



Australian Government



Services  
Australia

## Meeting of the Interim Services Australia Independent Advisory Board

Friday 31 May 2024

Meeting for the fifth time, members of the Interim Independent Advisory Board explored several key areas where Services Australia is seeking to ensure the customer experience is supported, safe and positive. This included:

- helping people to manage their payments, so they are paid the right payment, at the right amount at the right time.
- reforming the Centrepay voluntary free bill paying service offered by Services Australia for Centrelink customers.
- enhancing functionality and security in the myGov platform.

In discussion with the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Government Services, members acknowledged the significant funding for Services Australia in the 2024-25 Budget. They spoke about how that investment can be leveraged to maintain and lift the customer experience—whilst also bolstering staff capability in a safe working environment.

Reflecting on their advocacy for agency funding and performance across all channels, but particularly in the digital stream, members were pleased to hear that:

- as recommended in the myGov Audit, myGov will be supported as critical national infrastructure with an investment of \$630 million over 4 years and \$145 million per year ongoing. This will help make myGov the go-to place for digital government services and communications.
- the myGov funding will provide:
  - better messaging capability and clearer myGov Inbox notifications
  - stronger fraud prevention controls
  - better security features, including a personalised security dashboard, to help people keep their accounts secure.
- Services Australia will receive \$1.8 billion over 3 years to bolster the delivery of timely and effective customer and payment services.
- an additional \$314 million for staff safety initiatives will be part of the Government's commitment to addressing all 44 recommendations of the Ashton security review.

Board members welcomed the announcement of a four-year Independent Advisory Board to build on contribution of the interim Board. At their next meeting, members will recommend the work to be taken forward by the Independent Advisory Board to maintain momentum and ensure the Board can influence on high value and transformative work.

### **Payment accuracy**

Board members were briefed on how Services Australia supports payment accuracy for customers through upfront and ongoing prevention, education, and early intervention strategies. Members heard

how these strategies target known risks and embed an upfront payment accuracy culture, with examples including:

- using pre-filled information, such as Single Touch Payroll, to help address employment income risk
- proactively nudging customers to support timely updates to changes in circumstances, and
- implementing customer-centric design principles across new initiatives.

Members reflected on the potential of significant reforms that could go some way to addressing reasons that contribute to payment inaccuracy. For example, exploring what it means to be an individual or in a relationship based on modern construct of society versus when the legislative definitions were formed, having a common definition of income as well as exploring broad concepts like universal basic income.

Members acknowledged the role of Services Australia was to administer payments on behalf of Department of Social Services (DSS) and in that context reflected on some practical considerations on how the agency can help provide people with financial education and processes to ensure they get the right payment, at the right time.

Members provided views across design, prioritisation, positioning, and delivery of high-value, high-impact payment accuracy initiatives that:

- enhance the customer experience and improve payment accuracy.
- streamline complex policy into simple, helpful, respectful, transparent services.
- identify existing consent models and reuse opportunity across government services.

The Board encouraged the agency to return after considering the advice and shape the concepts that could be developed into trials to further support prevention, education and early intervention strategies.

### ***Centrepay Services***

Board members heard how Services Australia is improving the Centrepay program to support and protect customers. Members also engaged with a small group of sector advocates on their experience and views on the reform efforts. This allowed the Board to view firsthand how Services Australia is working with stakeholders to respond to concerns and co-design solutions.

Board members then provided insights and advice on the role of government in operating a service like Centrepay, and how to place customers—particularly vulnerable customers—at the centre of the program so the service is safe, simple and accessible.

Members commented:

- the reform efforts are challenging, but critical to ensure the government improves protections for customers and the compliance of Centrepay businesses.
- there is no place for predatory or unethical businesses in the Centrepay model.
- a clearer and more accessible complaints process is needed.
- the long term goal of government and the community should be to support and enhance individual financial literacy and capability.

The Board acknowledged the work to establish the public consultation process on the Centrepay Reform Discussion Paper, and the Community Town Hall sessions to hear directly from customers and community groups in remote and regional communities on how they use Centrepay.

### ***myGov and digital updates***

Board members were updated on strong progress toward the release of myGov Passkeys functionality in June, with insights from the private beta testing revealing a positive track toward those willing to adopt the security feature and insights into the connection between understanding the value proposition and who is providing the messaging impacting a willingness to adopt.

Members advised the importance of the public release scheduled for later this month continues to be treated as a learning phase with it's release being a public beta.

Members spoke with Services Australia about the outcomes from the Federal Budget for Digital ID, including funding to continue to support and enable the Australian Government Digital ID System. The Board intend to work further with the Digital ID Expert Panel to scope and influence opportunities for government to provide convenient, connected and safe functionality for a digital wallet and verifiable credentials.

Members also acknowledged the investment Services Australia received to support Census 2026 and looks forward to advising the agency on this as it progresses towards design with ABS.