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PERFORMANCE  
REPORTING FOR  
OUTPUT GROUP 2:  
SOCIAL POLICY



## OUTPUT 2.1: SOCIAL POLICY

Output	Performance information
<p>Advice, briefing and support to the Prime Minister on social policy issues, including health, community services, education, employment, immigration, Indigenous policy, veterans' affairs, income support, families, natural disasters and human influenza pandemic, including on presentation of the government's decisions in these areas.</p>	<p>Quality:</p> <p>The degree of satisfaction of the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Secretary, their offices and the departmental Executive, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of policy advice and the achievement of key tasks.</p>

### ROLE OF THE DIVISION

Social Policy Division provides policy development and advice to the Prime Minister on a broad range of social policy issues. The scope of the division's work is very broad, including health, community services, women's policy, disabilities, education and employment, immigration, Indigenous policy, veterans' affairs, income support and support for families and carers, pandemic influenza prevention and preparedness, and natural disaster recovery.

The division makes a significant contribution to the government's social policy agenda by taking a proactive role in identifying emerging issues, by undertaking or responding to major reviews and reports, and in providing a whole-of-government perspective on social policy matters. The division undertakes research and analysis of social issues, as well as broad consultation with departments, agencies and stakeholders to ensure the Prime Minister is comprehensively briefed.

Key activities in 2007–08 included:

- supporting the implementation of the government's priorities, including through the development of the 2008–09 Budget
- supporting the working groups established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in December 2007 to pursue reforms in key areas of social policy: health and ageing, housing, Indigenous reform, productivity and disability services

- development and implementation of the COAG Pandemic Exercise Program 2008 (Exercise Sustain 08), and
- establishment of the Social Inclusion Unit and the Australian Social Inclusion Board.

### OUR PERFORMANCE

Social Policy Division provided advice, briefing and support to the Prime Minister and the Secretary across a wide range of social policy issues in 2007–08. The division provided advice and information through a wide range of mechanisms, including responses to questions on notice and possible parliamentary questions. Feedback from the Prime Minister's Office and the department's Executive confirms that the quality of the division's support and analysis remains high.

**COAG Reform Agenda:** In line with the government's new model of cooperation across jurisdictions, at its 20 December 2007 meeting COAG established seven working groups. Four of these are directly relevant to the work of the Social Policy Division: Health and Ageing, Housing, Indigenous Reform, and the Productivity Agenda (which includes early childhood development, schooling, and skills and workforce development).

The division supports the department's participation in each of these working groups and provides support to Australian Government

officials in the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Committee. These groups are developing new national agreements for education, health and ageing, housing, and disabilities, replacing the existing Specific Purpose Payment funding agreements, as part of the broader reform of Commonwealth–state financial relations. The division is also contributing to the development of reforms across these areas, including negotiations with states and territories and the provision of strategic policy advice to ministers.

### **Health workforce registration and accreditation agreement at COAG:**

The division led work within the government, and co-chaired with Queensland work by Commonwealth and state officials. This culminated in COAG signing an intergovernmental agreement to establish a national registration and accreditation scheme for health professions on 26 March 2008.

### **Pandemic preparedness and Exercise Sustain 08:**

As part of COAG's pandemic influenza prevention and preparedness activities, PM&C continued to chair and provide the secretariat for the COAG Pandemic Working Group on Australian Influenza Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness. We led the development of the key activities of the working group, which involved Australian, state/territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association.

Following Exercise Cumpston 06, COAG agreed in April 2007 to a series of national pandemic desktop exercises to further assess national whole-of-government preparedness to respond to an influenza pandemic.

Our Pandemic Exercises Team has managed development and implementation of the COAG Pandemic Exercise Program 2008 (Exercise Sustain 08), comprising three discussion exercises and a functional exercise.

Discussion Exercise 1 (industry impact and recovery, focusing on the tourism and hospitality sector) and Discussion Exercise 2 (social and community impacts and recovery, focusing on

home-based care services) were held on 22 May and 19 June 2008. Discussion Exercise 3 (communications) will take place in August followed by a functional exercise in November 2008.

The department has also been leading work on the development of a whole-of-government crisis communications capability that will guide national coordination and delivery of timely, accurate and nationally consistent public communications in preparation for, response to, and recovery from an influenza pandemic. This will be tested as part of Exercise Sustain 08.

We continued to chair and provide the secretariat for the Commonwealth Deputy Secretaries' interdepartmental committee (IDC) on Pandemic Influenza Prevention and Preparedness which leads and coordinates Australian Government prevention, preparedness, and response planning, and advises the government on these issues.

### **COAG Skills Recognition Taskforce – mutual recognition:**

The COAG Skills Recognition Taskforce is continuing to drive the implementation of COAG's February 2006 decision on full and effective mutual recognition for trade licences between states and territories.

The taskforce supports the COAG Skills Recognition Steering Committee, which is chaired by the department and includes senior officials from state and territory premier's and chief ministers' departments and the Australian Government. The taskforce is headed by a senior departmental officer, and is located in the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, which has received funding for the taskforce.

Under our stewardship, the steering committee has overseen continuing collaborative work between state and territory bodies, industry organisations, employee representatives and other stakeholders to streamline licence recognition processes. During 2007–08, the taskforce supported eight meetings of the steering committee and 41 action group or regulator working group meetings.

**Social inclusion:** In line with the government's election commitment, the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) was established in the division to promote coordination and collaboration on social inclusion across government. Following its establishment in December 2007, the SIU has undertaken work on:

- a strategic stocktake to identify baseline indicators of disadvantage
- establishing an evidence base on 'what works' when addressing social inclusion challenges to inform the development of future social inclusion policy initiatives
- coordinating work across government agencies to progress the government's early social inclusion priorities, and
- collaborating with key stakeholders on the development of an evaluation/outcome monitoring framework for social inclusion.

Together with the Cabinet Secretariat, the SIU supports the newly-established Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet. This committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, is charged with integrating government action to ensure a consistent approach to addressing social exclusion.

The SIU has also supported the establishment of the Australian Social Inclusion Board, managing a call for expressions of interest in appointment to the board and providing secretariat and administrative support for the board's inaugural meeting on 21 May 2008.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

**Helping children with autism:** In October 2007, the former Prime Minister announced a total of \$190 million in assistance for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their parents and carers. The division coordinated work across a number of Australian Government agencies to develop the *Helping children with autism* package. This package recognises the major gaps in the provision of services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and is designed to help these children early in their lives, making it easier for them to attend school and participate in everyday life.

### **Organ and tissue donation for**

**transplantation:** The division provided advice to the Prime Minister in relation to the development of a package designed to significantly boost the number of life-saving organ donors for Australians on transplant waiting lists. The new funding will expand the clinical workforce and infrastructure for maximising organ donation, promote community awareness, and provide support for donor families.

**Alcohol abuse:** The division provided advice to the Prime Minister on the development of the National Binge Drinking Strategy which aims to address binge drinking among young Australians. The strategy includes funding for community level initiatives to confront the culture of binge drinking, early intervention programs and a public education campaign.

### **Prime Minister's apology to members of the Stolen Generation:**

The division provided advice to the Prime Minister and his office on matters relating to the apology in Parliament to members of the Stolen Generation. On 13 February 2008, motions of 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous people' were moved and passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

### **Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs:**

The heads of agencies administering the Australian Government's Indigenous programs make up a Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs (SGIA). The SGIA provides whole-of-government advice on matters relating to Indigenous affairs. The SGIA is chaired by the Secretary of the department, and the division provides secretariat support for these meetings. During 2007–08, the Secretaries' Group met seven times, including one joint meeting with the National Indigenous Council.

### **Northern Territory Emergency Response:**

The division continued to provide advice, coordination and support for the Prime Minister and departmental executive on matters relating to the policy options and financial and legislative arrangements for the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER).

In June 2007, the SGIA established a sub-group to specifically focus on the direct implementation of the NTER. Meetings were chaired by the Secretary of the department, and the division provided secretariat support for the meetings. The sub-group met a total of nine times in 2007. Departmental officers also attended 10 meetings of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Taskforce, which provided advice to government on matters relating to the NTER and four meetings of the NTER Project Management Board which oversees the NTER implementation.

**Single Indigenous Budget Submission:**

In 2007–08, the division played a key role in facilitating the 2008–09 Single Indigenous Budget Submission through Cabinet as part of the 2008–09 Budget process. The 2008–09 submission comprised 27 new policy proposals across seven portfolios, including cross-portfolio proposals. The division provided advice to line agencies on Cabinet and Budget processes, negotiating policy positions with other central agencies. It also provided advice to the Prime Minister on each proposal to ensure the government’s priorities were reflected in the development of the submission.

**Migration Program:** The government has identified migration as a short-term mechanism for addressing skill shortages and consequently reducing inflationary pressures. The division worked closely with relevant agencies to coordinate policy advice to the Prime Minister in relation to the size, composition, processing and compliance arrangements for the Migration Program.

**Floods in New South Wales and Queensland:**

The division provided advice to the Prime Minister on the government response to flooding that occurred in New South Wales in December 2007 and January 2008 and in Queensland in January and February 2008.

## OUTPUT 2.2: OFFICE OF WORK AND FAMILY

Output	Performance information
Advice, briefing and support to the Prime Minister on work and family issues, including early childhood education and child care and family impact statements, including on presentation of the government's decisions in these areas.	<p><i>Quality:</i></p> <p>The degree of satisfaction of the Prime Minister, the Minister assisting, and the Parliamentary Secretary, their offices and the departmental Executive, as expressed through formal and informal feedback mechanisms, with the quality and timeliness of policy advice, and the achievement of key tasks.</p>

### ROLE OF THE OFFICE

The Office of Work and Family was established in December 2007. Our aim is to make sure work and family matters are considered in a coordinated way across government and to ensure the formulation of policies that are aimed at balancing work and family life takes place at the highest level and is central to all policy decisions. We provide advice, briefing and support to the Prime Minister on work and family issues, including early childhood development. We are also responsible for managing the family impact statement process for Cabinet and the department's relationship with the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

### OUR PERFORMANCE

From December 2007, we provided advice, briefing and support to the Prime Minister and other relevant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries on a range of work and family issues, including early childhood development, child care, workforce participation, the impact of policies on families, and the State of the Family Report.

Informal feedback indicates that the Prime Minister and other relevant ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries were satisfied with the quality and timeliness of policy advice, and the achievement of key tasks.

Highlights for the office are outlined here.

**Early childhood development:** For all children, the quality of early childhood health, development and education experiences underpins later educational and employment outcomes. The government has made a number of commitments designed to improve early childhood experiences and we have been actively involved in ensuring these are rolled out in a timely and effective way.

We helped to deliver the government's early childhood commitments through the work of COAG, especially through the Productivity Agenda Working Group and the Indigenous Reform Working Group. Significant progress has been made towards reaching agreements with states and territories on outcomes and roles and responsibilities for early childhood development. We also participated in a number of IDCs on child care and early childhood development. Over the coming year, we will focus our attention on providing input into the development of a longer term strategy for the broader early childhood development agenda.

**Secretaries' Steering Committee on early childhood development:** A Commonwealth Secretaries' Steering Committee on Early Childhood Development has been established to develop a broad early childhood development strategy and provide guidance to the various processes currently underway in the early childhood area. The committee is chaired by our

Secretary, Mr Terry Moran. We provide support to this committee, which began in May and met twice in 2007–08.

**Work and family:** We worked with relevant agencies to ensure the government’s commitments in relation to work and family were implemented and that work and family and early childhood issues were integrated into a range of major reviews, both internal and external to government. These include the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave, the development of the National Employment Standards, and consideration of changes to family payments in the lead-up to the 2007–08 Budget. The office participated in a number of IDCs and cross-agency groups on issues related to work and family.

**Family Impact Statements:** To make sure members of Cabinet have the best possible information on which to base their decisions, the government made a commitment to improve the quality and rigour of Family Impact Statements contained in Cabinet submissions.

To facilitate this improved approach, responsibility for these statements was moved from the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. As a first step in improving the process around Family Impact Statements, we developed and implemented improved interim guidelines. We also reviewed the existing process and started developing a revised system (to be completed in 2008–09) that will ensure all Family Impact Statements provided to Cabinet are of a high standard and based on robust evidence and research.

**State of the Family Report:** The government has committed to publishing an annual State of the Family Report which analyses key issues and trends facing Australian families. In 2007–08, we started developing the inaugural State of the Family Report in consultation with other Australian Government departments and agencies, drawing on nationally representative data. The report aims to inform the public about the state of Australian

families and encourage interest and debate in the community.

**Australian Institute of Family Studies:**

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) was transferred from the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio to the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio to underpin the development of evidence-based policy related to families across the whole-of-government. We managed the transition and developed a communication protocol with AIFS as well as a memorandum of understanding for projects it undertakes. We also provided advice on the development of a statement of the government’s expectations of AIFS.

