



Australian Government
Office of the Registrar of
Indigenous Corporations

Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy
Minister for Indigenous Australians
Senator for the Northern Territory and Christmas and Cocos (Kneeling) Islands
Senator.McCarthy@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

Statement of Intent

This letter outlines my response to your Statement of Expectation dated 19 June 2026. It sets out how I intend to meet those expectations, taking into account the statutory independence of the Registrar in administering the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act). Both statements will be published on the ORIC website.

The Registrar role

The statutory functions and powers of the Registrar are set out in the CATSI Act and published on the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) website.

The Registrar with the assistance of ORIC both regulates and supports the corporations incorporated under the CATSI Act – with the aim of these corporations achieving their economic, social and cultural purpose while being governed in accordance with the CATSI Act and their own rule book.

I remain committed to executing the powers and functions of the role, as set out in the CATSI Act, in line with your expectations and with the standards the public expects of myself and my office.

Supporting the Government's priorities and objectives

The unique provisions of the CATSI Act and the internal rules of corporations ensure that members hold key rights and are in control of a corporation. Some 3,398 registered Indigenous corporations are controlled by some 254,685 members and governed on their behalf by some 18,025 directors¹.

Indigenous member owned and controlled corporations are delivering programs and services for the social, cultural and economic benefit of First Nations people, and are protecting various Indigenous rights and interests.

¹ Data as at 24 June 2026. Member and director count is 'position' noting that some individuals are members or directors of more than one corporation.

I and ORIC remain committed to our vision of *well-governed and self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations* that are achieving their economic, social and cultural purpose, and specifically:

- registering Indigenous member-controlled corporations that are delivering social, cultural and economic programs for the benefit of First Nations communities
- regulating corporations' compliance with the law and their rule book, ensuring that at all times they are Indigenous member-controlled and that the rights of members are protected
- regulating, supporting, and where necessary, intervening so that First Nations communities, governments, funding bodies and the broader public have trust and confidence in corporations
- providing training and educational products which build the capacity, confidence and success of corporations
- maintaining a public register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, including a register of persons who are disqualified from being a director or from managing a corporation
- providing regular and accessible public information on the administration of the CATSI Act.

Well-governed and self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations are better placed to: provide high quality services to First Nations Australians; manage and protect Indigenous rights and interests; and partner with governments in sharing decisions and authority on matters that affect the lives of First Nations people.

Notwithstanding the independence and impartiality of the Registrar's regulatory powers and functions, the Registrar role and its office contribute to the Government's agenda for First Nations people.

It does so as an active and accountable member of the Government's Indigenous portfolio.

As the Registrar I will continue to:

- support the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and particularly economic empowerment of First Nations Australians
- support the Government's regulatory reform process
- demonstrate better practice in decision-making, communication and the implementation of policies and processes.

I welcome the Government's focus on *Modernising Indigenous Portfolio Bodies* in ensuring better outcomes for Indigenous economic growth, and how changes to the CATSI Act might best support this. I will continue to engage in this work with a commitment to maximising how ORIC's support and regulatory functions and the CATSI Act better boost strong well-governed Indigenous corporations as vehicles for economic self-determination.

While ORIC actively contributes to this work, it will continue to maximise the powers that currently exist under the CATSI Act, with efficiency and effectiveness.

Regulatory best practice

In performing the functions and exercising powers under the CATSI Act, I aim to embed and act in accordance with the 6 principles of the *Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework*. I will continue to also follow regulator best practice principles under the *Government's Resource Management Guide- Regulator Performance (RMG 128)*. This includes

continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data driven regulation as well as collaboration and engagement.

The CATSI Act gives regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition and circumstances in regulating Indigenous corporations. I will continue to build:

- corporation's understanding and engagement in the regulatory framework that they operate in, and confidence in managing cultural and corporate governance
- the cultural responsiveness of ORIC and its staff
- public trust and confidence in independent and impartial regulation of Indigenous corporations.

This includes developing governance training, education and support materials that are designed to assist corporations to achieve strong Indigenous corporate governance. I will also continue to pursue internal ORIC training and system improvements.

I will continue to adopt a risk-based approach where my regulatory powers are used consistently, proportionately and reasonably. In developing this approach, I will continue to monitor the environment to ensure that regulatory approaches keep pace with changes in technology, industry practices and community expectations, and effect change accordingly.

To provide transparency of my regulatory position for corporations. I will continue to publish:

- a Regulatory Posture each year re-enforcing my enduring regulatory priorities and setting out my regulatory appetite and focus for the period
- Policy Positions and Policy Statements.

Underpinning this is a commitment to regulating the number of compliance requirements of corporations with a focus on driving an uplift in reporting compliance. I remain focussed on taking appropriate enforcement action such as civil and criminal prosecution as a deterrent to serious and intentional wrongdoing that harms corporations and public confidence, and which hinders cultural, social and economic services and benefits to First Nations communities.

Relationships with stakeholders

I remain committed to ORIC's values of independence, impartiality, respect and accountability. I will continue to embed these in ORIC's culture, behaviours and support – and more importantly its regulatory functions.

I will continue to focus on ORIC's customer service standards including its systems, responsiveness and communications. We will continue to:

- publish resources, tools and materials to assist corporations and stakeholders
- adopt a plain English style in our communications
- communicate our decisions and reasons clearly with open information on affected party's review and appeal rights
- communicate openly on our complaint avenues.

I will continue to actively participate in the portfolio of Indigenous Agencies, coordinated by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), contributing to strategic and collaborative priorities. This includes the sharing of information, intelligence and data (insofar as is authorised under the CATSI Act).

More broadly, I remain committed to working with:

- the NIAA and Government to progress changes to the CATSI Act and Regulations which will assist the administration of the CATSI Act and meeting your Statement of Expectations in particular expectations that go to a modernisation in approach to regulation
- the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC), more specifically, focussed on reducing reporting burden for CATSI Act registered corporations that are also registered charities
- Government agencies where regulatory action and support is necessary to secure at risk services with a priority on minimising the impact on First Nations communities
- law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies ensuring allegations of serious corporate misconduct is investigated thoroughly
- the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) in the referral of evidence to support the successful prosecution of criminal offences against of the CATSI Act
- the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) supporting the corporate governance of RNTBCs and common law holders of native title including appropriate referral and handling of complaints and disputes
- the Australian Business Registry Service (ABRS) in aiding its administration of director identification numbers and compliance rates for directors of CATSI Act registered corporations.

ORIC also works with the regulated community, industries and peak bodies informing its regulatory posture and strategic outlook. This will include appropriate evaluation and consultations to inform my regulatory posture.

Governance and accountability

Notwithstanding the independence of the Registrar, I respect that I am accountable to you as the Minister in the use of public resources made available through the provision of ORIC (staffing, financial). This includes the management of resources responsibly and in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). I will work with the NIAA to report on this through appropriate channels.

I acknowledge obligations to be accountable for my performance and that of ORIC, and to provide appropriate briefings to your office as necessary and appropriate.

As the Registrar accountable to yourself, I commit to:

- attend the Finance and Public Administration Senate Estimates Committee hearings to provide evidence in the examination and scrutiny of ORIC's operations
- report publicly via oric.gov.au on ORIC's performance including the publication of regulatory decisions and actions
- uphold public confidence and accountability through the publication of a Regulatory Compliance Framework, Position Statements, Policy Statements, Fact Sheets and a Customer Service Charter which ensure corporations and interested parties are informed of ORIC's accountabilities and standards in administering the CATSI Act
- provide a specific complaint handling process for ORIC staff and contractors, underpinned by the ORIC values of independence, impartiality, respect and accountability, as well as the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct

- comply with all Government legislative and policy requirements for accountability and transparency, including maintaining comprehensive quality assurance and reporting processes for ORIC.

Regulatory decisions and actions of the Registrar are subject to contest and scrutiny through several mechanisms such as those above, as well as the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) or judicial review of a court.

Officers of ORIC are delegates of the Registrar, with obligations to make delegated regulatory decisions, in a manner compliant with the CATSI Act, and directions provided by the Registrar, independently and impartially, and able to withstand review and appeals.

I remain committed to upholding public accountability and scrutiny and ensuring that corporations and interested parties are at all times informed of their review, appeal and complaints rights and how to exercise these.

I remain committed to public transparency and accountability and will continue to improve ORIC's suite of public performance reports. This includes the provision of 3 performance reports a year as well as contributing to the NIAA Annual Report.

ORIC has undertaken significant change since 2022. Changes to its regulatory approach, systems, policies, procedures, capabilities as well as its support offerings to corporations. I remain committed to a culture of continuous improvement and to implementing the recommendations of the recent Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audit - *Support and Regulation of Indigenous Corporations*. In doing so I will consider how the broader audit findings can inform ORIC's continuous improvement.

I commit to providing quarterly updates to you on ORIC's performance and its work more generally. I will include progress on implementing the audit recommendations in this reporting.

Organisational matters

The CATSI Act provides for the provision of an office by the Australian Government. This is provided through the NIAA with all officers being public servants.

The Deputy Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations is appointed under the CATSI Act and is engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Corporate decisions are undertaken by ORIC delegates in accordance with the NIAA corporate policies and procedures and the PGPA Act.

I continue to respect the obligations on ORIC as a Government entity as it relates to responsible management of its budget and resources in a manner that is accountable and compliant with the relevant NIAA policies and resources and the PGPA Act.

Tricia Stroud



Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations

1 July 2026