



Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Ms Fiona Carrick

Addressed to: Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

In relation to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Closing the Gap Implementation Governance

Hearing: 30 July 2026

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 24-26

Transcript provided: 31 July 2026

Answer Due: 7 August 2026

MS CARRICK: Thank you, chair. Minister Orr, you are the minister for policy. So would it be possible to have a lead minister responsible for overseeing the implementation given the implementation is across all the portfolios? Is there a lead minister for overseeing the implementation?

Ms Orr: I believe, under the new AAs, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is the partnership lead for the ACT government.

MS CARRICK: Partnership lead?

Ms Orr: I believe that is the terminology.

MS CARRICK: And what does that mean?

Ms Orr: I would say with that, Ms Carrick, you know, it is actually hard to—so I think this is one where I think there has been a lot of want to see one person responsible but given it is a whole-of-government, it is for one person to do it is not realistic. And certainly in finding that balance between being the lead and also making sure my colleagues continue to take account and drive the stuff I need them to drive within their portfolios. That has been a big focus of where we are. And I certainly have not had any pushback from my colleagues of becoming far more involved in this portfolio, and I think Minister Stephen-Smith will probably say she can speak to the time she had the portfolio, and the colleague engagement was probably quite high, I would imagine. What we are looking at doing and again it goes back to—and I am sorry to sound like a broken record but it goes back to getting that focus and building the strength of that partnership between the Elected Body as the voice to government for the community here in the ACT and that focus through aligning all the work that we have going on and all the commitments we have there so that we can actually just do them a little bit more efficiently or quickly. I mean, when we say the lead, my role in taking what it

has always taken in; it is just giving that recognition, sitting on joint council for Closing the Gap. So I am the ACT representative on that. I provide information on how we are progressing and tracking across what we are doing. The chair of the Elected Body is also the partnership representative on joint council. That oversight role does probably sit with me through that particular position, noting that everyone will also need to be taking oversight of their particular portfolios. And really, it is that direction-setting which again has always been done. It is really just getting a stronger focus on what it is we are doing within that.

MS CARRICK: So given there are so many things going on, do you have a nice sort of governance structure sort of like a normal chart about all the different elements, all the different committees and what they are responsible for reporting? So is there a nice little one-pager that one can see how it all hangs together?

Ms Orr: Sorry, can I just clarify that someone has just helpfully handed me the AAs, because I have not memorised them all since midnight this morning; word-for-word. Broadly, I am okay. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Partnership Lead is me, and National Agreement on Closing the Gap and ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreements Performance Monitoring is me. So I am the one who gets to hold everyone to account.

MS CARRICK: Good.

Ms Orr: I am trying not to say “crack the whip” into the Hansard, but here we go.

MS CARRICK: So will you be producing us a one-pager that shows all the different things that are going on, like, a little org chart of what committees there are and who reports what?

Ms Orr: I might defer to my officials as most of it happens within the public service so I will leave it at their discretion as to—

Ms Arthy: Yes, Ms Carrick, I may have to think about that. There is no such thing as a simple one pager when it comes to being able to outline. I am not saying that to sound odd, can I just take that on—because we report—publicly there are our documents but what we are doing for the Closing the Gap and the partnership agreement and I can find the link for that and I am pretty sure that it is online so that will tell you what the public service is doing around Closing the Gap, but I do not think—

MS CARRICK: I mean just like an org chart, you know, about the different committees and how they roll up to—

Ms Orr: Yes, okay. I do not know—I think when you say “org chart” that would be happening across the whole public service.

MS CARRICK: Yes.

Ms Orr: I think what you are asking for is the structure of collaborations—

MS CARRICK: The committees, yes.

Ms Orr: Yes. And again, it is probably actually a simple one in that you have cabinet, you have the subcommittee, you have the board—

Ms Arthy: The strategic board in the public service and then the subcommittee. And they are the formal committees so there are only really the four. Then every directorate has their own arrangements.

MS CARRICK: The portfolios, directorates doing their different things.

Ms Arthy: Yes, and they may not be formal committees. They might just be different working groups that get stood up from time to time.

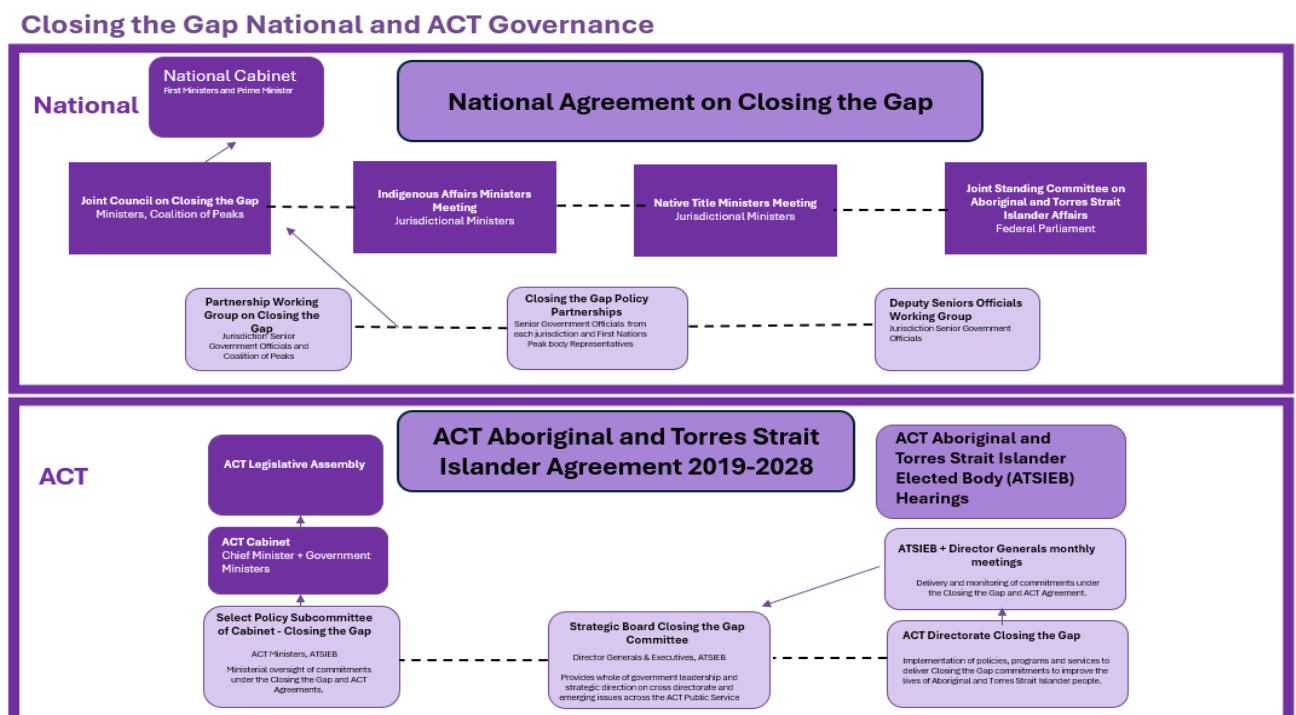
MS CARRICK: Yes. Just how the governance of the whole thing works.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And I think it is also important, Ms Carrick, to recognise that the governance of the ACT government links in with governance, federal and councils so under the joint council and Closing the Gap there are a number of partnership working groups that focus on specific priorities that have been established by joint council which brings together state, territory and commonwealth ministers with the coalition and peaks—peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations so part of this work is trying to align what we are doing with what joint council has determined as a structure so that we can minimise the duplication of reporting.

Ms Arthy: So, Ms Carrick, I will do our best in terms of timeframes to be able to put the questions on notice back. It might be an interim answer because as Minister Stephen-Smith said there are so many national working groups that we are hooked into as well that we may not be able to capture them all in time but we can certainly do a very high level overview about our internal ACT government ones.

Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Please see below a map of ACT and national Closing the Gap governance arrangements:



OFFICIAL

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027

Signature: 

Date: 9/8/26

Acting Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA