

36th Meeting of COAG

December 2013

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 36th meeting in Canberra on 13 December 2013. COAG consists of the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

For more background information on COAG, see Hawker Britton's overview published 12 December 2013, available [here](#).

Significant developments or agreements were made in the following areas:

1. Infrastructure
2. Deregulation
3. Automotive Industry
4. Paid Parental Leave
5. Indigenous Education
6. National Disability Insurance Scheme
7. National Occupation Licensing Scheme
8. Resource-sharing during Bushfires
9. Classification of Online Games for Children

COAG agreed to work closely together on the Commonwealth White Papers on Taxation and Reform of the Federation and acknowledged the need to reduce government duplication.

The outcome of COAG meetings are published in communiqué, which is released following the close of the meeting. To access the six-page communiqué of the 36th COAG meeting click [here](#).

COAG Councils

The 36th meeting also saw reform to the internal organisation of the COAG Council system. Over a period of 12–18 months the number of COAG Councils will be reduced from 22 to 8. These will be:

- Federal Financial Relations
- Disability Reform
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Energy
- Industry and skills
- Law, Crime and Community Safety
- Education
- Health

Indigenous affairs and deregulation will be included in the terms of reference of each council.

Key outcomes of the 36th Meeting of COAG

1. Infrastructure

The COAG meeting commissioned work on infrastructure, including:

- options to accelerate project delivery, including fast-tracking planning approval timeframes;
- advice on future major transport reform, including proposals for heavy vehicle charging and investment reform;
- increasing private sector investment in infrastructure projects; and
- prioritising projects that improve productivity and increase economic growth potential, including in regional economies.

2. Deregulation

The meeting discussed the Federal Government's commitment to reduce regulation by \$1 billion per year. This included reducing regulation in four key areas:

- manufacturing;
- higher education;
- early childhood; and
- 'end-to-end' regulation of small businesses.

Each State and Territory also agreed to work bilaterally to implement 'one-stop-shop' approvals processes for environmental approvals in each jurisdiction.

COAG also announced it would consider workplace health and safety at its next meeting.

3. Automotive Industry

The meeting acknowledged that an urgent response from government was required following Holden's decision to cease Australian manufacturing operations in Victoria and South Australia by 2017.

A structural adjustment and co-investment package will be developed to support affected workers, families businesses and regions.

A priority for the new Industry and Skills Council will be to assist in the development of proposals to facilitate the transition of the manufacturing sector during this period and foster internationally high-end manufacturing in Australia for consideration by COAG in April 2014.

4. Paid Parental Leave

The Federal Government's proposed Paid Parental Leave scheme would commence from 1 July 2015. It will provide 26 weeks paid parental leave payments at a replacement wage (capped at \$75 000) and superannuation calculated at the rate of the Superannuation Guarantee.

COAG agreed that the scheme will also apply to State public sector employees.

The Federal Government also expressed that its intention is that States will not be financially disadvantaged and the scheme.

5. Indigenous Education

COAG agreed to several measures to improve worsening school attendance among Indigenous children, including:

- minimum school attendance benchmarks;
- biannual publication of data on school attendance for all students, broken down by Indigenous and non-Indigenous;
- a messaging campaign;
- greater support for enforcement; and
- attendance audits.

There will be flexibility around the implementation of these measures to suit the requirements of each State or Territory.

The meeting also agreed to cooperate in order to increase community safety in such communities by boosting or establishing police presence in remote Indigenous communities.

6. National Disability Insurance Scheme

All jurisdictions reaffirmed their commitment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Disability Ministers will be required to report in March 2014 on the progress of each trial site, and to provide options to improve the scheme's implementation.

7. National Occupation Licensing Scheme

The proposed National Occupational Licensing Scheme reform will not proceed due to its potential cost. The National Occupation Licensing Authority will be disestablished from early 2014.

States agreed to work together via the Council for the Australian Federation to develop alternative options for minimising licensing impediments to improving labour mobility.

8. Resource-Sharing during Bushfires

COAG asked the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council to review the arrangements for sharing emergency services resources, including personnel, between jurisdictions during emergencies, and resolution of legal uncertainty surrounding workplace health and safety regimes.

9. Classification of Online Games for Children

The meeting also discussed ways to prevent the harmful exposure of children to simulated online gambling material. This will include classification of online gambling material.

This follows on from work by the South Australian Labor Government to reduce the exposure of children to gambling-like games through its Children, Technology and Gambling Policy announced on 18 November.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the South Australian Children, Technology and Gambling Policy is available [here](#).