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1. Overview

1.1 Welcome!

Congratulations on your appointment as a Departmental Liaison Officer (DLO). You are now part of the Government Relations branch within Office of the Secretary (OSec).

DLOs have a unique opportunity to see how the work carried out across Transport for NSW (TfNSW) influences the decisions of Government.

The role of a DLO is important and challenging. This fast-paced, dynamic position provides staff with an opportunity to form new and influential working relationships across Government as well as develop a deep understanding of how NSW Parliament, Government and Ministerial offices (MO) operate. It also provides an opportunity to improve on your knowledge of the key issues and priorities of the Transport portfolios.

A DLO role is an extremely valuable development opportunity, and can significantly enhance your skills and experience. As a DLO, you are instrumental in the delivery of timely, accurate and responsive advice to the Transport portfolio MOs as well as ensure effective relationships and appropriate communication between TfNSW and the Ministerial offices.

1.2 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and support to DLOs in fulfilling their role and responsibilities. It provides best practice for DLOs and a consistent approach to meeting the expectations and standards of MOs. The Handbook documents the key functions, policies and procedures, and other relevant information for a new DLO.

DLOs should familiarise themselves with the contents of this Handbook prior to commencing their assignment or as soon as practical after their commencement date.

The Handbook aligns with the overarching NSW Government policy around DLOs as articulated in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) Circular – C2021-07 Departmental Liaison Officers.

Content within the Handbook is continually monitored and updated as new processes and directions are received from the MOs and within TfNSW. Please note, the specific roles and responsibilities of the Transport portfolio DLOs may vary according to the requirements of individual portfolio Ministers and their advisors but in accordance with C2021-07 Departmental Liaison Officers, DLOs must remain politically neutral and impartial while assisting the Minister and his/her staff, and must avoid party political activities in the performance of their duties.

Any queries regarding the Handbook should be directed to the Senior Manager, Office of the Secretary (governmentrelations@transport.nsw.gov.au).

1.3 Our Ministers

The make up of portfolio Ministers changes over time. The structure and number of Cabinet ministers will vary based on the needs of the Premier of the day.

Currently, the Transport portfolio reports to three Ministers:



The Hon. Jo Haylen MP
Minister for Transport
Member of the Legislative Assembly; Member for Summer Hill
Further details: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/Member-details.aspx?pk=111>

The Hon. John Graham MLC
Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism

visits, House Folder Notes, Budget Estimates notes, questions on with and without notice

- Provide sound parliamentary support on policy and legislation, and review correspondence, briefing notes, meeting briefs and speeches for accuracy and consistency with Government policy, legislation, and current position and messaging
- Manage the workflow of correspondence in the MO and review incoming Ministerial correspondence, liaise with relevant Divisions regarding responses
- Maintain excellent working relationships with TNSW and other ministerial offices
- Monitor emerging issues, trends and changes in the environment to anticipate shifts in the information and knowledge management needs of the MO, and to proactively meet stakeholder and customer requests.

Key challenges:

- Deliver high quality products and services within a high volume, high pressure environment to strict deadlines and with limited resources
- Ability to exercise judgment and discharge tasks with a high level of confidentiality and discretion
- Operate in a politically sensitive environment in which deadlines and priorities change at short notice.

DLOs may be asked to undertake additional duties in the course of their assignment by either the MO or TNSW. Duties must be apolitical in nature and any concerns should be raised with the Senior Manager, Office of the Secretary.

DLOs have a duty to respond promptly and professionally to MO requests for advice in ways which are consistent with the relevant policies and procedures of TNSW. Where a DLO cannot resolve an issue which arises in their dealings with MO staff, they should promptly refer the issue to the Senior Manager, Office of the Secretary, who can manage or escalate it directly.

A DLO should not:

- Carry out policy development or research work
- Prepare speeches, media releases, ministerial statements, parliamentary questions and answers or other similar documents
- Organise meetings or events with external stakeholders on behalf of the Minister or their office
- Institute communication with external parties, including Members of Parliament or other MOs (excluding liaising with DLOs in other MOs to facilitate liaison with Departments/agencies)
- Be involved in electorate office matters or any other party political activities.

3. Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW's role is to set the strategic direction for transport across the State.

This involves consolidating the planning, policy, strategy, regulation, resource allocation, and other service and non-service delivery functions for all modes of transport in NSW.

This work supports the safe and seamless movement of people and goods on roads, metro services, trains, buses, ferries, light rail, point to point transport vehicles, on demand services, community transport, and walking and cycling.

TNSW also oversees the delivery of transport infrastructure across NSW through our project experts and industry partners.

3.1 Transport portfolio operating model

The Transport portfolio is made up of an extended network of Government agencies and independent entities which work together to deliver transport services and infrastructure.

Private Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the Minister's Cabinet file and other confidential papers Maintain the Minister's diary and arrange necessary appointments Liaise with other Ministers, members of Parliament, agency staff and members of the community
Administrative Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate the Chief of Staff's diary and appointments; administrative support to the chief of staff; relieve receptionist when necessary Liaise with other staff regarding allocation of work Coordinate requests for briefing notes, speech notes, etc Liaise with other Ministers' offices and members of Parliament on behalf of the Chief of Staff
Receptionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General administration, office management, handle enquiries, receive visitors, arrange appointments
Parliamentary Liaison Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge and skills relating to the operations of Parliament, liaises with Parliament and departments regarding the Minister's needs for Parliament

5. Parliament

The Parliament of New South Wales is the law-making body for the State of New South Wales, directly elected by the people to make state laws, control state finances, and discuss matters of importance to the people of New South Wales. It consists of two democratically elected Houses:

- Legislative Assembly (Lower House)
- Legislative Council (Upper House).

Parliamentary elections determine the State Government which is formed by the party with majority support in the Lower House. Functions of Parliament includes:

- Forming Government
- Making laws
- Representing voters and citizens
- Scrutiny of the Government.

It is highly recommended DLOs familiarise themselves with the Parliament of New South Wales' How Parliament Works resource and the below information as soon as practical:

Legislative Assembly	NSW Legislative Assembly Practice Procedure and By-laws
	A Typical Sitting Week
	Parliamentary Committees
Legislative Council	NSW Legislative Council Practice Procedure and By-laws
	A Typical Sitting Week
	Parliamentary Committees

At the completion of a DLO assignment, DLOs return to the substantive role they held prior to the assignment.

6.4 Work hours and location

DLOs do not have to complete timesheets due to the irregular hours which DLOs may work. There is an option to place a flexsheet on hold for the duration of the DLO assignment by emailing a request via Transport Equip, this will negate back capture of times upon a DLO's return to TfNSW and cease email reminders about flexsheets.

Due to IT firewalls and restricted access of Ministerial emails and datasets, flexible work arrangements are subject to the operational requirements of MOs and the approval of the relevant MO CoS.

In most cases, DLOs are required to be physically present at the MO to deal with unexpected and urgent issues. Any working from home arrangements will be in accordance with office and business practices within the MO. The DLO may be required to work from two locations – Ministerial offices at 52 Martin Place and NSW Parliament on Macquarie Street.

6.5 Leave

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for the efficient operation and to ensure the best performance from DLOs. Attendance is managed in accordance with Transport awards.

All leave must be recorded to ensure accurate records are maintained in Transport Equip. The Senior Manager Office of the Secretary is responsible for approving all requests for leave in Transport Equip (including annual leave and sick leave).

Planned leave

All requests for leave must be discussed with both the MO CoS and the Senior Manager Office of the Secretary prior to applying in Transport Equip. This allows for better planning of relief DLO arrangements.

DLOs should then request / notify the MO CoS (or other designated person in the MO) in their MO via email. Once approved by the MO in writing, the DLOs should forward the written approval to the Senior Manager Office of the Secretary, after which leave should be applied for in Equip.

All planned leave should be discussed with other DLOs in the same MO to establish whether any other DLO leave is planned for the period.

Unplanned leave

From time to time, DLOs may need to take unplanned leave. In these instances, they are required to inform their MO CoS (or other designated person in the MO) as well as the Senior Manager Office of the Secretary at the earliest opportunity, preferably before 9.00am.

6.6 Travel

As the primary role of DLOs relates to administrative and policy matters, they generally should not accompany the Minister on official travel, either domestically or internationally.

Travel by DLOs should only occur where necessary to facilitate liaison between the department and the MO, or if asked to accompany the Minister for a departmental site visit. This may include, for example, the delivery of urgent or confidential papers which cannot be delivered by other means.

DLOs must seek approval from the Senior Manager Office of the Secretary, prior to any travel being organised. Employee-related costs of DLOs are to be met from the budgets of home agencies. Other costs, for example, mobile telephone, office equipment, transport and accommodation for official business, are to be met from Ministers' office budgets. This does not preclude a DLO from using existing agency administered assets in the performance of their duties (for example, laptops, tablets, phones etc).

6.7 Learning and development

From time to time, DLOs may participate in learning and development programs for Transport staff as notified by the appropriate TfNSW team.

Access to health and wellbeing blogs, podcasts, videos, meditations, activities, learning modules and more – view content any time, anywhere or speak to a clinician on LiveChat. Information to create an [BenefitHub](#) account is available [here](#).

Contact the EAP

TINSW, and Sydney Metro: 1300 360 364

Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink: 1300 364 213

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support line: 1800 816 152

The Senior Manager Office of the Secretary is also available to discuss matters of a personal nature, particularly if they are impacting on a DLO's capacity to work. The Senior Manager Office of the Secretary may be able to offer support or additional resources to DLOs, where permitted.

7.3 Resilience/responding to stressful situations

DLOs work in a fast-paced environment with extremely tight deadlines and demanding stakeholders. Dealing with these situations requires resilience and adaptability.

Resilience is not one specific skill, but a set of resources and skills. Research has shown that learning new skills—and practising those skills—can increase resilience. In particular, focusing on positive coping strategies, self-regulation and social connections can build resilience.

DLOs must always be professional, kind, empathetic and respectful to all TINSW and MO staff.

A useful way to approach this is using the PERMA framework to build wellbeing, which includes five important building blocks of wellbeing and happiness:

- Positive emotions – feeling good
- Engagement – being completely absorbed in activities
- Relationships – being authentically connected to others
- Meaning – purposeful existence
- Achievement – a sense of accomplishment and success

When these PERMA elements are strong, individuals are more likely to cope with challenges.

It is especially important for DLOs to build relationships with other DLOs as well as their colleagues within Office of the Secretary, and more broadly across Transport for NSW. These networks can be a valuable resource as a touchpoint following stressful interactions.

DLOs who are exposed to daily contact with the public may require additional support, and each DLO needs to consciously build support and nurturing into their daily work.

8. DPC guidelines

The Cabinet Office has published a Circular (C2021-07 [Department Liaison Officers](#)) to outline a number of key guidelines in relation to Department Liaison Officers and their assignment to a MO:

The below guidelines apply to the assignment of DLOs to MOs:

- Payroll and leave administration for DLOs will be provided by the home agency, with leave and other matters affecting the performance of the DLO role considered in consultation with the MOs.
- Day to day, DLOs will be supervised by the Minister's CoS.
- Employee-related costs of DLOs are to be met from the budgets of home agencies. Other costs, for example, mobile telephone, office equipment, transport and accommodation for official business, are to be met from Ministers' office budgets. This does not preclude a DLO from using existing agency administered assets in the performance of their duties (for example, laptops, tablets, phones etc).
- DLOs must be politically neutral and impartial while assisting the Ministers to achieve their objectives. DLOs must avoid party political activities in the performance of their duties.
- DLOs may remain in a MO during the caretaker period before an election should their position continue to be required at the time. Particular care should be taken to ensure duties remain politically neutral.

	<p>Government Relations also manages high level functional units as a central point for external requests from MOs, industry and Government agencies (State and Federal). The team manages the interface between Transport for NSW, NSW Parliament and other Government agencies, including parliamentary services.</p> <p>Contact:</p>
<p>Parliamentary Services (Office of the Secretary)</p>	<p>The Parliamentary Services team sits within the Government Relations team and manages the preparation of products for Parliament, including tracking Parliamentary activity relevant to the Transport portfolio, House Folder Notes, Notice of Motion speeches, responses to Parliamentary questions and positions, Transport portfolio participation in Parliamentary Inquiries, as well as Budget Estimates project management across Transport for NSW and Sydney Metro.</p> <p>Contact:</p>
<p>Briefings (Office of the Secretary)</p>	<p>The Briefings team manages and coordinates briefings initiated by MOs, Transport for NSW and Sydney Metro, and provide analysis of issues to assist with decision making. The team also coordinates meeting briefs, and speaking points requested by Ministerial offices.</p> <p>Contact:</p>
<p>Strategic Issues and Engagement (Office of the Secretary)</p>	<p>The Strategic Issues and Engagement team identifies and provides advice on emerging risk and strategic opportunity, prepares the Secretary's internal and external communications, and briefs the Secretary on all stakeholder engagements.</p> <p>Contact:</p>
<p>Cabinet Services (Office of the Secretary)</p>	<p>The Cabinet Services team supports the Secretary, the Transport Executive, Ministers and Transport agencies in navigating the Cabinet process to deliver the Transport portfolio Ministers' Cabinet agenda.</p> <p>The team also ensures the Secretary has the necessary support to approve Cabinet submissions and is briefed ahead of attendance at the Expenditure Review Committee.</p> <p>Contact:</p>
<p>Customer Response team, Customer Strategy and Technology</p>	<p>The Customer Response team manages ministerial correspondence, customer feedback, escalations and NSW Ombudsman cases on a diverse range of subjects.</p> <p>The team acts on behalf of our Ministers and Transport divisions to deliver high quality customer service through a range of customer response channels of topics spanning the entire Transport cluster. The Customer Response team liaises with other teams and subject matter experts across Transport to source advice, resolve customer concerns, and ensure customers receive timely and reliable responses.</p> <p>DLOs should contact the Customer Response team for any questions about customer feedback or ministerial correspondence.</p> <p>Contact: Terry McSweeney and Eva Lewkowicz</p> <p>Please note: HR matters deemed not appropriate to go through the Ministerial Correspondence process (any investigations or conduct allegations) should be sent through directly to the Office of the CMA People Officer below.</p>
<p>In addition to the above individual team meetings, the below regular forums will be in place to discuss and mitigate issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly Informal catchup with Senior Manager Office of the Secretary • As required catch-ups with individual teams (e.g. Parliamentary Services, Briefings, Min Comm etc) • Fortnightly catch up as a whole team with Manager/Senior Managers/DLOs. This meeting can be in person to spend part day working from or visiting the Department to maintain a sense of belonging. 	