

Reform Progress 2011: Highlights

Each year, the COAG Reform Council publicly reports on the aggregate pace of activity in progressing COAG's agreed reform agenda—the most comprehensive economic, social and environmental reform agenda ever pursued cooperatively by all nine Australian governments. The COAG reform agenda is underpinned by a new approach to federal financial relations.

This year we have examined:

- whether key reform commitments are being met
- whether key indicators are showing signs of progress towards COAG's goals
- progress towards realising the principles of the new approach to federal financial relations

Full reports for 2010 and 2011 are available on our website at www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au

Most reform commitments are on schedule

- Based on COAG's own timeframes, 20 of the 26 key reform commitments we assessed are on schedule.
- Some key achievements to date include:
 - initiating the Australian Consumer Law and product safety regime
 - establishing a national registration and accreditation scheme for health professionals
 - signing three intergovernmental transport agreements on heavy vehicles, rail safety and maritime safety
 - implementing literacy and numeracy reforms in over 1000 schools, including approximately 400 000 students
 - providing 41 584 additional elective surgery procedures in 2008
 - upgrading infrastructure and equipment in 129 hospitals
 - purchasing, building or allocating 289 dwellings for homeless people
 - completing 490 new houses and refurbishing 2 288 houses for Indigenous Australians in 2010-11.
- There have been delays with:
 - the National Rental Affordability Scheme
 - improving the availability of social housing
 - improving the energy efficiency of buildings and households.



<p>There are promising early signs of progress towards high-level goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the available performance data, it is too early to draw any firm conclusions about progress towards the high-level goals of the COAG reform agenda. • There are, however, some good early signs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improvements in literacy for all students in years 3, 5 and 7 – improvements in reading for Indigenous students in years 3 and 7 – increasing immunisation rates for children aged five – a reduction in the mortality rate for Indigenous children under five. • We expect the data set for 21 key indicators to be much richer in future years. This will allow us to provide a more comprehensive picture of progress toward the goals of COAG’s reform agenda.
<p>Governments have also made significant progress towards upholding the principles of the new approach to federal financial relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments have made good progress in developing new reforms with a rigorous focus on outcomes and clear roles and responsibilities. • Stronger financial incentives—in particular reward funding in National Partnerships—are helping governments to implement ambitious reforms. • Performance reporting is generally simpler, standardised, more transparent and outcomes focussed.
<p>COAG is already working to improve the way governments are implementing these principles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments are addressing problems with data quality and availability, improving the specification of outcomes and indicators, clarifying roles and responsibilities and monitoring concerns over input controls. • COAG is improving the way it monitors reform commitments and examining ways to improve the framework for federal financial relations and the way governments report progress.
<p>COAG now needs to drive cultural change and actively promote the agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To fully reap the benefits of this new approach to federal financial relations, we recommend that COAG: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promotes the reform agenda and drives cultural change in government – makes the reform agenda more transparent and accessible – tackles design and implementation issues for National Partnerships.

