

Common Process

Automated Briefing and Correspondence

Standard

Departments must use the Automated Briefing and Correspondence common process for in-scope briefs and correspondence at the portfolio, branch/unit, division and departmental level.

Document Control

Applies to	All departments and Victoria Police	Authority	Digital Strategy and Transformation, Department of Premier and Cabinet
Period	To be determined	Advised by	N/A
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Requirements

In-scope

For the purposes of this standard, the scope of 'briefs' includes all forms of briefs with the exception of cabinet submissions, parliamentary questions and Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) briefs.

For the purposes of this standard, the scope of 'correspondence' includes all correspondence to a Minister, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Executive Director or Director that requires a response, no matter the channel it comes via.



It is recommended that the Automated Briefs and Correspondence (ABC) Governance Model (governance model) and ABC Guideline (guideline) be read prior to reading this document.

Departments must at a minimum:

1. Use the ABC common process (common process) for all briefs and correspondence (see Appendix A for the common process diagram).
2. Implement the roles defined in the ABC common process and nominate for each brief or correspondence item, at a minimum, an or a:
 - **Accountable Officer (AO)**
 - The AO is ultimately accountable for the brief or correspondence including ensuring it reaches the Recommender in a form and timeframe suitable for recommendation. This includes compliance with all relevant legislation and regulation.
 - Departments will maintain a register of appropriately trained and authorised AOs.



Note that the AO can delegate the responsibility for constructing and editing the document, but they cannot delegate the accountability for ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the document.

- **Recommender**
 - The Recommender is the person who formally provides the advice or 'recommends' the action (i.e. Approve, Not Approve, Note or Please Discuss a course of action) to the Decision Maker.
- **Decision Maker**
 - The Decision Maker is the person who ultimately makes the decision regarding a recommendation. The decision can only be one of:

'Approve'	the recommendation, in whole and unchanged, is approved
'Not Approve'	the recommendation in its entirety has been not been accepted.

‘Note’	no action is to be taken. This is effectively a ‘for your information’ to the Decision Maker.
‘Please Discuss’	the recommendation requires further discussion with the Decision Maker before a decision can be made.



In addition to the four decision alternatives, the recommendation may contain additional actions for the **Decision Maker** to be performed based on the decision made, e.g. if the brief is approved, sign the attached document.



Note that these (**AO, Recommender, Decision Maker**) are roles, and the same person could fulfil all roles. The only exception to this is for recommendations from the VPS to the Victorian Government (government) (e.g. Ministerial Briefs). Separation of **Recommender** and **Decision Maker** is required to support requirement 4. below.

3. Require the **AO** to determine the path through the department and the required timeframe for each brief or item of correspondence. This includes nominating:
 - all touchpoints (people or roles) in the common process
 - the timeframe for the brief or correspondence to reach the **Recommender** and the **Decision Maker**
4. For Ministerial briefs and correspondence, maintain the separation of duties between the elected government and the Victorian Public Service (VPS), by ensuring that:
 - the **Recommender** and the **Decision Maker** (i.e. Approver or Noter), are not the same person.
 - two discrete records are created (and thus ensure compliance with the [Evidence Act 2008](#)). This effectively means that two discrete records are created as part of the process; a record of Recommendation and a record of Decision.
 - the **Recommender** (and only the **Recommender**) can Withdraw or Supersede a Recommendation.



The governance model, common process, roles, definitions, business rules and common templates are subject to formal change control via the Whole of Victorian Government (WOVG) ABC Group.

Overview

The purpose of the ABC Common Process Standard (the standard) is to define the government’s common approach for briefing and correspondence.

The use of a common process and language and defined roles and responsibilities are an important precursor step towards improving productivity and effectiveness in the end-to-end process for briefs and correspondence.

Rationale

Government departments are becoming more aware of the problems and restrictions they operate under in the current, disparate briefing and correspondence processes.

The implementation of a common process will help government to move away from existing inefficient and time-consuming department specific processes to a streamlined and repeatable process which focuses on common roles, workflow and accountability.

The emphasis is on creating a consistent WOVG practice – irrespective of department, technical platform or level of technical or digital maturity. Thus, the use of the common process will improve productivity via ensuring that people trained in briefing and correspondence are immediately productive after changes in machinery of government or when transferring to other parts of the government. Further, legislative compliance will improve as a result of increased accountability; costs will reduce as digital systems eliminate paper, which will further improve productivity as manual processes (including ‘walking the brief around’) are reduced or eliminated.

Derivation, scope and glossary

Derivation

This standard is derived from the Automated Briefs and Correspondence Policy, and is guided by the [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Statement of Direction](#) (ABC SOD) and the [Information Technology Strategy for the Victorian Government, 2016–2020](#) (IT strategy).

Scope

All departments and Victoria Police, referred to collectively as ‘departments’, are formally in-scope. While not required, the standard may be adopted by agencies and partner organisations, if desired.

Glossary

The glossary of terms and abbreviations used in this document are defined in the Automated Briefs and Correspondence Glossary.

Related documents, tools and references

- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence - Governance Model](#)
- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Guideline](#)
- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Policy](#)
- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Standard – ABC Governance](#)
- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Standard – ABC Monitoring and Reporting](#)
- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Standard – Common Templates Standard](#)

- [Automated Briefs and Correspondence Statement of Direction](#)
- [Information Technology Strategy for the Victorian Government, 2016–2020](#) (IT strategy)

Further information

For further information regarding this standard, please contact Digital Strategy and Transformation, Department of Premier and Cabinet, at: digital.transformation@dpc.vic.gov.au.

Document Control

Approval

This document is yet to be formally approved and is published as guidance only. It is expected that when delivery of the common platform commences, under the requirements of VSB approved ABC SOD, the ABC Governance Model and associated standards and templates will be formally reviewed and approved.

Version history

Version	Date	Comments
0.1	07/05/2018	First formal draft for review
0.2	15/05/2018	Minor changes identified during review period.
0.3	30/05/2018	Second formal draft for review
0.4	01/08/2018	Input from review round
0.5	01/08/2019	Final draft
1.0	03/09/2019	Final version

Appendix A – Common Process Diagram

