

NSW Parliament and Cabinet

On this page

Working with Cabinet

Cabinet confidentiality

eCabinet

Parliamentary committees

Appearing before parliamentary committees

Senior executives play an essential role in supporting the Cabinet system by delivering quality advice to Cabinet ministers and operating in an environment of integrity and confidentiality.

You may be required to lead policy development processes, communicate policy leadership in Cabinet submissions and provide advice on submissions from other agencies. You might be asked to update house folder notes during the year, prepare Budget Estimates briefs, and develop incoming government briefs for a new or returning government. Your agency will have established procedures and templates for preparing parliamentary briefing notes.

Working with Cabinet

Cabinet refers to the regular meetings of the Premier and other ministers, where they discuss and agree on major issues facing the Government.

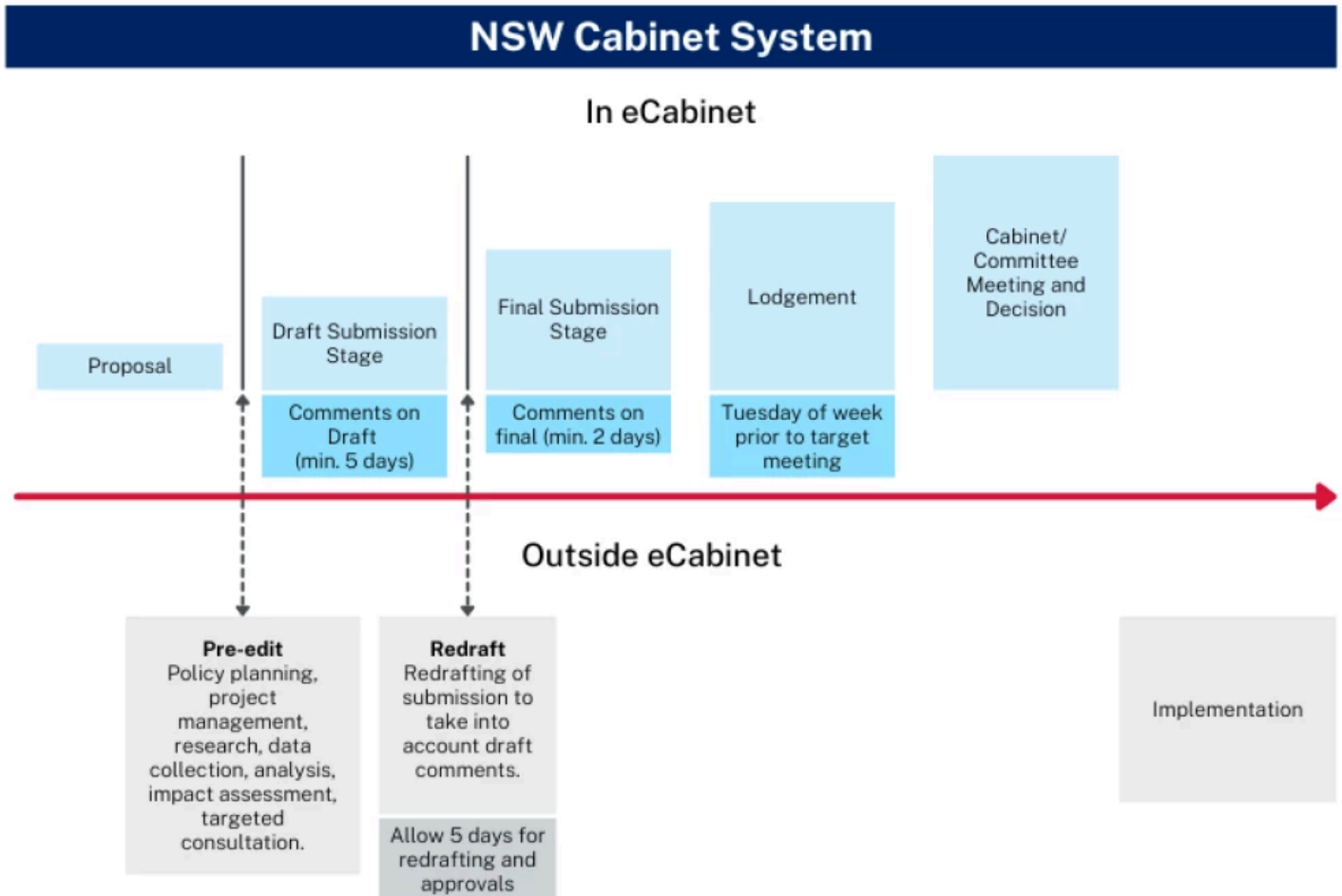
Within the NSW Cabinet system:

- all ministers are members of Cabinet
- the Premier chairs Cabinet meetings, which typically occur fortnightly
- Cabinet is based on convention. The most significant Cabinet conventions are:
 - collective responsibility
 - confidentiality
 - ministerial accountability
- Cabinet makes decisions based on recommendations put forward by ministers in a Cabinet submission

- Cabinet committees deal with specific areas of policy or have cross portfolio functions.

For Cabinet to function efficiently, Cabinet meetings must concentrate on important issues. As such, a lot of the detailed discussion between ministers and agencies -including areas of contention or disagreement - should be dealt with before bringing the matter before Cabinet.

The following diagram outlines the steps involved in developing a Cabinet submission.



Text description of above diagram



The diagram showcases sequential milestones in and out of eCabinet as follows:

1. Proposal (in Cabinet)
2. Pre-editing – Policy planning, project management, research, data collection, analysis, impact assessment, targeted consultation (outside eCabinet)
3. Draft Submission Stage - comments on Draft (min. 5 days) (in Cabinet)

4. Redraft - Redrafting of submission to take into account draft comments - Allow 5 days for redrafting and approvals (outside eCabinet)
5. Final Submission Stage - Comments on final (min. 2 days) (in Cabinet)
6. Lodgement - Tuesday of week prior to target meeting (in Cabinet)
7. Cabinet/ Committee meeting and decision (in Cabinet)
8. Implementation (outside eCabinet)

If you are working on a cabinet submission you should consult as early as possible with:

- The Cabinet Office for all proposals to provide a whole-of-government perspective, especially those with whole-of-government impacts or matters affecting intergovernmental relations
- Treasury, and the Chief Financial Officer of the lead agency or department, for all proposals with financial, fiscal and/or economic impacts
- Treasury for all proposals with regulatory impacts or involving procurement systems
- the Department of Customer Service for all proposals involving significant digital and information technology issues
- the Department of Communities and Justice for all submissions proposing new or changed offences, penalties or enforcement powers, or impacts on the court system
- the Department of Planning and Environment for proposals involving government property
- the NSW Public Service Commission and The Cabinet Office for all proposals involving the public sector workforce or broader public sector employment, including industrial matters
- any other NSW Government agencies that have a policy or operational interest in the proposal

This process may take several months depending on the complexity of the issue and internal and ministerial approval.

It is your job to ensure broad strategic awareness of portfolio policy developments, while maintaining interagency relationships, and working with agencies and your Minister's office to develop submissions in the consultation and drafting stages. When drafting or reviewing submissions ask the following questions:

- Is the proposal in line with the Government's priorities?
- Is the proposal consistent with Cabinet's previous decision and directions?
- What other options have we considered?
- Are there implementation challenges and risks?
- Have we consulted the relevant stakeholders?
- Is the submission clear and succinct, and no more than 10 pages?
- Are the recommendations clear?

You may also be asked to write or endorse comments on submissions from other agencies. When preparing draft comments or coordinated comments:

- be concise
- address significant issues
- consult colleagues in your own agency
- consult the Minister's office.

There are resources available to help you better understand and work within the Cabinet process:

- [NSW Cabinet Practice Manual](#)
- [Guidelines for Cabinet Submission](#)
- [information on appointments](#)

Cabinet confidentiality

Cabinet records are strictly confidential. This is essential to protecting the collective responsibility for Cabinet decisions. You must take steps to ensure confidentiality by:

- managing Cabinet records through the secure eCabinet document management system
- adhering to eCabinet authorisation requirements
- only providing documents on a need-to-know basis
- never copying Cabinet records
- returning any Cabinet records to The Cabinet Office to be marked off and securely destroyed.

All Cabinet documents must carry the Dissemination Limiting Marker '**Sensitive: NSW Cabinet**'.

More information on Cabinet confidentiality is available in the [Premier's Memorandum M2006-08 Maintaining Confidentiality of Cabinet Documents and other Cabinet Conventions](#).

eCabinet

eCabinet is the secure document management system that supports the work of Cabinet. It enables government agencies and ministers' offices access to papers securely, and facilitates Cabinet, Cabinet committee and Executive Council meeting workflows.

The [eCabinet Help portal](#) has further resources and information to assist you in your submissions.

Parliamentary committees

Parliamentary committees are comprised of Members of Parliament to examine issues in more detail. Committees increase public awareness and debate on issues the Houses are considering. They benefit the community by reviewing proposed laws, facilitating more informed policy making and ensuring greater government accountability.

Committees can call for written submissions, conduct hearings where witnesses give evidence and seek advice from experts. They provide an opportunity for members of the public to have their say on issues currently being considered by Government. Committees then report their findings to the relevant House and make recommendations for government action.

The [list of NSW parliamentary committees](#) includes information about matters being examined, committee membership, terms of reference, hearings and reports.

Appearing before parliamentary committees

As a senior executive, you may be requested or summoned to attend and give oral or written evidence to a committee hearing, or to produce documents or make submissions. The Premier's Department has issued several guidelines detailing the requirements for appearing before committees and making submissions to them:

- [C2011-27 Guidelines for Appearing Before Parliamentary Committees](#)
- [M2017-01 Guidelines for Government Sector Employees dealing with the Legislative Council's Portfolio Committees](#)
- [M2021-08 NSW Government submissions and responses to inquiries](#)

You can only give evidence of a factual nature, should refer questions that seek opinions or practical judgements to the Minister (when in attendance) or take those questions on notice to obtain a written response from the Minister.

If questions on notice have been submitted to agencies prior to the committee hearing, the Minister must approve the answers before they are sent to the committee. Answers that would affect the whole of government or other agencies must be referred to the Premier for approval.

Agencies must apply a systematic approach when determining the need for and nature of a submission requested by a committee inquiry, beginning with government-wide engagement.