

More Effective Ministerial Council System

The system of Ministerial Councils will be reformed from 30 June 2011, to focus on strategic national priorities and new ways for COAG and its councils to identify and address issues of national significance.

Under the new system, enduring issues of national significance will be addressed through Standing Councils, while critical and complex issues will be addressed through limited life Select Councils.

Standing Councils will be established in the areas of: health; community, housing and disability services; school education and early childhood; tertiary education, skills and employment; transport and infrastructure; police and emergency management; law and justice; federal financial relations; energy and resources; environment and water; regional Australia; and primary industries.

Standing Councils will support the move to a reform-based system by identifying a small number of priority issues of national significance (normally five to seven) they will deal with and in what timeframes, for endorsement by COAG.

Standing Councils will also undertake legislative and governance functions relevant to their scope, and provide an annual report to COAG which includes an overview of the decisions made by the Council.

Select Councils will be established initially to cover: homelessness; workplace relations; climate change; women's issues; and immigration and settlement, in addition to the existing Select Council on Gambling Reform.

Select Councils will be established, where First Ministers propose, to work on specific reform tasks of critical national importance that are of sufficient importance to warrant Ministers' direct attention.

This new system provides a clear role for Ministers from all jurisdictions to support COAG in tackling 21st century policy challenges. There will be sustained collaborative effort on the long-term reform agenda while allowing for the flexibility needed to address more urgent challenges.

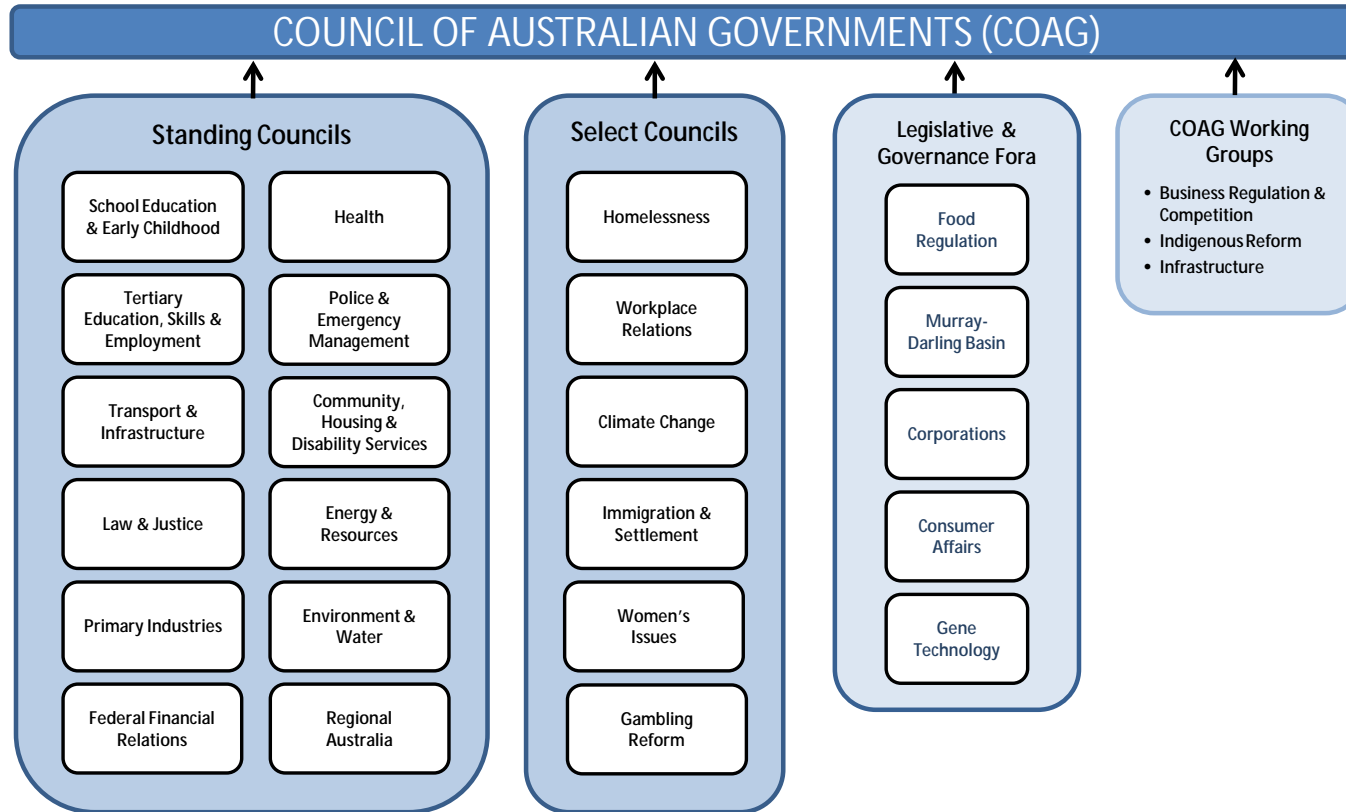
The new arrangements strengthen policy oversight of National Agreements and National Partnership Agreements, which govern the financial relationships between the Commonwealth and States and Territories and ensure performance and delivery. There will also be greater emphasis on implementation and a tighter relationship between COAG and its Councils.

A small number of Ministerial Legislative and Governance Fora will be established in specific areas to manage ongoing legislative and governance functions where they are outside the scope of Standing Councils. Five Legislative and Governance Fora will cover the following areas: food regulation; gene technology; corporations; consumer affairs; and the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Ministerial Legislative and Governance Fora will also oversight significant collective responsibilities for ministers where they are set out in relevant legislation, intergovernmental agreements and treaties that are outside the scope of Standing Councils.

Outside of the Ministerial Council arrangements, Ministers may meet from time to time with their colleagues in other jurisdictions on matters of mutual interest and to facilitate collaboration and information sharing. This will include activities such as implementing the National Drug Strategy and the long-term tourism strategy.

The New COAG Council System



∅ Standing Councils cover key areas of ongoing Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibility and funding.

∅ Time-limited Select Councils focus on key reform tasks, providing a flexible and agile response to complex national issues.

∅ Legislative and Governance Fora cover significant executive responsibilities that do not fall within the scope of Standing Councils.

∅ Working Groups provide COAG with advice on key reforms which transition to other bodies in the system as required.