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Tuesday 14 November 2023

Colleagues,

Yesterday the Australian Government released their response to the final report of the 2022 *Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme*. The Government has accepted or accepts in-principle all 56 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission exposed failures in judgement and leadership within the APS and acknowledged that while many public servants were trying to do the right thing, they felt they couldn't speak up, or weren't listened to.

Work is underway to implement the report's recommendations, alongside the broader efforts of the APS Reform Agenda. These changes will require all of us to make a full commitment about how we go about our work. There will be a focus on integrity and accountability, and how we can bring empathy and understanding to the way we engage with people and communities. Keep an eye out for more information as these initiatives progress.

This is a timely reminder for IP Australia – as a government agency that is also delivering services in direct contact with our customers – of how important our customer-centric approach is. We must continue to put our customers at the very forefront of our thinking and continue to operate in their best interests. If we do not, we cannot uphold the Government's commitment to working in partnership with the Australian people to improve their lives and deliver better services, which is core to both our vision and our purpose as an agency.

The Government's response will likely bring renewed attention to the Robodebt scheme and the harm it has caused to many Australians. Your wellbeing is our top priority. To our knowledge, no IP Australia staff were directly involved in the Robodebt scheme itself, the Royal Commission and / or the follow-up investigations. However, it is possible that you or your family were impacted in some way by its implementation. Like me, some of you may also feel a direct impact as a public servant because we take pride in delivering for the community and upholding the APS Values each day. If you need support at

this time, please reach out to your colleagues, your managers, or [access the EAP](#).

I encourage you to [read the response](#) and discuss it among your teams, sections and groups. It is important that we are all part of leading this change and building a stronger APS.

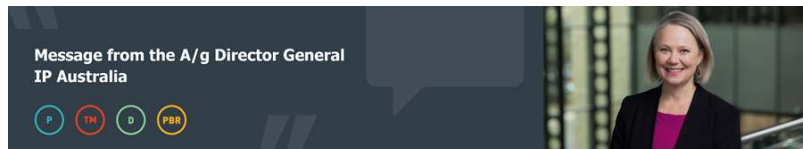
Regards,

Michael



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Monday 4 December 2023

Colleagues,

Last fortnight I accompanied Michael, Jen and our Enterprise Risk team to the Commonwealth Awards for Excellence in Risk Management to accept an award for enterprise-wide risk management. While we talk about it a lot – usually in ways which make people crave pizza – risk is one of those topics that doesn't receive a lot of recognition when things are going well.

It was a pleasure to see some of our colleagues stand up and be lauded for their hard work. Redesigning our strategic risk frameworks, policies and practices from the ground up is no mean feat, let alone working tirelessly to educate staff as to what these mean in practice and embedding a positive risk culture across the agency. Great work team!

Feeling a bit out of the loop? We all engage with risk every day, and it's among our core capabilities. You can find out more about risk – and what it has to do with pizza – via the intranet.

Embodying integrity

Much has been said about integrity in the public sector this year, through the APS Reform agenda to the commencement of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, and even the findings of the Robodebt Royal Commission. Saturday 9 December is International Anti-Corruption Day, recognising the importance of proper governance and accountability in public administration around the world.

20 years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention against Corruption. This year we stand with our colleagues across the APS and indeed globally to commit to holding ourselves accountable, both as individuals and as an agency. For some guidance on what this looks like in practice, I recommend the recently released Integrity Good Practice Guide or the APSC's overview of integrity.

Generative AI in government

It's no surprise to me that Macquarie Dictionary's Peoples' Choice for Word of the Year went to 'Generative AI' in 2023. It's

a term that, until recently, didn't hold much meaning outside of some niche tech circles. However, it's a topic that has a lot of people buzzing, whether they're looking at problems or opportunities. As an IP office, it's a technology that has profound potential for how we operate, not just in the future, but right now.

I'm offsite tomorrow attending the Generative AI for Government Conference. I'll be speaking on the ways generative AI might challenge the role of IP rights, building on the [work done by IPAventures](#). On Wednesday Justine will be speaking on the ways that generative AI can empower and enhance human creativity. I look forward to sharing outcomes and learnings from the conference with you.

We've spun up a new working group to explore how we might use generative AI for our own purposes. They are delivering [their first showcase next week](#), and I encourage you to listen in if this is an area you're interested in.

Celebrating and reflecting on inclusivity and accessibility

Sunday was International Day of People with Disability. Through our new Access and Inclusion Plan, and our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, we're committed to ensuring that our workplaces and our services are fully accessible to those with disability. You can [find out more](#) about what this means in practice from our Disability Champion, Kelly Sims, or get in touch with [our LEAP network](#).

Our [signature IDPwD event](#) is on tomorrow morning. We're looking at recruitment and tapping into the unrealised potential of hiring employees with disability. I encourage you to get involved if you can.

Have a great week.

Regards,
Margaret



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Agenda

DG's Town Hall
21 November 2023

AGENDA ITEM	DESCRIPTION	SME / Support
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s22

	DG's Opening	
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- APSC annual statement on APS Reform

s22

Speaking notes

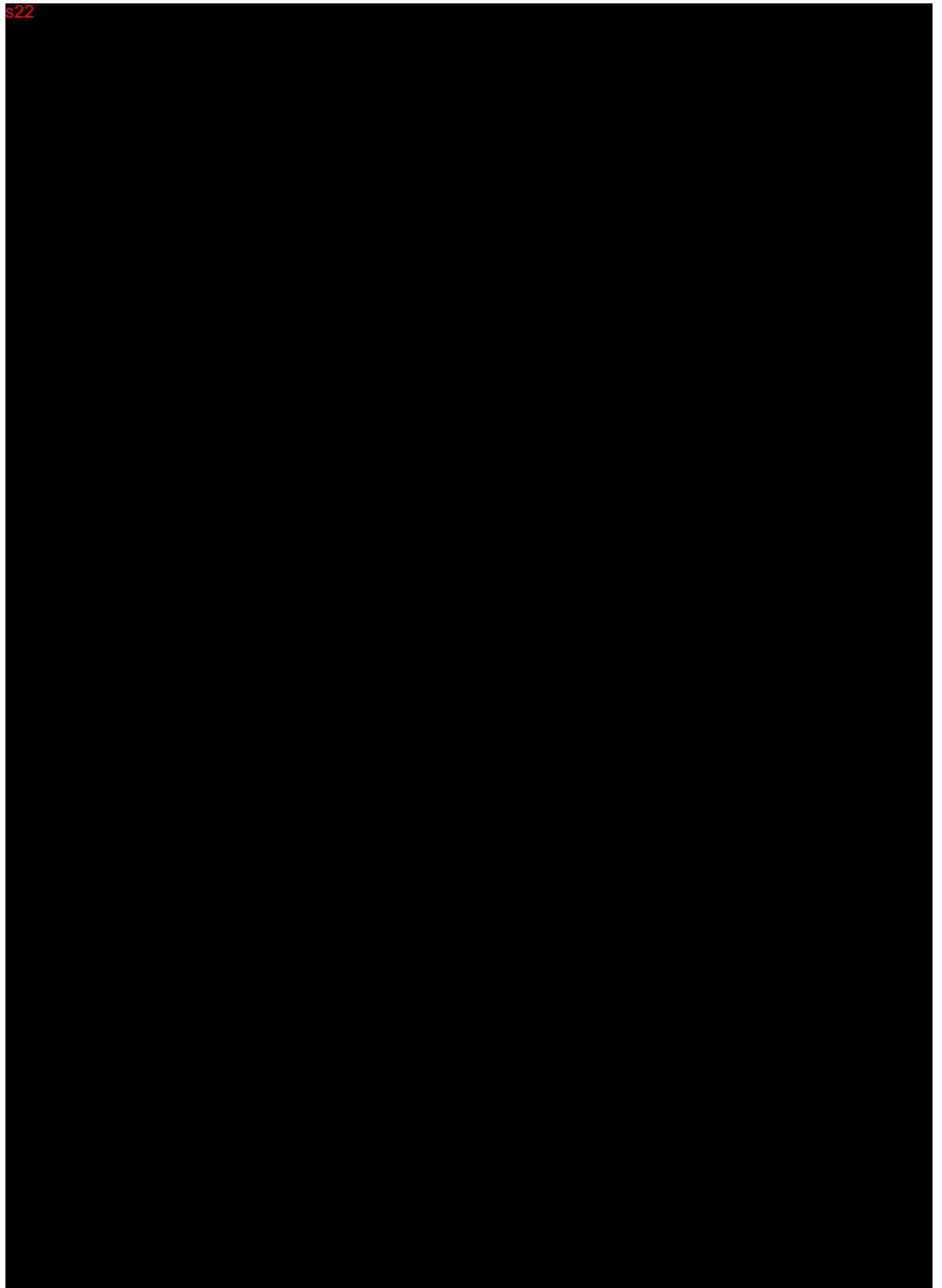
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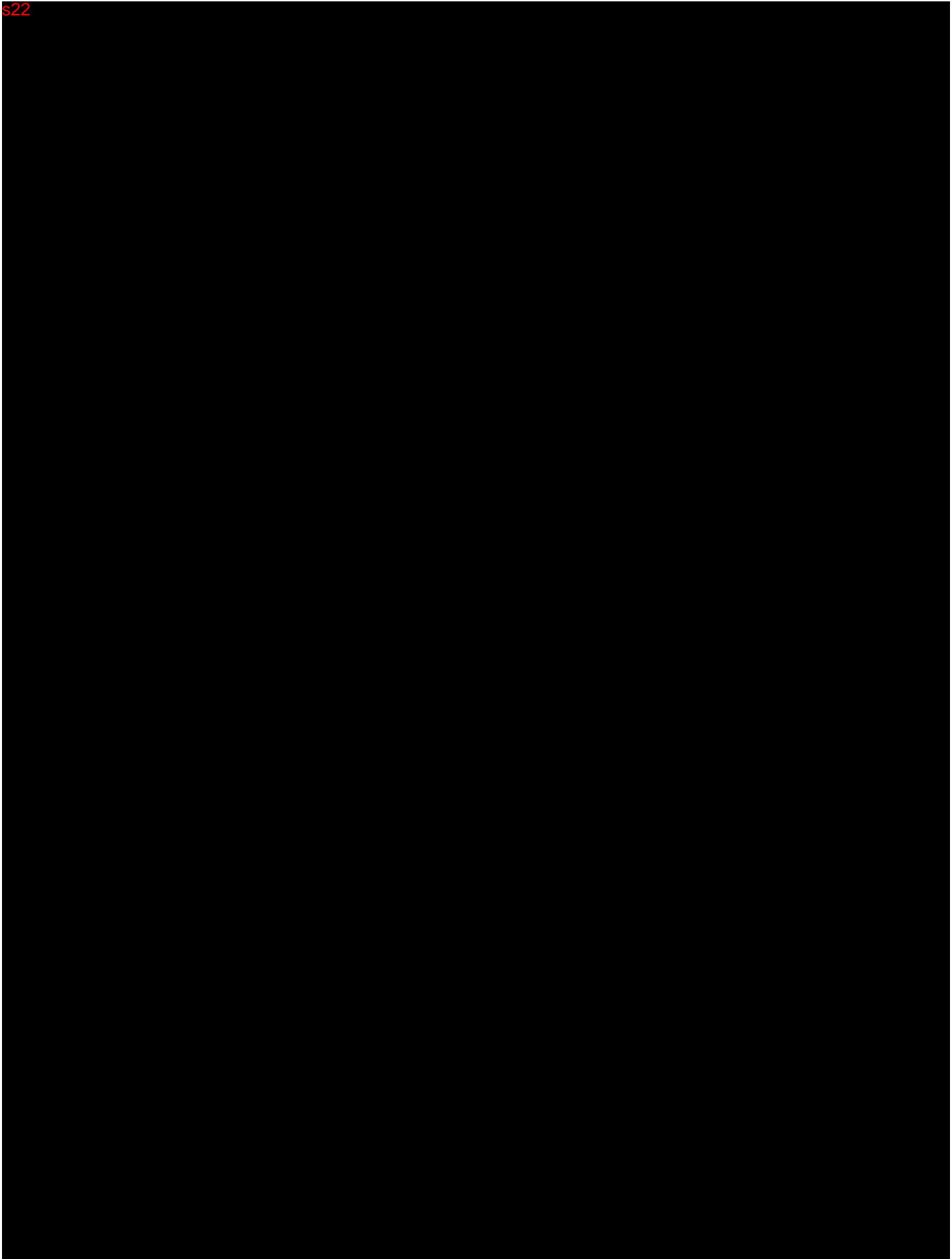


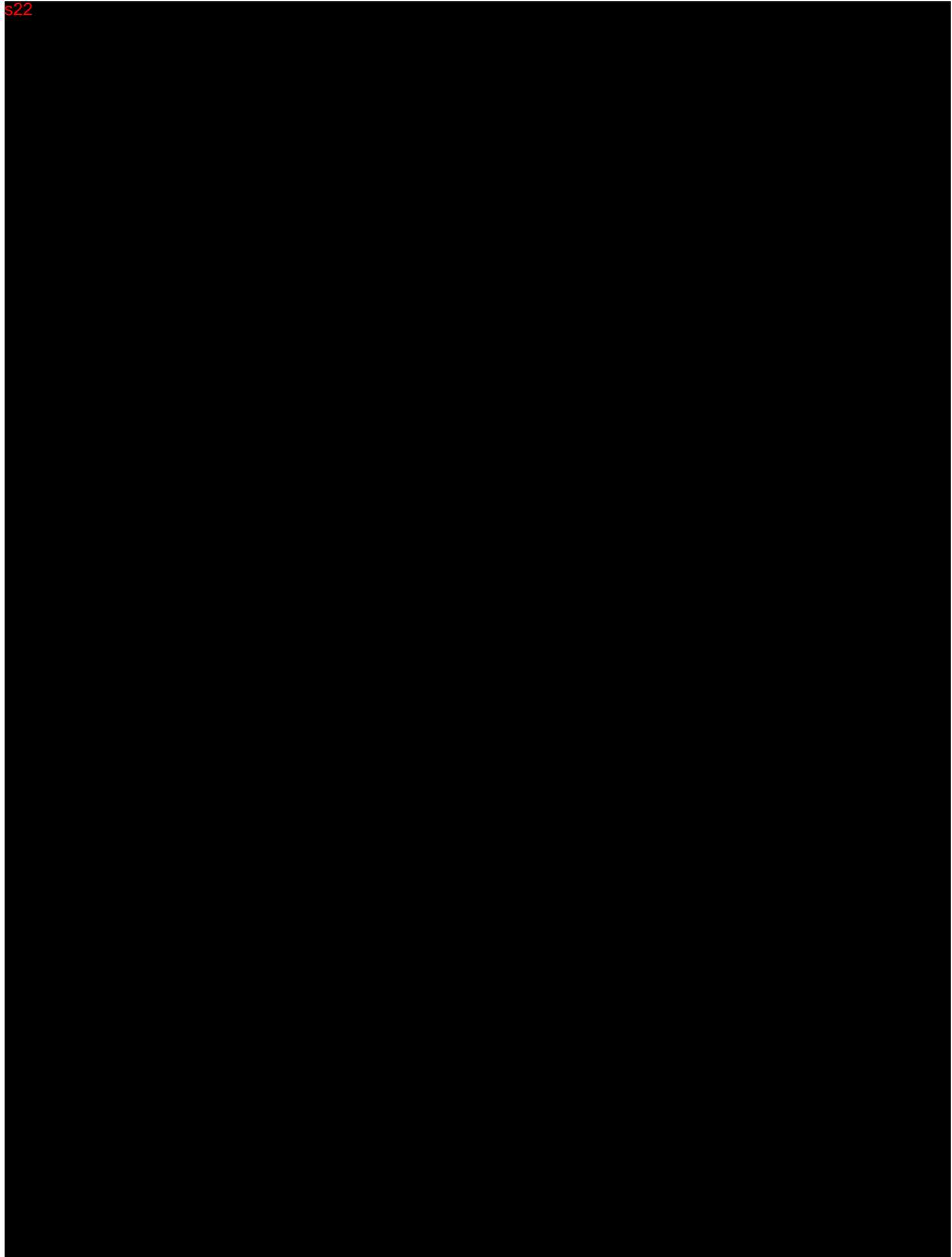
Annual Statement on APS Reform

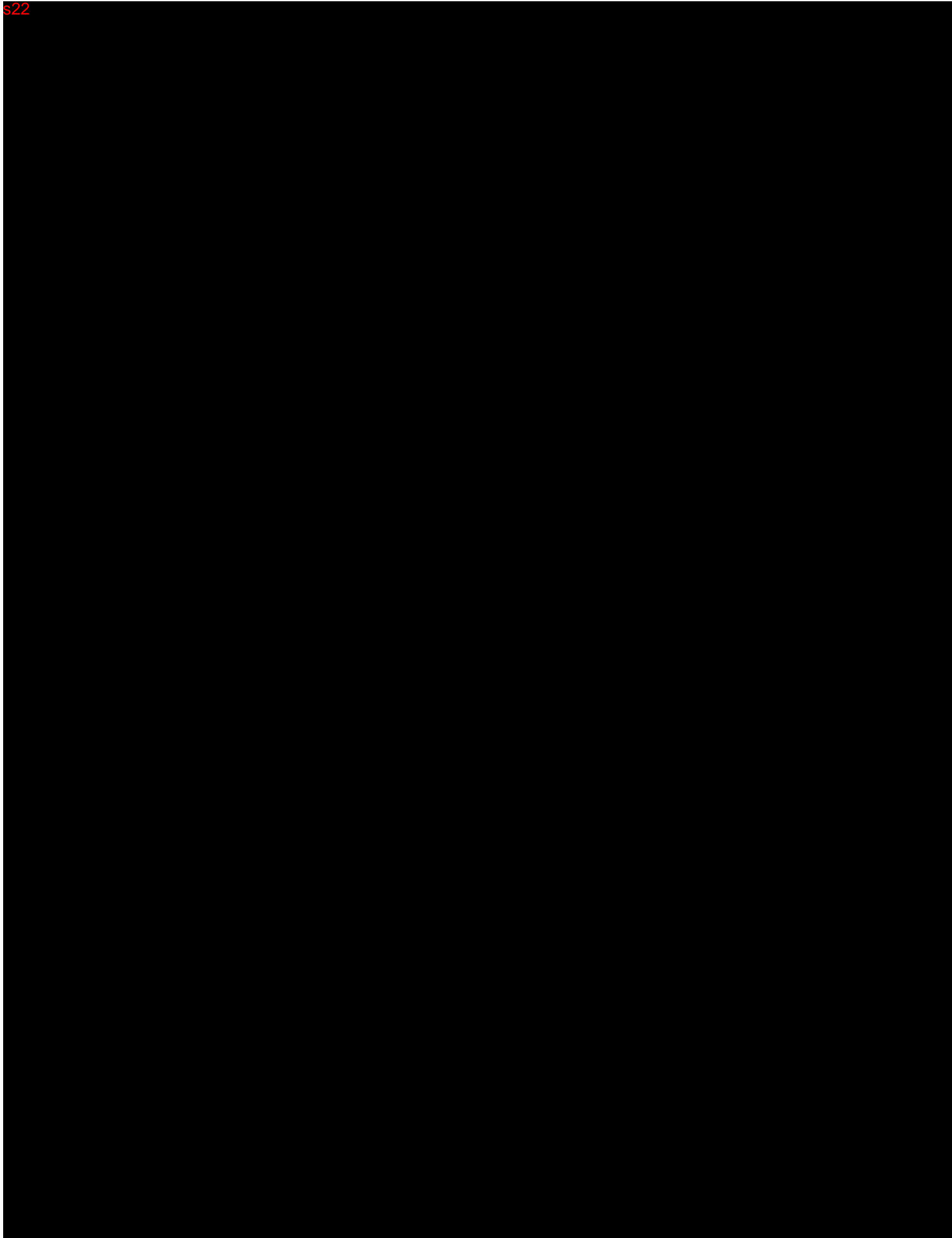
- At the beginning of November, Senator the Honourable Katy Gallagher, Minister for the Public Service, gave the first annual statement on APS Reform.

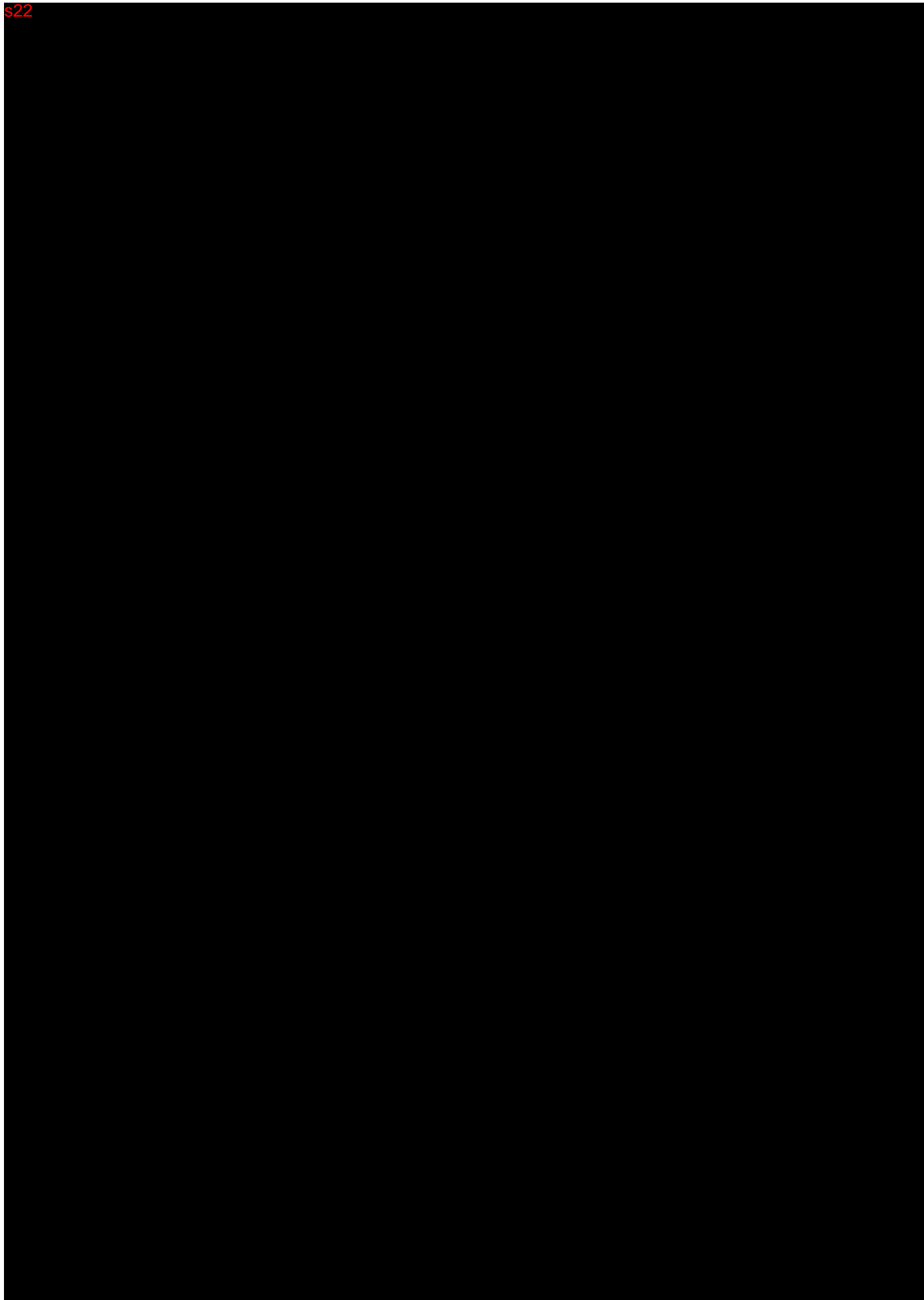
- The Minister provided an update on 44 initiatives which will ensure the APS;
 - puts customers at the centre of policy and services,
 - is a model employer,
 - has the capability to do its job well,
 - and embodies integrity in everything that it does.
- These changes are happening to make our public service stronger, now and into the future.
- As we have seen from the recent response to the Robodebt Royal Commission, when the public service does not act with integrity or in the best interest of the Australian public, significant damage can be done to people, community, and the reputation of our institutions.
- I am proud to be a public servant, and I encourage you all to have pride in what we do.
- One area of the APS Census which we have identified for future work is our sense of connectedness to the broader APS.
- I need you to understand that, as we have seen through APS Reform, as we will hear shortly about Enterprise Bargaining, IP Australia does not exist and operate in isolation.
- We are part of a broader machine serving Parliament and the Australian people, and like our colleagues across the APS, we are both bound and empowered by the priorities of Government.
- Bolstering integrity, building our skills, and delivering quality services to our customers set us up for greater success in a changing and challenging world.
- Keep an eye out for more information as these initiatives progress.

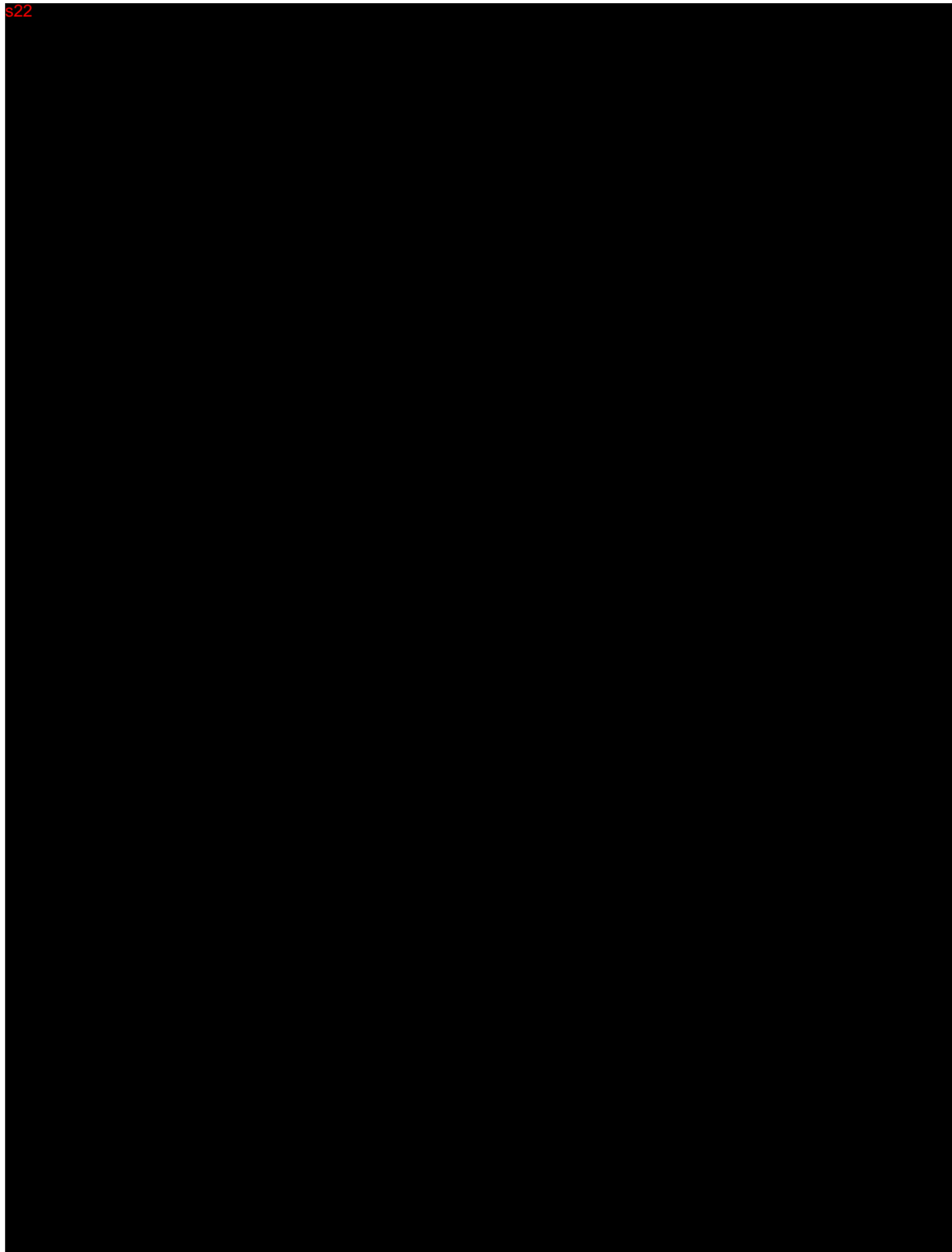


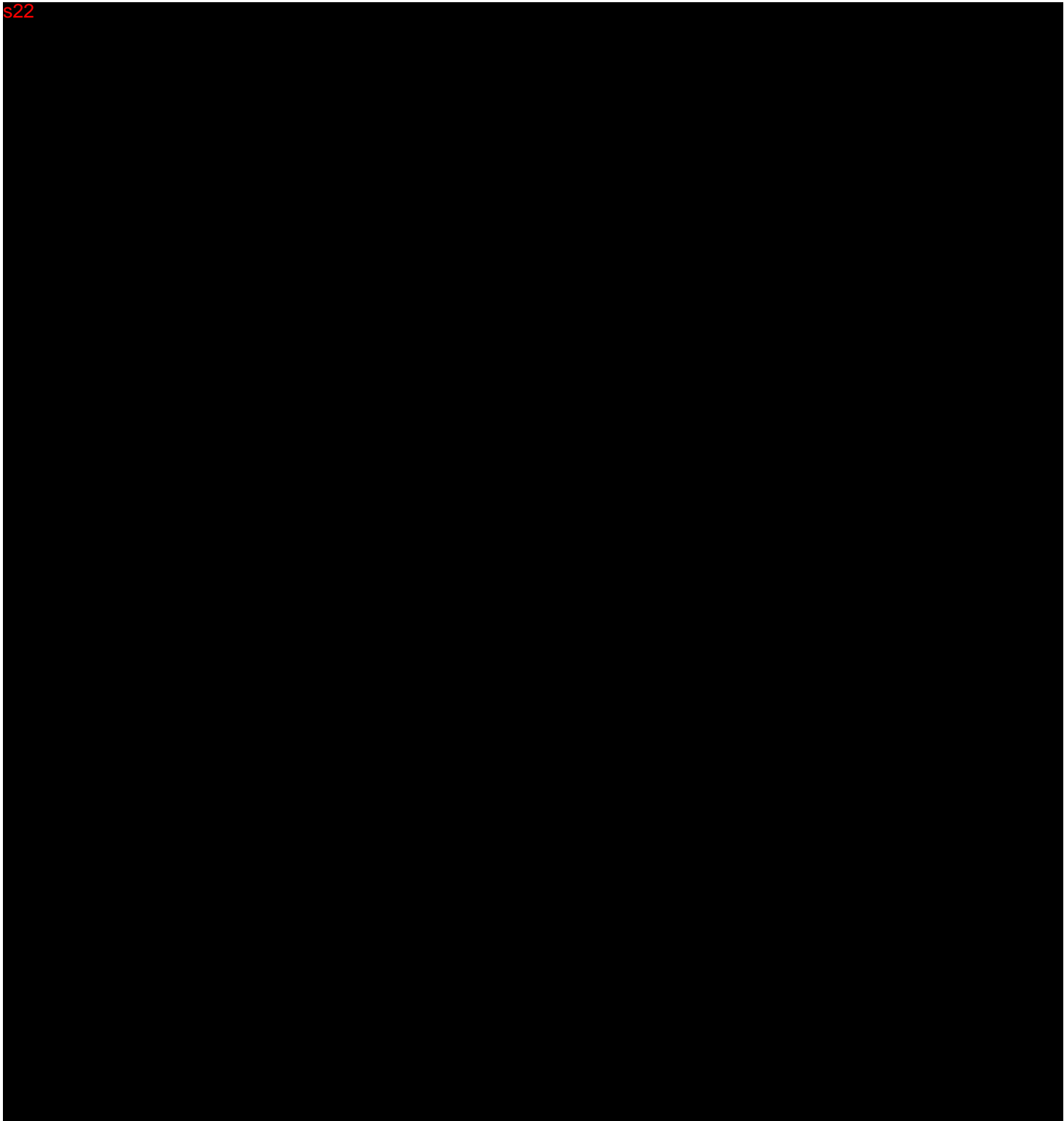












From: [Jennifer Hutchinson](#)
To: [DL-Executive-ALL STAFF](#)
Cc: [s22](#)
Subject: Robodebt Royal Commission - Final Report [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 7 July 2023 11:54:51 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

OFFICIAL

Hi all

As mentioned, the Robodebt report has been released and available below. There are 57 recommendations in total. Majority are directed to Services Australia and other oversight bodies, but many relevant/applicable to broader government practice. I'll pull together some highlights and share next week, noting a Government response is also expected.

[Report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme](#)

An extract from the preface below:

...as to how effective any recommended change can be, I want to make two points. First, whether a public service can be developed with sufficient robustness to ensure that something of the like of the Robodebt scheme could not occur again will depend on the will of the government of the day, because culture is set from the top down.

Second, politicians need to lead a change in social attitudes to people receiving welfare payments. The evidence before the Commission was that fraud in the welfare system was miniscule, but that is not the impression one would get from what ministers responsible for social security payments have said over the years. Anti-welfare rhetoric is easy populism, useful for campaign purposes. It is not recent, nor is it confined to one side of politics, as some of the quoted material in this report demonstrates. It may be that the evidence in this Royal Commission has gone some way to changing public perceptions. But largely, those attitudes are set by politicians, who need to abandon for good (in every sense) the narrative of taxpayer versus welfare recipient.

Thanks

Jen

Jennifer Hutchinson (she/her)

General Manager

Governance Group

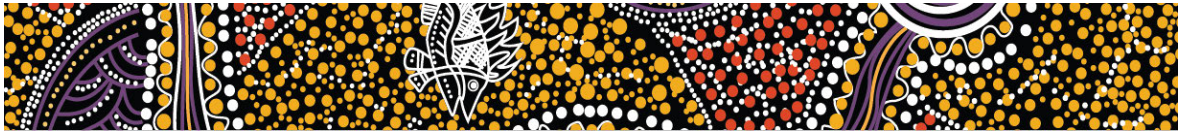
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on Ngunnawal country



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IP Australia acknowledges the rich contributions to innovation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made through 60,000 plus years of continuing lore and history. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our agency is located and where we conduct our business.

From: [Margaret Tregurtha](#)
To: [DL-Executive-ALL STAFF](#)
Cc: s22
Subject: FW: Robodebt Response and stocktake on automated decision-making [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 11 September 2023 6:16:40 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[23.09.07 Weekly AI Taskforce Report EXTERNAL.pdf](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image007.jpg](#)

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Dear All

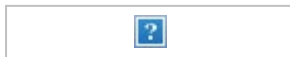
For your visibility:

As I mentioned last Friday there is a range of activity occurring under the AI Taskforce remit. The attached report gives you a snapshot.

Also we can expect a co-ord request re current uses of Automated Decision making and also AI uses cases. These are two separate things but there may be overlap.

We are well connected to this work through Alex and Alicja but now would be a good time to check in on progress with our review of our Automated Decision Making framework and how that fits in. [Mike – can you put this on your list for our next catch up. Thanks.]

Margaret Tregurtha (she/her)
Deputy Director General
IP Australia
on Ngunnawal country



P 02 6283 2344 | M 0412 581 258 | E margaret.tregurtha@ipaaustralia.gov.au
Visit us at <http://www.ipaaustralia.gov.au>

IP Australia is proud of our diverse and inclusive workplace where all employees feel respected and valued.

IP Australia acknowledges the rich contributions to innovation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made through 60,000 plus years of continuing lore and history. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our agency is located and where we conduct our business.

From: Lucy Poole <Lucy.Poole@dta.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 3:08 PM
Subject: Robodebt Response and stocktake on automated decision-making [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Colleagues

We are writing to you with a significant update relating to AI and automated decision-making in government for your awareness. We expect Secretary Quinn PSM and CEO Fechner will be writing out to Secretaries with further information shortly.

By way of background, in August following agreement by the Future of Work Sub-committee of the Secretaries Board, DISR and the DTA established a cross-agency AI in Government Taskforce (AI Taskforce). The AI Taskforce consists of 18 full and part-time secondees from 11 agencies and is developing a range of initiatives across four workstreams: governance and risk, use and adoption, sourcing and infrastructure, and resilience and scenario planning. This work will take place over a six-month period and is overseen by a cross-agency steering committee. The latest weekly report is attached for your interest and information.

Robodebt Response and stocktake on automated decision-making

We wanted to flag with you that there is an upcoming meeting of the Secretaries Board on 13 September where they will consider whether the AI Taskforce is the appropriate body to coordinate the identification and mapping of automated decision making (ADM) in the delivery of government services and payments, while advice is prepared for Government on implementation of Robodebt Royal Commission recommendation 17.1 on developing a consistent legal framework for ADM.

If the Secretaries Board agrees, the AI Taskforce is expected to return to the Board in November 2023 with an update on the stocktake. While this is still subject to consideration of the Secretaries Board, we wanted to give everyone a heads up on the proposed tasking which would mean we may seek your urgent support to collect the relevant information.

To enable the collection, we recognise that it will be critical that clear definitions and data parameters are developed to avoid unnecessary burden and wasted effort. The AI Taskforce will work with colleagues across the service on the design of the collection.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. The AI Taskforce can also be contacted at aitaskforce@dtg.gov.au if you would like to connect your teams into this work.

Kind regards

Lucy Poole and Anthony Murfett

	
	<p>Lucy Poole <i>(she/her/hers)</i> General Manager Digital Strategy, Architecture and Discovery Division Digital Transformation Agency</p> <p>Lucy.Poole@dtg.gov.au dtg.gov.au Ngunnawal Country 11 Moore Street, Canberra, ACT 2600 +61 427 276 578</p>

s22

s22



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7 September 2023

AI in Government Taskforce Weekly Report

Fortnightly/Weekly Update

Engagements this week	Use cases identified	Taskforce ASL	Next AI Steering Committee	Oct FoW Paper due to AI SC
21	35	14.6	30 Aug	22 Sep

- First meeting of Community of Practice on 6 September with 203 attendees from 270 sign ups representing over 50 agencies
- Initial meeting with advisory points of contact held 4 September
- Scoping & Infrastructure workstream developed tech stack and scenarios to support scoping work
- Use & Adoption workstream have begun outreach to collect use cases, piloting a use case catalogue
- Risk & Governance stream are drafting update to interim guidance based on existing and new feedback collected
- Resilience & scenario planning developing scope of work including mapping risks and resilience
- CRM and engagement plan completed

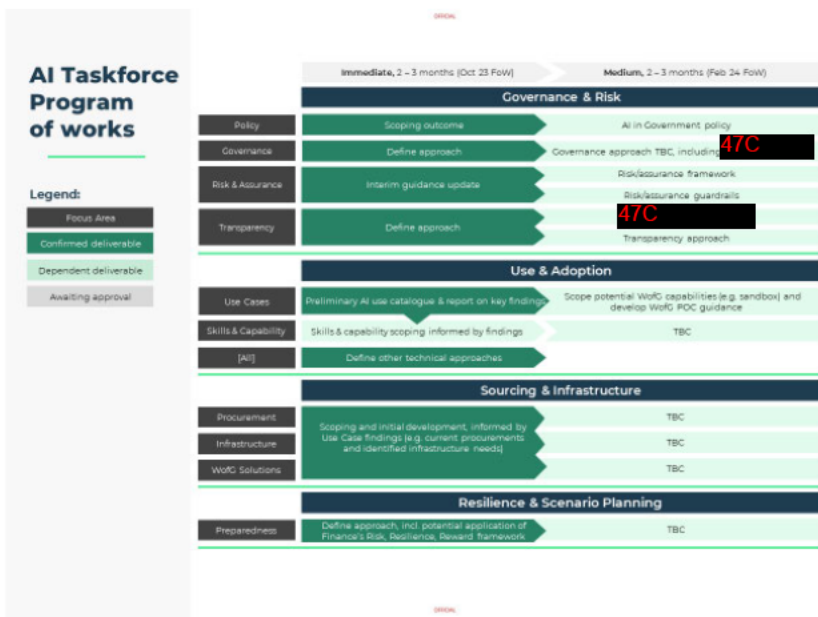
Executive Support Requests

Detail	Date required by
Encourage agencies to provide detailed use case and case study information and AI model risk management frameworks	As needed
Discussion and guidance on Sourcing & Infrastructure scoping	8 Sep
AGD points of contact at a working level and decision point on Robodebt linkages/ input to ADM catalogue	When available

Taskforce Staffing: 18 full/part time (14.6 ASL)

Commonwealth representation

- Taskforce members: 11 agencies
- + Advisory points of contact: 15 agencies
- + Community of practice: 53 agencies to date – first meeting 6 Sep



Governance & Risk

Focus area	Deliverable	Next Deadline	Update
Policy	Scoping outcome & draft policy	22 Sep	Iterating on the draft initial policy and scoping integration with streams
Risk	Draft risk & assurance approach	22 Sep	Drafting risk framework outline
Governance	Define approach	8 Sep	Initiated
Transparency	Define approach	30 Oct	Mechanism to be developed following Oct FoW

Use & Adoption

Focus area	Deliverable	Next Deadline	Update
Use cases	Preliminary AI use catalogue	22 Sep	Use case template developed. Targeted engagement to begin next week.
Skills & Capability	Inclusion of skills and capability scoping in use cases	22 Sep	Skills & capability included as a dedicated question in use case template to ensure capture
Use cases	WoG POC guidance	01 Dec	Connected with Services Australia's team developing AI strategy to share thinking.

Resilience & Scenario Planning

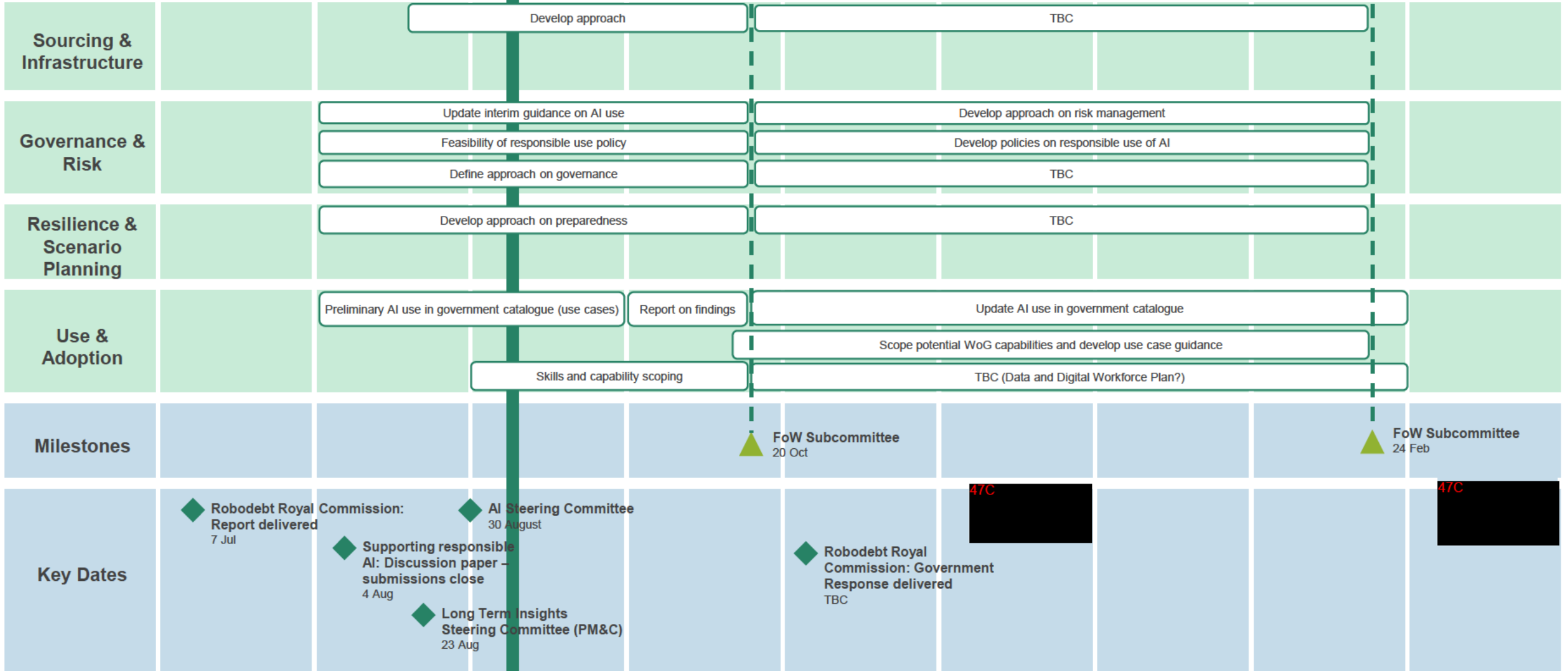
Focus area	Deliverable	Next Deadline	Update
Preparedness	Define Approach	22 Sep	Developing initial scope of work
Scenario Planning	Collecting scenarios for analysis	22 Sep	Initiated

Sourcing & Infrastructure

Focus area	Deliverable	Next Deadline	Update
Procurement	Mapping landscape	22 Sep	Initial meetings undertaken with large vendors, mapping of procurement issues beginning
Infrastructure	Define Approach	22 Sep	Mapping out dependencies and options to understand associated infrastructure needs / choices
WoG Solutions	Define Approach	22 Sep	Seeking guidance from Steering Committee re priorities

AI in Government Taskforce Timeline 2023-24

	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March



7 September 2023

AI Taskforce Program of works

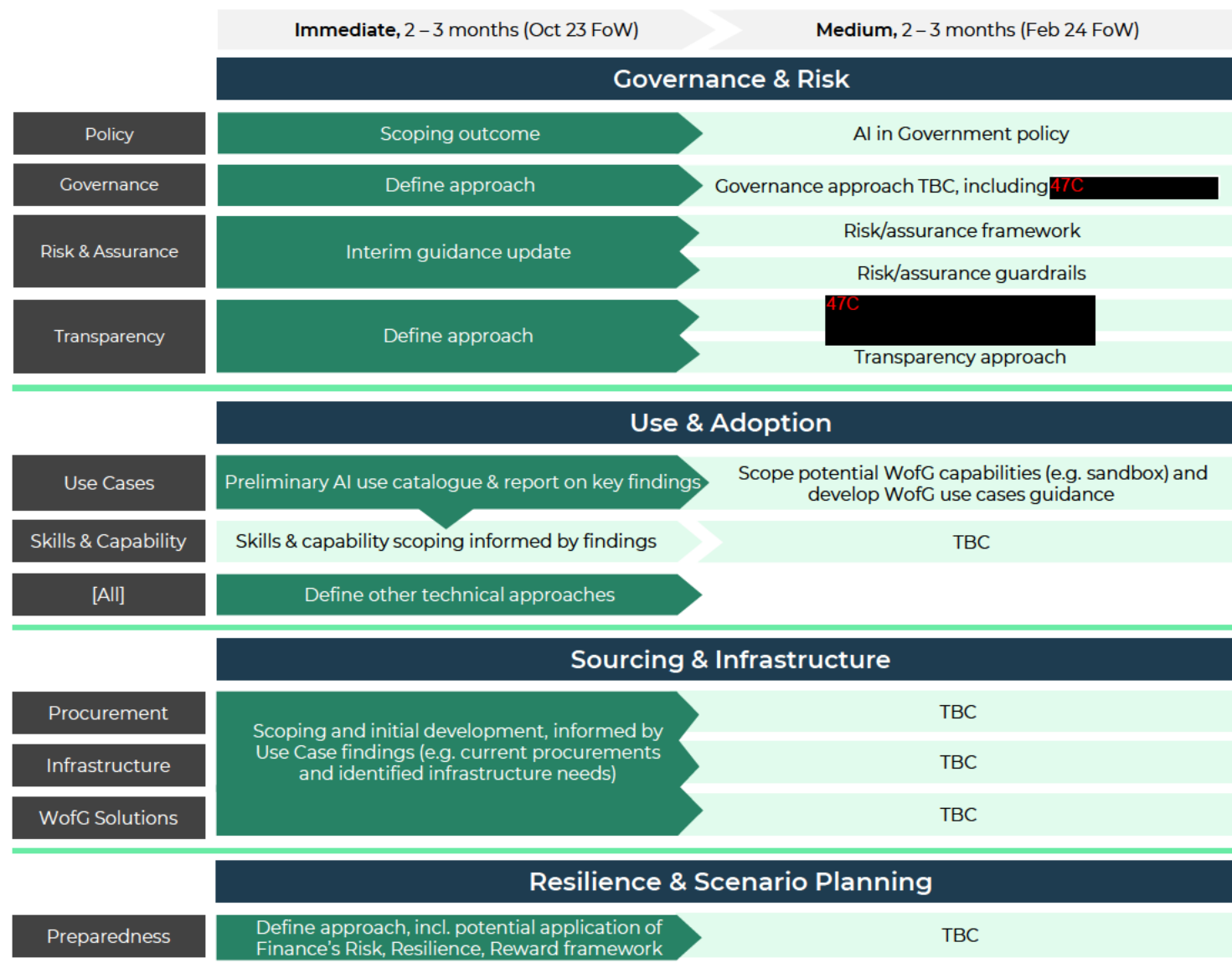
Legend:

Focus Area

Confirmed deliverable

Dependent deliverable

Awaiting approval



From: [Michael Schwager](#)
To: [DL-Executive-Executive Only-ALL STAFF](#)
Cc: [S22](#)
Subject: FOR SES ONLY: Release of the Government Response to the Robodebt Royal Commission Report – arrangements for directly impacted individuals and broader support for staff [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Tuesday, 14 November 2023 9:15:35 AM
Attachments: [SES Talking points - Robodebt Royal Commission Government Response.docx](#)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

The Government Response to the Robodebt Royal Commission was released overnight.

See below and attached. These are SES only TPs.

As far as we know there is no one in IP Australia directly affected.

Justine and the Comms team will be developing Agency wide comms for me, using this material from APSC.

Thanks

Michael Schwager (he/him)

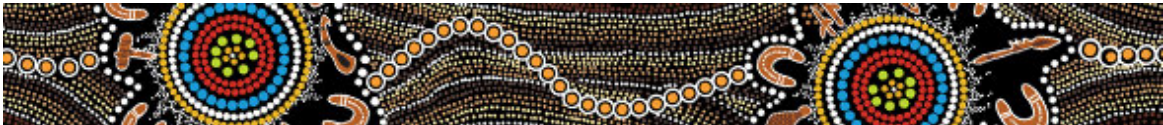
Director General

IP Australia

P: 02 6283 2000 | M: 0412 337 525 | E: Michael.Schwager@ipaustalia.gov.au

www.ipaustralia.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country



IP Australia acknowledges the rich contributions to innovation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made through 60,000 plus years of continuing lore and history. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our agency is located and where we conduct our business.

From: de Brouwer, Gordon <Gordon.deBrouwer@apsc.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, November 9, 2023 4:03 PM
Cc: Davis, Glyn <Glyn.Davis@pmc.gov.au>
Subject: Release of the Government Response to the Robodebt Royal Commission Report – arrangements for directly impacted individuals and broader support for staff [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Colleagues

The Government is finalising its response to the Robodebt Royal Commission Report and it will possibly be released next week.

The response addresses the 56 recommendations and the closing observations made by the Commissioner, Ms Catherine Holmes AC SC. It reiterates the Government's commitment to

restoring public trust and embedding reforms that put people at the centre and strengthen integrity.

The response is forward looking and heralds work that is being done to reform social security policy, government service delivery and the APS.

The response will bring renewed attention to the failings of public administration that enabled the Robodebt scheme and the damage caused to so many Australians.

Support for affected staff

This may cause distress for current and former staff members within your agency who were directly affected by the scheme. This includes staff who bravely appeared before the Royal Commission to tell their stories, gave evidence or made written submissions.

The wellbeing of staff is a priority.

Please put arrangements in place to support staff in your agency who may be directly affected. This includes, as appropriate, notifying them that the Government is finalising its response to the report, that the response may be released next week, and that wellbeing supports are available to them.

Support for staff undergoing investigations

Prior to the release, APSC wellbeing officers will contact all individuals, including former employees, who were referred to the centralised code of conduct mechanism by the Royal Commission, to ensure they are aware the response will be released, and are well supported. It is recommended that if you have current employees who have been referred to the Code of Conduct mechanism, your wellbeing officers make contact following the release of the Government response.

Support for staff more broadly

On the day of release, we will write to all APS staff to make them aware of the response, what it means for the APS and remind them where to go if they need support.

It's timely to remember that many other staff will find the release of the response challenging and upsetting. Please ensure suitable wellbeing services are available and staff know where to turn for support in your agency.

A set of talking points is attached to support SES and team leaders to initiate discussions with staff. Please share these with your leadership teams following the release of the report.

If you need further information or support in your agency, please get in touch.

Regards

Professor Glyn Davis AC
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Dr Gordon de Brouwer
Commissioner
Australian Public Service Commission

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EMBARGOED UNTIL ROBODEBT RESPONSE IS RELEASED**SES TALKING POINTS****GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE
ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE ROBODEBT SCHEME**

Background

- The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme was established on 18 August 2022. Ms Catherine Holmes AC SC was appointed as the Commissioner.
- Over the course of its inquiry, the Royal Commission published over 8,000 exhibits, and heard from over 100 witnesses across nine weeks of public hearings. It brought to light the harm caused to affected members of the Australian community.
- The Royal Commission delivered a report with its findings to the Governor-General on 7 July 2023.
- The final report is published on the Royal Commission's website.
- In response to the Royal Commission's recommendations, the Government formed a taskforce with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Attorney General's Department and the Australian Public Service Commission.
- The Government Response has now been released.
- The talking points below are to support SES officers and other leaders in talking to staff about the Robodebt Royal Commission and the Government response.

Talking points**Release of the Government's Robodebt Royal Commission Response**

- The Australian Government has carefully considered the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme report and has released its response, available at www.pmc.gov.au.
- The Government accepts or accepts in-principle, all 56 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.
- The Royal Commission heard from over 100 witnesses across nine weeks of public hearings. It brought to light the harm caused to affected members of the Australian community.
- It exposed failures in the APS and it was a hard lesson for us, one we aren't shying away from.
- We know there were failures of leadership and judgement and that people felt they couldn't speak up, or weren't listened to.
- It's important to remember, at the same time many good people were trying to do the right thing.
- You matter, your work matters, and your integrity matters.
- The response will likely bring renewed attention to the Robodebt scheme and the harm it caused to many Australians.
- Many people in the community and APS staff were affected by the Robodebt Scheme and many bravely gave evidence to the Royal Commission.

EMBARGOED UNTIL ROBODEBT RESPONSE IS RELEASED

EMBARGOED UNTIL ROBODEBT RESPONSE IS RELEASED

The wellbeing of our staff

- You may be experiencing a range of emotions in response to the renewed attention on Robodebt.
- The wellbeing of our people is our top priority.
- APS staff can be proud of the work they do to support the community and serve the Government.
- The events surrounding the Robodebt Scheme affected many APS staff.
- Some may have had close involvement with the Royal Commission.
- Some may have been personally affected by the Robodebt Scheme.
- Some may feel a direct impact as a public servant because we take pride in delivering for the community and upholding the APS Values each day.
- Speak to your manager, a friend or family member if you are feeling upset or distressed.
- Ask for help if you need it. Support is available for you through agency wellbeing support services like the Employee Assistance Program.
- Other support is also available for staff who are experiencing distress.
 - [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) – Provides immediate, short-term counselling, advice and referral services. Phone 1300 224 636, [webchat](#), or search their [forum](#) for free.
 - [Lifeline Crisis Support](#) – This is a confidential service providing you with support for when you feel overwhelmed, for when you have difficulty coping, or are thinking about suicide. Phone 13 11 14 or chat to a [crisis supporter online](#).
 - [13YARN](#) – Provides crisis support for First Nations people. Phone 13 92 76 or view their services online at www.13yarn.org.au.
- I encourage you to read the Response and discuss it in your teams.
- It's important we are all part of leading the change we want to see and building a stronger APS.

Where to next

- Confidential processes are underway to ensure that public servants are appropriately held to account if they have not met their obligations as professional public servants.
- Work is also underway to implement the report's recommendations.
- Achieving real change will mean a commitment from all of us about how we go about our work.
- There will be a focus on integrity and accountability, and how we can bring empathy and understanding to the way we engage with people and communities.
- There will also be changes to process and a bigger focus on proper decision-making and record keeping, and enhanced statutory powers for oversight bodies.
- This complements other reform work underway, like the APS Reform program and other reforms that focus on building a strong public service that puts people at the centre.
- Across the APS, there is a strong push to elevate the importance of integrity in everything the APS does – both at the systemic and individual levels.
- There will be many opportunities ahead to boost capability and integrity through the recommendations and the APS Reform program.
- Through the response the Government has committed to ensuring that the APS works in partnership with the community to improve the lives of Australians and deliver better services.

EMBARGOED UNTIL ROBODEBT RESPONSE IS RELEASED