

Capability Review Response

October 2023



Australian Government

**Department of Health
and Aged Care**

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Secretary
Response
BLAIR COMLEY PSM

I am honoured to join the Department of Health and Aged Care at such a pivotal time in its history. Australia's world class health and aged care system is a complex landscape with interdependencies and many stakeholders. It supports universal and affordable access to high quality medical, pharmaceutical, and hospital services, while helping people to stay healthy through disease prevention and health promotion. The department's focus on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all Australians requires us to work with our partners in driving health, aged care, and sporting outcomes reform through evidence-based policy, well targeted programs, and best practice regulation. The department will further develop the stewardship role it plays within these markets to ensure high quality, viable services centred around people, are available to all Australians.

The Capability Review had three clear intertwined themes:

Lifting our strategic policy capability – focused on improving our strategic thinking in program, regulatory and corporate areas; deepening our engagement with the community and stakeholders – to deliver strategic policy we need to be out there engaging with our stakeholders and having a national presence; and unlocking our Executive Leader potential – empowering our executive level will empower everyone to have a greater role, greater autonomy and a greater feeling of contribution.

The engagement of our staff is a key strength driving our ability to meet future challenges. Staff are encouraged to “know the story, tell the story, and shape the story”, enabling them to clearly understand our roadmap for the future, engage in a meaningful way and provide feedback to influence priority actions.

This response to the Capability Review seeks to highlight a selection of work already underway within the department. The additional initiatives are focused on culture and behaviour which will deliver the long-term capability required from the department. Work will be prioritised to align with the strategic narrative which will flow through to the allocation of resources.

I look forward to leading the department as we work with government to deliver better health and wellbeing for all Australians, now and for future generations.



Theme
one

**LIFTING OUR STRATEGIC
POLICY CAPABILITY**

Theme
two

**DEEPENING OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH
THE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Theme
three

**UNLOCKING OUR EXECUTIVE
LEADER POTENTIAL**

Findings

- 1** Integrated strategic policy development capabilities
- 2** Using data to inform policy
- 3** Systemic consideration of the health and aged care workforce
- 4** Increased knowledge about the providers the department funds and regulates
- 5** Readiness for future healthcare delivery
- 6** Learning the Lessons from COVID-19 – addressed through participation in the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry
- 7** Collaborative and enduring relationships with the states and territories
- 8** Improved communication and engagement with the community
- 9** Building and empowering the mid level of the department



Theme **one**

LIFTING OUR STRATEGIC POLICY CAPABILITY

DESCRIPTION

We develop strong policy capabilities to deliver integrated policy addressing the interactions between the various parts of the health and aged care systems through a strong understanding of our stakeholders, consumers and insights provided by our regional and state network.



SUCCESS

We present to government strong reform options addressing strategic objectives with data-driven metrics that support performance monitoring, and assist in future policy development and refinement. Strong policy options crossing the health and aged care systems require time to design, develop and consult with stakeholders.

Staff have clear policy objectives, outlining options to address objectives while developing “good policy” recommendations. Evidence-based recommendations are provided, articulating areas where there are gaps in the evidence base.



UNDERWAY

Strategic Policy Forum – The Strategic Policy Forum provides an opportunity for senior staff at Health and Aged Care to collaborate on agency policies and critical initiatives.

Chief Health Economist – The health and aged care systems are facing an increasingly challenging environment, with economic issues around affordability, productivity and workforce all at the fore. A Chief Health Economist can:

- ◆ help Australia navigate these challenges and act as an influential and reliable voice in the department
- ◆ translate health economic principles and practices to design policy, implement programs and evaluate outcomes.

Data Strategy – Our Data Strategy sets out the strategic direction for our management, use and ongoing development of data to enable our vision of delivering better health, aged care and wellbeing outcomes for all Australians.



Theme **two**

DEEPENING OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

DESCRIPTION

The department has a leadership role nationally and internationally, to establish improvements to the health system and influence health outcomes. Engagement with stakeholders should be evidence-based and focused on the architecture required for the future of health and aged care. Incorporating the requirements and feedback from the community will improve health outcomes across the board. To achieve this extensive communications and engagement effort across the department and into Australia's multi-faceted community will be required utilising our strong state network.



SUCCESS

The department will provide a clear narrative outlining the future of the Health and Aged Care system, providing a broad roadmap enabling strategic engagement with stakeholders. Australia has a growing multicultural community and new and emerging groups, needs and businesses. We need to ensure we are engaging at all levels with the right tools at the right time. Strategic engagement will occur with jurisdictions and other stakeholders on health and hospital system design capitalising on our extensive state network. This will result in improved health outcomes as a result of coordinated and consistent stakeholder engagement.

Staff have a clear understanding of who their stakeholders are, when and how they will be engaged, and all engagements are clear and respectful.



UNDERWAY

Preventive Health – National Consumer Engagement Strategy – this strategy supports and strengthens partnerships that are equitable and effective and to build trust between consumers and policy-makers in all policy areas relevant to preventive health.

Priority population engagement forums – such as the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Health Advisory Group, the National Women's Health Advisory Council and the Aged Care Council of Elders have been established – these forums provide a direct voice to the Australian Government from priority populations.

Health Design Lab – supports business teams to design human-centred policies, programs and services. At the core of the design lab's methodology is the internationally recognised 'double diamond' approach that sets the framework for delivering major design projects. Discover, define, develop and deliver is an iterative 4-phased approach supporting us to discover and define the current state of policy delivery and ensures a human-centred approach to developing and delivering future solutions.



Theme **three**

UNLOCKING OUR EXECUTIVE LEADER POTENTIAL

DESCRIPTION

The department has a strong sense of self, with clear values and professional and supportive culture and behaviours. Our positive no-blame culture encourages people to be innovative and provides an inclusive environment for different ways of thinking. Staff are highly engaged, and our workplace is supportive and promotes high integrity among its people. Generally the culture of the department is progressive, supportive and positive. In order to position the department to meet the challenges of the future we need to ensure that staff are provided with relevant opportunities for development and that decisions are delegated to levels that match complexity and authority. Frameworks and supporting tools need to be accessible and fit-for-purpose.



SUCCESS

Staff will be empowered to make a range of decisions through a devolved system of authority. The department will use a strategic approach to workforce planning and development, and investment in leadership and management skills to support staff to work effectively in a modern and hybrid work environment and ensure the right skills and capabilities are identified and recruited. A performance system will recognise staff contributions while maintaining a system of accountability across a range of responsibilities.

Staff have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility in delivering the priorities of the department. Systems and processes support decision making and utilising delegations.



UNDERWAY

Building an engaged, capable and diverse workforce by implementing the department's Workforce Strategy to provide tools and support to enable managers to attract, retain, engage and develop their staff.

Expanding awareness and use of management frameworks and tools for managing hybrid and dispersed teams, projects, risks and finances to drive consistency and accountability and help staff navigate these challenges and act as an influential and reliable voice in the department.

Lifting our ability to drive and lead through change by giving staff the tools and tactics to enable the organisation to innovate, adapt and successfully implement reforms.

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

The department Executive Committee will oversee the implementation of initiatives through feedback from the portfolio Ministers and a range of Stakeholder and Employee Surveys:

- **APS Employee Survey** – including Agency-specific questions focussing on the internal actions / shifts we are trying to achieve.
- **Internal employee surveys** – periodic surveys of our employees on organisational issues.
- **Annual survey of key stakeholders.**

1 EXTERNAL NARRATIVE

Develop an external narrative outlining the interconnection and future direction of the Health and Aged Care system.

- Increased understanding of stakeholders will enable stronger strategic discussions, ensuring our work, business processes and resources are aligned to the external narrative.

3 SENTIMENT TRACKING

Build capability to capture and share stakeholder and community feedback so we build trust and understand their views on priority and emerging issues.

- Sentiment will be applied to policy advice and delivery planning, informing engagement and supporting continuous improvement.

2 SEAT AT THE TABLE

Executive Leaders to be included in strategic discussions and encouraged to provide direct input and briefing.

- Involvement in strategic discussions will deepen the understanding of the Executive Leadership and empower more informed decision making.

4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Strengthen performance management to be clear about expectations, ensure accountability, and drive capability.

- Staff at all levels will understand their role and responsibilities including in response to the Capability Review.

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