

Secretaries Digital and Data Committee

Terms of Reference

Date: October 2025

Purpose and Scope

1. The Secretaries Digital and Data Committee (the Committee) is convened as a sub-committee of Secretaries Board. The purpose of the Committee is to provide strategic leadership to promote an APS enterprise approach to the planning, coordination, investment, assurance, and delivery of trusted and secure digital and data capabilities across government.
2. No new senior digital or data governance forums will be established without this Committee's approval.
3. Without limiting the scope of matters to be considered, the Committee will:

Direction Setting

- Drive enterprise-wide digital and data transformation and provide advice on the strategic direction of whole of government digital and data priorities, strategies and policies.
- Drive the adoption of common patterns, platforms, and services to promote the sharing and re-use of digital and data capabilities across government, consistent with the Australian Government Architecture policies and standards.
- Identify and recommend mitigations to manage whole of government data and digital risk.

Common Platforms

- Drive improvements in strategic planning for digital and ICT investment including through the Integrated Digital Investment Plan and Digital Investment Overview, with advice to Ministers ahead of each Budget.
- Drive whole of government data priorities, including through improved data management, governance, linkage, handling and use.
- Guide a structured approach to assurance activities of critical initiatives that are high risk or have dependencies associated with delivery and recommend interventions to Government where programs and projects are not delivering.

Workforce and Capability

- Support the development of the Data and Digital Professions and initiatives to develop digital and data talent across the Australian Public Service.

Emerging technologies

- Drive better use of data and adoption of emerging technologies.
 - Identify barriers to the adoption of emerging technologies, focusing on but not limited to technical challenges, funding constraints, leadership and cultural barriers.
 - Drive the implementation of technical solutions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, while putting mitigations in place to maintain public trust and integrity.
4. The Committee will support the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) and Department of Finance, including the National Data Commissioner, to fulfil their whole of government digital and data leadership roles.

Membership

5. The Committee will comprise of the following members:
- The Secretary of the Department of Finance (co-Chair)
 - The Commissioner of Taxation (co-Chair)
 - The Secretary of the Department of Social Services
 - The Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department
 - The Secretary of the Department of Defence
 - The Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs
 - The Secretary of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources

- The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
 - The Secretary of the Department of the Treasury
 - The Secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
 - The Australian Public Service Commissioner
 - The Australian Statistician
 - The Chief Executive Officer of Services Australia
 - The Chief Executive Officer of the Digital Transformation Agency
 - The Director-General of the Australian Signals Directorate
6. The co-Chairs may rotate through the membership on a periodic basis.
7. Changes to membership are to be agreed by co-Chairs.

Work Program

8. The Secretariat will prepare a Forward Work Program annually for agreement by the Committee.
9. The Forward Work Program will be prepared in consultation with the Committee and with reference to any relevant work programs agreed by Secretaries Board.
10. The Forward Work Program will outline the themes and major bodies of work for the Committee to consider during the calendar year.
11. The Forward Work Program will be updated by the Secretariat to reflect agreed changes throughout the year.

Attendance

12. It is expected that members will be available for committee meetings.
13. To support the effectiveness of the Committee and align with revised Secretaries Board arrangements, delegates are discouraged from attending on behalf of members but may attend at the discretion of the co-Chairs.
14. A quorum will be at least one co-Chair and 50 percent of members. If a quorum is not met, a meeting may still proceed at the discretion of the co-Chair(s).
15. Co-Chairs may invite observers to attend and participate in Committee meetings, including other APS Senior Executives directly responsible for policy or project delivery where their Secretary or Agency Head is not a member.
16. If a member is unable to attend, they may seek approval via the Secretariat from the co-Chair/s to send a delegate at the SES Band 3 or 2 level as an observer.

Responsibility of members

17. Committee members are representatives and stewards of the APS as a whole, as well as their individual agencies.

Decision making authority

18. The Committee is authorised by the Secretaries Board to progress and make decisions regarding the responsibilities outlined in these Terms of Reference.
19. Substantive recommendations will be presented to Secretaries Board for decision, as required.

Meeting Frequency

20. The Committee will meet a minimum of four times per calendar year.
21. The Committee may consider matters out of session.

Performance and Transparency

22. The Committee will provide a performance report to Secretaries Board every 6 months.
23. The Committee will publish a communique after each meeting to provide advice on key strategic decisions made.
24. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed at least annually and provided to Secretaries Board for endorsement.

Secretariat

25. Secretariat services for the Committee will be provided by the DTA.
26. Agenda, papers and a draft communique will be provided to members approximately five business days before each meeting, or as agreed by the co-Chairs.
27. Papers will include a cascade note from which a communique will be prepared.
28. Draft minutes and action items will be provided to members for review approximately five business days after each meeting, or as agreed by the co-Chairs.

Subordinate Committees

29. The Committee is principally supported by the Digital Leadership Committee, which provides executive oversight of whole of government digital outcomes, and the Deputy Secretaries Data Group, which provides oversight of whole of government data outcomes.
30. Papers presented to the Committee should be subjected to appropriate consultation and intellectual scrutiny, and be considered at one of the above subordinate committees, unless agreed by the co-Chairs, prior to Committee consideration.
31. These two subordinate committees will report to the Committee on performance against agreed performance measures, and provide advice on significant issues, trends and opportunities every twelve months.
32. Other subordinate committees include:
 - the Artificial Intelligence Steering Committee, which oversees activities to support the safe and responsible adoption of AI in government; and
 - the myGov Strategic Committee, which serves as a whole-of-government strategic governance body tasked with shaping the future of myGov.