



Secretaries Board Communique

Date: 18 March 2026

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

Strategic Outlook

The Board discussed government priorities, strategic issues and emerging risks.

The Board received an update on geostrategic issues from Mr Craig Maclachlan, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Mr Greg Moriarty AO, Secretary, Department of Defence.

The Board received an economic and budget update from Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary, Department of the Treasury, and Mr Matt Yannopoulos PSM, Secretary, Department of Finance.

Intergenerational Report

The Board received an update from Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary, Department of the Treasury, on the Intergenerational Report and discussed how it could support policy coherence, long-term prioritisation, and the Budget process.

Reducing the Cost of External Workforce

The Board discussed ways to improve value-for-money from contracted labour across the Commonwealth.

The Board noted that coordinated action will be required to reduce costs and ensure consistent, sustainable approaches to using external expertise.

The Board agreed that Defence will lead this work in collaboration with whole of government agencies.

Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Implementation Plan

The Board noted the Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Implementation Plan were tabled in the House of Representatives on 12 February 2026.

The Board acknowledged the importance of continuing to embed the four Priority Reforms across the Australian Public Service (APS) and noted that progress towards implementing 2026 Implementation Plan actions will be monitored and reported to Secretaries Board.

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to improving First Nations employment across the APS, including through the SES100 initiative.

State of Evaluation in the Australian Government

The Board noted the State of Evaluation in the Australian Government 2026 report and that it will be published on the Australian Centre for Evaluation's website.

COO Committee Bi-Annual Update

The Board noted the COO Committee's achievements for the 6 months to December 2025 and its strategic forward workplan for the 2026 calendar year.

The Board noted the updated Terms of Reference for the COO Committee that was endorsed by the Committee 25 February 2026.

COO Committee Minutes

The Board noted the COO Committee's minutes from its 12 November 2025 meeting.

Other Business

The Board acknowledged the significant contribution of Mr Greg Moriarty AO, Secretary, Department of Defence, to the work of the Board since 2017, and noted it would be his last Board meeting before his commencement as Australia's Ambassador to the United States of America.

The Board received an update from Ms Katherine Jones PSM, Secretary, Attorney-General's Department on the publication of the National Anti-Corruption Commission's report of the investigation into the six persons referred to it by the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, and tabling of the confidential chapter of the final report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme.

The Board discussed SES Remuneration and noted this would be discussed at a future Secretaries Board meeting.

The Board noted an update by Tony Cook PSM, Secretary, Department of Education, that nominations for the 2026 Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) ACT Spirit of Service Awards were open until 2 June 2026.

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Next Meetings

The next Secretaries Board meeting is scheduled for 22 April 2026.

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