



# Communique

## Secretaries Board

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Date: 12 April 2023

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The Secretaries Board met today at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to discuss the following matters.

### Closing the Gap

The Board had a strategic discussion around actions to progress priority reforms under the national agreement on Closing the Gap and accelerate work to meet Closing the Gap targets.

The Board received an update and agreed to consider the most critical investments necessary to support the Government in Closing the Gap.

### Economic and Budget Update

Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary of the Department of Finance, and Ms Roxanne Kelley PSM, acting Secretary of the Treasury, provided an update on the 2023-24 Budget and economic outlook.

### APS Integrity

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Australian Public Service Commissioner, updated the Board on APS Integrity work.

Ms Katherine Jones PSM, Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, provided an update to the Board on the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme and noted the Commonwealth lodged its submission on 6 April 2023.

### APS Reform

The Board endorsed APS Reform whole-of-program outcomes, which serve as the objectives for the APS Reform program. Secretaries committed to implementing and embedding the outcomes within their departments and agencies. Outcomes will be provided to the Minister for the Public Service for approval.

The Board endorsed Terms of Reference that will guide work of the APS Deliberative Committee to develop a new purpose statement for the Australian Public Service. Further details will be made

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available on the APS Reform website in May 2023. Records of Deliberative Committee meetings will be shared on the APS Reform website.

The Board was updated on the proposed changes to the *Public Service Act 1999*, including progress on public consultation and engagement. Public consultation commenced in March 2023, with proposed legislation changes to be provided to the Minister for the Public Service mid-year.

The Board noted the review underway on Public Sector Board Appointment Processes will be provided to the Minister for the Public Service for consideration mid-year.

## APS-wide approach to flexible work

The Board endorsed an APS-wide approach to flexible work and noted flexibility will be a key element of the Government's enterprise-wide workplace relations bargaining process.

The [Principles of Flexible Work in the APS](#) are provided at Attachment A.

## Capability Reviews

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Australian Public Service Commissioner, updated the Board on the Capability Review program and proposed 2023-24 work program. The Board endorsed the proposed approach.

## Australian Child Maltreatment Study

The Board discussed the key findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study and the implications of the new prevalence data. The Board will support the Government's commitment to work in partnership with States and Territories and First Nations leaders to combat the prevalence of maltreatment identified in the study.

## Multilateral Forums

Ms Jan Adams AO PSM, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, updated the Board on Australia's engagement in elections for multilateral institutions.

## APS Bargaining

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Australian Public Service Commissioner, updated the Board on the progress of APS Bargaining. The Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023 was released on 28 March 2023, which includes a preferred approach to genuine service-wide bargaining in the APS. A key objective is to establish a set of common conditions that will apply across the APS, and take initial steps to reduce pay fragmentation.

The [Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023](#) is provided at Attachment B.

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## SES Performance

The Board received an update on the COO Committee Sub-Group on SES Performance. An updated framework for SES performance is being developed, focussing on ensuring outcomes and behaviours are assessed and considered equally.

## Strengthening Democracy Taskforce

The Board noted the establishment of the Strengthening Democracy Taskforce in the Department of Home Affairs, announced by the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Clare O'Neil MP in December 2022. The Board recognised the broader role of the Australian Public Service in supporting the work of the taskforce.

## Next Meeting

The next Secretaries Board meeting is scheduled for 10 May 2023.