



# Message from the Chairperson



## **Term 4, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body**

Thanks for all the feedback on last week's message, glad its helpful and we will keep gathering vital information for the community to help us all navigate these uncertain times. As another week has passed and with further restrictions it is even more important that we look out for each other, observe social distancing to protect our community – especially our Elders.

We have been working this week with organisations, government and other stakeholders to ensure that the services and programs the community need are available and can be accessed in a safe way. As indicated last week if you do need to go outside your homes to service providers I would encourage you to call ahead and discuss what you need and see if they will be able to assist and support you without you needing to leave your home and family.

I would also like to say thank you to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people out there in the workforce continuing to deliver vital services and programs to our community. We are very proud of the contribution you are all making and hope you stay healthy and safe during this time.

I want to also thank Minister Stephen-Smith whom as Minister for Health is obviously very busy at the moment but she is making regular time to update the Elected Body on COVID 19 related matters and to get advice from us where that's appropriate. I have included a short message from the Minister to our community to ensure you all are hearing directly as well.

### **Message from Minister Stephen-Smith, MLA**

It has been a difficult few months for Canberrans – from smoke and fires to hail storms and now COVID-19. I want to assure you that work is underway across the ACT Government to ensure our healthcare system and community are prepared for COVID-19. Following health advice such as the social distancing rules and staying home as much as possible gives us all the best chance to stay healthy and flatten the curve. For people impacted by business shutdowns, supports and services are available from the ACT and Commonwealth Governments. All of the health and economic information for the ACT can be found here: [www.covid19.act.gov.au](http://www.covid19.act.gov.au)

The ACT's community-controlled organisations are doing an incredible job in keeping people healthy and connected in these difficult times. I acknowledge all the staff at Winnunga Nimmityjah, Gugan-Gulwan and

the range of smaller organisations that are continuing their hard work and commitment to community through these difficult times.

One of the very best things about Canberra is how strong and connected our community is. It's really important for us all to continue to check-in on how our family and friends are doing. Canberrans are resilient and I know we will get through this together.

### **Canberra Relief Network**

The Canberra Relief Network and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body have been working together to coordinate the announcement by the ACT Government around food relief for people in the community who are experiencing financial hardship during this time.

If you want to register to receive a hamper, please register with the Canberra Relief Network on 1800 43 11 33 from 10am-2.30pm Monday to Friday.

They will ask you to select a drop off point, please note that Gugan Gulwan is one of these drop off points, and you can organise a non-contact pick up from Gugan or alternatively if you contact Gugan and they can organise for a non-contact drop off to your home. Call Gugan-Gulwan on 02 6296 8900.

### **Child and Family Centre Programs**

Whilst the 3 Child and Family Centres are temporarily closed families are still able to have access to Child and Family Workers who can support you and your family. To assist with this there is a new Intake and Consult Service where you can talk with a Child and Family worker about a range of issues including – general parenting, family relationship issues, children's behaviour and development or adjusting to parenthood. Unfortunately, this means that the group programs and supported playgroups are on hold for now. If you want to speak with a Child and Family worker through the Intake and Consult Service, please note it is available Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. Please call:

West Belconnen Child and Family Centre on **6205 2904**

Gungahlin Child and Family Centre on **6207 0120**

Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre on **6207 8828**

If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, please call the **Child Development Service** on **6207 8884**.

### **Housing ACT**

In the week commencing 30 March 2020, Housing ACT commenced phone contact with all housing tenants to check on their health and wellbeing, these phone calls will also be used to obtain or confirm current bank information to ensure the prompt payment of the ACT Government's \$250 stimulus payments for ACT Housing and community housing tenants. Tenants can expect the one-off payment to be made by June 2020. Housing ACT is also working with community partners to address and implement emergency homelessness and housing responses where possible. As part of this process, priority contact is being made with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and over. It is also important to note that the one-off payment of \$250 is exempt from being treated as assessable income or assets for tenants.

**Rent** - tenants who have lost employment or had work hours reduced should complete a new rental rebate application to ensure the correct calculation and payment of rent for your current circumstances.

For all other tenants you should note that Housing ACT has extended all rental rebates by 60 days that expire before 31 May 2020. Further extensions to rental rebates will be applied as necessary.

**Repairs and Maintenance** – there are no changes to the current process regarding repairs and maintenance, further any repairs and maintenance issues identified during the health and wellbeing phone call will be addressed on a case by case basis. The call centre will continue to operate around the clock and any health and safety matters and/or security of property issues will continue to be a priority.

**Priority Housing Register** – there are no changes to the operation of the Priority Housing register.

**Moving House** – if you had signed up for a transfer or move prior to COVID-19 there are no changes to the current process, however given the health crisis it could take a little longer than usual as Housing has a limit of five people at any one time to attend the Centre Access Point.

**The Older Persons Housing Project in Lyons is progressing well** - the construction program is on time with an anticipated completion date of October 2020. As you can see from the photo's the site has been cleared, the stone retaining wall is complete, footing and pier concrete has been poured and over the next two weeks it is planned to undertake the slab preparation and finish off the in ground drainage.

If you have any business with Housing ACT and you are required to go into the office, you can expect some delays and if you are unwell you should contact Housing ACT via phone or email, See attached flyer for Housing ACT contact details.

### **Canberra Health Service**

During this time if you are admitted to hospital be assured that the Aboriginal Liaison Officer Service is operating and available to provide you with support and assistance, Monday-Friday from 8.30am to 5pm each day or you can contact them on 02 5124 2055 or email [ALOService@act.gov.au](mailto:ALOService@act.gov.au).

If you require mental health support you can call Access Mental Health on (freecall) 1800 629 354 this is a 24/7 triage line for urgent referrals, they can also put you in touch with the Home Assessment and Acute Response team which is able to come out to your home. However, if you or a family member require urgent or immediate support, we would encourage you to present yourself or encourage your family member to attend the Emergency Department for a clinical assessment.

The inpatient Withdrawal Unit is also operating as usual and has an allocation of culturally appropriate bed/s available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being admitted to this unit.

I will be back with more updates on Thursday next week as we head in to Easter!

*Katrina Fanning*  
*Chairperson*

**ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body**

