may significantly impact the child or young person;
- Determine whether to participate, intervene, or provide advice;
- Ensure the child's cultural identity, community connection, and best interests are addressed in tribunal processes; and
- Determine whether the Commissioner will also participate in the hearing.

- **Court Lists**

The Office receives the Children's Court lists weekly for both care and criminal matters, involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young people. This enables the Office to be present at court where support might be needed.

- **Bimberi Youth Justice Centre Residents List**

The Office receives the Bimberi Residents List on a daily basis, this list provides information regarding young people detained in Bimberi, including their next court date, where they are housed within the centre and any additional needs.

- **Use of Force and other Serious Incidents in Youth Detention**

When the Office makes a request for information regarding use of force and other serious incidents in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, the incident reports, associated documents and access to view any associated footage are provided.



ADVOCACY

The Office was established to advocate for the rights, interests, and protections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT. The Office aims to ensure that every child grows up strong in family and culture, promoting their wellbeing and development through culturally appropriate services and supports.

The Office employs four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with appropriate experience and aims to work with allies who demonstrate cultural safety, integrity, and respect, particularly in their work with children, young people, and their families.

During 2025, the Commissioner's focus has continued to be on establishing the Office, including policies and procedures, development of advocacy tools such as pamphlets and the website, community engagement, systemic advocacy and meeting the high demand for individual advocacy.

Systemic advocacy is a strategic approach to promoting long-term, structural change that upholds and advances the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Rather than focusing solely on the circumstances of an individual child, systemic advocacy examines the broader policies, practices and systems that shape their lives. This includes the interconnected domains of health, education, child protection, housing, justice, community services and other social structures at the local, national and international levels.

The Office aims to identify the underlying causes of disadvantage or inequity, and to influence reforms that create safer, more culturally responsive and more effective systems. This work can take many forms, including contributing to inquiries, developing evidence-informed submissions, participating in advisory committees, influencing policy development, supporting community education and strengthening strategic partnerships. Importantly, the Office's systemic advocacy is grounded in the lived experiences of children, young people, families and communities.

Individual advocacy focuses on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people on a case-by-case basis to ensure their rights, safety and wellbeing are upheld. It involves listening to their experiences, amplifying their voices in decisions that affect them, and helping them navigate systems such as child protection, youth justice, education and health.

This work is grounded in cultural safety and respect for each child's identity, family and community. The issues raised through individual advocacy not only address immediate concerns but also reveal broader patterns and gaps, directly informing the Office's systemic advocacy.

Our children and young people have the right to live in safety, free from abuse, neglect and harm, and to grow within stable, supportive family and community environments.

To support this, the Office comprises two dedicated Senior Advocate positions, one focusing on child protection matters and the other on youth justice, ensuring specialised advocacy across both systems. **In 2025, the Office provided advocacy for more than 84 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children across over 57 families, reflecting both the breadth of need and the significance of this work.**



SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

During 2025, Systemic advocacy has primarily occurred in the form of embedding access to advocacy from the Commissioner and Office staff into practice, particularly in the areas of child protection and youth justice.

The Office has kept abreast of current systemic issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people that have been identified in several reports at a National and State level. Along with previous community feedback from 2024 forums and advocacy across the year, this will inform future planning for 2026 onward. Some of the key reports include:

- SNAICC - Family Matters Report 2025;
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body - 'Truth Through Transparency': A Turning Point Report;
- Our Booris Our Way Review - Implementation Update 2024 (Released May 2025);
- National Children's Commissioner - 'Help way earlier!' How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing;
- ACT Annual Report and Jurisdictional Implementation plan on Closing the Gap; and
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019 – 2028.

The Office has not yet established a Youth Advisory Council but considers this a priority, to further seek input from young people themselves, into our operations and outreach arrangements. The Office will continue to reach out to community for their views and to increase awareness of the role of the Office and the Commissioner.

The Office is also committed to embedding the Child Safe Standards into policy, procedure, and practice and advocating for the standards to be inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and community.

The Office continues to be involved in various forums focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people's best interests including:

- Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) group;
- ACT Child and Family Reform - Ministerial Advisory Council;
- Bimberi Oversight Group;
- Child Safe Standards Implementation Oversight Committee;
- Child Safe standards in the ACT;
- Safe and Supported - National Leadership Group;
- Safe and Supported - Implementation Coordination Committee;
- Bimberi Youth Justice Centre Clients Services Meeting;
- Listen to Me Reference Group;
- Interagency High Risk Adolescent Meeting; and
- MacKillop Transition Panel.

Inquiries and Submissions

No formal inquiries have been undertaken in 2025. The Commissioner has provided a further submission into the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into youth justice and incarceration. A joint submission with the ANZCCGA was also made to the same inquiry.



Children's Commissioner's and Guardians from across the country met with Attorney-General, Michelle Rowland MP and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Malarndirri McCarthy
In November, 2025

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) group

The Commissioner is a member of the ANZCCGA which brings together Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates from across Australia and New Zealand to provide updates on jurisdictional matters and concerns and to stay informed together on matters affecting the rights and interest of children and young people. ANZCCGA also has a role in advocating for change at National and jurisdictional levels.

Three meetings were held in 2025, with the agenda focusing on key issues for children and young people such as:

- Youth Justice and Incarceration;
- Human Right Advocacy;
- Digital Safety and Social Media Regulation;
- Child Rights Report;
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention; and
- Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Safeguarding.

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner was party to several collaborations by the ANZCCGA, including media releases, joint submissions into inquiries and attendance at the 18th Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Alice Springs in 2025.

The Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (part of the ANZCCGA) are committed to progressing key priorities in alignment with Australia's commitment to uphold and embed into law the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Development Program Sustainable Development Goals. There is also a First Nations caucus as a subset of the ANZCCGA and a number of the key priorities, have a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Senate Inquiry into Australian's Youth Justice and Incarceration System

An initial submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into youth justice and incarceration, was submitted in October 2024, by Commissioner Turnbull - Roberts. A subsequent submission was made in December 2025, by the Acting Commissioner, Barb Causon.

The latest submission has a focus on issues the Office has encountered, in regard to experiences working with the Youth Justice system in the ACT. This includes education, health, child protection, cultural programs, youth detention and other spaces.

The ACT has been proactive and at the forefront of many promising reforms, including raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT, there is still so much more that needs to be done to increase accountability across all sectors in reducing the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

The Commissioner made recommendations in the latest submission including:

- The AFP, when contracted as ACT policing be bound by the ACT Human Rights legislation and other relevant legislations in the ACT to allow for accountability mechanisms in the ACT to provide transparency back to the community;
- The expansion and embedding of Circle Sentencing nationally as a culturally effective, diversion and sentencing option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, led by Elders and community justice groups. Evidence shows Circle Sentencing strengthens accountability, reduces reoffending, and improves engagement with the justice system by centring cultural authority, collective responsibility and healing rather than punishment; and
- The offer of cultural programs be mandated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention to strengthen their cultural connection and identity.

The acting Commissioner specifically noted in the submission,

“We must not lose sight of the importance of listening to the voices of children and young people.”

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

The Office's individual advocacy focuses on addressing specific issues to achieve personalised, culturally responsive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and their families. This work is grounded in the principle that every child has the right to be heard, to be safe, and to grow up strong in their identity, culture and community.

A key aspect of individual advocacy is amplifying the voices of children, young people and families. Advocates support individuals to express their views, wishes and concerns, particularly within settings where they may feel unheard or disempowered, such as case conferences, care team meetings or Children's Court proceedings. Ensuring that their perspectives are respected and meaningfully considered is central to achieving fair and culturally safe decision-making.

Advocates also play a critical role in helping families navigate complex systems, including the child protection and youth justice systems. This involves guiding children, young people and families through processes and legislation, clarifying their rights and responsibilities, and supporting them to engage confidently at key decision-making points. Advocates attend a wide range of meetings, including pre-birth planning, care plan reviews, family group conferences, care team meetings and court appearances, ensuring children and families are supported at every stage.

A core element of the Office's individual advocacy in the child protection system is monitoring and accountability. The Office acts as a quality-control mechanism to ensure agencies follow required procedures, communicate transparently, and make decisions that align with legislation, policy, best practice and most importantly the best interests of the child. This oversight helps safeguard children's wellbeing and ensures that actions taken by government systems uphold their rights.

Advocacy also involves information gathering and clarification, supporting children, young people and families to understand their options and the likely implications of different decisions. By providing clear, accessible information, the Office strengthens each family's ability to participate meaningfully in planning for their children and enables more informed, empowered decision-making.

The individual advocacy in the child protection space has highlighted several emerging issues facing our children and young people in the ACT. Some of the key issues include:

- Aftercare, and the need to properly plan and support young people as they age out of the Out of Home Care system into independent living;
- Kinship care placements lacking alignment with the SNAICC Placement Principle and inadequate support for kinship carers;
- Family contact for children in care, including sibling contacts;
- Interstate transfers, specifically the delay in transferring case management, impacting on the ability to implement supports; and
- Enduring Parental Responsibility, especially those granted to non-Aboriginal carers of Aboriginal children creating disconnection from their Aboriginal families.

The Office's commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is at the heart of our work. It drives us to advocate for meaningful change, strengthen connection and reconnection with family and community, support mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, and uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across the ACT. Through individual advocacy, the Office seeks to ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow up safe, supported and strong in culture.

RESTORATION - CASE STUDY

This is a good news story of a mother who continued to fight to get her children home and it has been a privilege for the Office to support her along this journey. When our children are placed in long term statutory care (Out of Home Care) it can be a long hard road for families to get their children back home. The Office supports families who are trying to get their children returned home.

Jess (name has been changed to protect privacy) a young Aboriginal woman, from interstate, living in the ACT, without easy access to her family, cultural supports and country, had two children removed from her care. Concerns for the children's safety were Jess's parenting capacity, including financial stress, housing stress, substance abuse and family violence. The children were placed in a non-Aboriginal foster care arrangement.

Jess described this as a difficult time, with the usual obstacles of being a parent with limited supports. Due to being isolated from her family and having reduced parenting capacity at the time; Jess found it difficult to proactively engage with antenatal services and broader community supports. Rather than services wrapping around her and her babies, she was required to seek them out.

Jess consistently demonstrated strengths and protective factors, she constantly stated her desire to keep her children safe and remain their primary carer. She also spoke about her fear of child removal and concern about her partner's behaviours. Jess has a strong sense of Aboriginal identity and places a lot of value on kinship and cultural connection for her children.

Whilst the children were in care, there was minimal family finding to identify an alternative placement to the non-Aboriginal foster care placement. Jess was allocated one hour of supervised contact per week, while the father who was by then incarcerated, was granted no contact. Jess continued to struggle with her trauma and before she had the opportunity to get the supports in place that were needed, the children were placed on long term care orders to 18 years with the non-Aboriginal foster carers.

It was not until many years later that family finding was undertaken and the maternal great grandmother was assessed as having capacity to care for the children; however, placement with her would have required relocation many miles interstate and across jurisdictions. Although assessed as suitable, the children were not placed in her care and continued to reside with non-Aboriginal foster carers.

Over ten years later and after much effort on behalf of Jess and her supports, including the restoration team in the child protection space, the children were finally restored to their rightful place, with family. Jess and the children are doing well and settling into their new life. Jess and her children continue to require and receive supports, including therapeutic services, to ensure the children remain in a strong, safe home environment with their mother and culture.

The Office has supported Jess in having her children returned and the Office wishes this lovely family all the best and stands ready to support with any future needs.



TRANSITION PLANNING

Young people in the Out of Home Care System are entitled to the same opportunities as their peers and should be provided with the support they need to thrive. This includes comprehensive transition planning prior to a young person leaving statutory care, through the development of a Leaving Care Plan or Transition Care Plan by the allocated case manager.

Under legislation, planning conversations must commence when the young person turns 15 years of age and should actively involve the young person, their family, and relevant support networks. The primary purpose of the plan is to support the young person's transition to adulthood and increasing independence.

Transition plans must identify the anticipated supports and assistance the young person will require from ages 15 to 25, including areas such as housing, education, employment, health and wellbeing, cultural connections, and ongoing social and community supports.

Good transition planning ensures young people have access to a safe and stable place to live, the opportunity to continue their education, support to find and maintain employment, and access to trusted adults they can talk to and rely on. The transition to independence is a critical milestone in a young person's life, and young people must be fully supported to navigate this period successfully and build a stable, independent future.

Particular attention should be given to securing safe and stable accommodation prior to care exit and the prioritisation of targeted support for young people. There is an urgent need to progress transition planning for young people who have already aged out of care or are at risk of doing so without an adequate plan. This includes ensuring access to post-care supports up to the age of 25, when needed.

Throughout 2025, our office supported a significant number of young people in our community who were in statutory care. Some of these young people aged out of the care system during 2025, while many others were in the transition preparation phase.

A review of their circumstances identified that very few young people had a current and up-to-date transition or leaving care plan in place. Some had outdated plans, while others had no plan at all. Additionally, a number of young people had no transition planning underway despite being within the age range where planning should have commenced.

The Office is focusing on ensuring transition planning begins at age 15, as required by legislation. Planning should start from a young person's 15th birthday and include clear milestones and regular reviews, so plans stay active, relevant, and responsive to their changing circumstances.

The Office is hoping to see improved monitoring of transition plans. Plans that are outdated or incomplete should be prioritised for immediate review. This would include establishing a clear accountability mechanism for case managers to ensure transition plans are developed, documented, and reviewed in a timely manner.

The Office will continue to advocate for the importance of involving young people in the development, monitoring and implementation of transition plans.



AFTERCARE

A focus of the Office's advocacy continues to be aftercare support for young people who are about to or have aged out of statutory care. In line with recent legislative reform which extends the period for which CYF is responsible for young people leaving care up to 25 years, the Office continues to advocate for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access support from CYF up to the age of 25. The Office would like to see an expansion of our legislative powers to allow us to work more fully with young people who have been in care, until they are 25. The Office currently relies on consent from people 18 years or older in order to be able to advocate on their behalf for aftercare supports.

Section 529-I of the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT) provides detail on the aftercare support types that can be provided to young people including:

- Accommodation;
- Referrals to support services;
- Education and training;
- Employment;
- Financial security;
- Legal advice;
- Life skills support;
- Social supports;
- Therapeutic supports; and
- Access to a young person's care and protection files.

Whilst the Children and Young people Act 2008 details supports that may be provided to young people, it is evident that young people leaving care are having great difficulty in accessing equitable and culturally appropriate supports.

For young people in residential care placements or Bimberi Youth Justice Centre access to aftercare supports is incredibly difficult and more focus is needed to support these vulnerable young people in our community.

It often takes significant advocacy from the young person themselves, their family, the Office and other supports to ensure that young people who have aged out of statutory care have appropriate accommodation as a starting point. This advocacy continues in an attempt to ensure young people are provided with robust, equitable and culturally safe aftercare support plans that are going to meet their needs in both the short and long term.

The voices of young people leaving care is telling us they feel very anxious, unsupported and silenced. The system is not empowering our young people to transition into adult life with the skills and confidence required, often not even meeting their basic needs.



YOUTH JUSTICE

Youth Justice Issues continue to be a priority for the Office, both on systemic and individual basis. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are significantly overrepresented in the ACT youth justice system; there is a lot of work to be done to reduce this overrepresentation.

The removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families is inextricably linked with the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people involved in the youth justice system and detained in Bimberi. The Independent Review into the Over-Representation of First Nations People in the ACT Criminal Justice system (2025) highlights the well-established phenomenon of care criminalisation. This refers to the way that child protection and policing respond to children and young people in Out of Home Care (OOHC), particularly those placed in residential care. A residential care placement for an Aboriginal young person increases risk of criminalisation due to the over reliance on ACT Policing to manage trauma-based behaviours and the constant surveillance of professionals in their homes. This Office continues to see our young people in residential care placements impacted by over policing and surveillance.

Young people that the Office has engaged with throughout the 2025 period all have a range of great strengths and potential; they are our future. The frank and fearless feedback young people have provided supports the Office to determine priority areas for advocacy. Their contributions are invaluable.

The Office is concerned about the number of incidents where adult professionals have used inappropriate language and behaviour toward our children and young people. These incidents include swearing at young people, calling young people slurs and having inappropriate conversations with young people where their family members may have had involvement with the justice system.

Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility

The ACT is the first jurisdiction in Australia to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old. Raising the age was a two staged approach, on the 22nd of November 2023 the age of criminal responsibility was raised to 12 years old, the age then raised again on the 1st of July 2025 to 14 years. Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the ACT is a step towards reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in the youth justice system. The Office continues to advocate for culturally safe and trauma informed support responses to young people rather than a youth justice response.

A key focus area of the Office is the need for culturally safe and accessible supports for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are not engaged in education or employment. There are currently limited opportunities for young people to engage in culturally safe and trauma informed programs and supports to improve their quality of life.

Therapeutic Support Panel

In response to the minimum age of criminal responsibility raising to 14, the ACT Government established the Therapeutic Support Panel (TSP) to meet the needs of young people who may be engaging in harmful behaviours. The Office has developed a good relationship with the TSP and is aware of the work it has underway relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the ACT, who are deemed at risk. We participate in oversight roles in relation to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person that is placed on an Intensive Therapeutic Order and are working closely with other young people, and their families, who are also engaged with the TSP.

Intensive Therapeutic Orders

Intensive Therapeutic Orders (ITO) were introduced as a response to the raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old. ITO's are legislated at section 549 of the Children and Young People Act 2008 and which enables the ACT Children's Court to grant an ITO where they are satisfied that the child or young person is a significant risk of harm to themselves or others. The Office plays a key role in overseeing and advocating for the best interests of the child or young person for any ITO application or order made regarding an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child or young person.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre

In early 2025 the Office, unfortunately, experienced access issues in relation to visiting young people detained in Bimberi. Access to Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (Bimberi) is legislated at section 153A of the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT) allowing the Commissioner or their delegates to visit Bimberi at any reasonable time for the purposes of exercising legislative functions.

Over the reporting period access to Bimberi improved. The Office has established regular weekly visiting times, during these visits, the Office engages with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people detained in the centre. Issues that continue to be raised within the centre consist of use of force used by staff on young people, the lack of programs during school holidays and limited opportunities for young people to mix with each other. Issues raised with the Office forms the basis of our advocacy for change.

The Office also attends the Bimberi Client Services Meeting when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are listed for discussion; our attendance is typically required weekly. Attendance enables holistic oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people detained as there are representatives from education, health and Bimberi present.

The Office attends the Bimberi Oversight meeting quarterly. In preparation for these meetings, the Office attends a pre meeting with other oversight bodies to discuss agenda items. Attendance at this meeting gives the Commissioner the opportunity to raise systemic issues and discuss concerns pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people detained in Bimberi with Health and Community Services Directorate (HCSD) executives.

When the Office becomes aware of a use of force action towards a young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in Bimberi we liaise with Bimberi executive to view footage and obtain incident reports. Bimberi executive has been flexible in arranging times for the Office to view footage, however, the office experiences delays in receiving incident reports and related documents. The Office continues to work with Bimberi to receive incident reports that accurately reflect the incident.

A range of issues have been identified in relation to the use of force on young people through the review and analysis of footage and incident reports. The events leading to use of force on young people by staff and the restraint techniques utilised are focus areas that the Office is working with Bimberi and other oversight bodies on. No young person in Bimberi should have their safety compromised because of staff miscommunication or error.

The Office participates in the training of new Bimberi Youth Workers with other oversight bodies to inform the new workers about our oversight function at the centre. This occurs in line with Bimberi's recruitment cycle.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As per Section 11 (2d) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner ACT 2022, the Office endeavours to engage regularly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Office participated in a range of community events, activities and attended several conferences throughout 2025 as part of its obligation and commitment to consultation and engagement with the local community and representing its views on issues impacting our children and young people.

The Office engages regularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, Elders, community leaders, organisations, and service providers in ways that are respectful, inclusive, and culturally safe. All staff acknowledge local cultural protocols when undertaking engagement activities. Staff seek guidance from Elders and community representatives to ensure that engagement approaches and policy actions are culturally informed, upholding community expectations, and support meaningful and ethical relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Community engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is essential to building trust, ensuring cultural safety, and supporting self-determination, and is a key foundation for the design and delivery of effective and sustainable advocacy. We aim to:

- Undertake Community Engagement that supports meaningful, ongoing relationships and guides the Office's engagement practices;
- Maintain a visible presence in community life, including attending local events, hosting gatherings, and participating in cultural activities;
- Actively seek and respond to community feedback, and use this input to improve the Office's policies, practices, and priorities;
- Provide accessible, culturally safe, and age-appropriate information and publications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- Ensure we consult, actively listen to and elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; and
- Be accessible to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Over the course of 2025, the Office has worked in an advocacy and engagement capacity with and alongside several local ACCOs, community services, and multiple ACT Government Directorates and other agencies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. Our individual and systemic advocacy has focused on ensuring that the rights, safety, cultural connection, and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people remain central to all decision-making and service delivery across the ACT system. Collaboration work has included, but is not limited to the following agencies, whom we extend our thanks to.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
Aboriginal Legal Service
ACT Health Centres
Alexander Maconochie Centre
Australian Childhood Foundation
Barnardos
Bimberi Youth Justice Centre
Capability Support
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
Child & Family Centres
Children, Youth & Families
CIT Yurauna
Clybucca Dreaming
Education Directorate
Everyman Australia
Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation
Health Directorate
Human Rights Commission
Karralika Programs Inc
Legal Aid Commission
MacKillop Family Servies
Message Stick Foundation
OzChild
Public Advocate & Children and Young People Commissioner
PCYC
Sisters in Spirit
Ted Noffs Foundation
Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm
Toora Women
Uniting NSW.ACT
Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services
Yeddung Mura
Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Cooperation

Children's Rights Big Birthday Bash

The ACT Children and Young People Commissioner hosted a "Children's Rights Big Birthday Bash" on November 20, 2025, celebrating 35 years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, coinciding with World Children's Day. The event featured performances and activities for children and young people to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner. The Office was invited and hosted a stall featuring a range of craft activities, including several Christmas-themed creations with a cultural focus.

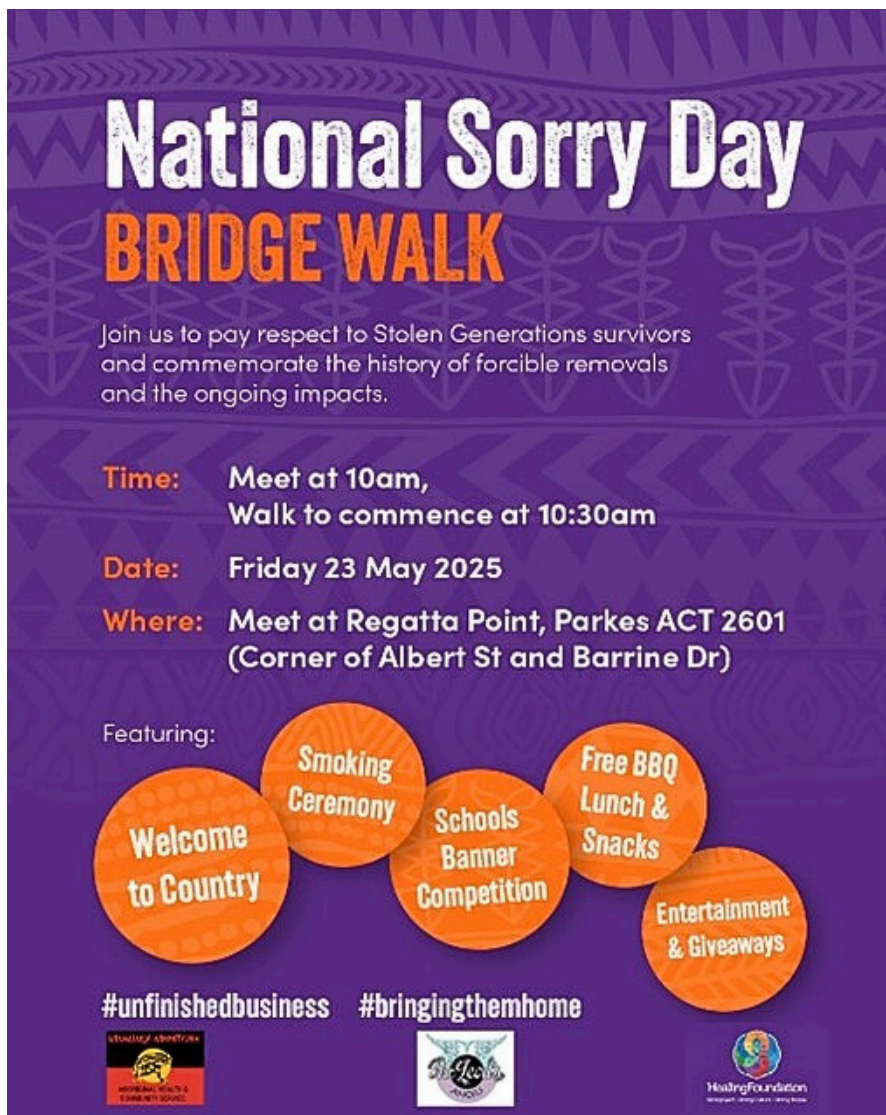


The event was attended by several agencies, including the Human Rights Commission, the Australian Childhood Foundation, AFP, and the National Museum of Australia, each hosting stalls and engagement activities. Children and young people attended from across the ACT participating in the interactive activities and were treated to live performances from St Edwards College South Sea Choirs.



The 2025 National Sorry Day Bridge Walk - 'Bridging Now to Next'

The Office participated in the 2025 National Sorry Day Bridge Walk, organised by Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services in partnership with the Healing Foundation, which was held in May. Although inclement weather resulted in the cancellation of the walk itself, the broader event continued with a strong turnout from the Canberra community. Attendees were treated to cultural performances, food stalls, and the School Banner Competition. A Welcome to Country was delivered by Auntie Matilda House, a Ngambri, Ngunnawal and Wiradyuri Elder and Stolen Generations survivor, together with her son, Paul Girrawah House. The program also included keynote addresses from Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga, and Shannon Dodson, CEO of the Healing Foundation. Despite the challenging conditions, the event remained a meaningful and well-supported commemoration of National Sorry Day.



National Sorry Day
BRIDGE WALK

Join us to pay respect to Stolen Generations survivors and commemorate the history of forcible removals and the ongoing impacts.

Time: Meet at 10am,
Walk to commence at 10:30am

Date: Friday 23 May 2025

Where: Meet at Regatta Point, Parkes ACT 2601
(Corner of Albert St and Barrine Dr)

Featuring:

- Welcome to Country
- Smoking Ceremony
- Schools Banner Competition
- Free BBQ Lunch & Snacks
- Entertainment & Giveaways

#unfinishedbusiness #bringingthemhome

NAIDOC 2025 – ‘The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy’

In celebration of NAIDOC Week 2025 and its theme “The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy,” the Message Stick Foundation hosted its inaugural event for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth on Ngunnawal Country. The event celebrated the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples while looking toward a bright and empowered future, one shaped by the strength, vision, and enduring legacy of our young leaders, communities, and ancestors.

The Office financially sponsored this event, participated in the celebrations and hosted an arts and crafts stall. The stall offered a warm and welcoming space for community members to escape the cold, engage in conversations with staff, and enjoy creating bird-themed artworks through cutting, pasting, and craft activities.



NAIDOC Morning Tea – ‘The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy’

The Office hosted a NAIDOC Morning Tea to celebrate NAIDOC Week, held under the theme “**The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy.**” Marking 50 years of NAIDOC Week celebrations, the event brought together a range of individuals and stakeholders to acknowledge and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and recognise the importance of ancestral wisdom and reflect on the ongoing strength and resilience of our Peoples. The theme emphasised self-determination and the intergenerational passing down of culture, knowledge and leadership, providing a meaningful opportunity for the Commission to engage with community members and reaffirm its commitment to supporting and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



CONFERENCES

The Office was represented at several significant conferences throughout 2025, which collectively represent a strategic investment in professional capability and organisational performance. Participation in these events enables staff to access leading-edge insights, emerging trends, and practical expertise directly relevant to our current and future work. These conferences also strengthened networks across government, industry, and academia, creating opportunities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing that extend well beyond the events themselves. The skills, perspectives, and learnings gained have been brought back into the Office, enhancing decision-making, uplifting capability, and supporting more efficient and innovative ways of working. As a result, this investment has delivered meaningful benefits not only to individual employees but also to the Office.

Justice Reform Initiative – 18th Reintegration Puzzle Conference – June 2025

'Rethinking Justice – Building Change'

Mparntwe/Alice Springs

The Justice Reform Initiative is an alliance of people who share long-standing professional and/or lived experience and expert knowledge of the justice system, and who are further supported by a movement of people of goodwill from across the country and across the political spectrum.



Australia's current dependence on imprisonment is failing to deliver safer communities. It is costly, ineffective, and harmful. A new approach rooted in prevention, rehabilitation, and community support is essential to break cycles of disadvantage and create a more effective and humane justice system. With broad public support and clear evidence, Australia has the opportunity to reshape justice policy and invest in approaches that genuinely enhance community safety and social wellbeing.

SNAICC 2025 – 11th National Conference – October 2025

‘Our Culture Keep It Strong We Belong’

Meanjin/Brisbane

The Office participated in this significant conference organised by SNAICC - the National Voice of our Children, which was held in Meanjin/Brisbane.

With more than 2,000 people in attendance, the three-day event showcased excellence in Aboriginal-led practice, shared powerful lived experience, and highlighted new research-strengthening national efforts to drive reform for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities. Across the event, speakers reaffirmed that lasting improvements in child wellbeing must be grounded in culture, community leadership, and self-determination. With renewed momentum for independent oversight, youth-led advocacy, and community-driven early childhood development, the conference has laid strong foundations for transformative national action. The message was clear, ‘keeping culture strong means keeping children strong’.



First Nations Public Administration Conference – November 2025

‘Leave a Legacy – Be a Transformer’

Meanjin/Brisbane

The Office was represented at this conference which brought together First Nations public servants, academics, and Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori leaders to share their perspectives on the changes needed to drive meaningful reform. This gathering created opportunities for attendees to build connections that foster future progress and deliver better outcomes for First Nations communities.

The aim is to ensure that First Nations staff are equipped with the skills, mindset and cultural knowledge required to lead transformative change and realise the commitments of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.



THE OFFICE

Staffing

The Office continues to be funded for four full time staff members, making it a small team with a lot of demand for services and support. We continue to prioritise support for local children and young people and their families.

Case Management Data Base

The Office has canvassed an appropriate case management database to allow for greater efficiencies in managing data and tracking matters we are involved in. The introduction of such a data base will also increase our capacity to securely and confidentially record information. We have now had demonstrations of the proposed data base and hope to have that in place within the next few months.

Staff Professional Development

The Office provides professional development opportunities for staff and will support staff to access these opportunities as appropriate. Staff have attended several conferences, workshops and community events that support professional development of team members.

Promotional Materials

The Office has updated some culturally appropriate information brochures and resources for children, young people and the wider community and these are available on our independent website. The website is being updated and has a number of resources available including media releases, we continue to look at improvements in-line with the needs of the community.

Policies and practice manuals

The Office continues to develop its policies and practices to have transparent systems across the Office that prioritise:

- The best interests of Children and Young people
- Professionalism, privacy and confidentiality
- Transparently and effectively performing our functions under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Islander Children and Young People Commissioner Act 2022.

Planning

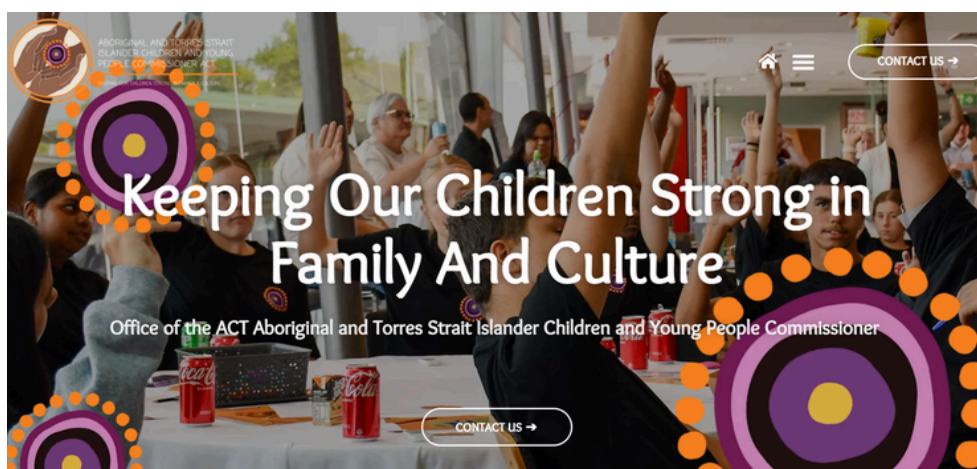
The Office is continuing to increase its capacity and seeks to work with the community on identifying community priorities, emerging issues nationally and locally, developing a youth advisory group or other such advisory committees as seen relevant by the local community. We will continue to build relationships with stakeholders that strengthens the service system to support our children and young people.

Accommodation

The Office is still in its temporary location in the Nara Centre in the City. Options for a long-term site continue to be explored but given recent changes to leasing arrangements, the Office will no longer be transferring to the former site of the Public Trustee and Guardian at 221 London Circuit. Much of our work continues to be undertaken through outreach into the community.



WEBSITE AND RESOURCES



The Office has also set posters and brochures on Understanding Your Rights in relation to the child protection system and the work of the Office which can be downloaded from our website:

aboriginalandtorresstraitislanderCYPC.com.au

We will continue to expand these resources and welcome community feedback on resources that you would like to see.



CONTACT US

The Commissioner's Office is here for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and their families.

We can speak up for you, or help you to find support or advice.

We would also love to hear from you if you have ideas about how we can do things better for our children and young people.

Phone us on: 0422 284 840

Or email us on: atsichildrenyoungpeople@act.gov.au

You can also check out our website and contact us through the online form



**OFFICE FOR ACT ABORIGINAL
& TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

KEEPING OUR KIDS STRONG IN FAMILY & CULTURE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner (Commissioner)	The statutory office holder appointed under section 10(1) of the Act.
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	An incorporated, not-for-profit organisation governed and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to deliver services to their communities.
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Child	An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person under 12 years old.
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person	A person who: (a) is a descendant of an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander person; (b) identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and (c) is accepted as such by their community
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Young Person	An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person aged 12 years or older, but not yet an adult.
ACAT (ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal)	An independent tribunal that reviews certain administrative and civil decisions in the ACT.
ACT Human Rights Act 2004	Legislation requiring public authorities to act consistently with human rights, including cultural rights and protections for children and families.
ACT Human Rights Commission Act 2005	Legislation establishing the ACT HRC to promote and protect human rights and welfare in the ACT
ACT Human Rights Commission (HRC)	Promotes the human rights and wellbeing of everyone living in the ACT.
Child Protection System	The ACT statutory framework for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.
Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)	ACT legislation governing child protection and youth justice. It promotes the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people.

Children, Youth and Families (CYF)	ACT Government's Children, Youth and Families (CYF) offer services aimed at supporting children, young people, families and carers.
Cultural Safety	An environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel their identity, culture and ways of knowing are respected and valued.
NAIDOC Week	Annual national celebration in July recognising the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Office	The Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner established under section 8 of the Act.
Out of Home Care (OOHC)	Alternative care arrangements for children and young people who cannot safely live with their parents (foster, kinship and residential care).
Parental Responsibility	The legal responsibility to provide for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.
Section 879	Section of Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT) relevant to sharing information on children and young people in ACT child welfare services.
Self-Determination	The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make decisions about matters affecting their lives, communities and futures.
SNAICC	National peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
Sorry Day	Observed annually on 26 May to acknowledge the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impacts of forced child removals.
The Act	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner Act 2022 (ACT).
Youth Justice System	ACT statutory framework of legal processes and interventions for young people aged 14-17, who have (or allegedly) committed offences.

