



Australian Government

# Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards

Report 2019–20

**A report on the gender composition  
of Australian Government boards**

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# Foreword



As the Minister for Women and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am pleased to present the *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2019-20*.

This year, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of women in leadership and gender diversity in senior positions. Having more women in leadership positions has been shown to lead to better outcomes, including because boards can draw on a greater range of lived experiences and skills in their decision making.

Numbers of women in leadership roles has risen. Our latest data, as at 30 June 2020, shows women hold 48.5 per cent of Government board positions. This record high result is also paired with an increase in the representation of women amongst key leadership positions on Government boards. On 30 June 2020, women held 36.9 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions. This result has increased 1.9 percentage points from 30 June 2019.

Consistent reporting against targets is key to maintaining and building on our achievements. That is why the Australian Government reports on its target for women to hold 50 per cent of Government board positions overall, and why Government has committed to men and women each holding at least 40 per cent of positions on individual boards.

I acknowledge and thank my Ministerial colleagues for their continued commitment to gender equality, noting this year women have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. By giving more women a seat at the table, we ensure their experiences and their decisions can play an important role in Australia's rebuild and recovery.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marise Payne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

**Senator the Hon Marise Payne**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Women

# Executive Summary

The *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report*, prepared annually by the Australian Government Office for Women, outlines performance against the Australian Government's target for gender balance on Australian Government boards.

The Government is committed to a target of women holding 50 per cent of Government board positions overall, and men and women each holding at least 40 per cent of positions on individual boards. This target was introduced on 1 July 2016, and replaced the previous gender diversity target of women holding 40 per cent of Australian Government board positions overall.

Since the 2018-19 report, there has been positive progress:

- As at 30 June 2020, women held 48.5 per cent across all Government board appointments, an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 30 June 2019.
- As at 30 June 2020, women held 36.9 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions across Australian Government boards, an increase of 1.9 percentage points since 30 June 2019.
- In 2019-20, 49.2 per cent of people nominated for Government board positions by external organisations were women, up 14.8 percentage points from 34.4 per cent in 2018-19.

The findings for 2019-20 also show further effort is needed to achieve the 50 per cent target:

- Of the 622 new appointments made over 2019-20, 50.5 per cent of nominees were women – a decrease of 2.2 percentage points.
- The representation of women on Government boards decreased across six portfolios since 30 June 2019, including in two portfolios where women held 50.9 per cent of board positions on 30 June 2019.

During the reporting period, a number of machinery of government changes affected the structure of portfolios. Some of these included changes to the Administrative Arrangements Order (see Appendix A). Where the 1 February 2020 change to Administrative Arrangement Orders have affected a portfolio's composition, figures for 30 June 2019 have been calculated based on the portfolio's current board composition.

The *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report* — Guidelines determine the scope of reporting for portfolios (see Appendix B). During this reporting period the guidance material for data collection has also been clarified. Results in this report are comparable to historic reports.

# Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Data

## Overall Government Results

At 30 June 2020, there were 343 Australian Government boards with 2,489 filled positions. Women filled 48.5 per cent of all board positions (1,206 positions were filled by women).

This result is an increase of 0.6 percentage points since 30 June 2019 when women filled 47.9 per cent of Government board positions (1,109 of 2,313 filled positions).

Table 1 details the number of boards, number and percentage of occupied positions by gender, and the percentage point difference from the previous year, since 2015.

**Table 1: Gender balance on Australian Government boards as at 30 June, from 2015 to 2020**

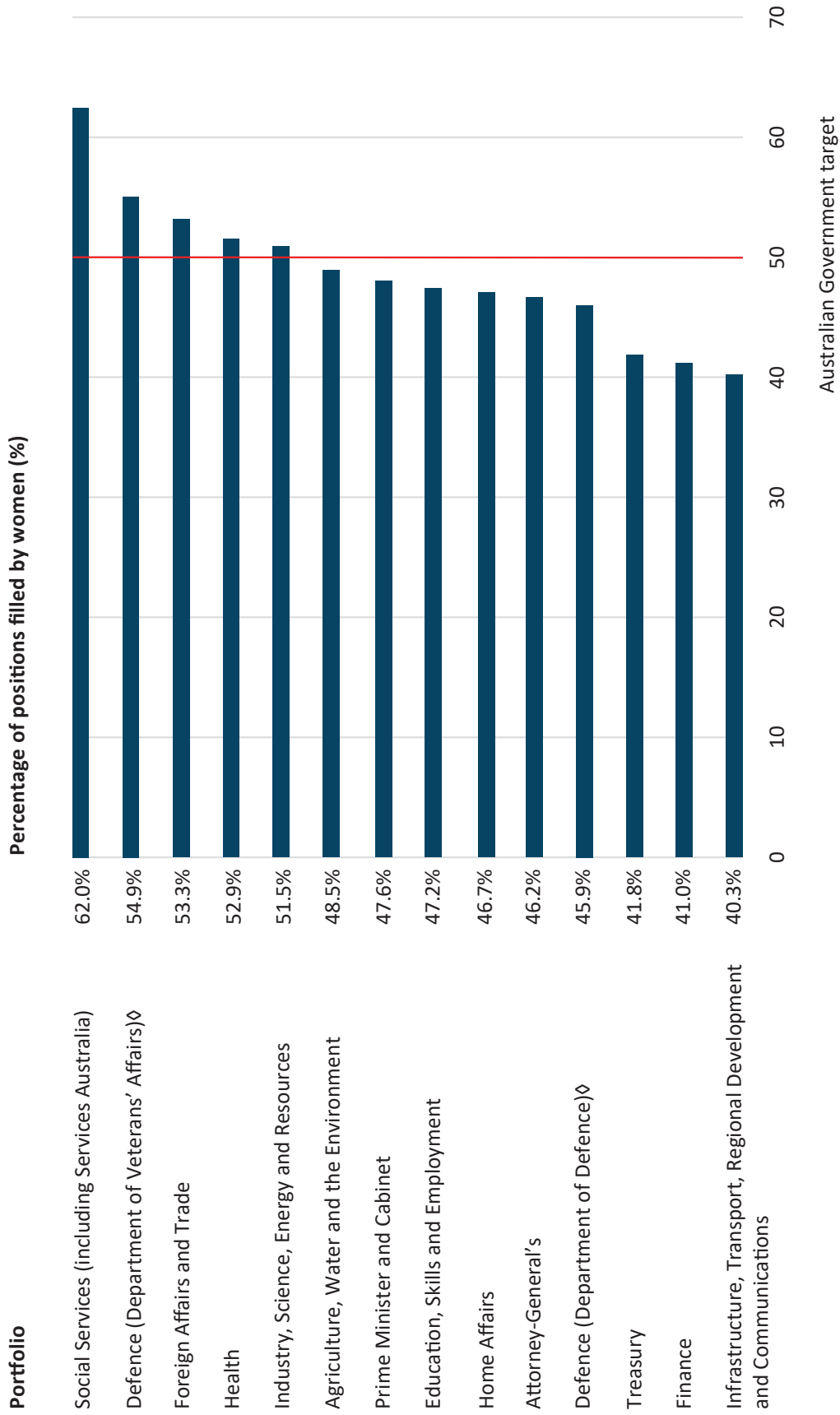
Year	Number of boards	Number of filled positions	Number of women	Number of men	Percentage of positions filled by women	Percentage point change since previous year
2020	343	2,489	1,206	1,283	48.5	+0.6
2019	341	2,313	1,109	1,204	47.9	+2.1
2018	339	2,530	1,158	1,372	45.8	+3.1
2017	337	2,508	1,072	1,436	42.7	+2.2
2016	332	2,351	953	1,395	40.5	+1.4
2015	361	2,570	1,005	1,565	39.1	-0.6

## Portfolio Results

At 30 June 2020, four out of 13 portfolios met or exceeded the 50 per cent gender diversity target: Social Services (including Services Australia); Foreign Affairs and Trade; Health; and Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

Women held between 45 and 50 per cent of board positions in a further six portfolios: Defence (including the Department of Veterans' Affairs at 54.9 per cent women and the Department of Defence at 45.9 per cent women); Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Prime Minister and Cabinet; Education, Skills and Employment; Home Affairs and Attorney-General's (see Figure 1 and Table 2).

Figure 1: Gender balance of overall Australian Government board positions as at 30 June 2020, by portfolio



◇ Split shown given the two department structure within the Defence portfolio. Women held 48.8 per cent of positions in the Defence portfolio on 30 June 2020.

**Table 2: Gender balance of overall Australian Government board positions as at 30 June 2020, by portfolio**

Portfolio	Number of boards	Number of filled positions	Number of women	% of positions filled by women at 30 June 2020	Percentage of positions filled by women at 30 June 2019	Percentage point difference from 30 June 2019 to 30 June 2020
Agriculture, Water and the Environment	35	237	115	48.5	46.3*	+2.2
Attorney-Generals	13	91	42	46.2	49.4	-3.2
Defence (Department of Defence)◇	16	111	51	45.9	44.9	+1.0
Defence (Department of Veterans' Affairs)◇	8	51	28	54.9	63.6	-8.7
Education, Skills and Employment	15	89	42	47.2	47.7*	-0.5
Finance	6	39	16	41.0	40.0	+1.0
Foreign Affairs and Trade	24	182	97	53.3	48.9	+4.4
Health	53	682	361	52.9	52.6	+0.3
Home Affairs	8	60	28	46.7	41.2	+5.5
Industry, Science, Energy and Resources	28	200	103	51.5	50.7*	+0.8
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	93	432	174	40.3	40.7*	-0.4
Prime Minister and Cabinet	14	124	59	47.6	50.9	-3.3
Social Services (including Services Australia)	7	50	31	62.0	55.8	+6.2
Treasury	23	141	59	41.8	43.3	-1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>2489</b>	<b>1206</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>47.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>

◇ Split shown given the two department structure within the Defence portfolio. Women held 48.8 per cent of positions in the Defence portfolio on 30 June 2020 (79 of 162 positions).

\* 30 June 2019 figures have been calculated based on the portfolio's current board composition.

## New Appointments

New appointments are those appointments made over the 2019-20 financial year that were not reappointments of the same person to the same position.

Of the 622 new appointments made in 2019-20, 50.5 per cent of appointees were women. This is a decrease since the last annual report when women comprised 52.7 per cent of new appointees.

Table 3 shows at 30 June 2020, in eight of 13 portfolios, women represented 50 per cent or more of new appointments.

**Table 3: Gender balance of new appointments in 2019-20, by portfolio**

Portfolio	Number of new appointments	Number of women appointed	Percentage of new appointees who were women
Agriculture, Water and the Environment*	71	39	54.9
Attorney-General's	13	4	30.8
Defence (Department of Defence)◇	46	26	56.5
Defence (Department of Veterans' Affairs)◇	5	2	40.0
Education, Skills and Employment*	28	16	57.1
Finance	4	1	25.0
Foreign Affairs and Trade	80	39	48.8
Health	140	74	52.9
Home Affairs	28	14	50.0
Industry, Science, Energy and Resources*	33	18	54.5
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications*	60	31	51.7
Prime Minister and Cabinet	93	42	45.2
Social Services (including Services Australia)	2	2	100
Treasury	19	6	31.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>50.5</b>

◇ Split shown given the two department structure within the Defence portfolio. Women made up 54.9 per cent of new appointments to the Defence portfolio on 30 June 2020 (28 of 51 appointments).

\* Appointments from before 1 February 2020 have been attributed based on the portfolio's current board composition.



## Chair and Deputy Chair Roles

As the most senior board members, the Chair and Deputy Chair positions are crucial to the functioning of every board.

At 30 June 2020, women held 36.9 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions across all Government boards. This result is 1.9 percentage points higher than the 30 June 2019 result, when women held 35.0 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions.

Figure 2 (page 8) details the portfolio results for the gender balance of Chair and Deputy Chair positions on 30 June 2020. This data excludes Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director and Managing Director positions.

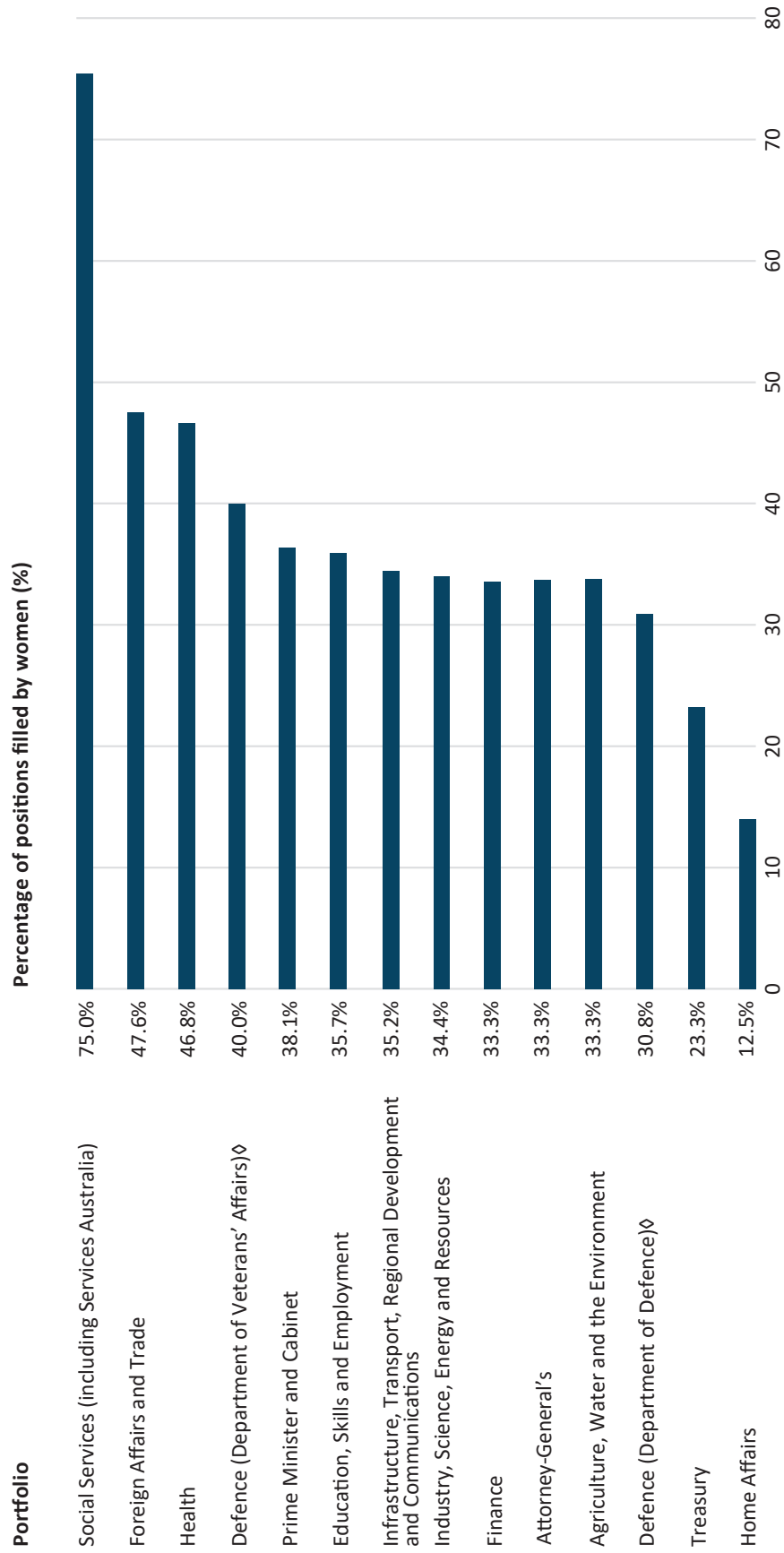
## External Nominations

An external nomination is one which is made by a person or organisation who is not the Minister responsible for approving the appointment, or a member of their department. This may include, for example, a state or territory government or non-government body, and extends to appointment processes where it is either legislated or accepted practice for nominations to be provided to the Minister.

While all nominations are reported, not all nominations made by external bodies resulted in the appointment of the nominee. For example, multiple nominations may be received for the same vacancy.

Of the 63 external nominations received for Government board appointments in 2019-20, 49.2 per cent of nominations were for women (see Table 4). This is an increase of 14.8 percentage points from the 2018-19 result, when women accounted for 34.4 per cent of external nominations.

Figure 2: Gender balance of Chair and Deputy Chair positions as at 30 June 2020, by portfolio



◇ Split shown given the two department structure within the Defence portfolio. Women held 34.8 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions in the Defence portfolio on 30 June 2020.

**Table 4: External nominations for board positions received in 2019-20, by nominating organisation**

Nominating organisation	Number of nominations given	Number of women nominated	Percentage of nominees who were women
New South Wales Government	9	6	66.7
Australian Council of Trade Unions	5	3	60
Northern Territory Government	4	1	25
Queensland Government	4	2	50
South Australian Government	4	2	50
Council of Australian Governments Energy Council	3	2	66.7
Nominated by agreement between the States, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory	3	1	33.3
Members of the Ex-Service Organisations Round Table	2	0	0
New Zealand Government	2	2	100
Nomination panel for ABC and SBS Board Appointments	2	0	0
Territory Natural Resource Management	2	2	100
Victorian Government	2	1	50
Western Australian Government	2	1	50
The Anglican Church of Australia	1	0	0
The Associated Protestant Churches Chaplaincy Board	1	0	0
Australian Capital Territory Government	1	1	100
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1	1	100
Australian Strategic Policy Institute Council	1	0	0
Business Council of Australia	1	0	0
Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia	1	0	0
The Department of the Senate	1	0	0
The House of Representatives	1	0	0
Independent Schools Australia	1	1	100
Leader of the Opposition	1	0	0
Master Builders Australia	1	1	100
Minerals Council of Australia	1	1	100
Minister for Industrial Relations	1	1	100
National Sikh Council of Australia	1	0	0
Pacific Community	1	1	100
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat	1	0	0
Prime Minister of Australia	1	0	0
The Uniting Church in Australia	1	1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49.2</b>

# Appendix A

Since 30 June 2019, the Administrative Arrangements Order has changed on four occasions:

## 8 August 2019

- Matters related to vocational education and training in schools, and youth affairs and programs (including youth transitions), were transferred to the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business and the Department of Health, respectively.
- Matters related to infrastructure and project financing were transferred from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development to the Department of the Treasury.
- Additional legislative responsibilities were transferred to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Matters related to Old Parliament House were transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (effective from 1 September 2019).

## 5 December 2019 (with effect from 1 February 2020)

- Matters related to employment and skills were transferred to the renamed Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- Matters related to agriculture and the environment were transferred to the renamed Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.
- Matters related to small business and energy were transferred to the renamed Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
- Matters related to communications and the arts were transferred to the renamed Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.
- The Department known as Services Australia (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) was established as a new Executive Agency, within the Social Services portfolio.

## 5 March 2020

- Matters related to national fuel quality standards were transferred from the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
- Matters related to climate change science and strategy were transferred from the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.
- Matters related to whole-of-government deregulation policy were transferred from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

## 2 April 2020

- Ministerial responsibility for the administration of the *Royal Commissions Act 1902* was transferred from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Attorney General's Department

# Appendix B

## Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report — Guidelines

The Australian Government has committed to a gender diversity target of women holding 50 per cent of Government board positions overall, and women and men each holding at least 40 per cent of positions at the individual board level. These targets took effect from 1 July 2016.

To track progress towards these targets, each year the Office for Women publishes a Gender Balance report on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website. In addition to reporting on the overall Government result, the report covers portfolio results, new appointments to Australian Government boards, Chair and Deputy Chair positions and candidates nominated for Australian Government board positions by external organisations.

### Scope of the reporting

#### *Boards*

Some Australian Government boards are not within the scope of the Gender Balance report. To fall within scope, a board must meet two conditions.

*Condition one:* The board must be either:

- A body covered by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) (a flipchart and further information can be found at <https://www.finance.gov.au/government/managing-commonwealth-resources/structure-australian-government-public-sector/pgpa-act-flipchart-list>).
- A ministerial advisory committee
- A review committee, whose appointments are made by a Minister or the Cabinet, or
- A Commonwealth statutory authority.

*Condition Two:* At least one appointment to the board must be approved by particular representatives of the Australian Government. These are limited to:

- The Prime Minister
- One or more Commonwealth Ministers
- The Governor-General in Council, or
- The Cabinet.

Boards which fall outside the scope of gender balance reporting include Royal Commissions, Commonwealth Courts and tribunals.

## **Positions**

Gender balance data is reported on a positions basis. Not all positions are within the scope of the Gender Balance report. Reporting does not include positions which are:

- elected with no formal Government approval
- nominated by a third party with no formal Government approval (these positions are captured in external nominations data only, see below)
- of a particular office-holder to a particular board or committee, as required by legislation (e.g. a Minister serving as the Chair of a board)
- for employees engaged under the *Public Service Act 1999* or other enabling legislation for purposes beyond serving on a Commonwealth decision-making or advisory board, committee, council or similar (e.g. ex officio appointments of senior public servants), or
- acting appointments of six months or less.

Where a board has a mixture of in-scope and out-of-scope positions, the board and its in-scope positions are included in the Gender Balance report. Out-of-scope positions do not contribute to the number of filled positions or to gender disaggregated figures.

## **Chair and Deputy Chair positions**

Board members with Chair or Deputy Chair positions, or their functional equivalents, contribute towards this metric. Equivalent roles can include, for example, Chief or Deputy Chief Convenors and Commissioners.

## **New Appointments**

New appointments are appointments made over the 2019-20 financial year, which fulfil all of the criteria above but do not require the successful candidate to have been formally working in the role at 30 June 2020. Reappointments do not contribute towards the new appointments metric, only to the overall gender balance metric and Chair and Deputy Chair gender balance metrics.

## **External nominations**

External nominations include, but are not limited to, nominations made by a state or territory government, the Senate or House of Representatives, an overseas Government, or a non-Government body. This includes appointment processes where it is either legislated or accepted practice for nominations to be provided to a Minister.

External nominations do not include nominations made by a Minister's department, the relevant board or its Chair, or by two or more Ministers where one is the relevant portfolio Minister.

Both successful and unsuccessful nominations are within the scope of the Gender Balance report.



