



## **Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy**

Minister for Indigenous Australians

Senator for Northern Territory and Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands

MS26-000019

Ms Tricia Stroud  
Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations  
Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations  
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Dear Ms Stroud

This letter outlines my expectations of you as Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations (the Registrar). This is a Ministerial Statement of Expectations (Statement), within the meaning of Government's Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide 128 (RMG 128).

This Statement complements the Registrar's functions, powers and obligations as an independent statutory officeholder administering the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act).

I expect the Registrar to be supported by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) in exercising your functions, and in meeting these expectations.

Principally, I expect the Registrar to deliver your key functions and obligations under the CATSI Act and any other legislative requirements, as well as any Government policy requirements for accountability and transparency. I expect the Registrar to report on your performance regularly.

### **Closing the Gap**

The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap, recognising that meaningful and lasting change can only be achieved through partnership. This partnership extends across governments, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and importantly for the Registrar and ORIC, their organisations. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is underpinned by four Priority Reforms, including strengthening the community-controlled sector and transforming the way governments work.

In this context, First Nations organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations registered under the CATSI Act (Corporations) play a critical role in delivering services, informing decision making, and driving community led solutions. The Registrar has an important role in supporting a strong, sustainable, and accountable sector that can fully contribute to these reforms, and in achieving the outcomes of the National Agreement.

### **Economic Empowerment**

As part of our work in Closing the Gap, a key priority for the Government is the economic empowerment of First Nations Australians. I expect the Registrar to use her powers and functions, including to register, regulate and support Corporations in a manner which best promotes the economic empowerment of First Nations Australians.

## **Regulatory Reform**

### Modernising Portfolio Bodies

As part of the ongoing focus on economic empowerment for First Nations Australians, I expect the Registrar to continue to engage with the Government's work on Modernising Indigenous Portfolio Bodies, of which the Registrar and ORIC are a part.

Modernising the legislative foundations and funding basis of these organisations is critical to enabling economic self-determination. It also provides an opportunity for the portfolio to deliver practical reform in the context of the First Nations Economic Partnership. This work will consider how changes to the CATSI Act might best support the Registrar and ORIC's regulatory work, boost the integrity of Corporations, and help people, organisations and businesses easily find the support they need.

### Regulatory Reform Agenda

The Government is modernising regulation and improving regulator performance across government through the Regulatory Reform Agenda. This work includes improvements in data, innovation, and stewardship to ensure regulation is fit-for-purpose in a digital era, protect against regulatory failures, and improve productivity.

## **Regulator Best Practice**

I expect the Registrar and ORIC to embed and act in accordance with the Government's principles of regulator best practice when performing their functions, including to apply the Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework's principles for effective regulation.

I expect the Registrar to specifically follow regulator best practice principles under RMG 128:

1. **Continuous improvement and building trust:** that the Regulator adopt a whole-of-system perspective, continuously improving your and ORIC's performance, capability and culture, to build trust and confidence in the regulatory settings.
2. **Risk-based and data driven regulation:** that the Regulator and ORIC manage risks proportionately and maintain essential safeguards while minimising regulatory burden, and leveraging data and digital technology, to support those they regulate to comply and grow.
3. **Collaboration and engagement:** that the Registrar and ORIC are transparent and responsive communicators, implementing regulations in a modern and collaborative way.

In accordance with these principles, I expect the Registrar to:

- Ensure ORIC is professional, respectful, courteous, proactive and prompt in exercising its functions and in communicating with stakeholders, but particularly with Corporations, their members, and those seeking ORIC's support;
- Ensure information about the administration of the CATSI Act is available as soon as practicable for access by the public, including by regularly updating the ORIC website;
- Maintain comprehensive quality assurance and reporting processes for ORIC;
- Ensure decisions and actions have a sound legislative base, are informed by consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- Ensure that your exercise of your functions is supported by corporate and work plans, strategic priorities, risk management strategies, performance indicators and reporting;
- Manage the budget of ORIC and the use of its resources in a fiscally responsible manner, including in compliance with relevant NIAA policies; and
- Ensure the Registrar's responsibilities are carried out efficiently, effectively and with minimal duplication.

### Collaboration

I expect the Registrar to maintain effective working relationships, particularly with Corporations, their members, and key stakeholders.

The Registrar should also collaborate closely with Commonwealth departments and agencies, state and territory governments, relevant regulators, and key stakeholders

I expect the Registrar to engage particularly closely with the NIAA. The relationship between NIAA and the Registrar is vital to the provision and collection of information and data needed to ensure the Government can maximise beneficial outcomes for First Nations people.

I expect the Registrar and the NIAA to facilitate the exchange of intelligence, information and data (insofar as is authorised under the CATSI Act) on both operational and strategic issues, policy development and evaluation processes. I expect the Registrar and ORIC to provide the NIAA wherever possible with timely information on the CATSI Act and the Regulator's administration of it, as well as the Regulator's performance of your powers and functions.

I expect the Registrar to work closely with Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and law enforcement agencies nationally to ensure any allegations involving serious misconduct in breach of the CATSI Act of registered Corporations are subject to thorough investigation, and other allegations are appropriately handled.

### **Enforcement and improving compliance**

I expect the Registrar and ORIC to maintain a strong focus on monitoring and enforcing compliance with the CATSI Act and take appropriate action to respond to allegations of serious misconduct.

I expect the Registrar to adopt a risk-based regulatory approach where the exercise of legislative powers (including enforcement powers) is appropriate to the consequence of non-compliance, and public interest. Notwithstanding that risk-based approach, I also expect the Registrar and ORIC to take appropriate steps to improve the general compliance of registered Corporations with the CATSI Act, ORIC policies and regulations.

### **Implementing *Support and Regulation of Indigenous Corporations***

I expect the Registrar and ORIC to examine closely the findings of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) 2026 performance audit: *Support and Regulation of Indigenous Corporations*. Wherever appropriate, I expect the Registrar to incorporate those findings into ORIC's practice, as well as to support the NIAA, the Department of Finance to implement the recommendations made to them.

I particularly expect the Registrar to implement the recommendations to which it has agreed, including by:

- Ensuring ORIC's key regulatory framework documents, such as the Compliance Framework and Registrar's Regulatory Posture, more clearly demonstrate the link between regulatory priorities and activities and compliance risks.
- Ensuring ORIC undertakes an evaluation of the key drivers of reporting and annual general meeting non-compliance and the relative impact of its support activities and regulatory responses in relation to non-compliance in these two areas;

I expect the Registrar and ORIC to keep me and my office informed of their progress in this regard.

### **Support for corporations to improve**

The Registrar has a crucial role in improving the corporate governance, skills, efficiency and accountability within corporations. This role is an important element in the Government's commitment to the Economic Empowerment of First Nations people.

I expect the Registrar to provide regular corporate governance training activities for registered Corporations, with a focus on delivering sustainability and accountability of those corporations.

I expect the Registrar to perform these support functions for Corporations and have regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition and circumstances.

I expect the Registrar and ORIC exercise their functions and powers in a way which is culturally responsive and culturally safe, to the extent possible under the CATSI Act.

**Statement of Intent**

I expect the Registrar will respond with a Statement of Intent (SOI) within two months from the receipt of this Statement. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Statement and responding SOI should be published on ORICs' website.

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**Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy**  
Minister for Indigenous Australians

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