

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

December 2012

The next COAG meeting will be held on Friday 7 December 2012, in Canberra, with the COAG Business Advisory Forum meeting held the day before. While a formal agenda for these meetings has not been released, key issues likely to be discussed include:

1. Electricity market reform – Following the release of the 2012 Energy White Paper on 8 November 2012, electricity market reform is likely to be a prominent agenda item. For more information on electricity market reform, read Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper, available [here](#).
2. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) - Details of how the Government will proceed with the NDIS beyond the first stage are still to be negotiated. More information on the NDIS is available in Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper, [here](#).
3. Environmental approval and assessment reform – This will be discussed in light of the release of a new draft Framework of Standards for accrediting State and Territory government environmental assessment and approvals. A copy of the new draft Framework is available [here](#).
4. National Plan for School Improvement – The Government hopes to form an agreement with the States and Territories on the implementation and funding of the National Plan for School Improvement by early 2013. More information on the Plan is available in Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper, [here](#).
5. Deregulation – Building on COAG's continuing agenda for a [Seamless National Economy](#).

COAG - Overview

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The Prime Minister chairs COAG.

The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments (for example, health, education and training, Indigenous reform, early childhood development, housing, microeconomic reform, climate change and energy, water reform and natural disaster arrangements).

Potential COAG issues may emerge from major initiatives of one government which impact on other governments or that require the cooperation of other governments. Other issues come to COAG from Ministerial Councils. This can be in the course of implementing existing policy, for example, National Competition Policy, or in developing policies such as food regulation reform.



COAG meets on an as-needed-basis and has met 33 times since it was established in 1992. The most recent meeting was held in July 2012.

Whereas the agenda for the COAG meeting usually is not available publicly prior to the meeting, the outcomes of COAG meetings are contained in communiqués released at the end of each meeting. Where formal agreements are reached, these may be embodied in Intergovernmental Agreements.

To see the communiqué from last meeting, held in Canberra on Wednesday 25 July 2012, please click [here](#). To see Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper on the outcomes of this meeting, click [here](#).

Current COAG members

- The Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister of Australia (Chair)
- Ms. Katy Gallagher MLA, Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory
- The Hon. Barry O'Farrell MP, Premier of New South Wales
- The Hon. Terry Mills MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
- The Hon. Campbell Newman MP, Premier of Queensland
- The Hon. Jay Weatherill MP, Premier of South Australia
- The Hon. Lara Giddings MP, Premier of Tasmania
- The Hon. Ted Baillieu MLA, Premier of Victoria
- The Hon. Colin Barnett MLA, Premier of Western Australia
- Mayor Felicity-Ann Lewis, President of Australian Local Government Association

COAG Reform Council

The Reform Council has been established by COAG as part of the arrangements for federal financial relations to assist COAG in driving its reform agenda. Independent of individual governments, the Reform Council reports directly to COAG on reforms of national significance that require cooperative action by Australian governments.

In February 2011, COAG adopted a reform agenda built around five themes of strategic importance which all fall into the intersection of jurisdictional responsibilities. The five themes are:

1. A long term strategy for economic and social participation
2. A national economy driven by our competitive advantages
3. A more sustainable and liveable Australia
4. Better health services and a more sustainable health system for all Australians
5. Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

The COAG reform agenda is implemented through National Agreements, National Partnerships, Water Management Partnerships under the Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform, and other intergovernmental agreements.

On 4 December 2012 the COAG Reform Council released its third report on the progression of COAG's reform agenda. The report found that out of the 30 key reform commitments, three reforms have already been completed, 11 are on track and another 13 are likely to be completed although they might exceed their deadlines.



These reforms include early childhood education, standards for literacy and numeracy, improvements to teacher quality, a uniform national consumer law, a harmonised construction code, national regulations for vocational education, the Murray-Darling Basin plan and investment in remote indigenous housing.

However, the also report found that three major reforms are at risk of not being achieved at all. These are the workplace safety reform, directors' liability reform and the competition reforms in the energy sector.

To see 'COAG reform agenda: report on progress 2012', click [here](#).

More information is available at the COAG Reform Council's website, [here](#).

COAG Business Advisory Forum

On March 6 2012 Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced the establishment of the COAG Business Advisory Forum. The establishment of the Forum is part of the Government's broader deregulation agenda, and will complement existing work being undertaken by COAG's Business Regulation and Competition Reform Working Group. The inaugural meeting of the COAG Business Advisory Forum was held prior to the COAG meeting in April 2012.

The Council is due to meet Thursday 6 December 2012, the day before the COAG meeting and it is expected that executives from some of Australia's biggest companies will attend to advance the reform plan agreed to in April, particularly in regards to cutting 'green-tape'. This would see a full delegation of authority from the Commonwealth government to the State governments in regards to environmental approvals and assessment process.

In addition, it is expected that the forum will discuss the rising costs of construction and the risk it poses to investment in infrastructure.

To see the Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper on the COAG Business Advisory Forum, click [here](#).