



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Agency Action Plan: Capability Review Response

November 2023



Secretary's foreword

The work of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts touches the lives of every Australian, every day. As one of the most diverse portfolios in the Australian Public Service, we will be best placed to meet the needs and expectations of the government and Australians, now and into the future, if we continue to build our capability.

The department has a truly national perspective in our ambition to connect Australians, enrich communities and empower regions. In the context of an uncertain and increasingly volatile future, the department needs to step up our strategic policy leadership. A tightening fiscal environment means that we need to be confident in proposing effective and efficient implementation options, that harness the potential of data and leverage the collective capability of our partners.

The Capability Review's findings are clear – we need to make fundamental changes to the way we work: to drive a more collaborative style of leadership, and to think strategically. To deliver more and better within constrained budgets, we also need to leverage the benefit of our scale and diversity, and accelerate the modernisation of our enabling digital technologies. We must do all this while maintaining the strong engagement and commitment of the department's staff.

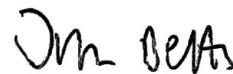
The department's response to the Capability Review reflects the commitment of my executive leadership team to use our cultural strength to build a trusted department that delivers robust and practical solutions for the years to come. It also reflects the commitment of staff within the department to act with kindness, collaboration, inclusiveness, creativity and daring in service of the government to improve the lives of all Australians.

The Capability Review noted the warm and supportive culture in the department. Strong staff engagement and experience is never a set and forget exercise and the department will nurture and strengthen different aspects of our culture in a cohesive way. This will ensure that we continue to have a culture that is kind, respectful, and collaborative, embeds integrity and intellectual curiosity in everything we do, and builds shared ownership for the department's digital transformation.

The Capability Review endorses work currently underway within the department to build capability, from the recent launch of our Integrity Strategy 2022-24 to the development of a First Nations Agreement, and a significant reform of our corporate services function. The Capability Review provides an excellent platform for further improvement if we are to deliver on all that is expected of us over the coming years.

This response to the Capability Review sets out the department's plan over the next two years to make improvements with both immediate impact and longer-term initiatives to sustain the capability required from the department into the future. Given the number of opportunities for improvement identified in the Capability Review, to realise its ambition, prioritisation will be key, as will identifying whether additional investment is needed. Actions will be prioritised to support the wellbeing and continued engagement of our staff, and in accordance with available resources.

Actions to build and maintain our capacity and capability will be dynamic, with regular reviews internally of our progress and direction, in addition to annual reviews through future Corporate Plans and Annual Reports.



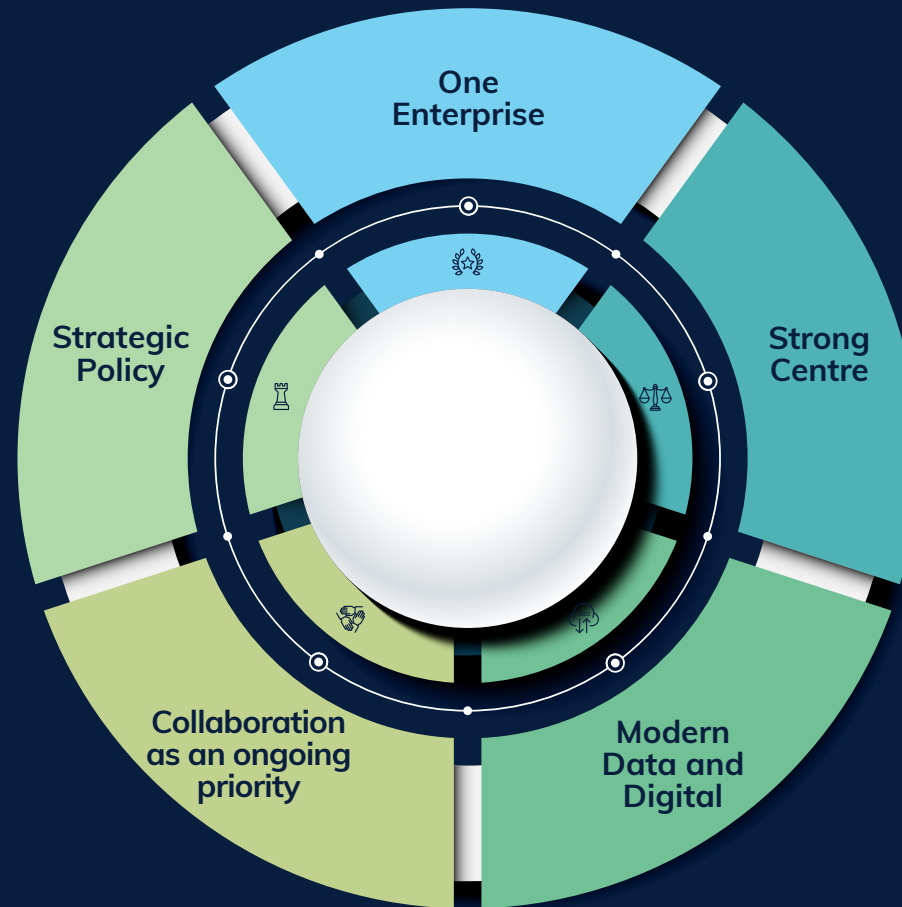
Jim Betts

Secretary

Capability Review findings

The Capability Review findings are unequivocal – there has been long-running under-investment in the department’s people, digital capability and enabling systems, which create barriers to delivery.

The Review proposes a challenging and ambitious capability improvement agenda that seeks to ensure that the department can continue to deliver effectively in the areas of infrastructure, transport, regional development, communications and the arts, as Australia navigates an increasingly complex and uncertain future.



There are five interrelated thematic findings. The Capability Review finds that machinery of government changes and fiscal constraints over a period of time have had an impact on the department operating as a unified entity. Our enabling systems are not at the maturity level needed and we need to modernise our ICT and data and analytical foundations.

In addition, the Review finds the department needs to adopt a more inclusive approach to engagement with delivery partners and build our workforce strategic policy capabilities to ensure we continue to deliver for government and the Australian people.

The five thematic findings address the priorities for action identified in the Review and cut across the Capability Review Framework domains. The table below provides a heat map of the extent to which each theme addresses the opportunities for action identified in the Capability Review, with darker shades indicating that the theme addresses more of the recommended actions.

	One Enterprise	Strong Centre	Modern Digital and Data	Collaboration as an ongoing priority	Strategic Policy
Priority for action	Update the department's purpose to reflect changed circumstances	Finalise workforce plan	Maintain focus on the uplift of information and communications technology	Make collaboration, both internally and externally, an expected behaviour	
Leadership/culture					
People					
Collaboration					
Delivery					
Resources/risk					



ONE ENTERPRISE

Desired future state

We operate efficiently as one integrated enterprise, that is greater than the sum of its parts, guided by a strong purpose, a positive culture with high standards of integrity, as well as appropriate resourcing.

Every team member feels connected to the purpose of the department, and we work together with integrity, across groups and teams, to serve the Government and the Australian people.

Actions

- Review the department's purpose statement to ensure it reflects the department's important role in supporting the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Australia
- Build and maintain a kind and respectful culture, where staff feel valued for the work they do and the expertise they bring, and feel supported to be their authentic selves at work
- Embed a pro-integrity culture by pursuing high standards of professionalism
- Develop and use an evidence base to support the allocation of internal resources to best reflect the department's objectives.

Expected change

- The department's purpose statement engages and motivates staff no matter where they work or their areas of responsibility and drives the kind, collaborative, creative, inclusive and daring culture needed to improve the lives of all Australians
- The purpose statement guides decision-making, informs the department's strategies, priorities and allocation of internal resources, and underpins the department's performance metrics
- There is recognition and celebration of workforce diversity and improved resourcing and connections with regional and remote offices, including a wide understanding of their contribution to achieving departmental outcomes
- The department maintains a pro-integrity culture that operates within the APS integrity frameworks and reinforces awareness, capability and accountability for integrity in everything we do
- An independent evidence base helps to assess whether the department's functions support government priorities, are financially sustainable and are deliverable.



STRONG CENTRE

Desired future state

Our corporate and enabling functions deliver efficient and effective services that strengthen our accountability, governance and decision making, while supporting our staff to deliver their respective functions and roles through consistent, reliable processes.

Our enabling functions build our staff capability, guide workforce planning, and ensure we have a culturally diverse workforce with the skills we need, now and in future.

Actions

- Develop and implement progressive, efficient and robust ways of working, which are supported by streamlined processes and well-defined access points to information
- Undertake sustained and embedded workforce planning and build our capabilities to respond to the current and future needs of the department.

Expected change

- Efficient, seamless delivery of departmental processes, functions, systems and people capabilities wherever they are located
- Corporate Group is a trusted partner, supporting our people through the delivery of professional, consistent and responsive services
- An enhanced leadership culture of learning and development and innovation
- Increased capabilities within the department to strengthen policy development, program implementation, regulation, and service delivery.



MODERN DIGITAL AND DATA

Desired future state

All staff have access to, and are able to leverage, contemporary, secure digital and data systems, tools and processes to deliver outcomes more effectively and efficiently, and there is shared accountability across the department for this uplift.

Underpinning this work is longer term planning over a ten-year horizon, with opportunities from all staff to contribute to and guide this planning.

Actions

- Drive a culture where digital and data uplift is owned by all staff
- Modernise the department's Information Technology, digital, cyber and data capability to better manage risks and deliver better outcomes
- Uplift department workforce data and digital literacy and awareness, especially through better communication and training.

Expected change

- The department has an embedded culture where all staff are empowered, have accountability and participate in digital transformation and effectively engage with data to deliver on departmental outcomes, led by the executive leadership team. This includes agreement to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services and service levels to support services that staff require to do their job effectively
- The department's internet connected ICT networks are protected from malicious cyber threats. Confidentiality of departmental/personal data is maintained, as is the requirement to ensure availability and integrity of information platforms, systems and data, and business continuity is assured
- All staff have contemporary, secure, digital and data systems, tools and processes. Better practice is leveraged across the department to improve digital literacy and deliver the best outcomes, regardless of where staff sit in the department
- All staff are aware of the tools, systems and processes that are available and required in the department, and clearly understand (and able to contribute to) necessary considerations around investment prioritisation and resource constraints. This includes agreement to ICT services and service levels to support ICT resource cost transparency and enterprise level prioritisation.



COLLABORATION AS AN ONGOING PRIORITY

Desired future state

Collaboration is an expected, valued and celebrated behaviour across all working levels, which is nurtured by appropriate tools and systems that promote a systematised, consistent approach and continuous learning and improvement.

All staff engage meaningfully and effectively across and within the department, and with communities, industries, jurisdictions and whole of government colleagues, to leverage their collective capabilities and insights, in turn improving policy, program and service delivery outcomes.

Actions

- Foster an environment for collaboration and a culture of continuous improvement internally and externally
- Develop a Collaboration Framework and accompanying Playbook
- Improve practices outlined in the Collaboration Framework, with the support of tools and resource management systems to enable sharing and leveraging across whole of Government.

Expected change

- Partnerships with stakeholders beyond the Commonwealth are leveraged
- Consultative practices and continuous review process implemented, using a range of mechanisms
- The Collaboration Framework sets expectations for internal and external collaboration
- The Collaboration Playbook supports practice with principles, concrete guidance and case studies for reference
- Staff use tools and resources to build on and scale up best practice internally and across whole of government, to expand networks and practice for complex and cross-cutting areas of work.



STRATEGIC POLICY

Desired future state

We are a department that is high performing and world leading in its strategic policy advice across the portfolio, confidently stewarding the Australian community through complex times.

We are recognised as an employer of choice for aspiring and experienced policy professionals, including those from diverse backgrounds, who through their lived experiences strengthen the department's policy capabilities.

We embed diverse perspectives and a sense of partnership in our policy processes by default, including with our First Nations staff and communities.

Actions

- Develop a policy capability and subject matter curriculum for all staff in policy roles and implement through the performance management system
- Expand Executive oversight of strategic policy activity
- Embed a culture of intellectual curiosity.

Expected change

- All staff in policy roles understand the fundamentals of effective policy development
- More practical policy design because staff have deep subject matter knowledge of their policy area
- Strategic policy embedded in Executive discussions, able to be appropriately resourced and progress measured through Senior Executive Service Key Performance Indicators
- Department is deliberately proactive in advising government of policy challenges in the areas of public policy for which we are stewards, while intentionally recognising the need to view policy development/design through diverse lenses
- Staff have broader exposure to public policy challenges, and see that curiosity and critical thinking are valued throughout the organisation
- Staff are deliberately provided with information to challenge their biases, by getting access to diverse sources of material or speakers with diverse views.

