[**Opinion**](https://www.crikey.com.au/opinion/) / [Economy](https://www.crikey.com.au/economy/)

[Danielle Wood can rescue the Productivity Commission. But is it worth saving?](https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/09/11/danielle-wood-productivity-commission-chair/)

The Productivity Commission has long been in need of a shake-up. How to fix it is another question. [BENJAMIN CLARK](https://www.crikey.com.au/author/benjamin-clark/) SEP 11, 2023

INCOMING PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION CHAIR, DANIELLE WOOD

Grattan Institute CEO Danielle Wood has been [**announced**](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/06/danielle-wood-who-is-productivity-commission-head) as the new head of the Productivity Commission (PC), after incoming candidate Chris Barrett pulled out in favour of a promotion at Victoria’s Treasury.

Wood is undoubtedly an inspired pick — she’s a well-regarded economist and a proven leader of an influential think tank. Her analysis of important issues like [**tax reform**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/apr/12/australia-is-not-a-high-tax-country-so-why-cant-we-have-a-conversation-about-the-t-word) and [**childcare**](https://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/fix-the-economy-it-s-as-easy-as-child-s-play-20220704-p5aytd.html) is generally astute. She will also be the first woman to lead the PC, a welcome break from the economics profession’s male-dominated leadership.

However, the role the PC will play in future policy formation remains uncertain. The government advisory group is indelibly associated with the heyday of neoliberalism, and as that ideology fades, so has the PC’s influence. It still produces thorough research, but its recommendations are mostly reheated covers of its outdated ’90s hits (tariff reform, microeconomic reform), or lukewarm restatements of current consensus (improving education, managing the energy transition). Either way, much of its work now makes the fifth or sixth page of the newspapers and gathers dust on bureaucrats’ shelves.