



Communique

Secretaries Board

Date: 8 March 2023

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

APS Reform

The Board agreed an approach to engage APS staff in developing an APS Purpose Statement (Recommendation 6 of the Thodey Review). Draft Terms of Reference will be developed for agreement by the Board.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM, Secretary for Public Sector Reform, updated the Board on the design of a Long Term Insights Briefing model. The Board discussed a range of potential themes for a pilot briefing to be delivered later this year.

The Board also received an update on establishing a potential in-house consulting model, to reduce reliance on external consultants. An in-house consulting function could work in partnership with portfolios to deliver Government priorities.

The Board noted public consultation with APS employees on proposed amendments to the *Public Service Act 1999* will commence in March 2023.

APS Integrity

Mr Peter Woolcott AO, Commissioner of the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), updated the Board on public service issues being canvassed in the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. The Board noted the reporting date for the Royal Commission has been extended to 30 June 2023.

Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023

Ms Jody Broun, Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), updated the Board on the 2023 Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. Secretaries reaffirmed their commitment to drive delivery of commitments in their portfolio.

Alice Springs

The Board received an update on the Government's Alice Springs response, including the work underway to establish governance arrangements, the work of the Central Australia Regional Controller, and feedback from a number of Secretaries who visited Alice Springs recently to engage directly with a range of community and Government stakeholders.

Remote Australia Working Group

The Board considered an update from the Remote Australia Working Group, including how very remote Australia will be a key part of future Commonwealth effort under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Australian Constitution

The Board received an update from Ms Jody Broun, Chief Executive Officer of the NIAA and Mr Peter Woolcott AO, APS Commissioner, on work underway to advise and support APS staff, particularly First Nations colleagues, in the context of the referendum.

Flexible work

Ms Natalie James, Secretary, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Mr David Fredericks PSM, Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and Mr Peter Woolcott AO, APS Commissioner, led the Board in a discussion to develop an APS-wide approach to flexible work. The Board noted flexibility will be a key element of the APS service-wide workplace relations bargaining process.

Sir Roland Wilson Foundation

Dr Martin Parkinson AC, Chair of the Sir Roland Wilson Foundation updated the Board on the Foundation's work. The Foundation is a partnership between the APS, the Australian National University and Charles Darwin University. The Foundation and its partners build research-informed public policy capability and leadership through postgraduate scholarships, professional development and networking opportunities. Its vision is for a strong APS with world-class leadership and capability for utilising research and evidence to address public policy challenges of national and global significance for the benefit of all Australians.

Budget Update

Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary of the Department of Finance, and Dr Steven Kennedy PSM, Secretary of the Treasury, provided an update on the preparations for the 2023-24 Budget.

HR Head of Profession

The Board agreed to extend the appointment of Ms Jacqui Curtis as the Head of the HR Profession.

Chief Operating Officer (COO) Committee Annual Update

The Board noted in 2023 the COO Committee is prioritising:

- Supporting the implementation of the APS reform agenda;
- Implementing the 2023 the APS Workplace Relations (Bargaining Policy); and
- Driving diversity across the APS.

Next Meeting

The next Secretaries Board meeting is scheduled for 12 April 2023.