

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 / 2026

NORTHERN TERRITORY
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION
COMMISSION

Bold Collaborative Inclusive

Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission acknowledges the traditional owners of the country on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present, and rising and we acknowledge their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately affected by discrimination and harassment, and acknowledge our shared responsibility to prevent and address discrimination and harassment in the Territory.



Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

We also acknowledge the strength, courage, and resilience of people across the Northern Territory who have experienced discrimination, sexual harassment, or other forms of harm. We recognise the lasting impacts these experiences have not only on individuals, but also on families, workplaces, and communities. People with lived experience bring powerful insight and leadership to our shared efforts to build a more inclusive Territory.

Diversity is one of the Territory's greatest strengths. The perspectives and contributions of people from all walks of life enrich our community and are vital to shaping systems that uphold human rights and equality for all. To those who have spoken out, sought change, made a complaint, or continued, despite injustice, we thank you. Your experiences matter, and your voice is central to our vision for a Territory where diversity is celebrated, people are respected, opportunities are equal, and voices are heard with compassion.

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Acting Commissioner's Message



Bronwyn Haack

I am pleased to provide the Annual Report on the activities of the Anti-Discrimination Commission (the Commission) for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 16 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act* 1992 (the Act). During the entire period, and since his commencement in 2023, Jeswynn Yogaratnam was the Commissioner. I thank him sincerely for his work on this annual report prior to his departure and acknowledge his work and commitment to equality in the Territory since 2023. I would also like to thank the committed staff of the Commission who have worked tirelessly in the preparation of this report and for their clear dedication to their work and improving equal opportunity in the Territory.

As a newly appointed acting Commissioner who commenced in August, providing a report on the previous period naturally prompts a reflection on my observations of the work of the Commission and the challenges of the current period. Much of the work of the Commission is confidential and the Act provides limitation, in most areas for good reason, about what the Commissioner can say about the complaints work that this office does.

Having undertaken anti-discrimination work over a decade ago, firstly as a contract employee for the Commission and then as a barrister briefed to undertake work under the Act, I was keen to see whether the nature of the work had changed. While some members of the community perceive that the work of offices such as these is trivial and focused on political correctness over substance, this is not the case. Sadly I have observed that the Commission continues to deal with very serious complaints. Including allegations of severe sexual harassment in workplaces (including matters that if proved would constitute assault), people with mobility issues due to age and disability being declined access to essential community services, and children being excluded from education for having a disability.

Positively, I am pleased to hear of the proactiveness of some organisations in responding to the Commission prior to complaints being made and deidentified examples are provided on page 15 of this report. I commend this proactive leadership approach to all Territory organisations including government. These responses comply with positive duty obligations which fundamentally aim to prevent incidents of discrimination and sexual harassment occurring in the first place.

Like many similar statutory bodies in the Territory and across Australia, a priority challenge facing the Commission is how to deal with increasing levels of complexity of complaint and servicing a rise of around 26% in complaints over the past year within existing resources. In my view, an educative and proactive prevention approach would alleviate many of the complaints the Commission receives, and Positive Duty provides a strong mechanism for this.

Outgoing Commissioner's Message

A Life-affirming Service to Community



Jeswynn Yogaratnam

> *"The true measure of public leadership is not what we achieve during our term, but whether we leave the institution stronger for those who follow."*

Public office is often measured by legislation enacted, complaints resolved or reports tabled. While these are important measures, it tells only part of the story. Independent statutory institutions also help shape the character of a democracy. It provides confidence that the law will be administered impartially, that governments remain accountable to Parliament and that every Territorian can seek justice through a process that is fair, independent and accessible.

As I conclude my three-year appointment as Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, I do so with enormous gratitude and optimism.

Looking back, this role has never felt like simply a job. It has been what I often describe as a life-affirming leadership lifestyle. Every day has brought the privilege of hearing stories of discrimination, resilience, courage, reconciliation and hope. Those stories have reinforced my belief that equality and equitable outcomes are not merely a legal concept. It is experienced in our workplaces, schools, hospitals, sporting clubs, businesses, correctional facilities, places of worship and public institutions. Protecting equality and equity ultimately strengthens our democracy because it strengthens public trust. Over the past three years I have also come to appreciate that anti-discrimination law is fundamentally about good governance. Every complaint tells us something about leadership, organisational culture, decision-making, accountability and risk management. While resolving complaints remains central to our statutory functions, our greatest opportunity lies in helping organisations prevent discrimination before harm occurs. That philosophy has guided the Commission throughout my appointment.

Leaving the Commission Stronger

Every Commissioner is a temporary custodian of an enduring institution. When I commenced this role, one of my aspirations was to leave the Commission stronger, not simply through legislative reform, but through organisational maturity, strategic clarity and stronger public confidence. Together, we developed the Commission's first Strategic Plan, Achieving Inclusion Together 2024–2026, establishing a shared vision, purpose and organisational values that continue to guide our work. Those values: being **Bold**, **Inclusive** and **Collaborative**, have become far more than aspirational statements. They have shaped our decisions, our relationships and the culture of the Commission.

This strategic renewal was accompanied by significant organisational reform, including a refreshed identity, stronger governance systems, improved operational planning, enhanced reporting frameworks, investment in staff wellbeing and redevelopment of the Commission's website (ongoing – watch this space).

Throughout this work I encouraged our team to embrace what Zen philosophy describes as a beginner's mind. Public officials should never become complacent because they have experience. Curiosity, humility and continuous learning are essential if statutory bodies are to remain relevant to the communities they serve.

Equally important was encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset, not in pursuit of profit, but in pursuit of greater public value. Through partnerships, pro bono expertise, technology, education resources and innovative approaches to service delivery, the Commission has demonstrated that even under resourced organisations can deliver significant community impact when they remain open to collaboration and innovation.

Prevention as the Future of Anti-Discrimination

The introduction of Positive Duty represents one of the most significant developments in Australian anti-discrimination law. It fundamentally shifts the focus from responding to discrimination after harm occurs towards preventing discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation before harm occurs. The Commission embraced this opportunity by developing practical guidance, educational resources, workshops and governance tools that support organisations to build safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces. During the reporting period we worked towards the developing of the Positive Duty Guideline on Preventing Race Discrimination in the Workplace with Corrs Chambers Westgarth pro bono team, expanded Project Butterfly to stewardship programs with duty-holders, strengthened regional engagement and invested in accessible educational resources that will continue benefiting Territorians well beyond this reporting year.

Complementing this work, the Commission expanded Positive Duty education programs and began conceptualising its first Public Education Strategy following extensive Territory-wide consultation. More than a strategy document, it will represent our belief that education is one of the most powerful levers of prevention available to any human rights institution.

The Commission's complaint data reinforces this approach. During the reporting year, the Commission handled 385 complaints, 80 more than the previous year, representing a 26 per cent increase in demand for our services. This increase reflects growing public awareness of, and confidence in, the Commission as an independent avenue for advice, complaint resolution and systemic improvement.

Despite this increased demand, the Commission finalised 165 complaints. Of those matters, 28 per cent were successfully resolved through settlement, resulting in $36,508 in compensation for complainants. Many other matters were resolved through the Commission's statutory assessment processes, including withdrawals, declines and decisions that no further action was appropriate.

> *"Our greatest legacy will never be the number of complaints we resolved, but the number of complaints that never needed to be made because organisations chose to lead differently."*

A Dual Appointment

One aspect of this office deserves mention. The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner is also appointed as the Northern Territory's Principal Community Visitor.

This concurrent appointment carries significant responsibilities extending beyond anti-discrimination law into independent oversight of mental health services and forensic disability services under separate legislation. It requires dedicated attention to some of the Territory's most vulnerable people while simultaneously leading two independent statutory functions with distinct reporting obligations, stakeholders and governance responsibilities.

Future Commissioners should be appropriately supported to undertake both statutory appointments, recognising the breadth and importance of these dual responsibilities.

Acknowledgements

The achievements of the past three years belong to an extraordinary team. I thank Director Josie, Senior Equal Opportunity Educator and Strategist Anika, Administration Support Officer Marg, and every member of our complaints, education and corporate teams whose professionalism, integrity and commitment have strengthened this organisation.

I particularly acknowledge Group Coordinator Taryn, whose outstanding governance, organisational discipline and unwavering commitment to accountability have quietly underpinned the Commission's success. Taryn has ensured the Commission maintained strong governance, financial accountability, reporting integrity and organisational performance while helping build the resilience necessary to navigate significant legislative reform and organisational change. Her contribution reminds us that trusted public institutions are built not only by visible leadership but equally by exceptional governance professionals working behind the scenes.

I also thank Acting Chief Executive Leonique Swart, former AGD CEO Gemma Lake, our many community partners, the Australian Human Rights Commission, my fellow Human Rights Commissioners across Australia, our Panel members and, most importantly, every Territorian who has entrusted the Commission with their experiences and aspirations.

To the Next Commissioner

You inherit more than an organisation. You inherit public trust. Protect your staff. Protect procedural fairness. Continue investing in prevention. Remain curious. Never stop listening.

Final Reflection

I thank the people of the Northern Territory for the extraordinary privilege of allowing me to serve. This has never simply been a job. It has been a life affirming leadership lifestyle.



NORTHERN TERRITORY ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMISSION

2025-26 Snapshot

Complaints

385
complaints handled
(26% increase from last year)

1283
allegations made

37%
finalised within 6 months

28%
of complaints settled.
Total of **$36,508**
provided in compensation.

9x
evaluations completed

Training

68
training and education sessions delivered reaching **965 people**

More than **40**
Positive Duty activities completed

Enquiries

Report discrimination notifications:
39

246
enquires dealt with

Intervened in
2x
NTCAT matters

Staff upskill

80%
staff accredited Mental Health First Aid officers

100%
complaints officers accredited or progressing towards accreditation*

20
internal staff training and professional development activities

Statements and Submissions

8
submissions on Government documents; proposed law reform; and national enquiries

9
media statements on issues impacting equality in the Northern Territory

*by the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS)

About Us

Our Story:

Our story begins with acknowledging our past. The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission was established in 1993 with a purpose of combatting discrimination and promoting the right to equality of opportunity. The Northern Territory's history of systemic, institutional and intergenerational inequality from colonialism and dispossession of land of First Nation's people is part of our foundational building blocks, forming the context in which we were created and evolve. As such, much of our story today draws on the strength from the adversities of the past and continued struggles of the present experienced by diverse Territorian communities who strive for equality of opportunity.

What:

The Anti-Discrimination Act was enacted in 1992 with Dawn Lawrie being appointed on 1 August 1993 as the first Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner. The Act seeks to achieve cultural and attitudinal change regarding attributes that historically have been the subject of persistent and systemic discrimination.

In July 2023 and January 2024, the Act had its most significant reform since its establishment. The reforms introduced greater protected attributes, the inclusion of 'the administration of Government Laws and Programs', the introduction of representative complaints and, most significantly, a positive duty on all organisations to proactively prevent discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation to the greatest extent possible. The reforms have made our Act the most comprehensive and protective legislation in Australia.

Why:

Achieving Inclusion Together

The ADC is dedicated to fostering a safe, inclusive community free from discrimination. We bring compassion, boldness and a collaborative approach to our work with people experiencing discrimination, harassment and victimisation. By managing complaints and educating the community, we create restorative pathways, where possible, in culturally inclusive and empowering ways to improve wellbeing and create meaningful change. Empowered by the Act, our staff facilitate clear, structured processes to address complaints, support conciliation and resolution, and work towards our shared vision for diversity, equality and compassion.

Together let's build a thriving, inclusive community for all generations.

Our People

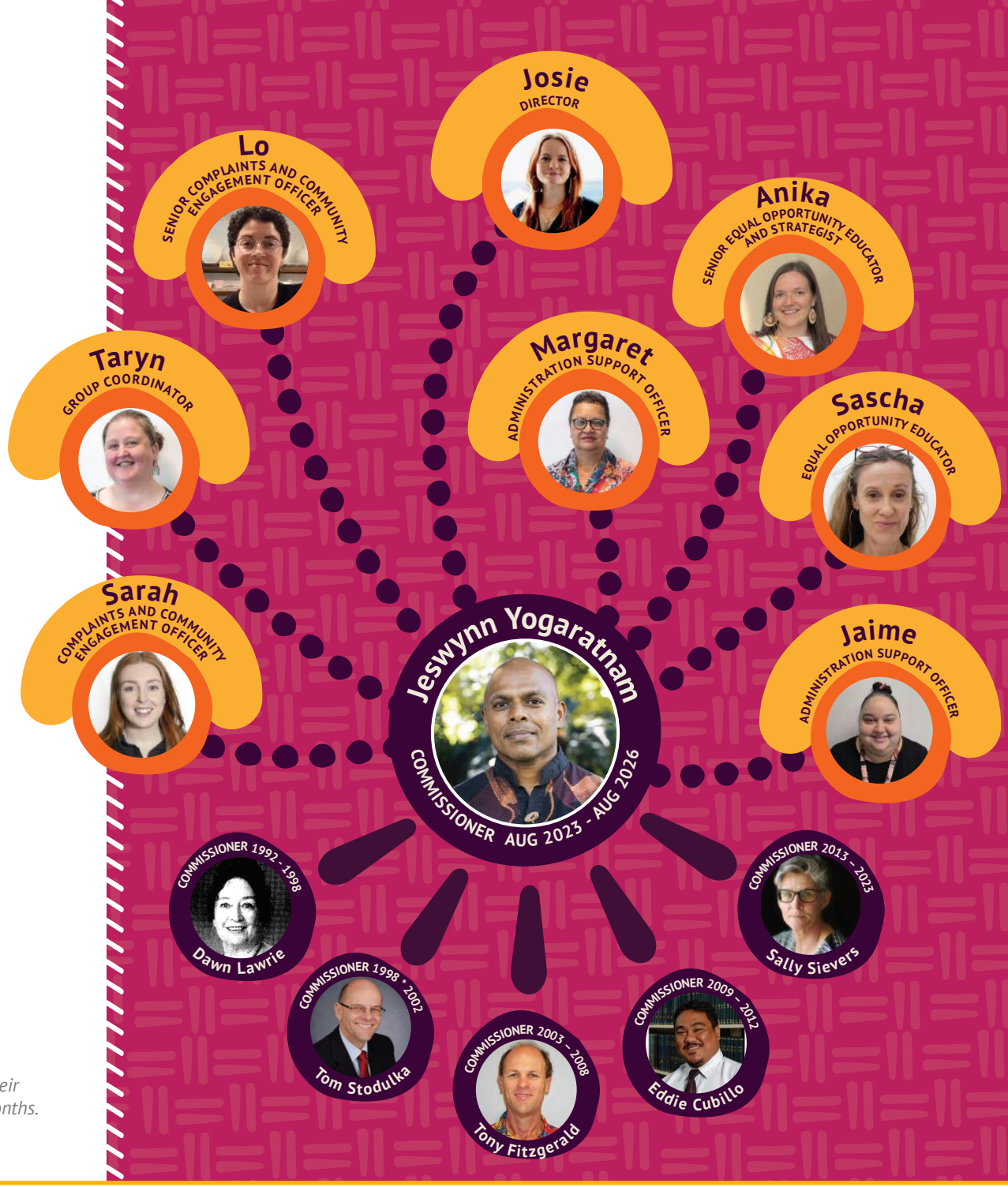
Our people are central to the work of the Anti-Discrimination Commission. We are a small, multidisciplinary team whose diversity reflects many of the communities and experiences that make up the Northern Territory.

Our team includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, members of the LGBTQIASB+ community, people with disability and neurodivergence, and people with lived experience of discrimination and sexual harassment. These diverse perspectives and experiences strengthen our work, challenge our thinking and help us better understand the people and communities we serve.

We are proud to deliver our core functions to the Northern Territory public, while we foster a workplace where people feel safe to bring their whole selves to work and where flexibility, inclusion and wellbeing are embedded in the way we operate.

As an organisation that promotes equality, inclusion and respectful workplaces, we know we must also live the values we ask of others. Our diversity, professional expertise and lived experience strengthen our cultural responsiveness and our ability to deliver accessible, compassionate and effective services to Territorians.

**We acknowledge and sincerely thank Nina, Steve and Amanda for their valuable contributions to the Commission's work over the past 12 months.*



Our Community Visitor Program

The ADC is also responsible for the Community Visitor Program (CVP), with the Commissioner also serving as the Principal Community Visitor. The CVP is an independent statutory service delivered by a dedicated team who form an important part of the Commission. Despite being a small team, they oversee a significant program across the NT, responding to enquiries and complaints from people receiving services under the Mental Health and Related Services Act 1998 (MHRSA) and the Disability Services Act 1993 (DSA). The CVP's critical functions include ensuring the rights of persons receiving care under the MHRSA and DSA are upheld, whilst also providing advocacy, monitoring, inspection and complaints handling functions working from a person-centred approach. The program also promotes a social model of care, with the wellbeing of individuals at its core.

For further information about the community visitor program please see the CVP Annual Report on their website.



Left to Right: Ryan (CVP Coordinator), Nicki (CVP Senior Coordinator), Jeswynn Yogaratnam (Principal Community Visitor), Toni (CVP Manager). The ADC contributes administrative and operational support, without dedicated funding, to help sustain the vital work of the CVP.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 -2026

Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission | Achieving Inclusion Together

NORTHERN TERRITORY ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMISSION

The Northern Territory is strongest when diversity is celebrated, people are respected and experience equality of opportunity, people feel safe to speak up and are heard with compassion. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, so this becomes the reality for everyone to the greatest extent possible.

From 2024-2026 we will focus on the most prevalent areas of discrimination in the Northern Territory: race, disability, and sex discrimination.

- We will implement the legislative reforms that create a positive duty for all Territorian organisations to eliminate discrimination.
- We will support complainants and respondents in reaching a resolution to complaints.
- We will build networks to amplify our voice and impact.

OUR VISION

A Northern Territory community where

- Diversity is celebrated
- People are respected and have equality of opportunity
- People feel safe to speak up and are heard with compassion

OUR PURPOSE

We are committed to eliminating discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation by engaging and educating the community and offering an impartial complaints process

OUR VALUES

We are:

- Bold
- Collaborative
- Inclusive

POSITIVE DUTY	EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT	RACE, DISABILITY & SEX DISCRIMINATION	STRONG NETWORK	INDEPENDENT & EFFECTIVE COMMISSION
Northern Territory organisations are acting on their positive duty obligations	**An effective and efficient complaints management process is in place**	**Race, Disability and Sex Discrimination is being actively identified and addressed**	**We are embedded into a strong network to enhance our reach and impact**	**NTADC has robust internal systems, processes and governance that enable it to efficiently fulfill its purpose**
We will develop resources to help organisations build knowledge and awareness to take positive measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination.	When people are affected by discrimination, harassment or victimisation, we will provide a safe and compassionate environment in which they can be heard. We will be impartial in bringing parties together to manage and resolve complaints.	We will educate and raise awareness about rights and responsibilities so everyone is treated equitably and has a sense of safety and belonging in their communities. We will prioritise the most prevalent discrimination in the Northern Territory including race, disability and sex discrimination.	We cannot fulfill our vision alone. We will build and maintain strong networks of people and organisations with a common purpose to amplify our values and expand our impact.	We are a strong independent voice and will boldly tackle discrimination wherever it occurs. Building efficient internal processes and a team of staff that know we care for their wellbeing, will enable us to focus our time and resources on achieving the best for Territorians.

Our Vison, Our Purpose, Our Values

We believe that every Territorian can and should live a life free from discrimination.

Our Vison:

A Northern Territory where:

- Diversity is celebrated
- People are respected and have equality of opportunity
- People feel safe to speak up and are heard with compassion

Our Purpose:

We are committed to eliminating discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation by engaging and educating the community and offering an impartial complaints process.

Our purpose is to mobilise and empower Territorians to build a discrimination free Northern Territory. We equip individuals and organisations with the knowledge, tools and mechanisms to take action everyday driving behaviour and cultural change and influencing the institutions that create a more inclusive society.

Our Values:



Bold

GARMA 2025 - Together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Katie Kiss, and fellow Commissioners speaking boldly on Understanding Rights: Beyond Symbolism



Collaborative

Minister for Disability, Jinson Charls, Federal Disability Commissioner Rosemary Kayess, Northern Territory Anti-discrimination Commissioner Jeswynn Yogaratnam, Sarah Skopellos attending the Disability Oration hosted by a strong network of partners.



Inclusive

ADC and CVP staff participating in Wear it Purple day which strives to foster supportive, empowering and inclusive environments for rainbow youth

Our Pillars

Positive Duty

we empower organisations to embed Positive Duty

1. 5 x keynote/panel presentations on Positive Duty at local and national conferences and events
2. Interview – Women's Legal Service Tasmania's Leading Safe and Respectful Workplaces Podcast Series, episode one: Positive Obligations
3. Inquest into the deaths of Big brother and Little Brother cited ADC's recommendations on Positive Duty
4. External organisation included Positive Duty performance in their annual report
5. Third annual Positive Duty Oration with Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner Kayess
6. Positive Duty Guideline: Preventing Race Discrimination in the Workplace
7. 2 x educational animations on Positive Duty

Strong Networks

We amplify our impact through maintaining a strong network of likeminded organisations

1. Co-delivered Human Rights Awards Event
2. Co-delivered Positive Duty Oration Event
3. Shared a booth with NT Working Women's Centre at Alice Spring's Big Day Out
4. New Public Education Strategy and Review of Complaints Process, both involving stakeholder forums and significant community consultation.
5. Consultation with the United Nations Youth representative regarding issues impacting youth in the NT
6. Collaboration with other independent bodies on submissions and training for all staff
7. Attendence at the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities annual meeting and continued participation in network
8. Engagement with and participation in ANZSOG's National Regulators Community of Practice and attendance at the annual regulator's roundtable.

Race Disability and Sex Discrimination:

We focus on the most entrenched inequalities through an intersectional lens

1. Input into Government action plans and strategies including NT Multicultural Action Plan 2026-2028; NT Disability Action Plan 2025-2029; NT Gender Equality Strategy.
2. Media release NT Police Anti-Racism Strategy
3. Evidence to the Federal Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence Against First Nations People
4. Updated and launched Unconscious Bias training module
5. Developed and rolled out new Rights at Work tailored training module
6. Development and launch of a new LGBTQIASB+ full day training package



Independent & Effective Commission:

We prioritise our team, our governance and our systems and processes to ensure we remain independent and effective

1. My Performance plans in place and current for all staff
2. Capability building for staff: Investigations and Maximising Regulatory Investigations and Outcomes. training; Diversity Council of Australia's Anti-Racism at Work and Unconscious Bias training;
3. Numerous Media releases and NT News Op-Ed's including, on Integrity and Ethics Bill; Ombudsman's Watch House Investigation Report; Gender affirming care ban; Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill; Future Administrator's social media comments
4. Submissions on a number of Bills including: the Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026
5. Panel member at Herbet Smith Freehills Kramer on LGBTIQASB+ by Pinnacle Foundation and the AHRC's National Seminar Series – The Answer is Human Rights
6. Evidence to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion
7. Appeared in a Judicial Review matter before the Federal Court of Australia

Effective Complaints Management:

We endeavour to deliver an accessible, impartial and responsive complaints process

1. Review and reform of complaints handling process
2. Addressed assessment backlog of 60 complaints *noting there remains backlogs in other stages of the complaints process*
3. Pilot of an Early Dispute Resolution process to triage complaints
4. Reviewed and amended all templates to modernise and reflect new processes
5. NT Law Handbook chapter on Anti-discrimination and human rights law published
6. All complaints officers completed CJC mediation training and have completed or are in the process of being fully accredited
7. Intervened in two NTCAT matters
8. Complaints team visit to Alice Springs
9. Presentation at DCLS's Law Week for frontline workers on unlawful discrimination

Effective Complaints Management

Complaints increased 26%

Complaints Handled

385

Settled 28%

Year	Company	Govt	NGO	Local Govt	Individual	Club	TOTAL
2025/26	95	184	21	6	69	10	385
2024/25	80	134	21	3	61	6	305
2023/24	90	110	8	1	104	4	317
2022/23	62	113	12	7	107	4	305

48% of all complaints were against Government

37% Complaints finalised within 6 months of receipt

Enquiries data

We also received **246** enquiries; **24%** about race, **18%** about disability and **6%** about sex. Out of those enquiries, **16%** were received via Report Discrimination Form.

This year the Commission received 26% more complaints than last year. This reflects both an increase in complaints and improvements to our internal reporting processes. Complaints involving multiple respondents are now accurately recorded when accepted, rather than when closed. Previous years therefore likely underreported the total number of complaints received and handled, and year-on-year comparisons should be interpreted with this change in mind.

Anonymous reporting of discrimination

Anonymous reports received through our **'Report Discrimination'** form provide an opportunity for the Commission to identify emerging issues, support early intervention and encourage organisations to address concerns voluntarily before they escalate into formal complaints. They also provide organisations with an opportunity to reflect on their practices, strengthen their systems and implement Positive Duty.

In several matters this year, organisations took proactive steps to resolve concerns before a formal complaint was made. Examples include:

Case study one

A service provider in a remote Northern Territory community temporarily restricted access to its service for people from particular Aboriginal communities in response to escalating community tensions. The organisation was attempting to protect the safety of its staff, customers and business, had consulted with local Elders and community members, and believed it was responding appropriately to a difficult situation.

The Commission contacted the organisation to discuss its obligations under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 (NT) and explain that restricting access to services on the basis of community or race may nevertheless contravene the Act, even where the decision was made in response to genuine safety concerns. Following those discussions, the organisation voluntarily lifted the restriction and gained a better understanding of its legal obligations and alternative approaches to managing future risks, demonstrating that organisations can face complex operational challenges, but that engaging early and seeking guidance can often lead to practical, lawful solutions.

Case study two

The Commission received an anonymous report alleging that a service provider had applied its policies differently to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal customers. Although no formal complaint had been made, the organisation responded promptly, respectfully and without defensiveness. The organisation outlined the measures already in place to promote culturally safe service delivery, including its Reconciliation Action Plan and ongoing cultural awareness training delivered by a local Elder. It also voluntarily committed to:

- conduct an internal investigation into the reported incident;
- ensure that all staff rostered on the relevant day had completed current cultural awareness training;
- Provide the Commission with a copy of its internal investigation report;
- review its policies to ensure they reflected current cultural protocols; and
- Consider whether all staff should undertake refresher cultural awareness training.

While the Commission does not make findings about anonymous reports, these responses demonstrate a genuine willingness to reflect, investigate and identify opportunities for improvement. Approaching concerns in this way can strengthen community confidence, improve service delivery and assist organisations to meet their Positive Duty by addressing potential systemic issues before they result in formal complaints.

Rather than viewing anonymous reports as criticism, organisations can view them as an opportunity to identify potential blind spots, strengthen their practices and build trust with the communities they serve. Early engagement can often prevent issues from escalating while supporting continuous improvement and compliance with the Positive Duty.

Process reform

Throughout the year, the Commission undertook a comprehensive review of its complaints process to ensure it remains as fair, efficient and accessible as possible within existing resources. Recognising that those who use the system are best placed to identify where improvements can be made, we consulted with complainant advocates, regular respondents, government agencies and community organisations to understand the practical impacts of delay and identify opportunities for reform.

The consultation informed a number of changes to our complaints process, including **earlier assessment of complaints, earlier engagement with respondents, and the introduction of an Early Dispute Resolution pathway** for suitable matters. These reforms are designed to provide parties with greater certainty earlier in the process, preserve opportunities for early resolution, and ensure Commission resources are directed to matters where they can have the greatest impact.

The reforms have already delivered meaningful improvements. During the year, the Commission **eliminated a substantial assessment backlog of more than 60 complaints**. While a conciliation queue remains, all parties are now informed that a complaint has been accepted at an early stage and have greater opportunity to resolve matters directly while awaiting a conciliation conference.

However, process improvements alone cannot overcome the ongoing demand on our complaints service.

The Commission received more than 380 complaints this year, managed by only two permanent complaints officers for the entire Northern Territory. The temporary addition of a third complaints officer has demonstrated the substantial difference that even one additional position can make, allowing the Commission to address longstanding backlogs and improve timeliness. It has also highlighted that sustained improvements depend not only on efficient processes, but on maintaining sufficient capacity to meet community demand.

Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Decisions

After a matter is referred to NTCAT for hearing, the Commissioner may apply to participate in the proceedings to assist the Tribunal with the proper interpretation and application of *Anti-discrimination Act 1992*. This is known as 'intervening'. The Commissioner will only intervene where it is appropriate to do so. This year, the Commission intervened in two proceedings that considered important questions about the interpretation of the Act and whether unlawful discrimination had occurred.

Haque v Northern Territory of Australia 2026

Mr Haque, a Bangladeshi Muslim security guard, was rostered to work at Royal Darwin Hospital. He was prevented from commencing a shift because his beard did not comply with hospital requirements concerning facial hair. He was advised that he could return to work if his beard was trimmed.

Mr Haque complained to the Commission alleging discrimination on the basis of race and religious belief or activity. He also alleged that the hospital had failed to accommodate his special need not to interfere with the growth of his beard, arising from his religious beliefs.

The Tribunal accepted that, although Islamic scholars and Muslim men may differ in their interpretation and observance of religious requirements concerning facial hair, Mr Haque's understanding of his religious obligation was consistent with that of many Muslim men. The Tribunal ultimately dismissed the complaint because it was not satisfied that Mr Haque had told the relevant supervisor that he could not trim his beard because of his religious beliefs.

Importantly, however, the Tribunal found that actual knowledge of a person's special need may not always be necessary for a failure to accommodate under section 24 of the Act.

Depending on the circumstances, something less than actual knowledge may be sufficient where a special need should have been obvious or self-evident, or where a person was recklessly indifferent to its existence.

What this means:

1. Religious practices can be individual. A person may have a special need arising from their religious belief or activity even where people of the same religion observe or interpret that practice differently.
2. Special needs do not always need to be expressly stated. Whether an organisation is required to accommodate a special need will depend on the circumstances. In some cases, a need may be sufficiently obvious or apparent that an organisation cannot simply rely on the person not having expressly identified it.



Positive Duty takeaway: Organisation's should create environments where individual needs can be identified, discussed and reasonably accommodated, rather than relying solely on individuals to raise barriers after they arise. Implementation of broad sweeping policies, even in emergency situations, should consider those special needs where possible.

Strickland v Northern Territory of Australia (2026)

Ms Strickland was a female prisoner participating in the prisoner employment program at Darwin Correctional Centre. Following an incident of sexual assault on the work bus, the prison introduced a 'buddy system' requiring female prisoners to be accompanied by another female prisoner when travelling on the bus. Male prisoners were not subject to the same restriction. As Ms Strickland was, at times, the only female prisoner participating in the program, the practical effect was that she could not attend work. Ms Strickland alleged that the policy amounted to unlawful discrimination on the basis of sex. The Tribunal found that discrimination had occurred. Although the Respondent was required to respond to the sexual assault and protect worker safety, the exemption under section 53 of the Act for acts done in compliance with legislation did not apply. The Tribunal was not satisfied that alternative, non-discriminatory options had been considered, particularly given the Respondent had broad discretion as to how it met its duties under work health and safety legislation. The buddy system restricted Ms Strickland's access to employment opportunities, impaired her equality of opportunity and treated her less favourably because she was a woman. The Tribunal also confirmed that an intention to discriminate was not required. The discriminatory effect of the policy, together with its connection to Ms Strickland's sex, was sufficient. A policy may therefore constitute discrimination even where it is introduced for a legitimate protective or administrative purpose.

Ms Strickland was awarded $5,000 in compensation for the offence and distress caused by the discrimination.

What this means:

1. Where an organisation has discretion about how it complies with another legal obligation, it must consider whether that obligation can be met in a non-discriminatory way.
2. Where a measure has a discriminatory effect, organisations should consider how long it will remain in place and establish mechanisms to regularly review whether it remains necessary or whether non-discriminatory alternatives have become available.



Positive Duty takeaway: When responding to safety risks or other legal obligations, organisations should proactively consider who may be disadvantaged or impacted by the new measures, explore non-discriminatory alternatives, and regularly review whether measures remain necessary and proportionate.

Allegations

ATTRIBUTE	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Disability (was Impairment)	74	11%	85	12%	83	11%	**177**	**14%**
Race	74	11%	67	9%	93	12%	**172**	**13%**
Sex	77	12%	69	10%	49	6%	**100**	**8%**
Age	40	6%	44	6%	32	4%	55	4%
Religious Belief/Activity	26	4%	21	3%	36	5%	49	4%
Carer Responsibility (was Parenthood)	16	2%	13	2%	16	2%	43	3%
Employment Status (added in 2023-24)	-	-	8	1%	19	2%	39	3%
Gender Identity (added in 2023-24)	-	-	11	2%	10	1%	33	3%
Accommodation Status (added in 2023-24)	-	-	12	2%	21	3%	30	2%
Language (added in 2023)	-	-	11	2%	20	3%	28	2%
Pregnancy	5	1%	10	1%	10	1%	26	2%
Relationship Status (was Marital Status)	20	3%	12	2%	11	1%	25	2%
Irrelevant medical record	23	4%	16	2%	18	2%	23	2%
Sexual Orientation	24	4%	21	3%	10	1%	23	2%
Irrelevant criminal record	28	4%	29	4%	21	3%	18	1%
Sex Characteristics (added in 2023-24)	-	-	2	<1%	7	1%	17	1%
Subject to Domestic Violence (added in 2023-24)	-	-	1	<1%	1	<1%	15	1%
Trade Union Activity	1	<1%	4	1%	4	1%	6	<1%
Political Beliefs/Activity	5	1%	7	1%	7	1%	5	<1%
Guide/Assistant Dog	1	<1%	2	<1%	2	<1%	3	<1%
Employment in Sex Work (added in 2023-24)	-	-	1	<1%	2	<1%	2	<1%
HIV/Hepatitis Status (added in 2023-24)	-	-	2	<1%	2	<1%	2	<1%
Breastfeeding	6	1%	4	1%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Details Published under 66M FPA	-	-	1	<1%	-	-	1	<1%
Not under the Act*	-	-	-	-	1	<1%	-	-

**This data related to complaints where no protected attribute was identified*

OTHER PROHIBITED CONDUCT	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Failure to accommodate a Special Need**	82	12%	83	12%	106	13%	175	14%
Vilification (added in 2023-24)	-	-	25	4%	96	12%	83	6%
Sexual Harassment	30	5%	29	4%	26	3%	35	3%
Victimisation	18	3%	17	2%	31	4%	31	2%
Seeking Unnecessary Information	37	6%	39	5%	19	2%	29	2%
Association with someone with an Attribute	31	5%	29	4%	16	2%	24	2%
Discriminatory Advertising	14	2%	11	2%	5	1%	7	1%
Aiding a contravention of the Act	25	4%	27	4%	15	2%	6	<1%
Total	657	100%	713	100%	790	100%	1283	100%

*** in 2025-26 44% of these allegations were regarding Disability; 14% regarding Race and 10% regarding Religious Beliefs/Activity.*

AREA	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Work	218	33%	228	32%	234	30%	545	42%
Access To Goods, Services And Facilities	274	42%	246	35%	295	37%	362	28%
Administration of Laws and Government Programs	-	-	38	5%	80	10%	184	14%
Accommodation	96	15%	109	15%	112	14%	98	8%
Education	35	5%	59	8%	50	6%	75	6%
Registered Clubs That Serve Alcohol	4	1%	2	0%	4	1%	13	1%
Vilification (added in 2023-24)	-	-	-	-	9	1%	6	<1%
Insurance And Superannuation	23	4%	24	3%	2	<1%	-	-
Not Under Act	7	1%	5	1%	4	1%	-	-
Other - no area*	-	-	2	0%	-	-	-	-
Total	657	100%	713	100%	790	100%	1283	100%

** Some types of prohibited conduct under the Act, such as sexual harassment and offensive behaviour, do not need to occur in an area.*

Race, Disability and Sex Discrimination

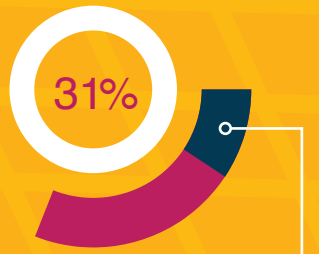
Dispute Resolution

Race, disability and sex discrimination continue to account for the highest proportion of complaints and enquiries received by the Commission. Reflecting both their prevalence and impact, these three protected attributes remain a strategic priority for the Commission. By focusing our education, policy and systemic work in these areas, we aim not only to respond to individual complaints but also to address the underlying barriers and practices that contribute to discrimination across the Northern Territory. The Commission recognises that discrimination is often experienced across multiple aspects of a person's identity. While people may identify with a particular protected attribute, the discrimination they experience is not always attributed to that characteristic alone. During 2025–26, only 30% of complainants who identified as having disability made a complaint alleging disability discrimination, while only 22% of First Nations complainants made complaints alleging race discrimination.

These figures demonstrate that people's experiences cannot be understood solely by reference to a single protected attribute. Applying an intersectional lens enables the Commission to better understand the full complexity of discrimination and how multiple aspects of a person's identity may interact to shape their specific experience, even where only one ground is alleged in a complaint.

	Allegations	Enquiries
Sex	179	16
Disability	177	50
Race	174	66

The Commission records complaints by respondent, not by allegation. A single complaint may include multiple allegations against one or more respondents. For example, three allegations (e.g. sexual harassment, sex discrimination and race discrimination) made against both a manager and an employer would be counted as two complaints, one per respondent. Allegation data reflects issues raised at lodgement, though some may later be accepted or declined following assessment under the ADA.



identify as living with disability;
30% of those complaints alleged disability discrimination



37% of all complainants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 22% of First Nations complainants made complaints alleging race discrimination



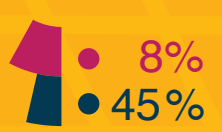
Race



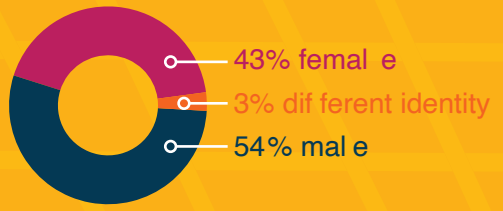
Disability



Sex



Gender of all complainants



percentage of all complaints handled

percentage of those complaints made against Government including individual public servants named in Govt complaints

Case studies

Prohibited conduct: Disability discrimination, failure to accommodate a special need

Attribute: Disability

Area: Goods, services and facilities

Anna, a woman with disabilities, attended a shopping centre during a period of construction and was directed to use non-disabled toilets which were not accessible. She explained to management that she could not use them due to her disability. When she asked about the disabled toilets frequently being locked, she was advised that the disabled toilets get locked by management because people do not use them appropriately. This impacted her ability to use a toilet when visiting the shopping centre.

Prohibited conduct: Race discrimination and offensive behaviour

Attribute: Race

Area: Goods, services and facilities

Lee, an Aboriginal man, attended a supermarket. He asked a staff member for help to access the locked deodorant cabinet. The staff member led Lee to another staff member and said, 'every worker should have access to open it for these smelly people'. The other staff member took Lee back to the cabinet. He thought she had opened it, so he reached to open the door. The other staff member said, 'you just wait, I haven't opened it. It is because of your kind this has to be locked'.

Prohibited conduct: Sex discrimination

Attribute: Sex, gender identity, sex characteristics

Area: Work

Melita, a transgender woman, was advised by her manager that a complaint had been made that she had been using the women's toilets rather than the disabled toilets. A sign was placed on the women's toilets which made her feel uncomfortable and singled out.

Conciliation outcomes for the above cases include:

- Compensation of up to $4000
- A letter of apology acknowledging the complainants lived experience and the distress, hurt and embarrassment felt
- Increased signage, maps and improvements made to facilities
- Delivery of anti-discrimination training to employees
- Email to all staff regarding anti-discrimination laws and the importance of upholding inclusive workplace practices

All case studies have been de-identified and details changed to protect confidentiality. Compensation across complaints finalised in 2025–26 ranged from $8 to $8,000, with a total of $36,508 awarded.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is a key part of the Commission's work to prevent discrimination and build stronger relationships with the communities we serve.

By participating in events across the Northern Territory, and Australia, we create opportunities to listen to lived experiences, understand emerging issues, increase awareness of rights and responsibilities, and strengthen trust in the Commission.

Our engagement throughout the year continued to support our strategic focus on race, disability and sex discrimination.



Small Steps, safe workplaces: Sexual Harassment Conference 2025 – Women's Legal Service Tasmania

Our Director Josie speaking about Positive Duty with Kelsey Paske as part of the Women's Legal Service Tasmania's Leading Safe and Respectful Workplaces Podcast series. You can listen to the full episode and subscribe to the series here: https://www.youtube.com/@womenslegalservicetasmania2522/playlists





Director Josie speaking about Positive Duty and Respect at Work at the Small Steps Conference in Hobart with the Tasmanian Acting Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Pia Saturno, Legal Director at WestJustice Jennifer Jones and facilitated by Barrister and leading human rights lawyer and academic, Kate Eastman AM SC.



NAIDOC Week

Senior Complaints officer, Nina, attending a NAIDOC breakfast in Katherine, the land of the Jawon, Dagoman and Wardaman people.



Joy of Many Colours Festival – Katherine

Nina hosting a stall at the Joy of Many Colours Festival in Katherine.

National First Nations Summit 2025

The Commissioner speaking about Positive Duty at the National First Nations Summit





GARMA 2025

Our Commissioner attending the Garma festival alongside Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Katies Kiss, and Travis Lovett, Executive Director for the Centre for Truth Telling and Dialogue, University of Melbourne, on Gumatj land of the Yolŋu people.



National Disability Summit 2025





Alice Springs Big Day Out in Harmony 2026

ADC and NT Working Women's Centre sharing a stall at Big Day Out







Disability Expo 2026

Taryn and Nicki join the Commissioner at this year's Darwin Disability Expo in Marrara



International Women's Day 2026

Photo on Left: Josie and Sarah attending International Women's Day march; *Photo Middle:* Taryn and Josie at ADC stall; *Photo on right:* Director Josie speaking about Positive Duty and intentional leadership at an International Women's Day panel alongside Acting Ombudsman, Bronwyn Haack, Criminal Barrister and Human Rights Lawyer, Lyma Nguyen and Author and lawyer Fernanda Dahlstrom.







Policy work and media

The ADC uses policy, advocacy and public commentary to spotlight systemic issues, advocate for evidence-based reform and drive systemic change. In the past year, we have prioritised policy work that challenges legislative proposals with disproportionate discriminatory impact, particularly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and children.

We provided input and feedback to Government on many action plans and strategies relating to sex, disability and race discrimination, including:

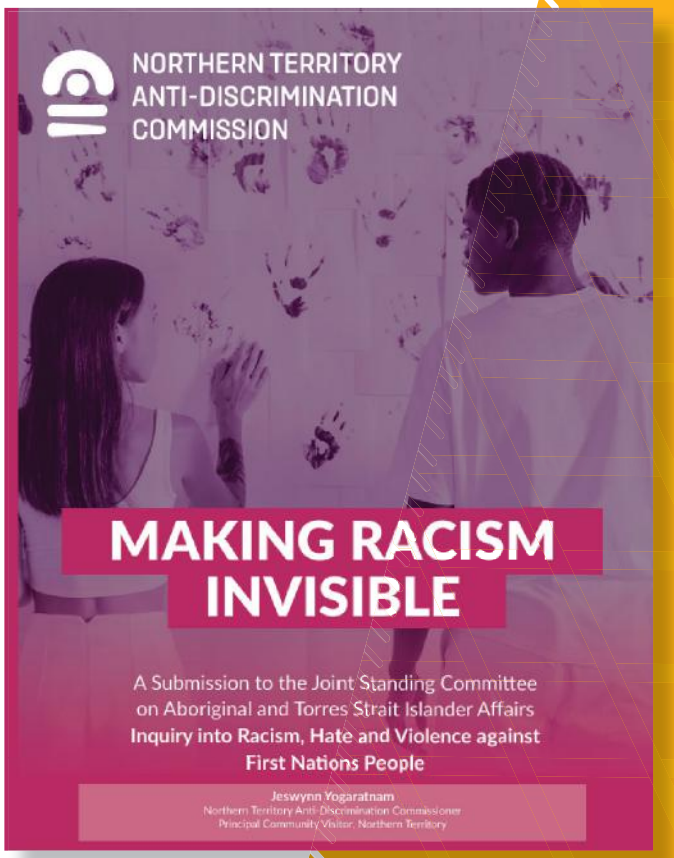
- Northern Territory Multicultural Strategy
- Northern Territory Disability Strategy 3-year Action Plan
- Northern Territory Police Racism Strategy
- Northern Territory Gender Equality Strategy

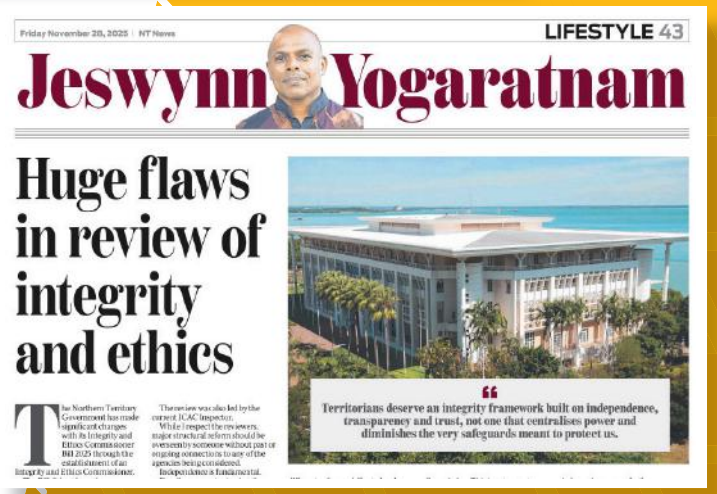
We called on the NT Government to reconsider significant legislative reforms which we say will disproportionately impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This included making submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on both the

- Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2026; and the
- Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026

We also made submissions to and gave evidence at a national level to both the **Commonwealth Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence against First Nations People**, and the **Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion**.






Friday November 28, 2025 | NT News

LIFESTYLE 43

Jeswynn Yogaratnam

Huge flaws in review of integrity and ethics

The Northern Territory Government has made significant changes with its Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill 2025 through the establishment of an Integrity and Ethics Commissioner.

The review was also led by the current ICAC Inspector.

While I respect the reviewers, major structural reform should be overseen by someone without past or ongoing connection to some of the agencies being considered.

Independence is fundamental.

"Territorians deserve an integrity framework built on independence, transparency and trust, not one that centralises power and diminishes the very safeguards meant to protect us.

Media Statements

We **boldly** spoke out in a number of media releases on issues of equality in the Northern Territory. Topics included:

- Kumanjayi Walker Inquest: A Reckoning with Racism in NT Policing (8 July 2025)
- NT Anti-Discrimination law changes regress protections under the guise of balance (30 July 2025)
- Unauthorised transphobic protest in Darwin (3 October 2025)
- Concern over misleading and harmful statements on transgender prisoners (15 October 2025)
- Commissioner warns against weakening equality protections (17 October 2025)
- Ombudsman report exposes inhumane treatment in NT watch houses (8 December 2025)
- NT Anti-discrimination Commission urges balanced approach to proposed federal hate speech laws (16 January 2026)
- Controversial remarks by newly announced Northern Territory Administrator (21 January 2026)
- Federal hate and extremism laws passed: Strong criminal response, but prevention must be strengthened in the Northern Territory (21 January 2026)

All releases can be read in full on the ADC website.

"The Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission acknowledge the weight of the findings from the Coronial Inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker. The 683-page report by Her Honour Justice Elisabeth Armitage on 7 July 2025 names what communities have long known: racism, both interpersonal and institutional, is entrenched within the Northern Territory Police Force."

"The Commission is disappointed, but not surprised, that the Government has chosen to roll back protections that took decades to build. These amendments do not restore balance; they strip away rights and undermine the very purpose of anti-discrimination law – equality of opportunity."

"Vilification laws are not about policing free speech; they are about protecting people from real harm. When humiliation and intimidation are stripped from the law, those who experience daily abuse are left without recourse."

"Public statements suggesting that trans women are a safety threat to others in custody are transmisogynistic and contrary to the evidence... A trans person in custody has a special need to be housed safely in a setting that aligns with his/her/their gender identity. Failure to consider or reasonably accommodate that need would expose NT Corrections, and by extension, the NT Government to potential legal liability." -

"Watch houses are not prisons. They were never designed to hold people for days, let alone weeks. Territorians sleeping shoulder-to-shoulder beside open toilets, drinking from taps above those toilets, and going without fresh air for weeks is not just a catastrophic failure of systems, it is a failure of our shared humanity. These conditions disproportionately punish Aboriginal Territorians and raise serious questions under OPCAT, the Anti-Discrimination Act (NT) and the Racial Discrimination Act (Cth). Race is a protected attribute, and subjecting one group to unreasonable and oppressive conditions in far higher numbers raises concerns about discriminatory policies and practices."

"Criminal law alone cannot carry the weight of social cohesion. Prevention must sit alongside enforcement. Criminal law and enforcement do not change underlying attitudes and prejudices which are the cause of extremism and hate. Education, early intervention, organisational accountability and positive duty frameworks are critical to reducing harm before it reaches the criminal justice system. As the Commission's recent work in positive duty demonstrates, prevention-focused approaches strengthen trust, build safer institutions and support long-term cohesion."






This ban risks rights, dignity and young lives

Jeswyn Yogaratnam

Positive Duty
Education and Information



POSITIVE DUTY

11
Information Sessions
APPROX. 13 HOURS
197 PARTICIPANTS

14
Positive Duty for Leaders Training Sessions
45 HOURS
160 PARTICIPANTS

4
Positive Duty Network sessions
72 TOTAL ATTENDEES

4
Virtual Positive Duty Thought Leadership sessions
179 TOTAL ATTENDEES

7
Workshop Sessions
112 PARTICIPANTS



Positive Duty for Leaders Training

During 2025–26, the Commission delivered 14 Positive Duty for Leaders training sessions to 160 participants. The program reached Northern Territory Government agencies, non-government organisations, Aboriginal-controlled organisations and a regional council. Three sessions were offered as public training, enabling participants from a range of workplaces to attend.

The Positive Duty for Leaders program can be tailored for senior leaders, middle managers and human resources staff.

It covers:

- positive duty and minimum standards for compliance;
- prevention and risk-management planning;
- leadership skills needed to develop and sustain a positive duty culture;
- appropriately responding to complaints and disclosures;
- principles of effective complaint handling;
- mechanisms for seeking and responding to staff feedback;
- identifying workplace risks, areas for improvement and practices that are working well;
- the organisational benefits of inclusion, diversity and a positive duty culture; and
- the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* (NT), the role of the Commission and its positive duty investigation powers.

Participant feedback across the 14 sessions was consistently positive:

4.39/5 Overall satisfaction

4.45/5 relevance to participants' work

4.33/5 training materials

4.51/5 trainer style and delivery

98% participants who would recommend the training

89% overall evaluation result

The results demonstrate continued relevance and value of the program in helping leaders understand their positive duty obligations and support them to take practical preventative action to create safer, fairer and more inclusive workplaces.

Positive Duty Network

During 2025–26, the Commission delivered four online Positive Duty Network sessions. The sessions connected leaders and practitioners from organisations across the Northern Territory with expert speakers, contemporary research and practical strategies for implementing positive duty.

Feedback demonstrated strong support for the Network. Respondents rated its value in supporting organisational positive duty efforts at **4.83** out of 5 and the usefulness of guest speaker presentations at **4.83** out of 5. The structure and format of meetings and participant engagement both received average ratings of **5 out of 5**.

Respondents identified practical changes resulting from their participation, including **updating policies and practices, providing further staff training, developing organisational action plans, encouraging inclusive language and increasing awareness of unconscious bias.** Future priorities included conflict resolution, policy development, managing resistance to change, intersectionality and sharing practical implementation experiences across leadership, human resources and work health and safety roles.

	Guest speaker(s)	Topic	
JULY 2025	**Ira Racines** NT Mental Health Coalition	Mitigating vicarious trauma, including psychosocial hazards, cumulative exposure, practical safeguards and leadership responsibilities	
SEPTEMBER 2025	**Traci Keys** Commissioner of Consumer Affairs and former NTADC Director	Responding appropriately to complaints and disclosures of discrimination and sexual harassment, including institutional betrayal, victim-led approaches and trauma-informed investigations	
MARCH 2026	**Gillian Stokie and Morlai Kamara** Anti-Discrimination NSW	Inclusive recruitment for culturally diverse and racially marginalised applicants, and workplace adjustments for employees with disability	
MAY 2026	**Hayley Green** Senior Director, Strategic Workforce Planning and Development, Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment	Embedding positive duty into organisational systems through disability employment, workforce data, accessible recruitment, workplace adjustments and staff capability building	

Positive Duty Oration

The Commission's annual Positive Duty Oration has become an established feature of our Positive Duty program, bringing national human rights leadership to the Northern Territory to explore practical approaches to preventing discrimination.

This year's Oration was delivered by Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner Rosemary Kayess, who explored how a positive duty in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act could shift responsibility from individuals responding to discrimination to organisations proactively preventing it.

The 2025–26 Oration marks the third consecutive year the Commission has hosted a Federal Commissioner in the Territory. Since launching the series in 2024 with Sex Discrimination Commissioner Dr Anna Cody and disability advocate Dr Dinesh Palipana, we have welcomed Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman, who launched the National Anti-Racism Framework during his 2025 visit, and now Commissioner Kayess. Together, these events have brought national leadership on sex discrimination, anti-racism and disability inclusion directly to Territorians.

Beyond the Oration itself, each visit creates opportunities for Federal Commissioners to engage with government, Aboriginal organisations, community leaders, education providers, legal services and employers. These conversations connect national human rights initiatives with Territory perspectives and support organisations to translate emerging frameworks into practical action.

The Oration demonstrates the value of sustained collaboration with the Australian Human Rights Commission and continues to strengthen a nationally connected, prevention-focused approach to equality and discrimination.









Positive Duty Champions

Positive duty is an ongoing journey of identifying risks, strengthening systems and embedding prevention into the way an organisation operates. Our role is to support Territory organisations move from understanding their Positive Duty, to taking action and embedding prevention into everyday practice.

From understanding to action

This year, the Commission worked directly with organisations ready to take the next step in their Positive Duty journey. Through facilitated workshops, organisations moved beyond understanding their legal obligations to examine their own workplaces: identifying risks, testing existing systems and exploring how Positive Duty could be embedded within governance, leadership, policies, workforce practices and organisational culture. Each organisation started from a different place and developed actions suited to its workforces, community and operating environment. It is our hope that these organisations continue being Positive Duty champions.



Alice Springs Town Council



Somerville Community Services



Batchelor Institute

Positive Duty in Practice

From commitment to implementation

Last year, we highlighted Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation as an organisation beginning to embed Positive Duty into everyday practice. Ironbark has since developed an organisation-wide framework built around people, systems and processes, **integrating Positive Duty into governance, risk and work health and safety systems, leadership accountability, position descriptions, induction, reporting mechanisms and performance planning.**

More importantly they are also measuring their performance in each of these areas to see if their approach is working and transparently publishing that performance in their own annual reporting. This is leading by example and demonstrating what accountability can look like in practice. Their model is now influencing other employers and community organisations across the Northern Territory, with Ironbark sharing tools, frameworks and practical approaches to support safer and more culturally responsive workplaces.

Ironbark's approach shows how one organisation's Positive Duty journey can contribute to broader systemic change across the Territory.



IRONBARK

Positive Duty

Championing Positive Duty: Embedding Safety, Respect and Accountability

In 2025, Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation deepened its leadership role in bringing Positive Duty to life across the Northern Territory, turning a legal requirement into a living culture of respect, inclusion, and accountability.

What began as a values-driven internal commitment is now a measurable, organisation-wide framework that is reshaping how Ironbark leads, listens, and protects its people.

Our Journey: From Commitment to Implementation

Ironbark's Positive Duty framework is grounded in three interconnected pillars: People, Systems, and Processes, ensuring that cultural safety and prevention are embedded in every layer of the organisation.

People

- 95% of Ironbark's leaders and people managers will have completed Positive Duty Awareness and prevention training before the end of 2025.
- Positive Duty expectations are now embedded in all position descriptions, inductions, and leadership performance frameworks.
- Every business will have unit participated in scenario-based training on cultural safety, bystander response, and trauma-informed leadership.

Systems

- Governance, risk, and WHS systems have been integrated to ensure Positive Duty is monitored through the Board's quarterly reporting metrics.
- Anonymous reporting tools and staff climate surveys have created safer feedback channels, increasing early interventions by 30%.
- The integration of HR, compliance, and cultural safety reporting now enables real-time tracking of workplace wellbeing indicators.

Processes

- Updated grievance and early intervention procedures ensure safe, fair, and culturally responsive pathways for staff.
- A prevention-first approach, grounded in procedural fairness and early resolution, has reduced the number of escalated grievances by 20%.
- Managers now receive debriefing and coaching support to sustain trauma-informed practice.

Embedding Cultural Safety Through Positive Duty

Ironbark recognises that the experience of discrimination and harassment is often layered, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our Positive Duty approach is shaped by intersectionality, addressing barriers linked to race, gender, disability, pregnancy, domestic and family violence, and cultural identity.

By aligning our work with Closing the Gap Priority Reforms 2 and 3, Ironbark is ensuring that prevention frameworks are culturally grounded, community-informed, and accessible across regional and remote workplaces.

Impact and Recognition

For Our People:

Staff surveys show a 12% increase in confidence to report issues safely and a 9% improvement in perceptions of cultural safety at work. Wellbeing Leave and the introduction of the Sonder 24/7 safety and wellbeing app have strengthened overall morale and support.

For Our Organisation:

Early intervention and governance reform have improved efficiency and reduced risk. Positive Duty measures are now part of internal audits, performance planning, and annual workforce reporting.

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Since embedding Positive Duty, Ironbark reports a **12%** increase in staff confidence to safely report issues; **9%** improvement in perceptions of cultural safety; **30%** increase in early interventions; **20%** reduction in escalated grievances

IRONBARK

For Our Communities:

Ironbark's model is influencing other employers and community organisations across the NT. By sharing training tools and policy frameworks, Ironbark is helping regional workplaces take practical, proportionate steps toward cultural safety.

Our approach is helping to shape how other organisations across the Territory understand and apply Positive Duty. Ironbark is working alongside partners to build safer, more inclusive workplaces that reflect the diversity and values of their communities.

Leading National Conversations

Ironbark's leadership in Positive Duty implementation was recognised nationally throughout 2025.

In April 2025, the Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman, visited Ironbark's offices while in Darwin for the Positive Duty Oration and the launch of the National Anti-Racism Framework. During this visit, Ironbark's Chief Executive Officer, Shaun Pearce, and key executives presented the organisation's Positive Duty journey, outlining how prevention, cultural safety, and leadership accountability are being embedded across Ironbark.

Commissioner Sivaraman commended Ironbark for its "outstanding, proactive approach to implementing Positive Duty across regional and remote settings."

Following this visit, Ironbark's work was featured in the National Indigenous Times, which described the organisation as "championing Positive Duty through intentional leadership, cultural safety, and transparency, showing that compliance can be driven by culture, not fear."

Building on this recognition, in September 2025, Ironbark was invited to present "Ironbark's Positive Duty Journey" at the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA) National Meeting. Presented via Microsoft Teams to commissioners and human rights leaders from across Australia the session shared Ironbark's practical model for translating Positive Duty obligations into measurable cultural transformation.

Our Vision for 2027

By 2027, Ironbark aims to:

- Be recognised as the Northern Territory's leading example of culturally safe, inclusive employment.
- Achieve 60–70% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across all levels of the organisation.
- Fully integrate Positive Duty metrics into every policy, system, and leadership practice.
- Continue to influence the national conversation on proactive prevention through lived cultural leadership.

"Positive Duty is not a compliance exercise, it's our shared integrity in action. It's how we ensure that every person at Ironbark feels safe, seen, and respected."

Shaun Pearce, CEO, Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation



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Independent and Effective Commission

The Commission's independence is fundamental to its effectiveness and to public confidence in our work. As an independent statutory authority, we must exercise our functions impartially, transparently and consistently with the *Anti-Discrimination Act* 1992 (NT), whether resolving complaints, engaging with Government, contributing to law reform or working alongside the community.

This year we continued to strengthen the systems, governance and capability that support an effective Commission. We reviewed internal processes, improved how we capture and use data, invested in our people and prioritised their wellbeing, and looked for more efficient ways to deliver our functions within existing resources. These improvements are particularly important as demand for our services continues to grow and the complexity of our work increases.

Financial sustainability

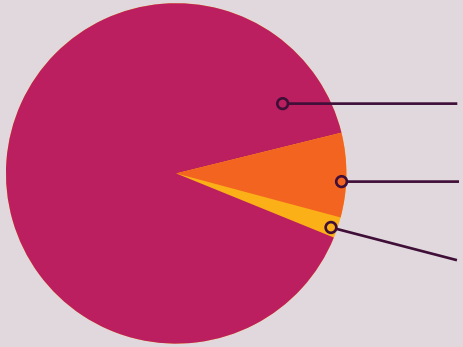
Financial Year	ADC budget
2021-2022	$915,000
2022-2023	$860,000
2023-2024	$916,000
2024-2025	$941,000
2025-2026	$925,000

The Commission's ability to remain independent, effective and accessible is directly linked to its resourcing. For at least the past five years, our annual core allocation has remained below $950,000, despite increasing demand, expanding functions and responsibilities and rising operating costs.

In 2025–26, more than 90% of the Commission's core funding is absorbed by personnel costs, with positions funded at 0.92 FTE simply to remain within allocation. Of the approximately $75,000 remaining for operational expenditure, more than half is committed to unavoidable costs including ICT, telecommunications, electricity and centralised whole-of-Government services.

2025-26 ADC budget allocation

$925,000



Personnel	92%	$850,000
Operational- non-discretionary	5%	$49,000
Operational -discretionary	3%	$26,000

This leaves less than $27,000 — less than 3% of our total core budget — for discretionary expenditure across the entire year.

From this funding, the Commission delivers a Territory-wide statutory complaints service, contributes to law and policy reform, undertakes community engagement, implements and regulates Positive Duty and performs the broader statutory functions of the Commissioner. Limited discretionary funding necessarily constrains our ability to travel, undertake outreach, invest in staff capability and ensure our services are accessible across a jurisdiction as geographically vast and diverse as the Northern Territory.

Education is also a statutory function of the Commission but cannot currently be delivered from core funding. Instead, the Commission must generate revenue through fee-for-service training to fund the education program. This model limits access for community organisations and not-for-profits that may have significant need for education about discrimination, sexual harassment and Positive Duty but limited capacity to pay.

The Commission continues to deliver significant public value from a core allocation of less than $1 million. However, efficiency cannot substitute for sustainable resourcing. Without additional core funding, there are functions we cannot deliver to the standard the Northern Territory community should reasonably expect from its independent anti-discrimination authority.

Investing in our people

Despite our limited resources, we know that an effective Commission depends on the capability of its people. We continue to invest in the specialist skills, professional development and leadership capability our team needs to deliver high-quality, impartial and culturally responsive services.

All Complaints Officers are now either accredited mediators or have completed the Community Justice Centre mediation training and are progressing towards accreditation, strengthening the specialist dispute resolution capability of our complaints team. This year, our Director completed a Graduate Certificate in Business (Public Sector Management) through QUT's Public Sector Management Program (PSMP), with our Senior Equal Opportunity Educator and Strategist, Anika, currently undertaking the program. We thank the Attorney-General's Department for supporting these opportunities to strengthen leadership capability within the Commission.

Our whole team also participated in Diversity Council of Australia's training on anti-racism and building inclusion at work, alongside a broader program of professional development including maximising regulatory investigation and enforcement outcomes, and risk control in regulatory environments.

Investing in our people strengthens the quality of our decisions, services and engagement, and our capacity to serve the Northern Territory effectively.

Stakeholder & Community Confidence

An independent and effective Commission must also be accessible and trusted by the communities it serves. We build that trust through presence, engagement and transparency, and by making our services as accessible as possible across the Territory within our available resources.

For most of this reporting year, until May 2026, the Commission had a dedicated Complaints Officer based in Katherine, strengthening our presence and accessibility across the Big Rivers region.

In 2024-25 4% of all complaints handled were from the Katherine region. In the time having a complaints officer based in Katherine that number doubled to 8%.

50% increase in complaints received from Katherine residents with a local presence

Our complaints team also travelled to Alice Springs to conduct in-person conciliations where online participation was not appropriate. While there, the team delivered information sessions to local organisations to build understanding of the Commission's role, complaints process and how people can access our services.

These activities demonstrate the value of having a Commission that can **reach beyond Darwin and meet Territorians where they are.** While our capacity for regional outreach remains constrained by available resources, we continue to look for practical ways to improve access and strengthen relationships across the Territory.

20 training and professional development activities

100% of staff participated in professional development

80% staff are accredited Mental Health First Aid officers

100% of Complaints Officers accredited or progressing towards mediation accreditation

Community Engagement



Sunset from telegraph station overlooking Mparntwe, the land of the Arrernte people

Visit to Urapunga School





Seniors Expo



Democracy Dash



Strong Networks

Some of our strong networks



Our Commissioner meeting with the pro-bono team at Corrs Chambers Westgate about developing Race Discrimination Guidelines



ANZSOG First Nations Summit in Brisbane 2025

Strong networks are fundamental to the Commission's effectiveness and underpin every aspect of our work. By building trusted relationships across government, community, industry and the legal sector, we strengthen our ability to prevent discrimination, respond to emerging issues and drive lasting change. These partnerships extend the Commission's reach, amplify our impact and help ensure our work remains collaborative, informed and connected to the needs of Territorians.



Positive Duty Disability Oration partners



Batchelor Institute is a Project Butterfly partner



Youth Parliament and Youth Press Gallery program

ACHRA | Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities



Front Row: Ro Allen AM, Commissioner - VEOHRC; Leanne Smith, CEO- AHRC; Robert Fitzgerald, federal Age Discrimination Commissioner; Katie Kiss, federal Social Justice Commissioner; Katie Kiss, federal Social Justice Commissioner; Pia Saturno, Acting TAS-ADC Commissioner; Ms Kara Wiseman, Acting Commissioner SA-EOC; Penelope Matthew, ACT President and Human Rights Commissioner; Anna Cody, federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner;
Back row: Lorraine Finlay, federal Human Rights Commissioner; Hugh de Kretser, President AHRC; Scott McDougall, Commissioner - QHRC; Giridharan Sivaraman, federal Race Discrimination Commissioner; Jeswynn Yogaratnam, Commissioner - NT-ADC; Dr John Byrne AM, WA Equal Opportunity Commissioner; Mia Zahra, Acting Director, Anti-Discrimination NSW

The Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities (ACHRA), which comprises the State, Territory and Federal human rights, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination authorities, met in Sydney on 18 September 2025.

In February 2026 ACHRA wrote to the Prime Minister seeking reform to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) to protect staff and students in religious schools from discrimination. Section 38 of the Act currently allows religious educational institutions to lawfully discriminate against staff and students based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status for certain religious reasons.

Our additional education and training



Education & Training

Education and training are core functions of the Commission and are embedded throughout our work. Many of our education training activities are featured across this report. This section highlights the additional education and training delivered during the year that sits outside of those explicit areas.

During 2025–26, the NT Anti-Discrimination Commission continued to deliver education and training across the Northern Territory, supporting employers, service providers and community organisations to understand their responsibilities under anti-discrimination law and build safer, fairer and more inclusive workplaces and services.

The Commission does not receive dedicated funding to deliver its training program and must charge fees to recover staffing and delivery costs. From July 2026, training fees were increased again to reflect rising staffing costs. While necessary to sustain the program, the increase will make training less accessible to some not-for-profit and community organisations. Improving equitable access to education and training will therefore remain an important consideration when implementing the Public Education Strategy and seeking future partnerships and funding opportunities.

The Commission commenced a co-design project to develop disability discrimination education and training in partnership with people with lived experience of disability. A delivery partner has now been selected, and the Commission is identifying potential funding opportunities, with the aim of developing and rolling out the training during the 2026–27 financial year.

The Commission also undertook extensive consultation to inform its new Public Education Strategy, which has been launched on 31 July 2026. Consultation feedback strongly indicated that the cost of Commission training can make it difficult for not-for-profit and community organisations to participate, despite these organisations often working closely with communities experiencing discrimination and disadvantage.

During 2025–2026 the Commission

- delivered **68** training and education sessions
- **965** participants reached
- delivered training to **26** organisations
- Delivered **11** public | **57** customised sessions
- **25** sessions delivered outside Greater Darwin and/or online
- achieved an average participant satisfaction rating of **90%**

During 2025–26, the Commission also developed its new LGBTQIASB+ Safety and Inclusion at Work training, designed by Lo, NTADC's Senior Complaints and Community Engagement Officer.

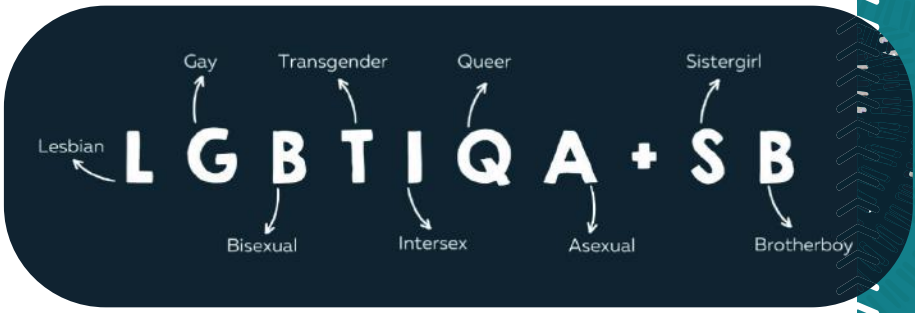
The focus during the reporting period was on developing and piloting the full-day program, incorporating participant feedback and preparing it for broader delivery.

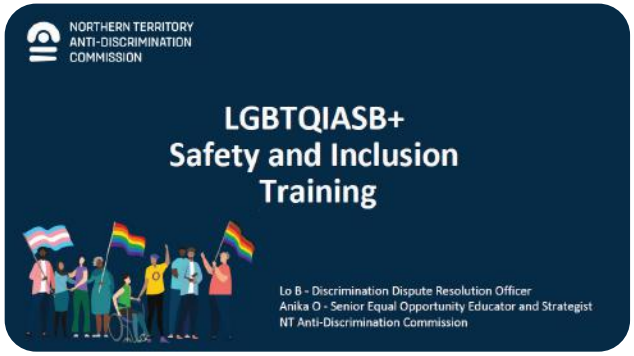
The Commission is now rolling out the training more widely and accepting bookings from organisations across the Territory. Organisations interested in participating can contact training.adc@nt.gov.au to register interest.

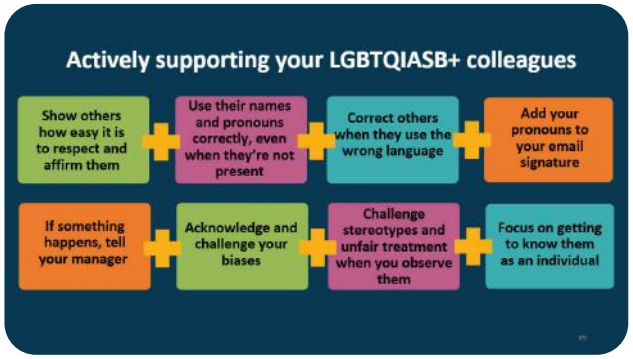
Participant feedback was highly positive:

4.73/5	Overall satisfaction
4.64/5	Usefulness for participants' work
4.55/5	training materials
4.73/5	Facilitation style and delivery
100%	participants who would recommend the training

Participants described the training as educational, insightful, relatable and useful for creating safer and more inclusive workplaces. They particularly valued the personable facilitation, practical information and strategies, and the complementary facilitation styles.







One participant commented:
"I appreciate how the trainers demonstrated respect and leverage of lived experience and positions of power."

2025 NT HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

The NT Human Rights Awards ceremony was held on 10 December 2025 at the Charles Darwin University Danala Campus in Darwin.

The Fitzgeralds recognise Territorians who have made outstanding contributions to diversity, justice, social change and advancing the rights of young people. Established in 2014 and named in honour of the late Tony Fitzgerald, NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner from 2002 to 2009 and a passionate advocate for human rights, the Awards have become a key event in the Territory's human rights calendar. As co-convener, the ADC uses the Awards to strengthen its networks and engage with people and organisations who share our commitment to equality and justice. In 2025, more than 100 people attended the Awards, which were generously supported by community service and not-for-profit organisations.

NT Shelter CEO, Peter McMillan delivered the keynote address, "Being at home in the NT". His messaged underscored that strong, connected communities are central to wellbeing, and he powerfully reiterated that adequate housing if not a privilege, but a human right.









NT Human Rights Awards



The Fitzgerald Diversity Award
ORGANISATION WINNER
Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation



The Fitzgerald Youth Award
INDIVIDUAL WINNER
Damian Bahr-Kelly



The Fitzgerald Youth Award
ORGANISATION WINNER
Northern Territory Youth Parliament



The Fitzgerald Justice Award
INDIVIDUAL WINNER
Senior Sergeant Erica Gibson



The Fitzgerald Justice Award
ORGANISATION WINNER
Katherine Womens Legal Service



The Fitzgerald Social Change Award
INDIVIDUAL WINNER
Megan Brown



The Fitzgerald Social Change Award
ORGANISATION WINNER
Disability Advocacy Services

Our Culture

Our team comprises of

75% female

8% non-binary or gender diverse

17% male

8% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

25% from a non-English speaking background

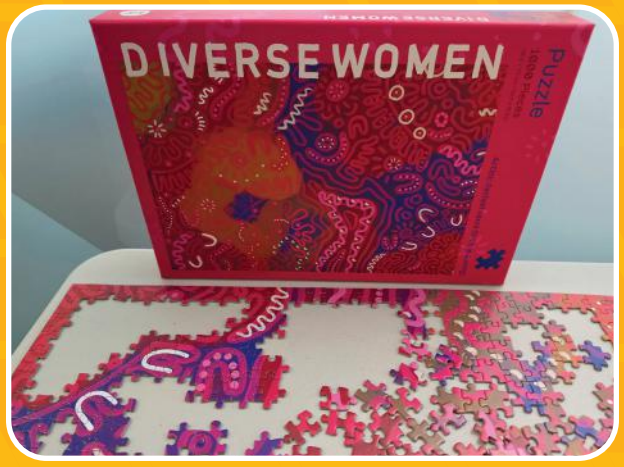
42% with disability or neurodivergence

25% with caring responsibilities

100% of staff identify as having lived experience in relation to one or more protected attributes



Pet Patch



Lunch Room Puzzle

OUR PEOPLE MATTER SURVEY

Our Employee Engagement Score
87%

Our Employee Satisfaction Score
82%

100%
of our staff completed the NTG People Matter Survey

Internal ADC Survey

The Commission values staff feedback and continuous improvement, so in addition to the biannual whole of Government People Matter survey, we conduct an internal annual survey on staff satisfaction.

67% of staff feel their needs have been accommodated at work including access, communication and flexible work

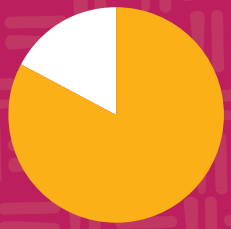
83% of staff are on a formal flexible work arrangement

67% of our staff are 'extremely satisfied' with their employment with the remaining 33% being 'mostly satisfied'



100%

of staff 'always' feel safe to speak up or raise concerns without fear of negative consequences.



83%

of staff say they 'always' feel a sense of belonging at the Commission, with the remaining 17% stating most of the time.

The Commission values its people and endeavours to be an employer of choice, while providing practical examples to Territory businesses of best practice and demonstrating how workplace flexibility can deliver public value and contribute to better outcomes for Territorians.

Example 1: Flexibility allowed a greater service delivery in Alice Springs

Lo doing Pottery





"One of my passions outside my role at the ADC is ceramics. With flexible work arrangements, including condensed hours, I'm able to run fortnightly ceramics workshops and collaborate on projects with other local artists. This year, my workplace supported me to work remotely from Alice Springs for two months to complete an art residency.

I'm incredibly grateful for this opportunity to learn from other ceramicists and advance my passion and skills in this area with the full support of my workplace."

Employer's perspective:
For a small Commission with limited resources, flexibility and an innovative mindset enabled us to increase our presence in Alice Springs, deliver services directly to Territorians and strengthen regional networks.

"The culture is what makes me enjoy my workplace and want to stay. The diversity of our team is the biggest strength of the Commission"

"What our team say makes us"

- Pet Patch
- Open door policy
- Regular check-ins
- Leaders
- Celebrating milestones
- Moderation of workload
- Team spirit
- We care
- ToniRobics
  2-3 min exercise breaks
- Communication

"I have always felt encouraged to prioritise the moments that matter most, whether that's attending important school assemblies, celebrating milestones, or simply taking the time to recharge when needed."

Strengths-based approach

Curiosity

Culture and flexibility

Understanding

Different perspectives

Diversity

People

Professionalism

Innovation

Unique workplace

Supportive colleagues

our workplace culture

"The Commission is leading the way in recognising the value of genuine workplace flexibility and the positive impact it has on staff wellbeing, culture, and retention."

"People take cues from their leaders. When leaders demonstrate and prioritise healthy and flexible work habits, these behaviours become ingrained within the team. Same goes for inclusivity and diversity: you can't be what you can't see"

Example 2: Flexibility promoted inclusion in Sport

Josie playing for Territory Stingers



"Playing in the Malaysian Hockey League as part of the Territory Stingers program required genuine flexibility, leaving work on time for training, flexibility around team commitments and taking three weeks away during a particularly busy period.

I was never made to feel guilty for prioritising something important to me, or that the flexibility came with an unspoken cost or owing someone.

Instead, I felt complete support and genuine pride from my colleagues, who stepped up while I was away.

That culture of trust allowed me to pursue an incredible opportunity, experience diversity and inclusion through sport, and return even more grateful for the workplace I am part of."

Employer's perspective:
Supporting flexibility helps retain skilled staff while bringing broader experiences and networks to the Commission, strengthening our networks and work on inclusion in sport and the value we deliver for Territorians.



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Artwork from Rights on Show: Human Rights Art Awards & Exhibition, showcasing an eclectic mix of artists and artwork with a diverse interpretation of human rights and the law.

Artist: Summer Eccles ***Title: Equal***

Equal is a painting on a canvas with acrylic, and depicts a group of people that all look different but they are all the same as human and are all equal with each other.

Bold

Collaborative

Inclusive