

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Finance

Minister for the Public Service

Member for Kurrajong

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 6****09 MAY 2025****Question No. 398****MR. PETER CAIN MLA:** To ask the Minister for the Public Service

1. How many WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, or similar encrypted messaging groups are currently being used by ACT Government directorates or agencies, including senior executives (i.e. executive group managers and higher), for work-related communications, and can the Minister list the platform, Group name and the members of the ACT Senior Public Service in each group.
2. What policies or guidance, if any, exist regarding the use of encrypted messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram by ACT Public Service employees for official government business, and can the Minister provide copies of any such policies.
3. Has the ACT Government undertaken any audits, reviews, or assessments in the last five years to determine whether the use of encrypted messaging apps by ACT public servants complies with record-keeping obligations and the Freedom of Information Act 2016; if so, can the Minister provide the findings.
4. Has the Head of Service or any directorate provided advice, either formally or informally, to public servants about the use of messaging apps in ways that might avoid the creation of Freedom of Information (FOI) disclosable records; if so, can the Minister provide details of such advice.
5. How does the ACT Public Service ensure that work-related communications conducted over encrypted or non-government messaging platforms are appropriately recorded and made available for FOI purposes or internal accountability processes.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. There is no register for messaging groups across the ACT Public Service. Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex are the preferred messaging applications for staff. In a minority of situations, other messaging services are utilised as a secondary form of communication, for example:
 - Head of Service: WhatsApp is the preferred use of communication by Commonwealth Government officials for logistical matters for some high level national forum arrangements, eg. changes to meeting start times, or alerts that meeting papers have been dispatched. Common practice is that substantive matters are dealt with by email.
 - Infrastructure Canberra: WhatsApp is used as one form of communication between the public service and delivery partners for safety alerts on construction sites and projects. These alerts are followed through with formal reports and associated email communication.
2. [Guidance on the use of non-DDTS provided messaging services](#) is available on the OneGov portal which is accessible to all staff, including the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

The Territory Records Office website [TRO website](#) includes standards and guidelines for records and information governance.

3. No audits have been undertaken.
4. The Head of Service has not provided any advice, either formally or informally, to public servants about how they could use messaging apps in order to avoid the creation of Freedom of Information (FOI) disclosable records. The guidelines issued by DDTS and TRO provide the whole of service guidance and specifically provide that appropriate record keeping obligations are met, including extracting records from non-DDTS provided messaging services (such as Signal) and storing in an appropriate ACT Government system.
5. See answer 2.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for the Public Service

Date:22/6/25.....

This response required 390 minutes to complete, at an approximate cost of \$891.