



The Secretary's Update – Volume 51

Also available at Secretary's Update – Volume 51

Colleagues

The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme has now concluded and a [report](#) has been released – it makes very sobering reading. The Prime Minister commended those public servants who supported the work of the Royal Commission and has indicated the government will now carefully consider responses to its 57 recommendations.

In a press conference on Friday, the Prime Minister emphasised the critical role of the Australian Public Service, including the capacity of the public service to give frank and fearless advice to the government of the day.

It is critical as public servants that we always have a clear understanding of the legal basis of our decision-making and act with integrity. A key priority during my time as secretary has been strengthening our legal capability and integrity framework.

I encourage you to take the time to read, discuss and reflect on the report and how we can contribute to a stronger and more ethical Australian Public Service.

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Chief Operating Officer Update



Colleagues

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Robodebt report

As you may know, the Royal Commission into the [Robodebt Scheme](#) released a report from their findings last week.

Following on from the joint message to APS staff from Professor Glyn Davis AC, Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) and Dr Gordon de Brouwer, APS Commissioner, a taskforce led by PMC, the Attorney-General's Department, and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) will be established to support ministers in preparing the government's response.

The APSC will also oversee an independent process to determine if public servants with adverse findings have breached the APS Code of Conduct. This process will be established under the APS Commissioner's powers in the *Public Service Act 1999*. It is designed to be fair, independent, and consistent.

I encourage all staff to take the time to reflect on this important report and for our leaders to proactively engage with their teams about the importance of acting with integrity in all aspects of our work. Please remember that support is available via our [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP). You can contact LifeWorks on 1800 273 865 at any time.

Stay tuned for more information about the preparation of the government's response and what it might mean for you – and us as an organisation.

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Regards

Cindy

Cindy Briscoe

Deputy Secretary Portfolio Strategy and Services Group

Chief Operating Officer

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- Hi everyone and thanks for joining me.
- I'd like to start today's video with a discussion on integrity in government – a very important and timely issue.
- Integrity is critical to building and maintaining public trust.
- Through our individual conduct – and behaving in way that's transparent, honest, lawful and accountable – we each contribute to our department's overall integrity and credibility.
- And while it's at this time of year that many of us complete our annual Integrity and Security Declaration, integrity should be thought of as a daily commitment.
- Every day, we need to actively promote and model high professional standards, challenge poor behaviors when we see them, and take accountability for our actions and decisions.
- As you would have seen, integrity was a central theme of the Royal Commission's report into the Robodebt Scheme.
- The report found that the failures across the scheme's design and implementation were underpinned by poor integrity behavior – and a general lack of empathy for those impacted.
- The findings of the report are relevant to all public servants, and I encourage you to read them.
- As a department, we are continuously enhancing our integrity culture.
- That's why we're establishing a working group to consider the Royal Commission's recommendations, and identify any cross-cutting issues, strategic risks and key actions for our department.
- I'll continue to keep you updated on this work.

- Please use this opportunity to think about integrity within the context of your work – and consider what changes may need to be made to ensure integrity throughout our operations.
- If you do need further advice or guidance on integrity matters, please contact our Integrity Branch.

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Business Bulletin

11 August 2023

Departmental news

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Accountable Authority Instructions have been updated

The Accountable Authority Instructions have been updated after a comprehensive review.

Amendments have been made to various sections, with one of the most significant being a new sub-section under Corporate Governance on Legal Advice. This sub-section reflects guidance issued by the Attorney-General's Department on the use of draft legal advice within government, following the recent Robodebt Royal Commission hearings.

Further, a new section on Internal Budgeting and Forecasting has been introduced to emphasise accountability for spending decisions and forecasting, after recent budget challenges faced by the department.

A list of all changes can be accessed [here](#) and the revised [Accountable Authority Instructions](#) can be found on the intranet.

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From: Glyn Davis & Gordon de Brouwer <APSCCommissioner@apsc.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 10 July 2023 2:54 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: [BULK] A message to you from PM&C Secretary Davis and APS Commissioner de Brouwer

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Message to All APS staff

Professor Glyn Davis AC
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM
Australian Public Service Commissioner

Colleagues

We would like to talk with you about the release last Friday of the findings from the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme.

We want you to know the Australian Public Service takes the Royal Commission's findings seriously.

We are committed to working through the findings in an open and constructive way with you—the APS—and with the Australian public.

We know the vast majority of public servants are committed to providing quality advice and dedicated service consistent with the APS values and code of conduct. Australians see the important and meaningful work that you and your agencies do every day, and the professional and diligent way you do it.

Following the release of the report on Friday, a taskforce led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Attorney-General's Department, and the Australian Public Service Commission will be established to support Ministers in preparing the Government's response.

Separate to this, the APSC will oversee an independent process to determine if public servants with adverse findings have breached the APS Code of Conduct. This process will be established under the APS Commissioner's powers in the Public Service Act 1999. It is designed to be fair, independent, and consistent.

The APSC has engaged Mr Stephen Sedgwick AO to exercise these powers as an Independent Reviewer. Mr Sedgwick will make inquiries and determinations about whether an individual referred for inquiry has breached the [APS Code of Conduct](#).

We will continue to talk with you about the Government's response and what it means for you. [Integrity](#) and stewardship are integral to the work of the APS, our responsibilities serving the community, and the trust the community places in us.

We echo the Prime Minister's thanks for the many public servants who assisted the Commission. We reiterate the continuing importance of an effective working relationship between the APS and the Government.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to embodying the APS values in every aspect of your work.

We recognise this message and the Royal Commission's findings may have an impact. Support is available. We encourage you to contact your agency's Employee Assistance Program. Alternatively, the following services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) – Provides immediate, short-term counselling, advice and referral services. Phone 1300 224 636, [webchat](#), or search their [forum](#) for free.
- [Lifeline Crisis Support](#) – This is a confidential service providing you with support for when you feel overwhelmed, for when you have difficulty coping, or are thinking about suicide. Phone 13 11 14 or chat to a [crisis supporter online](#).
- [13YARN](#) – Provides crisis support for First Nations people. Phone 13 92 76 or view their services online at www.13yarn.org.au.

Professor Glyn Davis AC
Secretary
Department of the
Prime Minister and Cabinet

Dr Gordon de Brouwer
Australian Public Service Commissioner

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This email was sent by Australian Public Service Commission, B Block, Treasury Building, Parkes Place West, PARKES ACT 2600, GPO Box 3176 CANBERRA ACT 2601 to Sarvin.SadrzadehJolgeh@aff.gov.au



Transcript

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