

CABINET

Cabinet is a committee of government ministers chaired by the Prime Minister. It is the main decision making body of the executive government. The ministry includes about thirty members and senators. Cabinet includes about seventeen senior ministers. Only cabinet ministers attend cabinet meetings unless there is a specific matter that requires the presence of junior ministers. All cabinet discussions and decisions are secret although records of cabinet meetings are opened to the public after thirty years.

In cabinet meetings, ministers introduce proposals for new bills from their departments. The cabinet discusses proposals for new bills — especially the costs — and recommends to the minister whether a bill should proceed or further changes should be made. Sometimes the cabinet sets up a sub-committee of ministers to examine an issue in greater detail. Cabinet spends a lot of time discussing current national problems and how they can be solved through legislation or other means such as regulations.

Cabinet makes decisions in different ways depending on how the Prime Minister chairs the meeting. Some Prime Ministers use a democratic vote to decide an issue. Other Prime Ministers prefer to try and reach a consensus decision.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provides all the technical, legal and other expert advice for the Cabinet to operate effectively.

Cabinet usually meets in the Cabinet room in Parliament House on Mondays, although it may meet at any other time if there is a lot of business. Sometimes the cabinet meets in other locations, especially in Sydney and Melbourne.

Cabinet is accountable to Parliament for the running of the government. The Parliament scrutinises the ministers and the government during Question Time each day in both chambers, as well as twice a year in estimates committees.

The Cabinet Room is located on the ground floor in Parliament House opposite the Prime Minister's office and close to the offices of the other ministers. The room is highly secure and is regularly swept electronically, and mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices cannot be used. High security is essential because the cabinet discusses confidential and secret matters that affect the life and well-being of the nation.



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The Cabinet in the Cabinet Room