

Review of the Secretaries Board

Ms Rosemary Huxtable AO PSM

4 March 2024

Professor Glyn Davis AC
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Dear Professor Davis

Review of the Secretaries Board

I am pleased to provide the report of the Review of the Secretaries Board.

The Report was conducted over an eight-week period across January and February 2024. Departmental secretaries and other senior staff were generous in the time that they provided to the Review and were thoughtful and constructive in their input.

The Secretaries Board operates in a constructive and collaborative manner. It is effective in its mandate to provide stewardship to the Australian Public Service (APS), to develop and implement APS-wide improvement strategies and model leadership behaviours. The eight recommendations I have put forward seek to build on its strengths and enable it to prepare for, and respond to, emerging challenges and risks.

My work was supported by staff of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in particular, Ms Nina Marie Bishay and Ms Alissa Johnson. I thank them for their research, contributions and suggestions.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to undertake this work.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Huxtable AO PSM

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Introduction

The Secretaries Board (the Board) is established under section 64 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, with responsibility for stewardship of the APS, to develop and implement improvement strategies, work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours.

Membership of the current Board comprises the Secretary of each Commonwealth Department of State, the Australian Public Service Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

The Board appointed Ms Rosemary Huxtable AO PSM in January 2024 to undertake an independent, high level review of the effectiveness of current Board operations and to make findings and recommendations to support its ongoing strategic work. The Terms of Reference for the Review is at [Attachment 1](#).

Methodology

The Review was conducted over January and February 2024 and adopted quantitative and qualitative methods to assess Board effectiveness, including:

- Twenty-two face to face interviews with Board members, members of the Board secretariat and executive in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and key personnel from select Board Sub-committees.
- A review of the minutes of the Board over the period October 2022 to December 2023 and the minutes, membership and terms of reference of Board Sub-committees.
- A scan of previous reviews that have examined the role of the Board and a desk-top analysis of equivalent structures in comparable administrations (New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom).

The Reviewer provided an oral update at the Board meeting of 7 February 2024 and submitted a draft report to the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on 27 February 2024. The final report will be considered at the April meeting of the Board.

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That First Nations priorities continue as a Board priority in 2024, but with a focus on significant cross-portfolio actions, milestones and accountabilities, with the active engagement of all Secretaries in setting strategic directions and priorities.

Recommendation 2

That APS reform continue as a Board priority in 2024, with a focus on strategic cross-portfolio issues, with operational matters developed through supporting governance structures that include the large service delivery agencies.

Recommendation 3

That a one-hour session at the start of each Board meeting be set aside for strategic discussion comprising;

- a. an update from the Chair on government priorities and emerging issues;
- b. an economic and fiscal update;
- c. an international and national security update;
- d. general discussion on emerging risks and strategic issues.

Recommendation 4

That the Board agree an annual work program that informs the commissioning of work and participation of others in Board meetings, and schedules consideration of items, while retaining flexibility to address emerging issues. Horizon scanning and a scenario-based exercise should form part of an annual work program.

Recommendation 5

That:

- a. an Executive of the Board be established, comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair and two Secretaries (appointed on an annual basis), to set the Board agenda, identify item sponsors and co-optees, engage with Sub-committee chairs, provide a quality assurance check on Board papers and sign off on action items;
- b. actions arising from Board meetings are mapped and responsibilities assigned through an action register, with progress monitored and reported at each Board meeting and Secretaries providing feedback within their portfolios on relevant Board outcomes and actions.

Recommendation 6

That:

- a. the purpose, membership and work of Board Sub-committees be considered at the annual strategy session to ensure alignment with the annual work program. Should Sub-committees be retained, there should be a clear line of sight between the work of a Sub-committee and the Board, a process to equitably allocate members and chairing responsibilities across Sub-committees, and sun-setting provisions to ensure regular review;
- b. the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Committee should be retained in its current form, but with a stronger link to the Board, both in commissioning its work and receiving reports on operational matters. A Secretary should be nominated as sponsor of the COO Committee to act as a conduit between the Board and the Committee;
- c. the Diversity and Inclusion Champions Networks should be actively supported by the Board, with Secretary level champions appointed every two years.

Recommendation 7

That the Board deploys a range of methods to enable information exchange with senior leaders in government, business and the community and with international counterparts, and that external speakers at the monthly Board meetings be limited to those instances requiring a one-way flow of information to Secretaries and where there is no ready alternative.

Recommendation 8

That Secretaries meet annually off-site for one to two days to support deeper, policy-oriented discussions and to establish the forward work program for the Board and its committees.

Role and Purpose of the Board

Legislation

Part 8 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, through amendments that took effect in 2013, establishes the Secretaries Board and describes its membership, functions and operating arrangements as follows:

64 Secretaries Board

- (1) *The Secretaries Board is established by this section.*
- (2) *The Secretaries Board consists of the following members:*
 - a. *The Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, as Chair;*
 - b. *The Secretary of each other Department;*
 - c. *The Commissioner;*
 - d. *Such other persons as are nominated in writing by the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department*
- (3) *The Secretaries Board has the following functions:*
 - a. *To take responsibility for the stewardship of the APS and for developing and implementing strategies to improve the APS;*
 - b. *To identify strategic priorities for the APS and consider issues that affect the APS;*
 - c. *To set an annual work program, and direct sub-committees to develop strategies to address APS-wide issues and make recommendations to the Secretaries Board;*
 - d. *To draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community;*
 - e. *To work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours.*
- (4) *The Secretaries Board may establish one or more senior leadership groups, consisting of members determined by the Secretaries Board, to assist the Secretaries Board in performing its functions.*

Board structure over time

While the core membership of the Board (the Secretaries and the Commissioner) is set out in legislation, other persons who have been nominated as members of the Board has varied over time at the discretion of the Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet. From time to time, Board members have included:

- The Chief of the Defence Force
- The Director-General of National Intelligence
- The Commissioner of Taxation
- The Chief Executive Officer of Services Australia
- The Chief Executive Officer of the NIAA.

Previous reflections on the role of the Board

As part of reviews of the capability and performance of the Australian Public Service, consideration has been given to the role of a Secretaries Board.

The 2010 report *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration* established the Secretaries Board through amendments to the *Public Service Act 1999* to strengthen leadership and ‘...drive reform in areas including strategic policy, citizen-centred service delivery and collaboration across the APS’.¹ Prior to this Secretaries engaged collectively through a Management Advisory Committee.

The 2019 report *Our Public Service Our Future* (the *Thodey Review*) identified the importance of the Secretaries Board operating as collective stewards of the APS and managing the APS as an integrated organisation², moving from information sharing to decision-making, taking a whole of service view and aligning in a systemic way on government priorities.

The Thodey Review recommended that legislative amendments be considered to support the Board to lead and govern the APS, including the power for Board decisions to bind agencies and that it be a highly visible APS leadership body. The November 2023 *Thodey Review Progress Report* noted that further legislative or ministerial authority along these lines was not considered necessary at this stage, but may be revisited after the second phase of APS reform concludes³. The second phase of APS reform strengthens the role and powers of the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the APS Commissioner.

International comparisons on the role of the Board

The Australian Secretaries Board is unique among comparable nations. A permanent Board of all departmental secretaries and the Commissioner, established in legislation, with a broad remit to advance public sector wide strategies, stewardship and leadership behaviours does not form part of the governance structures of the like nations reviewed (New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom).

- New Zealand enshrines the concept of interdepartmental executive boards in legislation, but these are drawn together on a needs basis to address particular policy or delivery challenges, and coordinate strategic policy and budgeting matters. The NZ interdepartmental boards bring together a subset of secretaries with policy responsibility for a particular issue, meeting from time to time as required to advance particular issues.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration* 2010, p.x and p.49

² Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. *Our Purpose Our Future*. Independent Review of the Australian Public Service 2019, pp. 279-281

³ Commonwealth of Australia. *APS Reform. Thodey Review Progress Report* as at November 2023. Recommendations 37 and 38

- Canada establishes a number of Deputy-Minister level advisory committees in the areas of policy coordination, human resource management and public sector management and renewal. Compared to the Australian Board, these are akin to Sub-committees and comprise sub-groups of secretaries. While the role of the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet (Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet equivalent) and Deputy Ministers (Secretary equivalent) are set out in Canada's *Public Service Employment Act*, there is no legislative basis for the committee structure.
- The UK has a Civil Service Board comprising the Head of the Civil Service, the Cabinet Secretary and a cross-section of permanent secretaries. The responsibilities of the Civil Service Board are similar to that of the Australian Secretaries Board, in providing strategic leadership of the civil service and considering shared challenges and direction. The key difference, however, is that the Civil Service Board is not established in legislation and does not comprise all permanent secretaries.

A more detailed international comparison is at [Attachment 2](#).

The Current Board

Membership and terms of reference

The structure and operation of the current Secretaries Board came into effect in September 2022. Its Terms of Reference is at [Attachment 3](#).

The membership of the current Board comprises:

- All departmental secretaries, with the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as Chair;
- The Australian Public Service Commissioner, as Deputy Chair;
- The CEO of the NIAA (while the terms of reference refer to this role as a co-opted participant as required by the relevant meeting agenda, the CEO has attended all meetings across all agenda items since September 2022).

The current Board has committed to focus on:

- First Nations priorities including Closing the Gap;
- APS reform priorities;
- Budget and economic priorities;
- Other priorities as determined.

Agendas and meeting frequency

The Board meets monthly (generally on the first Wednesday of the month) for three hours, with a general expectation that all members attend, or are represented by proxies where substantive acting arrangements are in place. There is strong attendance at the Board by departmental secretaries.

The agenda comprises standing items aligned to the Board's agreed areas of focus (First Nations, APS reform, economic and fiscal update) together with an update from the Chair. Other agenda items are identified through a variety of processes:

- nomination by a departmental Secretary or the APS Commissioner;
- the secretariat located in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet identifies items in consultation with departmental contacts and the APSC;
- generated by a previous Board agenda item or Sub-committee report.

A recent innovation is to require a nomination form to be completed with authorisation by the Board chair for an item to be listed on the agenda. A Secretary must sponsor an item for it to come on to the agenda.

The expectation of the Board is that each Sub-committee (described below) provides a written report to the Board on at least a six-monthly basis.

Sub-committees

Five Sub-committees of the Board operated in 2023 as follows:

- the Chief Operating Officers (COO) Committee (Chair: Chief Operating Officer, Department of Social Services)
 - manages whole of government operational and implementation matters and drives delivery of agreed initiatives of the APS reform agenda under the direction of the Board;
 - attended by COOs from all departments and other large agencies;
 - no departmental Secretaries attend the COO Committee as it is intended as a forum for the COOs to work together and to advise the Board on operational issues across the APS.
- the Future of Work Committee (Co-chairs: Secretary Attorney General's Department; APS Commissioner)
 - provides advice to the Board on opportunities to develop the best value proposition for the APS in the employment market through attraction, employment, retention, hierarchy and classification;
 - attended by select Board members plus the Australian Statistician (data profession lead), CEOs of Services Australia and the Digital Transformation Agency, Deputy Secretary ATO (HR profession Lead), Chair of the COO Committee.
- the Secretaries Digital and Data Committee (Co-chairs: Secretaries Department of Finance; Department of Social Services)
 - provides strategic leadership to promote an APS enterprise approach to the planning, coordination, investment, assurance and delivery of trusted and secure digital and data capabilities across government;
 - attended by select Board members plus the Commissioner ATO, Australian Statistician, CEO Services Australia, CEO DTA, Director-General Australian Signals Directorate.
- the Partnership Priorities Committee (Co-Chairs: Secretary Department of Social Services; CEO NIAA)
 - steers better policy and delivery outcomes by embedding partnership culture and behaviours in the public service to support effective engagement and co-design with community and delivery partners;
 - attended by select Board members.
- the Strategic Leadership Group (Chair: Secretary Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet)
 - sought to enable strategic, forward-looking discussion on significant public policy or administration matters through an extended discussion following every third meeting of the Board;
 - attended by all Board members plus the Director-General National Intelligence, Chief of the Defence Force, Commissioner ATO and CEO Services Australia.

Focus of the Board in 2023

A review of the minutes of the 13 Board meetings from October 2022 to December 2023 shows that the Board's identified priorities dominated the agendas:

- APS reform: a standing item that focused on delivery of the Government's APS reform initiatives;
- First Nations: an update was provided as a standing item at every Board meeting. Progress on Closing the Gap and the Central Australia Plan was also considered;
- Economic and Fiscal update: continued as a standing item focused on key economic and fiscal developments of relevance to Secretaries.

A selection of substantive items considered by the Board across the period and, in some cases, at multiple meetings, included:

- APS wide operating arrangements (flexible work, APS bargaining and workplace relations, SES performance framework, cyber security management, specialists in the APS);
- APS purpose statement;
- APS integrity – supported by the establishment of an APS Integrity Taskforce;
- response to the Robodebt Royal Commission including code of conduct processes;
- procurement, consultant engagement and procurement capability uplift;
- place-based partnerships and stakeholder engagement;
- report on the Review of Public Sector Board appointments;
- myGov user audit.

External speakers attended Board meetings to share information and at times seek Board action.

The Minister for the Public Service, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, addressed the Board meeting of December 2022 and the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, provided an update at the December 2023 meeting.

The Board undertook a dialogue with its Canadian counterparts through the Canada-Australia Public Policy Initiative (CAPPI) virtual meeting in November 2023.

Findings and Recommendations

Board achievements

A collegiate and collaborative Board

The general view expressed in interviews was that the Board works well, is collegiate and collaborative, able to have honest discussions and sets a good tone across the APS.

It has benefited from new Secretaries being appointed and bringing with them fresh ideas and different ways of working, particularly those with experience in other jurisdictions.

While significant areas of disagreement are rare, dissenting views can be voiced and discussions occur in a respectful way.

In this respect, the general tenor of input to the Review was seeking to build on strengths and enable continuous improvement rather than correct dysfunction.

The Board was seen as largely fulfilling its legislative functions across stewardship, APS improvement strategies, collaboration and modelling leadership behaviours, with less success in the area of external engagement.

There continues to be a tension between the Board as a forum for collective action and decision-making and the responsibilities of individual Board members as accountable authorities for their organisations.

The Board, in reality, has multiple functions that can at times come into tension. It operates:

- as a means of collective action for one APS;
- to advance the policy priorities of the government and to ensure there is the necessary capabilities and connections in place;
- to provide mutual support and share knowledge between the principals;
- to identify emergent issues and develop thinking and capability to address them;
- to provide leadership and support and to manage differences.

Feedback to the Review suggested that the current Board has the maturity and capability to manage the tensions that may arise between these functions, but needs to focus more directly on identification and management of strategic priorities, emerging issues and risk.

Stewardship

A number of examples were provided to the Review where the Board had acted to identify and address an issue with APS-wide implications. The Board's engagement with these issues and the processes it put in place were seen as adding value to the response of individual Secretaries.

Two case studies follow.

Integrity Taskforce

The Board created an APS Integrity Taskforce to ensure that the APS is focused upon and delivering a pro-integrity culture at all levels of the service. The priority given by the Board aligned with the government's agenda to strengthen integrity across the public sector.

Creating a Taskforce sent a strong message that all Secretaries were committed to the APS being a leader in integrity and were focused on working together to deliver clear, cohesive and measurable improvements in integrity across the system.

The Taskforce was based in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, reported to a Band 3 steering group and ran for a six month period. The cost of the Taskforce was met from internal budgets.

Update reports on the work of the Taskforce were considered at several Board meetings, with a final report at the September 2023 meeting. The final report was published and circulated to all APS employees. An implementation plan was agreed with lead agencies identified.

Robodebt Royal Commission

The findings of the Robodebt Royal Commission has implications for all secretaries, both in the cultures and behaviours that the Report identified, the impact on staff working across the APS and the importance of a coordinated response.

A Taskforce led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was established. The Board considered the Royal Commission Report and the Government Response on five occasions, as identified in the Board minutes. The Board provided an opportunity for Secretaries to be kept fully informed of developments and to provide input to public sector actions and responses.

It enabled coordination between the Government Response, the APS Integrity Taskforce and other APS reform initiatives.

In both the illustrated cases, there was a need for urgent and coordinated action in an area with whole of APS implications. There was clear purpose to the work, shared commitment sufficient to warrant allocation of resources, an end date and deliverables.

While both of these cases require implementation and monitoring they benefited from focused attention from the Board in their development stages and gave a clear message to the APS of the importance that the Secretaries accorded to shared action.

Economic and fiscal update

An economic and fiscal update provided by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of the Department of Finance has been a long standing feature of Board meetings. While their content is at the discretion of the Secretaries, these tend to cover the prevailing economic circumstances, recent economic indicators, fiscal climate and strategy and expenditure review updates.

Board members reported that these updates were very useful as they give a whole of government perspective that can be difficult for individual Secretaries to see from a line agency perspective. They particularly appreciated insights into expenditure review committee processes. The economic and fiscal update should continue, mindful of the benefit individual secretaries elicit from an insight into the expenditure review process and economic circumstances.

First Nations priorities

Standing updates on First Nations priorities, including Closing the Gap and the Central Australia Plan, was a feature of all Board meetings from October 2022 to present. In this period, the Coalition of the Peaks addressed the Board on two occasions.

There is strong support for the Board to continue its focus on First Nations priorities including Closing the Gap. There was recognition that improving the experiences and outcomes for First Nations people is a priority of government, with Secretaries needing to lead and be held to account for action within their own portfolios (through policy, program and operating lenses) and that it is an area where cross-government effort is needed.

The central role of the Secretaries Board in 'promoting and embedding the transformation of public sector systems and culture' in the context of Closing the Gap has also been highlighted in the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap⁴.

Secretaries are seeking to take this engagement to a next level – rather than standing updates that can become operational in focus, Secretaries are seeking to have strategic discussions at the Board on First Nations priorities, where milestones and deliverables are required, where Secretaries are held to account, where there is a focus on substantial cross-portfolio action(s), and commissioning and delegating work for further development.

The work program that has been developed by the NIAA should be considered at the first available Board meeting to identify those elements that are significant and require cross-portfolio action, and where milestones and deliverables can be set at the portfolio level. This should guide the actions and processes of the Board in 2024.

⁴ Productivity Commission of Australia. Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. January 2024 p.20 and chapter 7.

Recommendation 1

That First Nations priorities continue as a Board priority in 2024, but with a focus on significant cross-portfolio actions, milestones and accountabilities, with the active engagement of all Secretaries in setting strategic directions and priorities.

APS reform

APS reform is an important area for Board engagement. The government has an ambitious APS reform agenda with a number of elements that need close coordination and analysis across government agencies. The Board has focused on this in 2023.

A challenge for APS reform is getting the engagement with the Board pitched at the right level and coming at the right time – neither too early, when there are operational issues still to iron out, or too late, when it is difficult to move away from a particular implementation path. It is also important that the larger service delivery agencies are able to have a voice, given their employment footprint.

There are governance structures that can support the Board and which could be used to advance matters in the development stage. The COO Committee, for example, can advance specific pieces of work, as can the Future of Work Committee.

With many of the APS reform actions now maturing and moving to implementation, there is an opportunity for the Board to perform a more strategic role.

While APS reform should remain a priority for the Board in 2024, the focus of Board engagement should be at the strategic level, setting direction for further detailed development and engaging on areas with significant cross-portfolio implications or potential flow-on impacts. Use of existing Sub-committees to advance operational details should be mapped and curated to ensure that items are ready for discussion at the Board. The way that the Board engages on APS reform should be reviewed mid-year as the reform agenda moves to an implementation stage.

Recommendation 2

That APS reform continue as a Board priority in 2024, with a focus on strategic cross-portfolio issues, with operational matters developed through supporting governance structures that include the large service delivery agencies.

Strategic priorities and stewardship

Strategic agenda setting and risk mapping

The Board is a valuable forum for meaningful discussion and alignment on strategic and policy issues, where information can be shared, differences aired and actions taken to prepare the APS for

emerging policy challenges. All Board members considered there were the foundations for the Board to engage constructively on strategic issues.

Board members were united in a desire to have more discussion and a view from the centre on government priorities and emerging issues and to make room in the agenda for strategic and policy matters.

An area highlighted was national security and foreign policy developments, where those secretaries less involved in the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCNS) can find it difficult to access and share relevant information. There was strong support for injecting the international perspective into Board discussions.

The Board does not have a standing item on risks (current and emerging) and risk mitigation, though this is often implicit in how priorities have been identified and set (for example the work on APS integrity in 2023). While there are instances where horizon scanning and scenario planning have been on the agenda, this has not been in a systematic way. A more methodical and proactive approach to identifying and engaging with risk, conducting horizon scanning and undertaking scenario-based exercises would improve the quality of Board discussions and its responsiveness.

Areas identified as priorities for the Board agenda were:

- observations from the Chair on government priorities and emerging issues;
- the economic and fiscal update from the Secretaries of the Treasury and Finance (already a standing item but will benefit from being part of the strategic agenda);
- an international update from the Foreign Affairs and Defence Secretaries (and others as appropriate);
- a capacity for all secretaries to engage on emerging risks and strategic policy issues of concern to them and where there are significant cross-portfolio implications.

Recommendation 3

That a one-hour session at the start of each Board meeting be set aside for strategic discussion comprising;

- a. an update from the Chair on government priorities and emerging issues;
- b. an economic and fiscal update;
- c. an international and national security update;
- d. general discussion on emerging risks and strategic issues.

Establishing an annual work program

There is benefit in the Board agreeing an annual work program early in the year. Ideally this should happen at an off-site annual strategy session, as there is more time for in-depth consideration.

An annual work program would establish those matters that the Board intends to prioritise, enable work to be commissioned and timing to be set. It would focus the work of the Board Sub-committees, inform establishment of taskforces and map out participation of others in Board processes, such as the large service delivery agencies. An annual work program that schedules formal horizon scanning and a scenario-based exercise would round out the strategic Board agenda.

A number of areas were identified during consultations that could be considered for a 2024 work program:

- horizon scanning of emerging risks and responses;
- a planned scenario-based exercise on an issue with significant cross-government implications;
- federation policy and learnings;
- the geo-strategic context and intelligence issues;
- highest priority domestic policy challenges;
- accumulated learnings from APS capability reviews and response.

A reflection on progress against the work program (achievements and learnings) should be a standing item of the last Board meeting of the year.

An annual work program would not preclude the capacity for the Board to be flexible as unforeseen issues arise. Room needs to be left on the agenda for this purpose.

Recommendation 4

That the Board agree an annual work program that informs the commissioning of work and participation of others in Board meetings, and schedules consideration of items, while retaining flexibility to address emerging issues. Horizon scanning and a scenario-based exercise should form part of an annual work program.

Operational Arrangements

There was general support to retain the current membership of the Board and the length and scheduling of Board meetings.

A three-hour meeting in a secure environment is a big commitment for Secretaries. Scheduling needs to be alert to this, for example avoiding parliamentary question time.

It is important that the meetings deliver high value in the way the agendas are structured. This requires the active engagement of individual Secretaries in agenda setting and agenda items.

There will be items where it is imperative that voices beyond Board members are heard. Most notable are those of the service delivery agencies of ATO and Services Australia, which together represent

25% of the total average staffing level (ASL) of the general government sector⁵. A generous approach to co-opting agency heads where items have an operational focus should be taken.

Under current arrangements, the Board agendas are mainly driven from PMC and the APSC. An alternative is to establish an Executive of the Board, comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair and two other Secretaries on a rotating (annual) basis.

This Board Executive would set the forward work program, identify and engage with secretaries to sponsor and lead particular items (enabling more opportunity for the Chair to be a direct participant in discussions), agree whether and who should be co-opted for an individual item, liaise with Sub-committee chairs and provide a quality assurance check to ensure that papers coming forward are of high quality and ready to be considered by the Board. They would be the main point of liaison for the Secretariat to the Board and would sign off on action items.

The papers should convey key messages to the Board and be flexible in how material is best presented. For example, a placemat or diagram at times can communicate more effectively than a long form attachment to a paper.

An action register is an important discipline in ensuring forward momentum on agreed activity, disseminating outcomes and avoiding duplication. An action register should be established and reported at each Board meeting.

There needs to be clarity on how outcomes are disseminated. Practices currently vary from one Secretary to the next. While there are some matters that should stay confidential to the Board, there are others that it is important to share. There should be an expectation that each Board member is providing feedback within their portfolios and to item sponsors, supported by the action register.

Recommendation 5

That:

- a. an Executive of the Board be established, comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair and two Secretaries (appointed on an annual basis), to set the Board agenda, identify item sponsors and co-optees, engage with Sub-committee chairs, provide a quality assurance check on Board papers and sign off on action items;
- b. actions arising from Board meetings are mapped and responsibilities assigned through an action register, with progress monitored and reported at each Board meeting and Secretaries providing feedback within their portfolios on relevant Board outcomes and actions.

⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, Budget 2023-24. Budget Paper No.4

Board Sub-committees

There are mixed views on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current Sub-committee structure, with some support for a more issue-specific and time-limited approach.

Whatever model is adopted there should be a more methodical approach to establishing and ceasing Sub-committees, more equity of participation among Board members and in chairing arrangements, and greater effort to define issues and what is required before reference to a Sub-committee, with touchpoints to ensure they are on the right track.

Currently, three Board members are members of three Sub-committees, two are members of none. Co-chairing arrangements are shared among four members, with one member co-chairing two committees.

The reasons for this are historic. As new Secretaries are appointed, participation in Sub-committees should be considered. No one member should chair more than one Sub-committee and chairing responsibilities should rotate. Should Sub-committees be retained, the chairs should meet twice a year to ensure alignment.

Chief Operating Officer Committee

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) Committee has strong support. While it is not a Sub-committee of the Board in a traditional sense (it does not have Secretaries as members) it has an important role to play in implementing Board directions and communicating to the Board on operational issues.

A Chair drawn from participating members and rotated every two years has worked well and should be retained. The Chair should not be from the APSC. The APSC should continue to occupy the Deputy Chair position.

The link between the Board and the COO Committee could be much stronger. The chair of the COO Committee should attend the Board at least once a year to receive direction from the Board and to report on progress and emerging issues.

A Secretary should sponsor the COO Committee engaging after every Board meeting, to ensure strong lines of communication between the Board and the COO Committee Chair.

Future of Work Sub-committee

The Future of Work Sub-committee has sought to drive organisational and workforce reform priorities for the APS. The main focus of its work in 2023 included:

- a whole of government approach to flexible work;
- retaining specialists in the APS;
- capability uplift;
- employment experience of diversity cohorts;
- emerging technologies.

The Committee supported the development of Board papers on an APS-wide approach to flexible work, the SES performance framework, and APS specialist arrangements.

There is the potential for overlap between the Future of Work Sub-committee, the COO Committee and the work of the APSC.

It is important that any future work program of the Sub-committee focuses on those issues that will exclusively benefit from the involvement of a group of secretaries and agency heads.

Data and Digital Committee

The Secretaries Data and Digital Committee (SDCC) is the pre-eminent forum to promote an APS enterprise approach to digital and data capabilities across government. It has benefited from bringing data into its remit, broadening its scope and enhancing the data/digital connection.

The main focus of its work in 2023 included:

- data and digital government strategy;
- developing an integrated digital investment plan;
- national data integration infrastructure;
- responding to emerging data and digital issues (cyber incidents, privacy breaches);
- digital identity;
- shared services transformation program.

The SDCC is advancing important whole of government strategies of significance to all secretaries, with input from the large service delivery agencies.

It has tended to operate at arm's length from the Board and would benefit from stronger alignment and line of sight of its work program and deliverables.

Partnership Priorities Committee

The Partnership Priorities Committee commenced in 2023 as a time limited committee (to February 2026), with an aim to embed partnership behaviours and culture in the APS, to support engagement and co-design. The main focus of its work in 2023 included:

- creating foundation documents to support partnerships, engagement and place-based solutions;
- facilitating roundtables on place-based partnerships and social impact investing;
- supporting user-centred service delivery;
- advancing Closing the Gap priority reforms.

The focus of the Partnership Priorities Committee is to embed engagement standards and apply those across subject areas through methods, practice and governance. Once these foundations are in place, there is a question as to whether the Committee's work could form part of a broader social policy committee.

A social policy gap

There is no social policy equivalent to the Secretaries Committee on National Security. Consideration should be given to how those Secretaries operating predominantly in social policy areas (social services, education, health, veterans affairs) could work together more systematically to address shared challenges (care economy workforce for example) and advance shared priorities. Place-based approaches could form part of this work, with others co-opted as required.

Next Steps

The Secretaries' annual strategy session should consider the most effective structures to support the Board's forward work program and whether, and if so in what form, the current Sub-committees should continue.

While it is important that Secretaries work together, and are seen to work together, on matters of significant shared interest, they have many demands on their time and their engagement needs to be both necessary and targeted.

A practice of sun-setting Sub-committees of the Board would require their achievements, effectiveness and ongoing relevance to be determined. There is also the option of using a more taskforce based approach to address specific issues and to empower Deputy Secretaries to work together on specific tasks.

There are examples of Secretary level committees on policy issues that are not Sub-committees of the Board, but where Board members work together on policy development and implementation that reflect the priorities of the government (for example the Net Zero Economy Taskforce). Updating the Board on the work of these committees from time to time – to ensure broader awareness - could be included in the Board forward agenda.

Diversity and Inclusion Champions

Secretaries have assumed the role of Diversity and Inclusion Champions for a number of cross-agency champion networks. These networks allow champions to share best practice, raise issues of significance and contribute more broadly to diversity and inclusion strategies across the APS.

The Secretary level champions in 2023 were:

- APS Disability Champions Network Chair: Secretary Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Indigenous Champions Network Chair: Secretary Department of Social Services

While not formally part of the Board, the Secretary level network champions should be appointed for a fixed period, with new Champions appointed every two years. This sends a strong message about the level of commitment across the Secretaries Board to diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation 6

That:

- a. the purpose, membership and work of Board Sub-committees be considered at the annual strategy session to ensure alignment with the annual work program. Should Sub-committees be retained, there should be a clear line of sight between the work of a Sub-committee and the Board, a process to equitably allocate members and chairing responsibilities across Sub-committees, and sun-setting provisions to ensure regular review;
- b. the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Committee should be retained in its current form, but with a stronger link to the Board, both in commissioning its work and receiving reports on operational matters. A Secretary should be nominated as sponsor of the COO Committee to act as a conduit between the Board and the Committee;
- c. the Diversity and Inclusion Champions Networks should be actively supported by the Board, with Secretary level champions appointed every two years.

External engagement

A Board function is 'to draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community' (s64 (3)(d), *Public Service Act*). The purpose is to enable the Board to have a two-way engagement with other senior leaders on matters of national importance and areas of shared interest.

There are a variety of ways that the Board can perform this function.

While 'visitors' to the monthly Board meetings have presented on a range of topics, it is not an ideal forum to advance the type of outreach and engagement envisaged in the *Public Service Act*. By its nature, these visits are short and there is limited time for questions and open discussion. External

visitors to the monthly Board meetings should be limited to instances where there are matters the Board needs to know that are not able to be delivered through other means.

The Board has a place in promoting public debate on emerging issues and in informing itself and learning from business and community experience. It can deploy a variety of methods to perform this function:

- use the annual strategy session to hear from one or more external speakers – in an environment that allows open information exchange;
- be open to engaging as a group or sub-group of Secretaries with counterparts as opportunities arise – for example with State and Territory leaders, business and community organisations
 - there are many touchpoints now between individual secretaries and senior leaders. These could be broadened to include participation by other secretaries;
- use the APS 200 group to host external speakers and panel discussions with government and non-government representatives;
- engage with other national jurisdictions as a group or sub-group of secretaries, including with near neighbours such as Indonesia;
- continue to produce papers that contribute to debate on emerging issues, such as the recent Secretary-sponsored Insight publication on artificial intelligence.

Recommendation 7

That the Board deploys a range of methods to enable information exchange with senior leaders in government, business and the community and with international counterparts and that external speakers at the monthly Board meetings be limited to those instances requiring a one-way flow of information to Secretaries and where there is no ready alternative.

Annual strategy session

All Board members see the benefit in an off-site meeting of Secretaries at least once a year for one to two days (an annual strategy session) that could support deeper and more policy-oriented discussions and strengthen links between members. It was seen as a priority.

Ideally the annual strategy session should be factored into the calendar well in advance and occur early in the calendar year, at a time when parliament is not sitting.

An organising group of two to three secretaries should be tasked with developing the agendas for these meetings in consultation with their colleagues.

The types of issues that should be considered for an annual strategy session agenda include:

- policy priorities for the coming year, with deep dives into areas of cross-portfolio significance;
- emerging risks and horizon scanning;

- external engagement and panel discussions on contemporary challenges;
- setting the forward work program and performance measures for the Board;
- reviewing the Sub-committees and determining their structure and priorities.

Recommendation 8

That Secretaries meet annually off-site for one to two days to support deeper, policy-oriented discussions and to establish the forward work program for the Board and its committees.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Review of Secretaries Board Arrangements - Terms of Reference

Background

The Secretaries Board (Board) is established under section 64 of the *Public Service Act 1999* (Attachment A) to provide collaborative leadership to the Australian Public Service (APS).

Functions of the Board are outlined in the *Public Service Act 1999*, and operations of the Board are undertaken in accordance with the Board's Terms of Reference (Attachment 4).

A number of subcommittees support the work of the Board including:

- Chief Operating Officers (COO) Committee;
- Future of Work (FoW) Committee;
- Secretaries' Digital and Data Committee; and
- Partnerships Priorities Committee.

A Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) also supported the work of the Board in 2023, meeting quarterly. On 11 October 2023 the Board agreed to convene SLG as required.

Further details regarding the work of the subcommittees and the SLG are available on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) website: [Secretaries Board subcommittees](#) and [Strategic Leadership Group Terms of Reference](#).

Review

An independent eminent person will be appointed to conduct a high-level review of the effectiveness of Secretaries Board arrangements to support the ongoing strategic work of the Board, and deliver a report to the Secretaries Board outlining findings and recommendations. The Review recommendations may inform updates to the Board's Terms of Reference and revised functionality of Board arrangements.

The Review will cover:

- the effectiveness of current Board operations including: meetings arrangements relating to strategic priorities and agendas, subcommittees, invited guests, work program, and mechanisms for monitoring progress of the Board's priorities and outcomes; and
- any other relevant matter relating to the Board's functionality and effectiveness.

In conducting the Review, the reviewer should engage with key stakeholders including:

- Secretaries Board members, comprising the 16 secretaries of departments of state and the Australian Public Service Commissioner;

- the CEO of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA);
- PM&C Executives who support the Board's function;
- Secretaries Board secretariat within PM&C; and
- Any other stakeholder the reviewer considers necessary to support the outcomes of the review.

The reviewer will be engaged by PM&C, with secretariat support to be provided by PM&C.

The reviewer will:

- keep the PM&C Secretary, as Chair of the Board, informed of the progress of the Review;
- provide an update to the Secretaries Board at its 7 February 2024 meeting, including short paper;
- provide a draft report to the Chair of the Board by 1 March 2024
- deliver a final report to the Chair of the Board by 7 March 2024 – for circulation to the Board in advance of the meeting scheduled on 14 March 2024; and
- present on the final report to the Board at the meeting scheduled on 14 March 2024.

57 Roles and responsibilities of Secretaries

Roles of Secretaries

- (1) The roles of the Secretary of a Department include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (a) principal official policy adviser to the Agency Minister;
 - (b) manager, ensuring delivery of government programs and collaboration to achieve outcomes within the Agency Minister’s portfolio and, with other Secretaries, across the whole of Government;
 - (c) leader, providing stewardship within the Department and, in partnership with the Secretaries Board, across the APS;
 - (d) any other role prescribed by the regulations.

Part 8—Secretaries Board

64 Secretaries Board

- (1) The Secretaries Board is established by this section.
- (2) The Secretaries Board consists of the following members:
 - (a) the Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department, as Chair;
 - (b) the Secretary of each other Department;
 - (c) the Commissioner;
 - (d) such other persons as are nominated in writing by the Secretary of the Prime Minister’s Department.
- (3) The Secretaries Board has the following functions:
 - (a) to take responsibility for the stewardship of the APS and for developing and implementing strategies to improve the APS;
 - (b) to identify strategic priorities for the APS and consider issues that affect the APS;
 - (c) to set an annual work program, and direct subcommittees to develop strategies to address APS-wide issues and make recommendations to the Secretaries Board;
 - (d) to draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community;
 - (e) to work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours.
- (4) The Secretaries Board may establish one or more senior leadership groups, consisting of members determined by the Secretaries Board, to assist the Secretaries Board in performing its functions.

Attachment 2: International Comparisons on the Role of the Board

	Australia	New Zealand	Canada	UK
Public Service heads	Secretaries and Commissioner of the APSC, chaired by the Secretary Prime Minister and Cabinet	Chief Executives, led by the Public Service Commissioner and Head of the Public Service	Deputy Ministers, led by the Clerk of the Privy Council and deputy clerks	Permanent under-secretaries of state (permanent secretaries), led by the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service
Board	Secretaries Board	Interdepartmental executive boards	Deputy Minister committees	Civil Service Board
Overview	<p>Permanent board established under legislation. Board membership consists of the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as chair, secretaries of departments of state, the APS Commissioner, and from time to time co-opted members.</p> <p>The Board has prescribed statutory functions.</p> <p>Collective leadership model.</p> <p>Unique model amongst like-minded/Westminster jurisdictions.</p>	<p>No permanent board.</p> <p>Legislated model to establish inter-departmental executive boards on an as-needs basis to draw together chief executives of affected or contributing departments to work collectively.</p>	<p>No decision-making board/ committees.</p> <p>Three advisory committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinating Committee of Deputy Ministers (CCDM) - Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) - Board of Management and Renewal (BMR) <p>The Clerk and Deputy Clerks are ex-officio members of all committees.</p>	<p>The Civil Service Board is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Civil Service and is accountable to the Cabinet Secretary and is responsible for considering the strategic challenges faced by the Civil Service, and collectively agreeing a way forward.</p>
Legal basis	<p>The Board was established by statute in 2013 (s64(1), Public Service Act 1999)</p> <p>Membership is prescribed in legislation (s64(2)).</p> <p>Functions are prescribed in legislation (s64(3)).</p> <p>Power to establish Sub-committees to assist to perform the functions of the board is prescribed in legislation (s64(4)).</p>	<p>Framework to establish interdepartmental committees is set out in statute.</p> <p>Section 25 Public Service Act 2020.</p> <p>The purposes of interdepartmental executive boards are—</p> <p>(a) to align and co-ordinate strategic policy, planning, and budgeting activities for 2 or more departments with responsibilities in a subject matter area:</p>	<p>Committees are established on a policy / operational basis.</p> <p>Roles of the head of the public service (Clerk) and deputy head (Deputy Ministers) are prescribed in legislation (s125-127, Public Service Employment Act (justice.gc.ca)).</p>	<p>There is nothing in UK statute that clarifies the role and powers of the Head of the Civil Service nor the establishment/role of the Civil Service Board.</p>

	Australia	New Zealand	Canada	UK
Membership		<p>(b) to support those departments to undertake priority work in the subject matter area:</p> <p>(c) to support cross-department initiatives in the subject matter area.</p> <p>Section 26 of the Public Service Act 2020 requires an Order in Council (TOR) to state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the name of the interdepartmental executive board - the departments with responsibilities in the subject-matter area in which the board will work (the remit) - the department that will be the servicing department of the board. 		
	Board membership consists of the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as chair, secretaries of departments of state, the APS Commissioner, and from time to time co-opted members.		The Clerk and Deputy Clerks are ex-officio members of all committees. Committees comprise various Deputy Ministers and senior advisors .	Chaired by the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office (deputy head of the civil service). Members include Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, and a cross-section of permanent secretaries.
Scope / Priorities	<p>Statutory functions:</p> <p>(a) stewardship of and improvement strategies for the APS</p> <p>(b) identify strategic priorities for the APS and consider issues that affect the APS;</p> <p>(c) to set an annual work program, and direct subcommittees to develop strategies</p>	<p>The key uses of the model are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - align strategy and planning activities for a group of agencies operating in overlapping policy areas; and - harness the capabilities of individual departments to collectively plan for, and make funding decisions on, a specific cross-cutting problem or priority. 	<p>CCDM: forum to discuss the implementation of the Government's policy agenda and priorities.</p> <p>CSO: functions as the human resources committee for the senior executive cadre of the Public Service.</p>	<p>Accountable to the Cabinet Secretary and is responsible for considering the strategic challenges faced by the Civil Service, and collectively agreeing a way forward.</p> <p>As the most senior collective leadership body, members of CSB also support the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service in a programme of visible leadership and</p>

	Australia	New Zealand	Canada	UK
	<p>to address APS-wide issues and make recommendations to the Secretaries Board;</p> <p>(d) to draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community;</p> <p>(e) to work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours</p> <p>Terms of Reference set out policy and operational matters.</p>	<p>In these instances, responsibility for delivery activities that contribute to the board's priorities would remain with individual departments.</p>	<p>BMR: Provides a forum to advance the management agenda and the renewal of the Public Service.</p>	<p>engagement with other tiers of the Senior Civil Service (SCS), and the wider Civil Service</p>
Meeting frequency	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>Not publicly available.</p> <p>Assume meeting frequency is determined on a board by board basis.</p>	<p>Not publicly available. Canadian counterparts have indicated CCM meetings are held weekly /as needed and are advisory based/information sharing forums.</p>	<p>Information is not publicly available.</p>
Sub-committees	<p>Chief Operating Officer Committee</p> <p>Future of Work Committee</p> <p>Digital and Data Committee</p> <p>Partnerships Priorities Committee</p>			<p>People Board is a formal sub-board of the Civil Service Board. It oversees strategic people-related issues across the Civil Service.</p>

Attachment 3: Secretaries Board - Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Secretaries Board

Section 64 of the *Public Service Act 1999* establishes the Secretaries Board and sets out its functions as follows:

- a) to take responsibility for the stewardship of the APS and for developing and implementing strategies to improve the APS;
- b) to identify strategic priorities for the APS and consider issues that affect the APS;
- c) to set an annual work program, and direct subcommittees to develop strategies to address APS-wide issues and make recommendations to the Secretaries Board;
- d) to draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community; and
- e) to work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours.

In accordance with its legislated functions, the Secretaries Board provides leadership to the APS as an integrated organisation with a shared vision and purpose, with individual members of the Secretaries Board to retain autonomy and statutory responsibilities as the heads of their respective departments.

The Secretaries Board is committed to an integrated approach to national priorities and will focus its conversations on:

1. First Nation priorities including Closing the Gap.
2. The APS Reform priorities.
3. Budget and economic priorities.
4. Other priorities as determined by the Chair in consultation with the Board.

Membership of the Secretaries Board

The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) is the Chair of the Secretaries Board. If the Secretary is not available, the Australian Public Service Commissioner or the acting Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will chair Board meetings.

The Group membership comprises:

- all departmental secretaries;
- Secretary for Public Sector Reform; and
- the Australian Public Service Commissioner.

The Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency will be a co-opted participant as required by the relevant meeting agenda.

Sub-committees of the Secretaries Board

The Secretaries Board may establish senior leadership groups or Sub-committees, consisting of members determined by the Secretaries Board, to assist the Secretaries Board in performing its functions (sub-section 64(4) of the *Public Service Act 1999*).

The role of Sub-committees includes:

- Developing forward working plans for current and future reports in the context of the strategic directions set out by the Secretaries Board.
- Working in portfolio clusters to deliver Government priorities. This includes undertaking short, sharp pieces of work on specific emerging issues, as well as proactively identifying emerging risks with regards to longer-term issues, and proposing a path forward for the Board.

In establishing such groups or Sub-committees of the Secretaries Board, the Secretaries Board may give consideration to:

- Whether the Sub-committee is to be a standing Sub-committee or a time-limited, more informal working group to deliver a specific task identified by the Secretaries Board.
- Membership of the Sub-committee – including appropriate representation of relevant portfolios to provide a whole-of-government view, with members to have appropriate seniority to commit their portfolio departments or agencies to action.
- Arrangements necessary to ensure an appropriate feedback loop between the Secretaries Board and the Sub-committee – including regular reporting arrangements, format and frequency of progress updates from the Sub-committee, and any recommendations or issues to be raised for the Secretaries Board's consideration.
- Setting out the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the Sub-committee and governance arrangements in a Terms of Reference, which should be endorsed by the Secretaries Board.

Chairs of the Board's Sub-committees are responsible for providing six-monthly reports, at a minimum, to inform the Board of each Sub-committee's strategic priorities and key deliverables. These reports will be presented to the Board for discussion by exception, or for consideration out-of-session.

The Secretariat will work with relevant agencies and the secretariats for the Board's Sub-committees to schedule these reports.

Meetings

The Secretaries Board will meet monthly, usually on the second Wednesday of every month. The Chair may call extraordinary meetings of the Secretaries Board, as required.

The Board is committed to a dynamic board agenda that devotes sufficient time for strategic, forward-looking discussions on significant public policy or administration matters, while balancing the need for Board discussions on regular reports relating to matters of shared interest.

Attendance

Group members are expected to attend all meetings in-person and as scheduled, noting proxies are permitted to attend when substantive acting arrangements are in place, or as agreed on a case-by-case basis by the Chair.

The Deputy Secretary Governance PM&C, First Assistant Secretary Government Division PM&C and the PM&C Secretary's Chief of Staff will attend all meetings as notetakers. Senior thinkers or practitioners, including from outside the Australian Public Service, may be co-opted for items at the request of Board members.

All Group members must declare any potential, apparent or actual conflicts of interest as they arise.

Secretariat

The Secretaries Board is supported by a Secretariat located within Government Division, PM&C.

The Secretariat is responsible for providing administrative and strategic support to the Secretaries Board including, but not limited to:

- developing meeting agendas in consultation with Secretaries Board members and distributing agendas once approved by the Chair, at least one week prior to a scheduled meeting;
- collating and distributing meeting papers one week prior to a scheduled meeting and keeping meeting minutes;
- liaising with Secretaries Board members and their offices;
- keeping a forward work plan and tracking agreed actions from the Secretaries Board; and
- supporting the Secretaries Board in overseeing its Sub-committees and working groups, including:
 - o providing advice to Sub-committees, working groups and their respective Secretariats on governance and reporting arrangements to ensure an appropriate feedback loop between Sub-committees and the Secretaries Board; and
 - o liaising with Sub-committees and working groups to progress agreed actions from the Secretaries Board.

The Secretariat will ensure all significant decisions are referred to the Secretaries Board at its regular meetings or, where appropriate, out-of-session for consideration and decision. Transactional issues or matters that do not warrant the Secretaries Board's consideration should, as much as practicable, be dealt with out-of-session or tasked to Sub-committees.

The Secretariat can be contacted via email on SecretariesBoard@pmc.gov.au

Out-of-session items

All matters requiring discussion and/or endorsement by the Group should be dealt with as part of a scheduled meeting. Papers may be considered out-of-session, with the approval of the relevant member.

Out-of-session items will be circulated to members by the Secretariat.

Out-of-session items will be formally noted at the next available scheduled meeting.

Review

The Terms of Reference may be reviewed at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with members of the Secretaries Board.

Transparency

The Secretariat will publish a Communique on the PM&C website within three business days following each Board meeting, outlining the key outcomes of the Board's discussion at the meeting.