

This is the first Senate Estimates appearance since housing functions were consolidated into Treasury, and my first since commencing in the new Director-General role last week. I thought it might be useful for the benefit of the Committee to set out what these changes mean, and how we are thinking about the functions coming together.

From time to time, Governments change machinery arrangements to better support their priorities. In the case of this Government, there is a significant delivery program covering housing supply generally, boosting home ownership, especially for first home buyers, delivery of social and affordable homes, support for people experiencing homelessness, enhancing housing productivity – including through modern methods of construction, and improving the efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness in the home construction sector. Across all of this delivery program close and collaborative relationships with the States and Territories are crucial. New levels of accountability for delivery across the whole housing system – Commonwealth, States, local government, industry – are also very important.

Prior to the MoG arrangements that came into effect on 13 May 2025, the Commonwealth's housing responsibilities had historically been split between four different departments.

In the last term, the Minister for Housing and Homelessness had two departments reporting to her on housing – Treasury and DSS.

Responsibility for building and construction policy and regulation was with the Industry Minister and DISR; and planning and cities sat with the Minister for Infrastructure and that department.

One example of these historic arrangements was that the three key commonwealth-state ministerial councils that support housing delivery - Housing and Homelessness Ministers; Building Ministers; and Planning Ministers – usually had different Ministers chairing them for the Commonwealth. Stakeholders inside and outside of government had different ministers and departments to deal with on related issues.

Following the election, Minister O'Neil took on additional responsibilities, and is now the Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, and Minister for Cities becoming the Commonwealth's Building Minister and Cities Minister.

The public service was reorganised to support this, as is appropriate. The Commonwealth's housing functions have now been consolidated in a new Group within Treasury.

- 132 staff were transferred from DSS, DISR and the Department of Infrastructure.
- The new role of Director-General was created. I started last week.

Bringing the housing, homelessness, cities, planning and construction industry functions together is an opportunity to align housing policy levers within the Commonwealth, and to drive more effective Commonwealth-state relations, and industry, sector and stakeholder engagement in these areas.

The Director General role will also continue the work done in 2024-25 on housing supply coordination with the States and Territories, and with industry, meaning that jurisdictions and stakeholders have absolute clarity about accountability within the Commonwealth on housing supply issues.

A key part of Treasury's role is working with the Australian Government's specialist housing delivery agency - Housing Australia, to ensure alignment, integration and delivery. This is similar to other relationships between departments of state and their portfolio agencies, including oversight of governance and performance on behalf of the Minister.

Of course, we will still engage across the Commonwealth on relevant issues – for example, with colleagues in DCCEEW on environmental approvals, and with colleagues in the Office for Women and DSS to ensure that the housing market delivers outcomes for women, including in particular women and children experiencing family violence.

We will also be closely engaged with colleagues in relevant Treasury groups to ensure housing policy and wider economic and fiscal policy settings are well integrated.

I hope this information is to the benefit of the Committee and its deliberations going forward.