



Australian Government

SM20/0168/NATCAB

15 March 2020

## **CABINET MINUTE**

### **NATIONAL CABINET**

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<b>Other</b>	<b>SM20/0168</b>	<b>NATIONAL CABINET FOR AUSTRALIA'S CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE</b>
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The National Cabinet for Australia's Coronavirus Response ('National Cabinet') agreed to:

1. The Terms of Reference for the National Cabinet (Attachment A to this minute refers) and the establishment of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) as sub-committees of the National Cabinet.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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## **National Cabinet for Australia's Coronavirus Response**

The Council of Australian Governments agreed on 13 March 2020 to establish a National Cabinet to coordinate Australia's Coronavirus Response across State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government ('National Cabinet').

### **Purpose**

The National Cabinet will consider and coordinate national Coronavirus preparedness and response measures to deal with the health, economic, societal and public safety impacts of the virus. It will aim to ensure agreed measures are implemented and communicated as consistently and effectively as possible nation-wide.

### **Membership**

The National Cabinet will comprise the Prime Minister (Chair) and State and Territory First Ministers.

It will be supported by the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and his State and Territory counterparts.

The National Cabinet will provide strategic oversight of, and be supported by, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPCC) and the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM).

Expert advisers will be co-opted as appropriate.

### **Operating principles**

The National Cabinet will operate according to longstanding conventions of Cabinet government, including the guiding principles of collective responsibility and solidarity.

All proceedings and documentation of the National Cabinet will remain strictly confidential. To this end the National Cabinet will be constituted as a Cabinet Office Policy Committee, as provided for in the Australian Government Cabinet Handbook (13th edition).

The National Cabinet does not derogate from the sovereign authority and powers of the Commonwealth or any State or Territory government. The Commonwealth and the States and Territories, as appropriate, remain responsible for the implementation of responses to the Coronavirus.

For maximum effect, the decisions of the Committee should be endorsed by the Cabinet of each jurisdiction.

Formal Cabinet processes, including agendas, papers for consideration, note takers and minutes, will support the operation of the National Cabinet.

#### **Secretariat support**

The Commonwealth Cabinet Office will provide secretariat support to the National Cabinet, in collaboration with State and Territory Cabinet Secretariat support areas. Note takers will be the Commonwealth Cabinet Secretary, a senior official from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and a senior official nominated by the States and Territories.

#### **Meeting arrangements**

The National Cabinet will meet weekly on Friday at 10.00am AESDT/AEDT by telepresence or in person. Ad hoc meetings will be convened by the Chair as required to respond to urgent developments.

Agendas will be developed between the Prime Minister and First Ministers, based on advice from the secretariat.

Agendas and papers will be circulated by the secretariat through an appropriately secure system accessible to both the Commonwealth and States and Territories.

Wherever possible, papers will be circulated and comments sought from all jurisdictions prior to the meetings of the National Cabinet. Comments will be circulated to all members in advance of meetings.

These arrangements may be varied if urgent operational requirements dictate.

**COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS**  
**FRIDAY, 13 MARCH 2020**  
**BANKWEST STADIUM, PARRAMATTA, NSW**

**RECORD OF MEETING**

Leaders welcomed the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, Premier of Tasmania, to his first COAG and thanked the former Premier, the Hon Will Hodgman MP, for his contribution to COAG.

**1. Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subsequently COAG agreed:

8. to establish a National Cabinet, made up of the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers, to meet at least weekly, to address Australia's response to COVID-19; and
9. the Australian Health Protection and Principal Committee and the National Coordination Mechanism will be the primary bodies advising the National Cabinet, including on social distancing protocols and managing the risks associated with mass gatherings.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

**From:** [McGregor, Leonie](#)  
**To:** [Foster, Stephanie](#); [Gaetjens, Phil](#); [Andrew](#)  
**Subject:** Draft ToR for consideration tomorrow.  
**Date:** Friday, 13 March 2020 6:39:43 PM

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HI All

Here is my first rough draft of how the National Cabinet ToR might look. I have tried to think of the main features that would apply to such a Committee....without being too prescriptive!

But feel free to add/pull apart/send suggestions through. I think for Sunday the agenda would include (at least) consideration of

- large gatherings and agreement on advice to the public
- update on consumables

Cheers Leonie

### **National Cabinet**

This committee considers matters in relation to the threat of Coronavirus and appropriate nationally coordinated and consistent approaches and implementation of responses to deal with health, economic and social impacts due to the spread of the virus.

### **Proposed Membership**

Prime Minister

First Ministers

Secretaries/Director Generals of Prime Minister and First Minister Departments

Expert advice will be cooped as appropriate.

### **Officials/National Cabinet Secretary**

The Commonwealth Cabinet Secretary and a nominee of States and Territories will perform the role of National Cabinet Secretary/s and will agree the business to come before the committee, schedule meetings, and agree attendance.

### **Principles**

The following principles would apply to the operation of the committee

- Discussions of the National Cabinet should remain confidential to the Committee
- Formal cabinet processes including note takers and minutes will be a feature of the National Cabinet operations
- Decisions of the National Cabinet meetings will be communicated publicly by communique or other agreed statement
- Decisions recorded in minutes of the meeting will not bind states and territories
- Both the Commonwealth and States and Territories will continue to make and implement decisions under their sovereign authority.
- The decisions of the Committee should be endorsed by the Cabinet of each jurisdiction.

### **Secretariat Support**

Support will be provided through the Cabinet Secretariat of Prime Minister and Cabinet, in collaboration with State and Territory Cabinet Secretariat support areas.

### **Meeting arrangements**

The committee will meet weekly, generally on a Friday morning and usually by telepresence.

The committee will co opt expert advice as appropriate.

Agendas will be developed between the Prime Minister and First Ministers, based on advice from the National Coordinating Committee and the AHPPC, and cleared by the National Cabinet Committee Secretary/s

Agendas and papers will be circulated through an appropriately secured system accessible to both the Commonwealth and States and Territories.

Prior to circulation of papers, the National Cabinet Secretary/s will approve the final agenda for circulation.

Papers will be circulated and comments received from all jurisdictions prior to the meetings of the Committee. Comments will be circulated to all prior to the meetings of the Committee.

**From:** [Gaetjens, Phil](#)  
**To:** [McGregor, Leonie](#)  
**Cc:** [Foster, Stephanie](#); [Andrew](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Draft ToR for consideration tomorrow.  
**Date:** Friday, 13 March 2020 6:45:47 PM

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Secretaries should not be members but advisers able to be present.

Philip Gaetjens  
Secretary, PM&C  
Sent from my iPhone

On 13 Mar 2020, at 18:39, McGregor, Leonie wrote:

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