



ACT|atsieb

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ATSIEB plays a vital role in informing government priorities as well as highlighting the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberran's – as a part of that important role, the members each year attend hearings where they interact directly with the ACT Government

## Annual hearing process

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) was established under the ACT's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008* (the Act) to enable the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT to have a strong democratically elected voice that is aware of, and able to, represent the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's interests and aspirations.

It has seven members elected every three years.

ATSIEB has the power under section 26 of the Act to invite the director-general of a government directorate to attend a meeting of ATSIEB and answer questions or provide information about the functions of the government directorate.

If ATSIEB invites the Director General of a government directorate to attend a meeting to answer questions or provide information about the functions of the government agency, the Director General must take reasonable steps to attend the meeting, and answer the questions and provide the information, as requested.

At a meeting in early 2009 between the then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Chair and Deputy Chair of ATSIEB it was proposed to hold an 'estimates style' process for ATSIEB to assist it in carrying out its functions in accordance with the Act.


The process was based on the budget estimates process used by the ACT Legislative Assembly where the Ministers and Members of the ACT Legislative Assembly and heads of ACT Government Departments appear before a committee which enquires into the Budget Estimates.

Only senior executives from ACT Government Directorates appear at the ATSIEB hearings.

ATSIEB engages the ACT Legislative Assembly Hansard services to record the proceedings.

This process assists ATSIEB to review the effectiveness and accessibility of ACT Government programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

At the hearings ATSIEB raises with the Directors-General and Senior Executives various matters concerning delivery of services, Departmental programs and the allocation of resources (current



and planned) relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The first hearings took place on 19 August 2009.

ATSIEB uses the information gathered from the estimates style process to:

- Make recommendations to the Government on the issues raised during the hearings;
- Develop policy positions in regard to their portfolio responsibilities; and
- Develop its strategic plan.

Following the hearings, ATSIEB presents a report and recommendations to the ACT Government through the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The ACT Government formally responds to the recommendations contained in the report. The Government response to the report and the ATSIEB report are both tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Subsequent hearings have been held on 3 and 6 September 2010, 12-13 December 2011 and most recently 23-24 April 2013.

ATSIEB is also considering an expansion of the annual hearings process to include appearances by ACT Legislative Assembly Ministers and heads of ACT Government Directorates to answer questions.