

**ITEM            COMMUNICATING WITH COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENTS**

**POLICY**      Initial contact at ministerial level on any policy matter will be made with State Governments by correspondence addressed to the Premier and signed personally by the Chief Minister. Subsequent contacts may be made on a minister-to-minister basis.

Initial contact on any policy matter with the Commonwealth Government will be made by the Chief Minister with the Prime Minister. Subsequent contacts may be made on a minister-to-minister basis.

Ministers may correspond directly with their Commonwealth and State counterparts on routine matters associated with the administration of their portfolios.

Public servants are not to sign correspondence addressed to ministers.

Relevant documents and statements should be borne in mind when preparing correspondence for signature by the Chief Minister or ministers to their Commonwealth Government counterparts. Thought should be given to whether appropriate references could be used to reinforce the Northern Territory Government position on the particular subject matter.

**Contact at departmental level**

Initial contact with State departments on any policy matter at officer level will be made by correspondence addressed to the Secretary of the Premier's Department, or her or his equivalent, and signed by the Secretary of the Chief Minister's Department. Subsequent contacts may be on a Departmental Head to Permanent Head basis.

Initial contact with Commonwealth departments on any policy matter will be made by the Secretary of the Chief Minister's Department who will determine if it should be addressed to the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, or to the Permanent Head of the department responsible for a particular function. Subsequent contacts may be on a Departmental Head to Permanent Head basis. It is important to be aware of federal policies and to make reference as appropriate

Departmental Heads may correspond with their Commonwealth and State counterparts on routine matters affecting their departments. They may also authorise senior officers of their departments to contact Commonwealth and State counterparts on specified matters of an operational nature.

Employees at any level should not commence correspondence on any new matter directly with the Northern Territory Branch of any Commonwealth instrumentality without the approval of the head office of that instrumentality. However, in the interests of speed and efficiency, every effort should be made to obtain approvals for direct local contact in appropriate cases and existing operational contacts should be maintained.

### **Contact by statutory authorities**

Chief Executive Officers of statutory authorities should contact State and Commonwealth authorities and departments in the same manner as for contacts at the departmental level. Chief Executive Officers should not write directly to Commonwealth or State Ministers.

### **Financial matters**

It is emphasised that all departments and statutory authorities in dealing with financial matters should seek the advice and assistance of Treasury before firm recommendations are formulated. It is important in dealing with matters relating to finance, and in particular those relating to the *Memorandum of Understanding*, that the views of Treasury be sought at the earliest possible date.

Matters which have financial implications with the Commonwealth arising from either the *Memorandum of Understanding* and/or where there is no established precedent should be discussed with Treasury officials in the first instance.

The *Cabinet Handbook* states that any proposal with implications for Commonwealth, State and Local Government relations should be referred to Cabinet.

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