The Context for APS bargaining

What are the Government’s key interests in bargaining?

The Government has four key interests in bargaining, as reflected in the Workplace Bargaining Policy 2018:

- enterprise agreements and other workplace arrangements need to support flexible, modern workplaces – they are not to contain restrictive work practices or unduly limit workplace flexibility;
- remuneration increases are to be modest and remain within an agency’s existing budget;
- terms and conditions of employment are to be reasonable and reflect community expectations; and
- freedom of association is to be respected.

The Government’s objectives are aimed at modernising public sector workplaces to ensure they are in a position to adapt quickly to changing operational needs. Large shifts in the Australian economy and the changing priorities of Australian Government agencies will continue over the coming decade. APS workplaces need to have the flexibility to adapt quickly in this rapidly changing environment. This can be achieved while still ensuring a suitable work-life balance for employees.

The federal budget remains in deficit. There has not been a budget surplus since 2007. The 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook confirms that budget deficits are expected until 2019-20. Gross debt is estimated to be $383 billion by the 2020-21 financial year. Very tight agency budgets will continue to be a feature for the foreseeable future.

The available remuneration increases are broadly in line with wider economic indicators including the consumer price index and wage price index. The increases are around the midpoint between the remuneration increases being offered in the state and territory public services.

The rights of employees to choose to belong to, or not to belong to, a union will be respected.