Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Ministerial correspondence

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong
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Question:

Can the Department provide the current guide on the preparation of ministerial correspondence in the PM&C portfolio?

Answer:

Yes. Refer attached.

Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

GUIDE

TO PREPARING

AND HANDLING

MINISTERIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Contents   Page No

1. ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Purpose of this guide

This guide sets out the requirements for responding to ministerial correspondence.

The overarching approach with correspondence is that:

- people who take the time to write to the Prime Minister, or one of our Portfolio Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries are deserving of a timely response, and
- concise and well written, factually accurate responses need to be produced by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) within the required timeframes.

PM&C Portfolio Ministers

The Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries in the Prime Minister's portfolio are:

The Hon Tony Abbott MP	Prime Minister
Senator the Hon Eric Abetz	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service
Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion	Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC
Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women
The Hon Christian Porter MP	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (for matters relating to deregulation, the legislation programme, honours and awards and guest of government visits)
The Hon Alan Tudge MP	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (for matters relating to Indigenous affairs)

Categories of ministerial correspondence

'Ministerial correspondence' is all correspondence (letters and emails) addressed to the Prime Minister, Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries in our portfolio. Table 1 sets out details of the four main categories of ministerial correspondence:

- Priority Very Important People (VIP Priority)
- VIP
- Organisations (Orgs)
- General Representations (GenReps).

Table 1   Categories of ministerial correspondence

VIP Priority
Governor-General
Commonwealth Ministers and their chiefs of staff
Commonwealth Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators (Coalition)
Commonwealth Ministers, MPs and Senators (Coalition) writing on behalf of their constituents
State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers

VIP
Commonwealth MPs and Senators (non-Coalition/Opposition), State and Territory MPs
Heads of state, heads of government and Ambassadors
National and state presidents and federal and state directors of the Liberal and National Parties *(NB: the Department would only prepare responses on policy matters – political correspondence is not registered on Slipstream; it is forwarded to PMO for processing)*
Chief of staff enclosing a letter from a Commonwealth Minister or head of a foreign government

Peak lobby groups, industry bodies and major organisations, including but not limited to:

• ABARE	• BHP Billiton	• Master Builders' Association
• ACCI	• Commonwealth Bank	• Medicines Australia
• ANZ	• Financial Services Council	• Minerals Council of Australia
• Australian Council of Social Service	• Ford Australia Generic Medicines Industry Association	• Pharmacy Guild of Australia
• Australian Industry Group	• Grains Research and Development Corporation	• National Australia Bank
• Australian Medical Association	• General Motors Holden	• Optus
• Australian Strategic Policy Institute	• Independent Schools Council of Australia	• Reserve Bank of Australia
• Business Council of Australia	• Lowy Institute	• Rio Tinto Australia
		• Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
		• Telstra
		• Westpac Banking Corporation

VIP – Minister Scullion

Peak lobby groups, industry bodies and major organisations, including but not limited to:

• Australian Indigenous Education Foundation	• Supply Nation	• NSW Aboriginal Land Council
• Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	• National Native Title Council Native Title Representative bodies	• Reconciliation Australia

Indigenous Portfolio Bodies:

• Indigenous Land Corporation	• Outback Stores	• Northern Land Council
• Indigenous Business Australia	• Torres Strait Islands Regional Authority	• Central Land Council
• Aboriginal Hostels Limited	• Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council	• Anindilyakwa Land Council
		• Tiwi Land Council

Organisations (Orgs)
Community organisations
Commonwealth, State and Territory Members and Senators - writing on behalf of constituents
Local Government
Lobby groups
Industry bodies
Large and medium enterprises (e.g. more than 50 people)
Local branches of the Liberal and National Parties *(NB: the Department would only prepare responses on policy matters – political correspondence is not registered on Slipstream; it is forwarded to PMO for processing)*

General representations (GenReps)
Members of the public, including children (15 years or younger)
Small businesses
Individuals trading as a company

All VIPs and Orgs are generally handled by PM&C and not referred to other agencies.

For GenReps, the Prime Minister provides standard responses to correspondence on topics related to key government policy and some other matters as agreed with the Prime Minister's Office.

Commonly used acronyms

DLO   Departmental Liaison Officer
MSD   Ministerial Support Division
MCU   Ministerial Correspondence Unit (in MSD)
MO   Ministerial Office
PM   Prime Minister
PM&C   Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PMO   Prime Minister's Office
PSPM   Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister

Deadlines

It is important that the following deadlines are adhered to:

Category of correspondence	Deadline (number of working days for a response to be provided to the PMO/MO or finalised)
Priority VIPs	5 working days
VIPs (other than priority VIPs)	10 working days
ORGs	20 working days
GenReps	20 working days

It should be noted that MOs can request an earlier due date. All deadlines are recorded in Slipstream by MSD.

1.1.1 Extensions

Extensions are generally not granted. A request for an extension may be considered in extenuating circumstances. For example, a drafter may not be able to finalise a response due to an impending government announcement within a few days of the deadline. To apply for an extension, outline the circumstances and extension sought in an email to the 'MCU – Extensions' mailbox. The Ministerial Correspondence Unit (MCU) will assess your request and forward it to the relevant MO for decision.

Extensions will not be granted for delays in assessing items, where correspondence has been allocated to staff on leave or has 'sat' with a branch before being identified as belonging to another branch, or for delays caused by internal consultations, eg. seeking legal advice or feedback from the regional office.

When requesting an extension please ensure that you provide the Slipstream reference number, and include the new due date and detailed reason for extension. Extensions should not be requested for already overdue items.

1.1.2 Reporting on handling and timeliness of correspondence

MSD prepares weekly reporting for the PM&C Executive and the PMO on the volume and timeliness of the department's handling of ministerial correspondence and other items in Slipstream. These reports show workload and timeliness by division.

Managing ministerial correspondence

1.1.3 Slipstream

PM&C uses Slipstream to manage the ministerial briefing and correspondence workflow as well as other material provided to Ministers (e.g. briefs, Question Time Briefs, responses to parliamentary questions on notice, Senate Estimates briefs, responses to Senate Estimates questions on notice, messages and speeches).

It is essential that all items are progressed in Slipstream. This allows tracking of all correspondence by the department and the DLOs, and preparation of workload and timeliness reporting.

Ministerial correspondence is work-flowed using Slipstream through a number of areas in the department and relevant ministerial offices – see Chart 1.

1.1.4 Ministerial Support Division (MSD)

MSD coordinates ministerial correspondence and briefs, including:

- opening, date stamping, sorting, analysing and creating Slipstream records of incoming ministerial correspondence
- working with the PMO/MOs to triage correspondence and get any handling advice
- directing ministerial correspondence to PM&C branches and other portfolios for action/information, in consultation with PMO/MOs

- when necessary, sending acknowledgment letters to writers advising their correspondence to the Prime Minister has been referred to another portfolio

- preparing responses where a standard reply has been approved

- printing and packaging ministerial briefs and correspondence to be provided to MOs

- delivering assembled briefs and correspondence to MOs

- receiving signed final copies of correspondence from MOs and scanning signed items into Slipstream

- arranging dispatch of ministerial replies to correspondence (via Australia Post and/or email)

- forwarding paperwork and the Slipstream record to the branch for filing

- reporting on PM&C's performance in processing ministerial correspondence and identifying current and emerging problems

- developing guidelines for preparing and handling ministerial correspondence, and

- providing related advice, training and assistance to MOs and PM&C staff.

1.1.5   Ministerial Managers

Ministerial Managers in divisions (generally Executive Assistants) are responsible for:

- allocating Slipstream records to drafters

- monitoring work allocated to their division, including the timeliness of work items and informing divisional SES of items on hand

- arranging for the dispatch of departmental replies

- sending Slipstream records to MSD for re-allocation, if required, and

- advising MSD of branch staffing, structural and functional changes so the Slipstream functional directory can be updated.

1.1.6   Drafters in PM&C Divisions

Drafters in PM&C divisions are responsible for:

- preparing replies to ministerial correspondence and associated briefs

- ensuring the product meets necessary quality standards

- obtaining approval for replies to ministerial correspondence and associated briefs in accordance with the Authorising rules for material delivered to the Prime Minister and Portfolio Ministers http://pmc-intranet/government-parliamentary/ministerial-correspondence

- liaising with MSD about who should sign replies

- adhering to the ministerial correspondence and other relevant guidelines

- using Slipstream to check, update, register, reschedule and draft briefs and replies to correspondence

- liaising with MSD on the preparation of ministerial briefs and replies to correspondence, particularly when correspondence is received directly from, or sent directly to, MOs, and

- consulting other areas of PM&C and other agencies or departments, as required.

Ministerial Manager

Files hard copy or assigns Slipstream record to Action Officer for redrafting.

1

MCU

Correspondent writes to a Minister.
MSD determines PM&C area for action.

10

2

MCU

If signed, reply despatched and hard copy sent to relevant Ministerial Manager for filing. If redraft required, Slipstream record reassigned to Ministerial Manager for action.

MCU

Registers correspondence, creates a Slipstream record, checks related items and assigns to relevant Ministerial Manager for action

Chart 1

**Ministerial Correspondence Workflow
(for replies drafted by PM&C)**

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3

DLO

Submits the documents to Ministerial staff for the Minister's signature. Once considered, returns to MCU for processing.

Ministerial Manager

Assigns Slipstream record to an Action Officer to draft a reply and monitors timeframes while the record is assigned to their branch.

Please note:

- In the event that a redraft is required, this process re-commences from Step 3.
- This process map does not include correspondence that is referred to Ministers in other portfolios for a response.

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4

MCU

QA all items sent to P&P and print and package the documents for delivery to the Minister's office. MCU can return the item to the Ministerial Manager if necessary.

Action Officer

Drafts reply in Slipstream.
Adds relevant officers to the consultation list in the Slipstream record.
Submits the draft for clearance

7

Ministerial Manager

Final Approver

5

6

Either returns the cleared Slipstream record, and authorised hardcopy, to MCU for Print & Packaging or reassigns it to the Action Officer for redrafting.

Either clears the reply or requests redraft.

1.1.7   Ministerial Offices and DLO

The DLOs in the MOs are responsible for:

- receiving Slipstream records containing prepared briefs (and hardcopy briefs) and replies

- undertaking final QA on replies and briefs - particularly for the layout and format of replies

- seeking additional information, if required

- arranging for briefs and proposed replies to be considered by the Prime Minister, Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

- returning proposed replies to branches for correction/redrafting when/if required

- arranging for signed replies to be returned to MSD for scanning and dispatch, and

- updating Slipstream.

Support for Slipstream Users

Support for users of Slipstream is available as follows:

- For help and information on business processes, information and advice on responding to ministerial correspondence, Slipstream training and user profiles, please contact MSD staff:
  (02) 6271 5566 and MSDSlipstream@pmc.gov.au.

- For IT technical support please contact Information Services Branch staff:
  (02) 6271 5555 and via email slipstream@pmc.gov.au.

2. RESPONDING TO CORRESPONDENCE

Receipt of correspondence

Correspondence is received in hard copy or email (either through the 'contact your PM' function on the PM's website or via Portfolio Ministers' email). On receipt, correspondence is registered into Slipstream by MCU in MSD, assessed and then allocated for response, referred to another department or NFA'd.

Personal and political correspondence does not require action by the Department (and is generally not recorded on Slipstream); it is referred to the PMO or MO.

2.1.1   Allocation of correspondence

To ensure timely responses, it is essential that all staff assess new items allocated to their Slipstream in-box ('my work') within a day or two of receipt. If you have been allocated correspondence that you believe falls within another branch's area of responsibility, please:

* add a note to the Slipstream record indicating which branch is best placed to provide a response
* reach agreement with proposed receiving branch and add notes in system outlining this outcome
* return the record to MCU for re-allocation.

It is important to do this as quickly as possible (see below for impact on extension requests).

Options for response

As a general rule, items referred to Ministerial Managers require a response; however, drafters may consider it more appropriate to refer or to take no further action on a particular item of ministerial correspondence.

In determining options for responses, drafters should consider:

* the author and nature of the correspondence
* the history of the item, including any previous related correspondence and/or separate discussions with ministers, their offices or government officials referred to in the correspondence (note: in the latter case, further enquiries should be made to confirm what was said/agreed in those discussions)
* any specific instructions from the PMO, MO, MSD or other staff within the department, or notes in Slipstream (see notes, instructions and redraft information tabs), and
* any specific guidelines that may apply (depending on the type of correspondence and proposed action, as outlined below).

Drafters should document, in the notes tab on Slipstream, reasons for referral or no further action.

2.1.2   Referrals

Correspondence is referred to a Portfolio Minister (e.g. Minister for Health) when the matter is routine single issue and the responsibility of that Minister, and a standard reply has not been prepared. This is generally done by MSD, and should occur **within three working days of receipt**.

Do not refer correspondence to Portfolio Ministers when:

*   the correspondent is under the age of 15 years

*   the Prime Minister or other Minister/Parliamentary Secretary in our portfolio should sign the reply

*   the complaint is about an agency or a Minister

*   a standard response is required

*   the correspondence contains multiple issues that cut across several portfolios (noting that routine multiple issues that fall within one portfolio may also be referred)

*   PM&C has line responsibility for the matter, e.g. it relates to the work of one of the department's programme areas or taskforces, or

*   the PMO or relevant MO has asked that PM&C prepare a response.

2.1.3   Acknowledgment of Referrals

An acknowledgement letter is sent to a correspondent if their letter/email to the Prime Minister is referred to another Minister. Letters from VIPs, most ORGs, children (<15 years) and those GenReps requiring a non-standard, compassionate or standard response are not referred.

Table 2 below outlines the types of acknowledgement letters. Generally, branches prepare acknowledgement letters to VIPs and Orgs for signature by:

*   the Prime Minister or Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister – for substantive replies, or

*   relevant PM&C branch head – for routine replies.

MSD prepares acknowledgment letters to GenReps.

Table 2   Acknowledgement of Referrals

Correspondent	Writing on behalf of constituent	Writing on their own behalf
Commonwealth Members of Parliament and Senators • Party leaders and coalition members and senators	Address letter to Chief of Staff (Ministers) and Senior Electorate Officer (Members and Senators). Routine acknowledgement to be signed in the department. Substantive acknowledgement to be prepared for signature by PSPM.	Generally not referred to other ministers; answers to be prepared for signature by the Prime Minister or relevant Portfolio Minister. If referral is proposed please consult MSD (x5566) or the relevant DLO. Options are: • routine acknowledgement to be signed in the department • substantive acknowledgement to be prepared for signature by PSPM • letter for the Prime Minister's or Minister's (if the original was addressed to the Minister) signature.
Commonwealth Members of Parliament and Senators	As above.	Routine acknowledgement to be signed in the department. Substantive acknowledgement to be prepared for signature by PSPM or Minister (if the original was addressed to the Minister).

Correspondent	Writing on their own behalf	
State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers Heads of State, Heads of Government and ambassadors	Generally, not referred to other ministers. If referral is proposed: • routine acknowledgement to be signed in the department, or • substantive acknowledgement to be prepared for signature by PSPM or Minister (if the original was addressed to the Minister).	
State and Territory Ministers, Members and Senators Community organisations Lobby groups Industry bodies Large and small-to-medium enterprises	Routine acknowledgement to be signed in the department. or Substantive acknowledgement to be prepared for signature by the Prime Minister or PSPM.	
Individuals / members of the public Small businesses Individuals trading as a company	Acknowledgement to be signed in the department.	

2.1.4   Correspondence requiring no further action (NFA)

Decisions to NFA a letter from a Minister must be cleared through the relevant adviser in the PMO/MO with details recorded in the Slipstream record.

PM&C does not prepare responses if:

♦ the correspondence is advertising material, a campaign (unless requested by the MO), spam, a duplicate, or offensive or abusive

♦ the matter(s) raised in the correspondence have been:
 – fully addressed in a previous response, or
 – overtaken by events which would be obvious to the correspondent

♦ there is no identifiable query or substantive policy issue raised in the correspondence, including acknowledgements of previous correspondence (noting that replies are to be prepared for compassionate issues)

♦ the author is an overseas correspondent who does not identify as being a foreign Head of State or Government or an Australian citizen resident (noting that Visa issues/enquiries from persons residing overseas are referred to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection)

♦ an email or physical address has not been supplied or is illegible

♦ the PMO or relevant MO has advised that:
 – a response is not required, or
 – no further action is required by PM&C as the relevant MO will finalise the matter.

2.1.5   Sensitive correspondence

Correspondence that is assessed as sensitive or deeply personal to the correspondent should be handled in an appropriate manner and in a way that will not embarrass or compromise the Prime Minister or the government as a whole. Branches should liaise with MCU or the relevant DLO for advice.

Sensitive and personal correspondence may be correspondence:

♦ from individuals or organisations engaged in litigation where the department or the Commonwealth is also a party

♦ from family members of Australian Defence Force members who have fallen whilst on operational service

♦ from family members of Australians killed or injured in a recent tragic event

♦ about subjects that frequently attract media and parliamentary attention, such as Indigenous matters, immigration matters, the detention of Australians abroad and terrorism

♦ that is suggestive of possible self-harm or a high level of personal distress

♦ relating to compassionate issues i.e. death, illness

♦ relating to election or other government commitments, or

♦ that cites a statement from the Prime Minister.

When correspondence is considered to be sensitive, MCU will liaise with the relevant PM&C branch for a response or advice. Advice will be recorded in the notes section within Slipstream.

Where <u>self-harm or serious distress</u> in indicated by a correspondent, **MCU will** refer the correspondence to the Social Work Services Branch of the Department of Human Services. Where correspondence has been referred to a Branch for response and the Branch considers that referral to a Social Worker in DHS may be needed, staff should contact MCU to discuss.

2.1.6   Children's correspondence

Correspondence from children (persons aged 15 years or younger/Year 10) to the Prime Minister is not referred to other ministers. Generally MSD prepares replies in accordance with text approved by PMO.

If needed, MSD will seek handling advice and content from the relevant branch.

Children's correspondence will be marked for no further action if it fulfils any of the criteria set out in paragraph 2.1.4 above.

2.1.7   Constituent correspondence

PM&C has a role in some constituent correspondence to the Prime Minister; involvement by PM&C in constituent correspondence for other Portfolio Ministers would be rare.

Electorate Office staff draft replies to constituents on matters that relate directly to an electorate, e.g. matters about schools, businesses, infrastructure or other facilities in the electorate. MSD transfers such correspondence to the Portfolio Minister's electorate office.

PM&C prepares replies to correspondence from constituents about matters unrelated to the electorate, e.g. matters about Australian Government policy or a federal area of responsibility or portfolio related issues. Constituent correspondence should always be prepared for signature by the Prime Minister/Portfolio Minister and is not to be referred to other ministers. Generally a brief should not be prepared unless the item is particularly complex or sensitive.

On occasions the department will provide input to the Electorate Office for inclusion in electorate correspondence via the PMO/MO.

Name	Title	Electorate
The Hon Tony Abbott MP	Prime Minister	Warringah, NSW
Senator the Hon Eric Abetz	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service	TAS
Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion	Minister for Indigenous Affairs	NT
Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC	VIC
Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women	WA
The Hon Christian Porter MP	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	Pearce, WA
The Hon Alan Tudge MP	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	Aston, VIC

2.1.8   Requests for patronage and sponsorship

Guidance on handling requests for patronage and sponsorship is at <u>Attachments A</u> and <u>B</u>.

Determining the signatory

The guidance below should be taken into account in determining the appropriate signatory. <u>Attachment C</u> set outs the signatory guidelines by topic. Further guidance can be sought from MSD.

2.1.9   Prime Minister

The following correspondence is prepared for the Prime Minister's personal signature:

- correspondence which is in response to letters seeking the Prime Minister's approval of proposals relating to:
  - substantive and legislative or policy matters that involve:
    - adopting a new or changed policy position
    - adopting an alternative approach to election commitments
    - issues which are highly contentious or high profile in nature, or
    - the manner and timing of substantive and non-technical government decisions
  - matters that relate to the operations of the government as a whole which involve:
    - proposals about the handling of the government's strategic priorities and policy proposals that impact on some/all ministries
    - arbitration between opposing views of ministers, or
    - transfer of functions between departments and/or agencies, and
  - matters involving relations with other governments – nationally or internationally – which involve approval:
    - to enter intergovernmental agreements
    - to enter or change agreements with another country, or
    - of a negotiating position in relation to international agreements
  - matters relating to appointments
- Cabinet-related matters, such as:
  - requests from Ministers seeking authority to bring forward an item for consideration by the Cabinet and its committees, including without submission
  - requests from Ministers to vary decisions of the Cabinet or its committees;
  - administrative arrangements for the operation of the Cabinet and its committees, including programming of Cabinet business
  - all appointment proposals, including extensions, that require a decision on whether the Cabinet's consideration is required, and
  - reports from the Cabinet Implementation Unit

- correspondence involving final replies to:
  – correspondence specifically related to discussions with the Prime Minister personally or where follow up with the Prime Minister has been agreed or invited by the Prime Minister in correspondence
  – correspondence relating to the policy and administration of the Office of National Assessments and the Australian National Audit Office
  – The Queen (for assistance with the preparation of letters to The Queen, contact Parliamentary and Government Branch)
  – the Governor-General and other vice-regal representatives
  – foreign Heads of State and Heads of Government
  – the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate
  – Premiers and Chief Ministers
  – leaders of political parties, and
  – Commonwealth Coalition Members of Parliament and Senators

- correspondence that requires a substantive policy response or clarification of the government position to:
  – heads of large or major organisations, such as industry organisations, trade unions, national umbrella organisations, welfare groups and businesses (consult the relevant PMO adviser if you are in any doubt as to whether the organisation falls into the above categories)
  – people of standing in the community, or
  – Warringah constituents.

Given the volume of correspondence received, please consider carefully whether the matter is something that could be handled by a Parliamentary Secretary.

2.1.10   Electronic signature

The Prime Minister and other Portfolio Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries may authorise the use of their electronic signature in certain circumstances. Any proposal to use an electronic signature should be discussed with MSD.

2.1.11   PMO staff

Correspondence is prepared by PM&C for the signature of PMO advisers, where:

- the adviser is authorised to do so by the Prime Minister

- the matter is of personal interest to the Prime Minister, or relates to a report for his personal information

- the correspondence is from a person/organisation or relates to a subject matter that warrants a response, but not from the Prime Minister, other Portfolio Minister, or the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, or a referral to a line Minister

- when a PMO member of staff has previously signed a reply on the subject matter

- when agreement has been reached between the PMO and PM&C, or

- it is a response to another ministerial staffer, e.g. advising approval for a Minister's travel.

2.1.12   Minister for Indigenous Affairs

Correspondence for Minister Scullion is considered in the MO and handling instructions are provided on a MO correspondence stamp (see below). Please take note of these instructions.

```
Office of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs
☐ Reply by Minister      ☐ Brief Req'd
☐ Reply by Parl. Sec.    ☐ Subject: ...............
☐ Reply by CoS           .................................
☐ Reply by Advisor       .................................

          0 1 JAN 2014

☐ Reply by Dept          ☐ NFA
Referral: .......................................................
Instructions: .................................................
.........................................................................
.........................................................................
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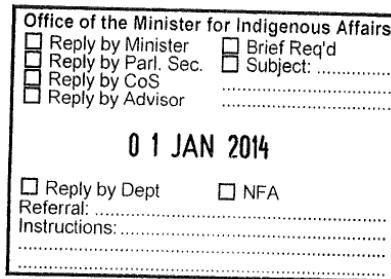
Correspondence is prepared for Minister Scullion on any matters related to the Indigenous Affairs portfolio, with the exception of Indigenous primary health, which is the responsibility of the Assistant Minister for Health, and matters that are the responsibility of state and territory governments e.g. policing.

The Minister signs replies to the following correspondents:
  ⬧ VIPs, including Chairs and CEOs of the Portfolio Bodies, eg. Aboriginal Land
      Councils, ILC, IBA, AHL – they are VIPs in the Indigenous Affairs portfolio.
  ⬧ Chairs and CEOs of large companies and organisations and Aboriginal peak bodies;
  ⬧ MPs/Senators on behalf of constituents.
  ⬧ All Northern Territory constituents: organisations and individuals.
  ⬧ People the Minister knows personally, met at the recent meetings/events, as advised
      by the MO.

Advisers sign all other correspondence related to the area of their responsibilities, including referrals from other Ministers/portfolios (unless the correspondence was addressed to PM&C or identified for a departmental response by Minister's Office). Refer to the MO correspondence stamp for details of required signatory.

Preferences for Minister Scullion are at <u>Attachment G</u>.

2.1.13   Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women

Correspondence is prepared for the Minister on matters relating to women's policies and programmes.

2.1.14   Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister – the Hon Christian Porter MP

The following correspondence is prepared for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's signature:

⬧   replies to all correspondence that seeks approval in relation to:
  –   Government responses to Parliamentary Committee reports
  –   non-substantive and technical policy and legislative matters (not requiring
        Cabinet approval) that:
        ▪   are relatively uncontroversial
        ▪   fall within existing policy parameters

- ▪ are subject to substantial agreement among Ministers and/or other relevant parties
- ▪ relate to the composition, timing and status of items on the legislative programme, including approvals to commence consultation on exposure drafts of legislation
  - – guest of government status for official visitors
  - – Australian honours, awards and symbols policy
  - – the National Australia Day Council
- ♦ replies to all correspondence from Ministers or departments that seek to inform the Prime Minister about:
  - – progress or outcome of established policy initiatives, or
  - – technical or non-substantive information provided as a matter of courtesy
- ♦ replies to all correspondence in relation to the deregulation agenda
- ♦ replies to all correspondence not requiring a substantive policy response or clarification of government position to:
  - – heads of large or major organisations, such as industry organisations, trade unions, national umbrella organisations, welfare groups and businesses (consult the relevant PMO adviser if you are in any doubt as to whether the organisation falls into the above categories), or
  - – people of standing in the community
- ♦ replies to all correspondence from:
  - – senior staff (but not their heads) representing large organisations and large union associations
  - – the general public when a reply was previously signed by a senior departmental officer, e.g. when the writer wishes to engage the officer in further discussion
  - – authors of campaign letters when a ministerial signature is warranted
  - – Federal, State and Territory Members of Parliament (Government and opposition) enquiring about an unanswered letter sent to the Prime Minister by one of their constituents
- ♦ replies to any other correspondence as required by the Prime Minister or his Chief of Staff.

2.1.15   Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister – the Hon Alan Tudge MP

Correspondence is prepared by PM&C for the signature of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister in relation to non-substantive, uncontroversial Indigenous affairs matters or other matters for which the Parliamentary Secretary has lead responsibility.

2.1.16   Other Portfolio Ministers

PM&C will also prepare briefs and substantive replies to correspondence for the following Portfolio Ministers' signature:

- ♦ Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service
  - – in relation to the policy and administration of the Australian Public Service Commission
- ♦ Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC.

Drafting replies to correspondence

Replies to correspondence must be prepared in Slipstream, using the correct template. There are different templates for the Prime Minister (for VIP and non-VIP correspondence), for the other Portfolio Ministers and for Minister's offices. Please do not use old versions of letters stored in divisional drives as the templates may have changed. Please do <u>not</u> change the formatting on the templates.

Replies should also adhere to the Prime Minister's/Portfolio Minister's preferences:

- length – one page where possible (with an absolute maximum of two pages)
- font – Times New Roman, 12 point
- salutations (the Prime Minister will overwrite if he wishes to personalise it – and see <u>Attachment D</u>):
  - 'Your Excellency' when writing to the Governor-General about formal matters, including constitutional issues and appointments, and 'Dear Governor-General' when writing about less formal matters, including accommodation
  - Dear Deputy Prime Minister
  - Dear Treasurer (for all Treasurers Federal and State)
  - Dear Attorney-General
  - Dear Speaker (the House of Representatives) or Dear President (the Senate)
  - Dear Minister (whether an MP or senator and including the outer Ministry)
  - Dear Parliamentary Secretary
  - Dear Senator or Dear Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (if backbencher)
  - Dear Premier/Chief Minister
  - Dear Dame/Sir
  - Dear Mr/Ms [name] for the Leader of the Opposition and other parties (Dear Senator [name] – if the person is a senator)
  - 'Your Grace' for Archbishops
  - Dear Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (if the head of a large organisation, a prominent member of the community or a constituent)
  - Dear [first name] (if a child aged 15 years or younger)
  - no salutation for heads of state (address block to follow signature block with one return separation)
- identical letters to all Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries
  - the Prime Minister signs only the letter to the Deputy Prime Minister
  - the opening paragraph should read as follows:
    Although this letter is addressed personally to you, I am sending a copy to all Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries with a request that they treat their copy as if personally addressed to each of them. References in this letter to Ministers are to be taken as references applicable to Parliamentary Secretaries.
  - the letter to the Deputy Prime Minister is copied to all Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries
- include partner's names on invitations (e.g. 'Mr X and Ms Y' not 'Mr X and partner')
- <u>do not</u> number paragraphs in replies to correspondence.

Guidance on address blocks is at <u>Attachment E</u>.

2.1.17 Language and style

Drafters should refer to the Department's style guide (http://pmc-intranet/policies-and-guidelines/pmc-style-guide) and Attachment F which provides some suggestions for writing with impact.

Some further preferences for items for the Prime Minister are:

- use words that have been used by the Prime Minister on the relevant issue, i.e. quote from his speeches and media release using the precise words
- use plain English and avoid acronyms
- remember the basic rules of good grammar
- use active voice (that is, 'The department administers the following Acts of Parliament' not 'The following Acts of Parliament are administered by the department')
- styles:
  - programme (not program)
  - meet (not meet with)
  - join (not join with)
  - forthcoming (not upcoming)
  - Chairman (not Chairperson or Chair) for men and women unless the title of the head of an organisation is otherwise enshrined in legislation or respond using the terminology the writer used in their correspondence
- avoid splitting infinitives (e.g. 'to write correctly' not 'to correctly write')
- avoid repetition, extensive lists and unnecessary attachments
- commas should not be used before 'and' except in rare instances
- 'Prime Minister', names and dates should not be split over two lines where possible, but large gaps at the end of a line are to be avoided
- successive paragraphs should not begin with 'I'
- qualifiers should not be used (e.g. 'I agree with this, subject to . . .')
- remember the 'the' when referring to the Department of *the* Prime Minister and Cabinet
- conform to the specific format and layout set in the templates.

Preferences for Senator Scullion are at Attachment G.

2.1.18 Autographed photographs

Autographed photographs of the Prime Minister are only to be enclosed when requested by Australian children. Requests from Australian adults are forwarded to the PMO.

Preparing briefs

Briefs must be prepared using the correct template and progressed in Slipstream. Please consider the readability, grammar and spelling; a consistent and well drafted brief quickly draws the decision maker's attention to the key issues and essential facts.

A covering brief should be prepared for:

♦ replies to correspondence if additional material is necessary to assist the decision maker deal with the issue

♦ for all VIP priority and most VIP and Org responses.

A covering brief is <u>not required</u>:

♦ where the issues are straightforward, the reply is self-explanatory or does not canvass issues of contention or controversy

♦ for constituent correspondence

♦ where the PMO/MO has specified that no brief is required.

Briefs should:

♦ be kept to one page where possible (with an absolute maximum of two pages – including the signature block); necessary additional material should be included in attachments

♦ in relation to timing and complexity, be labelled with one of the following four options to assist in triaging:

Urgent / High Complexity	Routine / Low Complexity
Urgent / Low Complexity	Routine / High Complexity

    – routine – where a decision is not required within three days of delivery to a Minister's office (this should apply to the majority of our briefs), or

    – urgent – where a decision is required within three days of delivery to the PMO/MO
 (this should only apply to a handful of briefs and the brief must identify the reason for urgency and any date by which a decision is required; the reason should not be that it has been delayed in the department and has now become urgent)

    – low complexity – those briefs where the decision sought is a relatively simple of straight-forward one, such as matters of routine administration

    – high complexity – those briefs where the decisions sought are on complex/sensitive issues

♦ include the subject of the brief as a title - noting that brief titles should:

    – clearly identify what the brief is about

    – be short – no more than two lines

    – be unique to that brief

    – highlight important groups e.g. Constituent Correspondence – subject

- have recommendations that:
  - follow the logic of the decisions being asked of the Minister
  - present key decisions separately
  - are inserted using the template add-in facility in the Word briefing template (use the 'policy advice options' tab to add a standard form of recommendations – do <u>not</u> make up new options)
- indicate all areas within the department that have been consulted on the brief (see below)
- include the date signed after the signature block
- include the Slipstream number of the incoming correspondence.

The signature block on a brief (and also on a letter) should always be on the same page as the last sentence or two or text (i.e. no 'orphan' signature blocks).

The Slipstream item should include as separate attachments in the item as follows:

- the brief (signed and dated)
- all the documents mentioned in the brief as attachments - as a combined document (i.e. as one attached document)
- all draft response letters (as another attachment).

Only the signed, authorised copy of a brief to the Prime Minister needs to be provided to MCU. For other Portfolio Ministers, please check with MCU. Distribution of copies within the PMO and MOs are handled by the DLOs.

2.1.19   Consultation on briefs, distribution lists and copies

Consultation on briefs provides an important safeguard to ensure a 'whole of department' view is being presented. It is important that all consulted areas within PM&C are given a copy of the draft brief and the opportunity to comment. The final brief should represent an amalgam of views of the department, not a view held by one area.

The copy addressees and the 'file' copy must be listed in the distribution box in the top left-hand margin (top) of the brief. The distribution box should list the Secretary and all Band 3 and 2 SES who have an interest in the brief (i.e. from the areas consulted in developing the brief). You do not need to list external departments and agencies consulted.

All those listed on the brief must be added to the consultation list in Slipstream. The consultation list in Slipstream may include additional people from the areas consulted. This will ensure that all those consulted can access a soft copy of the brief/ correspondence item on Slipstream.

Hard copies do not need to be provided to SES unless specific arrangements have been put in place. Please note that MSD will provide hard copies of all briefs sent to the PMO/MOs to the Secretary each evening.

Ensure that the Prime Minister and Portfolio Ministers are copied on briefs where appropriate, noting that:

* briefs to the Prime Minister are not to be copied to our Portfolio Ministers

* briefs to Portfolio Ministers, e.g. a brief to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs or the PSPM may be copied to the Prime Minister (as set out below)

> **To:** Minister for Indigenous Affairs
>
> **cc:** Prime Minister
>
> **cc:** Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Hon Alan Tudge MP

* all briefs to Minister Scullion are to be copied to PSPM Tudge, and all briefs to PSPM Tudge relating to Indigenous issues are to be copied to Minister Scullion

Classified or sensitive briefs and correspondence

Correspondence and briefs classified up to and including PROTECTED Sensitive Cabinet can be prepared in Slipstream. See Attachment H for further detail.

For items above that classification, a 'shell' item should be set up on Slipstream; this provides a Slipstream number and allows the shell item to be workflowed in Slipstream and tracked. The title of these items in the Slipstream record should take into account the classification and/or sensitivity of the item, e.g. use 'title restricted' or a short subject like 'brief on India – August 2014'.

2.1.20   Locked items

Where an item is sensitive, but at a classification that can be placed on Slipstream, access can be limited to a specified group of people by 'locking' the item.

3. APPROVAL AND SENDING A RESPONSE FOR SIGNATURE

Approval of replies to ministerial correspondence and briefs

Approval processes are set out in the *Authorising rules for material delivered to the Prime Minister and Portfolio Ministers* available on the intranet: http://pmc-intranet/government-parliamentary/ministerial-correspondence.

Courier and Dispatching to MOs

Authorised briefs and replies to ministerial correspondence need to be delivered to MSD **at least** 30 minutes before the desired courier run: http://pmc-intranet/government-parliamentary/ministerial-correspondence/incoming-mail-and-courier-services. The electronic version must also be forwarded on Slipstream for 'print and packaging'.

Do not deliver correspondence directly to MOs, unless the matter is extremely urgent, sensitive or is occurring outside normal office hours and the approval of the DLO in the relevant MO has been obtained.

- If this occurs please put a note in the 'Notes' tab in Slipstream advising such.
- The Slipstream record must be completed and a signed hard copy of the material provided to MCU as soon as possible.

Return to PM&C

Replies and briefs are returned from the MOs by MSD's courier.

- If signed, MSD will scan signed briefs and replies into Slipstream, prepare appropriate envelopes and place in outgoing mail. If the outgoing is to be transmitted by email, MSD will email using established procedures. The Slipstream record and any other paper materials are then forwarded to the actioning branch for filing.
- If redrafting is required, MSD will return the item to the branch for its action.

3.1.1 *Requests from the PMO/MO for redrafting of responses*

Re-drafts of ministerial correspondence requested by the PMO/MO should be completed **within three working days** unless advised otherwise by the relevant MO.

3.1.2 *Dispatch of signed items*

MSD arranges for dispatch of all signed letters and replies.

For items that require special handling for dispatch the DLOs will work with the relevant branch or MSD to facilitate that.

Branches should make sure any attachments to draft letters are included in the relevant attachment on Slipstream, to avoid them not being sent.

3.1.3   Filing of items

It is the responsibility of the originating branch to file or dispose of replies and briefs in accordance with departmental filing instructions and the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983*.

Items on Slipstream must be closed and filed so that the item is considered completed.

REQUESTS FOR PATRONAGE

From time-to-time, the Prime Minister and Ministers receive requests for patronage.

Criteria for patronage

The following criteria are generally applied when considering requests for patronage:

- patronage should not be used purely for fundraising or commercial purposes
- it is preferable that the Prime Minister not share patronage with others
- the organisation should have longstanding credibility and be in a position to maintain this credibility for the foreseeable future
- government policies should be considered in order to assess whether the organisation operates within the national interest
- consider whether PM&C administers any grants to the organisation
- the Prime Minister normally accepts patronage for organisations that have national coverage
- consider whether the organisation has or is likely to espouse policies that may lead to public controversy.

Clarifying the role

You should liaise with the requesting organisation to determine:

- the nature of the patronage
- the level of involvement expected of the Prime Minister or Minister should they agree to become the patron.

It is also good practice to liaise with the relevant ministerial adviser as to whether the Prime Minister or Minister is interested in becoming patron of that organisation.

Researching the organisation

You should research the organisation in some depth to establish its bona fides. This may include seeking advice from other agencies. Obtain copies of the following documents to assist:

- the constitution or memorandum and articles of association
- a statement of aims and activities
- a list of current office-bearers
- a recent annual report (if published)
- financial statements, with evidence of financial viability
- recent newsletters (if published).

In undertaking this research, be sure to ask:

- Has the organisation operated for at least five years?
- How is the organisation funded?
- Does it have a sustained record of achievement?

- Does the organisation have national influence?
- How many members does the organisation have in each State and Territory?
- Who would be invited to become patrons if the Prime Minister were to become patron-in-chief?
- Are there other related patronages held by the Prime Minister?

Responding to the request

Once you are comfortable in recommending that the patronage be agreed or declined:

- prepare a brief to the Prime Minister or Minister with your recommendation
- draft a response to the organisation for the signature of the relevant Chief of Staff.

Adding to the Register

MSD maintains a register of all cases where the Prime Minister or his wife agrees to be the patron of an organisation. Please contact on MSD on **x5495**.

REQUESTS FOR SPONSORSHIP

Most requests for the Prime Minister's sponsorship are either politely declined (see example below), or referred to another Minister or agency that have relevant grant programmes.

Sample response:

Dear Mr XXX

On behalf of the Prime Minister, I would like to thank you for your letter dated [dd mmm yyyy] seeking sponsorship for ....

The Prime Minister receives many requests for sponsorship of many worthy causes. It is not possible to grant them all. Regrettably the Prime Minister cannot sponsor your .... The Prime Minister sends you his best wishes and every encouragement with your endeavour.

Yours sincerely

SIGNATORY GUIDELINES (BY TOPIC)

NATURE OF CORRESPONDENCE / CORRESPONDENT	SIGNATORY
Appointment proposals	Prime Minister
Appointments proposals requiring a decision on whether the Cabinet's consideration is required	Prime Minister
Australian honours and symbols policy	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Australian National Audit Office – policy and administration of	Prime Minister
Australian Public Service Commission – policy and administration of	Minister for the Public Service
Cabinet and Cabinet committees – operation of	Prime Minister
Cabinet consideration of policy proposals	Prime Minister
Cabinet Implementation Unit – implementation issues, reports	Prime Minister
Campaign letters warranting a ministerial signature	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
Centenary of ANZAC	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC
Chief Ministers (ACT and NT) (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Children (persons ≤ 15 years of age) (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Foreign Heads of State and Heads of Government (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Governor-General (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Guest of Government status for official visitors	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Indigenous affairs matters	Minister for Indigenous Affairs or Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Tudge)

NATURE OF CORRESPONDENCE / CORRESPONDENT	SIGNATORY
Liberal and National party – nominated officials (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Liberal and National party branches[1]	Prime Minister
Liberal and National state presidents (correspondent)[2]	Prime Minister
Leaders of political parties (correspondent) [2]	Prime Minister
Members of parliament writing on behalf of their constituents	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
National Australia Day Council – policy and administration	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Non-substantial and technical policy and legislative matters (not requiring the Cabinet's consideration)	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Office of National Assessments – policy and administration	Prime Minister
Operations of the Government as a whole	Prime Minister
Premiers (NSW, Vic, Tas, SA, WA, QLD) (correspondent)	Prime Minister
President of the Senate (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Progress or outcome of established policy initiatives	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Referral letters from Members of Parliament, individuals and organisations of note	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Relations with other governments (nationally or internationally)	Prime Minister
Senior staff (not heads) of large organisations and large union associations	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
Speaker of the House of Representatives (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Technical or non-substantive information provided as a matter of courtesy (e.g. informing the PMO on appointments to Governments boards)	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)
The Queen (correspondent)	Prime Minister
Vice-regal representatives (correspondent)	Prime Minister
VIPs seeking an update on the progress of their correspondence to the Prime Minister	Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Porter)

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[1] All party related letters would be handled by the Prime Minister's office in the first instance.

SALUTATIONS

This section describes the salutations you will use for more complex letters and in the Prime Minister's and other Ministers' correspondence.

Co-signatories

Same organisation: Send a single reply to a letter that has been co-signed. Address the reply to both signatories; e.g.:

> Mr/s XXX and Mr/s YYY [names as given in the incoming letter]
> [Position of the co-signatories]
> [Organisation's name]
> [Organisation's address].

The salutation should be 'Dear Mr/s [surname] and Mr/s [surname]'.

Different organisation: Send a reply to each correspondent. Opening sentence should state 'Thank you for your correspondence of <date>, co-signed by <position and name of co-signatory>, regarding <subject>'. Closing sentence should state 'I have written in similar terms to Mr/s XXX'.

Multiple signatories

Same organisation: Send a single reply to a letter signed by a number of people. Address the letter to the writer and co-signatories; e.g.:

> Mr/s XXX [name as given in the incoming letter] and co-signatories
> [Position]
> [Organisation's name]
> [Organisation's address].

The salutation should be 'Dear Mr/s [surname] and co-signatories'.

Different organisation: Send a reply to each correspondent. Opening sentence should state 'Thank you for your correspondence of <date>, co-signed by <position and name of co-signatory>, regarding <subject>'. Closing sentence should state 'I have written in similar terms to Mr/s XXX'.

Families

If the family has written as, e.g., 'The Harris Family', address the reply to 'The Harris Family' and insert the salutation 'Dear Harris Family'.

If the family has written as 'Mr and Mrs Harris and family' or included the names of their children, address the reply to 'Mr and Mrs Harris and family' and insert the salutation 'Dear Mr and Mrs Harris and family'.

Gender specific

If salutations for VIPs, including Federal and State MPs, are unavailable in the correspondence, check appropriate websites for correct information.

Where it is not possible to ascertain the correct title, you may use 'Mr/s' when there is no indication whether the correspondent is male or female, but use common sense and make

every reasonable effort to ascertain the writer's gender. Use 'Ms' where a female correspondent gives no indication of her title. Use 'Mrs' or 'Miss' when the correspondent has stated this. In the case of a child, no title is required.

Ministerial correspondence

Use the following salutations in replies to ministerial correspondence:

* 'Her Majesty The Queen', HM The Queen on envelopes, 'Your Majesty' in salutation

* 'Your Excellency' when writing to the Governor-General about formal matters, including constitutional issues and appointments, and 'Dear Governor-General' when writing about less formal matters

* Dear Deputy Prime Minister

* Dear Treasurer (for all Treasurers Federal and State)

* Dear Speaker (the House of Representatives) or Dear President (the Senate)

* Dear Minister (for all Ministers, Federal and State)

* Dear Parliamentary Secretary (for all Parliamentary Secretaries, Federal and State)

* Dear Premier/Chief Minister

* Dear Senator [surname] or Dear Dr/Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss [surname] (for backbenchers, Federal and state)

* Dear Sir (First name) Dear Dame (First name) for Knights and Dames

* Dear Mr/Ms [name] for the Leader of the Opposition and other parties (Dear Senator [name] – if the person is a senator)

* 'Your Grace' for Archbishops

* Dear Dr/Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss <surname> (for all other correspondents)

* Dear <first name> (for children).

ADDRESS BLOCKS

This section will help you to prepare address blocks for Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Members of Parliament, Senators, former Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries and Members of other Parliaments. It also details when to use 'the Hon' and postnominals.

Federal Ministers

See the Ministry list on the PM&C intranet for details on how Ministers should be addressed (e.g. preferred diminutives: http://pmc-intranet/government-parliamentary/ministry .

The address blocks for Ministers who are Members of the House of Representatives or Senators or who are writing on behalf of their constituents are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Address blocks for Ministers

Ministers	Address block
who are Members of the House of Representatives	The Hon [first name and surname] MP Minister for [title] Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600 The Hon Dr [first name and surname] MP Minister for [title] Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600
who are Senators	Senator the Hon [first name and surname] Minister for [title] Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600 Senator the Hon Dr [first name and surname] Minister for [title] Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600
who are writing on behalf of constituents Replies to letters written by Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries on behalf of their constituents should be sent to electorate office addresses, preferably the PO Box address where applicable.	The Hon [first name and surname] MP or Senator the Hon [first name and surname] Minister for [title]/ Parliamentary Secretary [title] Member for [name of electorate] or Senator for [name of State/Territory] Electorate address

The address blocks for Senators and Members of the House of Representatives are shown in Table 4.

Address labels for all members and senators are available on the Parliament House website at
http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members/Address_labels_and_CSV_files

Table 4   Address blocks for MPs and Senators who are not ministers

Addressee	Address block	Salutation
President of the Senate	Senator the Hon [first name and surname] President of the Senate Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600	Dear President
Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Hon [first name and surname] MP Speaker of the House of Representatives Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600	Dear Speaker
Senators Use the name of the state or territory represented by the Senator and preferably their PO Box address where applicable.	* Senator [first name and surname] Senator for [state/territory] Office address	Dear Senator [surname]
Members of the House of Representatives Use the name of the member's electorate and the electorate address, preferably the PO Box address where applicable.	* Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs or Miss [first name and surname] MP (see also Table 5) Member for [title] Electorate address	Dear [Dr/Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss] [surname]

Members of State and Territory parliaments

When you reply to a state or territory member of parliament, use the PO Box address or appropriate state or territory parliament house or legislative assembly address. For example, the address block for the Premier of New South Wales is as follows:

The Hon Mike Baird MP
Premier of New South Wales
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

If the member has written on behalf of a constituent replies, use the member's electorate address.

When acknowledging letters from a Premier or Chief Minister, the reply is addressed to the head of the Premier's or Chief Minister's department.

When to use 'the Hon'

Use 'The Hon' for all current and former Commonwealth Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries who have been sworn as members of the Federal Executive Council and for the Presiding Officers (that is, the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives).

*Former Commonwealth Ministers retain the title 'the Hon'. This can be verified on the APH website: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members

Ministers in State and Territory parliaments are addressed as 'the Hon', except in the ACT where they are addressed as Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs or Miss.

All the 'office holders' listed in Table 4 are eligible to be called 'the Hon' while in office.

Table 5 (next page) shows when 'the Hon' is to be used for former members of State and Territory parliaments.

Postnominals

Use postnominals such as 'AC' and 'AO' after the person's name and before 'MP'. Show postnominals without full stops or commas. Check www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/index.cfm for an individual's current awards and honours.

Do not use 'JP' or refer to a person's educational qualifications.

State/territory parliamentarians are either Members of Parliament (MP), or Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Legislative Council (MLC) or House of Assembly (MHA).

South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are the only States that recognise 'MP' as a postnominal. The postnominals used by the other States and Territories are:

- Queensland—MLA
- Tasmania—MHA and MLC
- Western Australia—MLA and MLC
- Australian Capital Territory—MLA
- Northern Territory—MLA.

Table 5 Use of 'the Hon' for former members of State and Territory parliaments

State/territory	Office holder	Eligibility
New South Wales Check whether the office holder has retained the title 'The Hon' (office holders must apply to the State Governor to retain the title)	Premiers	After one year in office
	Ministers, presidents of the Legislative Council or speakers of the Legislative Assembly	After three years in office
Victoria	Ministers	For life as soon as they take office
	Presidents and Members of the Legislative Council and Speakers of the Legislative Assembly	For life by the President /Speaker after three years in office and by MLAs after 10 consecutive years in office
Queensland	Premiers	After one year in office
	Ministers	After three years in office
South Australia	Premiers	After one year in office
	Ministers	Who have held a portfolio for three years
	MLCs	Who have served for at least 10 years
Western Australia	Premiers	After one year in office
	Ministers	After three years in office
	MLCs	Who have served for more than 10 years
Tasmania	Premiers, Ministers, Presidents of the Legislative Assembly or Speakers of the House of Assembly	After three years in office and on application to, and approval by, the Governor
Northern Territory	Chief Ministers, Ministers, and MPs	In special circumstances former MPs are occasionally granted the right to use 'The Hon' for life by the Governor-General.
Australian Capital Territory	Chief Ministers, Ministers, and MPs	All to be addressed as Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs or Miss

WRITING WITH IMPACT

	BEFORE	AFTER
Use concrete language Abstraction has its place but seldom in a brief to the Prime Minister. Swift and high quality decision-making relies on thoroughly researched, tangible facts. These 'before' and 'after' examples describe the same policy yet differ greatly in their meaning and implications.	*'. . . there will be a more rigorous selection criteria applied to staff.'*	*'. . . staff with criminal convictions will be denied a security clearance.'*
Write in the active voice Passive writing slows reading flow by allowing verbs to intrude before we meet the noun to which they relate. In the 'before' example, 'carried out' precedes its noun 'the CSIRO' for no obvious reason. Read the 'after' version aloud to hear the difference active voice makes.	*'. . . Antarctic research will be carried out by the CSIRO in Hobart.'*	*'. . . the CSIRO will carry out Antarctic research in Hobart.'*
Eliminate link words *That* and *which* impede comprehension, a sure sign of too many ideas in one sentence. Review your work and prune link words mercilessly, simplifying and sharpening the logic as you go. Aim to be a better writer by deleting *that* and *which* from your vocabulary altogether.	*'We acknowledge that this is not ideal in the current constrained budget environment that we face.'*	*'We acknowledge this is not ideal in a tight budget environment.'*
Minimise adjectives The PM&C craft should not rely on adjectival flourishes for impact. Solid ideas, simply expressed will usually suffice. Have faith in your reader to comprehend the urgency and nuance of your words when it is clear you have chosen them with precision.	*'. . . there is very little evidence to suggest these particular businesses will be in direct competition with each other.'*	*'. . . they are unlikely to compete.'*
Eradicate jargon We use jargon to save time, hoping fuzzy terms like 'technology-enabled' adequately convey a more complex concept. But jargon words can mean different things to different people. Use them sparingly and only after providing the reader with a clear definition from the start.	*'. . . strategic use of ICT ensures more effective policy delivery that takes advantage of technology-enabled opportunities.'*	*'. . . technology applied well can improve policy delivery.'*
Be brief Draft your next brief in longhand as an incentive to write with greater economy and clarity.	*'We have considered the available evidence on the agency's operational requirements and find that the business case does not meet the necessary thresholds.'*	*'The available evidence does not support the business case.'*

MINISTER SCULLION'S PREFERENCES

⬧   Ensure you have addressed all issues raised in the correspondence.

⬧   Use 'Thank you for your letter/email **of** xx March 2015 **about'** not 'Thank you for your correspondence **dated** xx March 2015 **regarding'** (NB this differs from the Prime Minister's preference)

⬧   For unclassified letters, do not include 'Unclassified' or 'For Official Use Only' in the header. Only include headers if the letter is classified Protected or above

⬧   The address block should have the correspondent's name and then position on a separate line. Use the position identified by the writer e.g. don't change 'chairperson' to 'chairman'

⬧   Check address blocks. Is the address current? Is the person's title correct? Is the person a MP, Senator or Minister? Are the suburb and state capitalised and double spaced in the last line? Do not include 'Australia' in the address block

⬧   For less common titles, spell them out in full rather than using acronyms e.g. 'Reverend' instead of 'Rev.', and 'Councillor' instead of 'Cr'

⬧   When writing to a Minister address it 'Dear Minister' not 'Dear Mr/Ms/The Hon xx'

⬧   If the Minister has multiple titles, only include the title/s most relevant to the topic

⬧   If the correspondence is over six weeks old, include an apology for the delay

⬧   If the letter is to be copied to others, include a line 'I have copied this letter to the Minister for xx' rather than having a cc: list beneath the signature

⬧   The Minister's name should be in caps under the signature i.e. NIGEL SCULLION

⬧   Include the month and year, leaving five spaces for the date, one line under the signature block

⬧   If the correspondence is complex or sensitive, include a covering brief. Identify related correspondence (same person or same issues)

⬧   Ensure all briefs are copied to the Chief of Staff as well as the relevant adviser

⬧   Answer the correspondent's questions. Make sure that each issue raised is addressed as fully as possible. Responses should be 'solution oriented' unless there is a deliberate reason for being silent on it e.g. a request to meet

⬧   Ensure the correspondence makes clear, where appropriate, the Government's key priorities of getting children to school, getting adults into jobs and ensuring communities are safe

⬧   Use plain English and succinct, active language

⬧   Humanise the response to show the Minister is listening - avoid bureaucratic language

⬧   Avoid having dates and names split across multiple lines

⬧   Avoid having one sentence spill over to a second page and keep responses to one page if possible

⬧   Avoid acronyms where possible. Do not abbreviate programmes and organisations unless it is repeated more than twice or is a very common abbreviation or well known to the correspondent e.g. using RJCP (Remote Jobs and Communities Programme) when replying to an RJCP provider

⬧   Use '$1 million' rather than '$1M'

CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

The Slipstream application is on the PM&C network, which is rated to Protected. Documents with the following classifications:

- CAN be stored on the PM&C network and Slipstream:
    - unclassified
    - protected:
        - <u>excluding</u> official Cabinet documents (i.e. final versions of Cabinet submissions and memoranda, business lists, Cabinet minutes, Cabinet briefs);
        - <u>including</u> documents marked Sensitive: Cabinet (e.g. briefs containing references to Cabinet information)
- CANNOT be stored on the PM&C network and Slipstream:
    - confidential
    - secret, and
    - top secret.

For the purpose of work-flowing a brief or reply to correspondence classified above protected, a 'shell' (Slipstream record) is created without the classified attachments and a record made in the 'notes' tab on Slipstream that there is a classified component to be transmitted in hardcopy. The Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF) provides guidance on the special requirements of dealing with security classified material.

All documents that relate to or mention the Cabinet are to be marked 'Protected Sensitive: Cabinet' regardless of any other security consideration.

Documents used by the Cabinet to formulate policy and make decisions require special protective measures; these measures are detailed in the Cabinet Handbook (http://pmc-intranet/government-parliamentary/cabinet-operations). Final versions of Cabinet documents (as outlined above and defined in the Cabinet Handbook) are not to be placed on Slipstream. All questions relating to the Cabinet documents should be referred to the Cabinet Secretariat.

The Cabinet Secretariat in PM&C uses the MCN network (rated to Secret) to circulate Cabinet documents.