



Australian Government

Department of Health  
and Aged Care

## Executive Minute

### Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Report 502: The never-ending quest for the golden thread

- The Committee recommends that the Secretary of the Department of Health and Aged Care formally reviews the appropriateness of the 'congestion busting' awards in light of the ANAO report, and considers whether the awards for this project should be revoked, in particular from senior officers involved.*

#### Response

Agreed in principle.

The Department of Health and Aged Care agrees with the premise of the JCPAA's recommendation. Under no circumstances should Commonwealth officials receive awards for work that does not meet appropriate ethical and legal standards.

The awards referenced in the Auditor-General Report no.31 of 2022/23 were a team award for Excellence in Service from the department's 2020 Annual Secretary's Awards. This award went to a group of 32 staff who worked collaboratively to implement grants under the Community Health and Hospitals Program. The recipients of the award were mostly junior staff, and not the senior staff identified in the Auditor-General's report as failing to comply with finance law. For these reasons, there is limited benefit in revoking the award.

In response to the Auditor-General's report, the department has implemented a range of integrity measures including; establishing the Integrity and Assurance Division, developing an Integrity Policy and Framework, establishing an Integrity Hub consolidating integrity resources and creating mandatory SES integrity training. In addition, I recently sent a message to all-staff reinforcing the importance of integrity, transparency and accountability at work to ensure integrity is central to our culture and all decision-making.



Blair Comley PSM

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