

PROTECTED CABINET

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Dear Minister

Congratulations and welcome to the Home Affairs Portfolio. My team and I are delighted to support you on the wide-ranging and complex issues that you are responsible for as Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Cyber Security, and Minister for the Arts.

This initial briefing material is structured to bring to your attention immediate decisions and current issues, as well as a broad overview of our functions, budget and staffing. We have included brief summaries of our key strategic priorities, and a number of attachments providing you with information about the Department and its statutory office holders.

s. 33(a)(iii)

The Department, which includes the Australian Border Force, was established in 2017. It has a wide remit, being responsible for the leadership and coordination of strategy, policy, regulation, program delivery, operations and legislative reform in relation to:

- National Security (including Counter-Terrorism and Countering Foreign Interference)
- Cyber, technology and critical infrastructure resilience and security
- Immigration and citizenship
- Border management
- Operation Sovereign Borders
- Multiculturalism and social cohesion

s. 33(a)(i), s. 47C(1)

Our forecast Average Staffing Level for 2024-25 is 15,179, with 15,179 Full Time Equivalent staff as at 30 June 2024. We have a presence in 44 posts in 38 countries, including nine international regional directors at the SES Band 1 level. Our organisation chart, along with biographies of the senior leadership team, is in Section 3.

At an operational level, there are a number of current issues at play that warrant early attention.

Many of these stem from the High Court decision on NZYQ, which changed the legal landscape for immigration detention. The Executive's power to impose visa conditions that are intended to secure community safety will be tested by the High Court in the YBFZ hearing on 6 August 2024. The team and I are keen to brief you in more detail as soon as possible.

Another immediate priority is our review of the security of Parliamentarians. s. 47C(1)

s. 47E(d)

I propose that the Commander of the Joint Agency Task Force on Operation Sovereign Borders brief you as a matter of priority.

Summaries of these current issues, and next steps in relation to them, are in Section 1.

Looking beyond the immediate, you come to the portfolio at a time of significant strategic challenge. Australia's security environment is evolving rapidly and we face challenges across all of your areas of policy responsibility.

The pre-eminent threat to security is persistent and sophisticated foreign interference and espionage conducted by nation states. We have considerable challenges in mitigating those threats, particularly as the open and inclusive nature of our systems, institutions and communities make us particularly vulnerable to exploitation. The online environment is the most challenging vector for both espionage and criminal activity at scale, making cyber security across all parts of the economy a major priority that requires your attention. Over the coming weeks, we propose to brief you on a range of initiatives that seek to tackle these challenges, including by s. 33(a)(i), continuing to implement the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, building on our world-leading reforms to the security of Critical Infrastructure and Systems of National Significance and ensuring that critical technologies (like Artificial Intelligence and quantum computing) are secure by design.

In addition to protecting Australia and Australians from the threats we face from nation states, your Portfolio is also responsible for countering terrorism and violent extremism, bolstering national resilience and national preparedness and strengthening our democratic institutions and social cohesion. We are in the midst of an evolving community safety and counter-terrorism environment; exacerbated by decreasing social cohesion, decreasing confidence in government and institutions, and strong community reactions to international events. We are also faced with communities that are genuinely fatigued by constant crises over the last five years. s. 47C(1)

Finally, your Portfolio is responsible for the management of the border and migration system – both of which are critical to Australia's economic success. Implementation of the Government's Migration Strategy and managing a rapidly shifting legal landscape following the NZYQ High Court decision are critical priorities.

A more detailed analysis of our context and strategic environment is at Section 2.

Internally the organisation is undertaking a significant transformation agenda, seeking to build capability to meet the current and future challenges and opportunities outlined above, foster a culture of excellence, collaboration, openness and integrity, and position us to drive transformative policy and legislative reform. It draws heavily on the findings of the APSC-lead capability review completed earlier this year. We have done a great deal of work to look at organisational risks and how we propose to mitigate them. We also have independent reviews on prioritisation/resourcing and procurement due to report in August. A placemat articulating the transformation agenda, the work we have done on critical risks and the executive summary of the Capability Review are in Section 3.

To enable a more focused set of discussions, I propose that we work with your Office to schedule a series of deep dives with my leadership team on key priorities such as immigration, cyber security and critical infrastructure security, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and national resilience.

I also suggest separate detailed briefings with the Australian Border Force Commissioner, National Cyber Security Coordinator, the Commander of the Joint Agency Taskforce on Operation Sovereign Borders and the Illicit Tobacco and E-cigarette Commissioner, each of whom reports directly to you. Further details of their roles are at Section 3.

We have provided your office separately with relevant administrative documents, including the forthcoming Cabinet schedule, Administrative Arrangement Orders, and Legislative Agenda.

Stephanie Foster PSM
Secretary
Department of Home Affairs

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Ministerial Next Steps

First Week
(w/c 29 July 2024)

- s. 33(a)(iii) [redacted]
- s. 47F(1), s. 42(1) [redacted]
- s. 42(1), s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- Consider whether you host the Executive Cyber Council on 6 August 2024 in Sydney (invitations sent 10 July 2024).
- Consider whether to hold TechFIT on 6 August 2024 in Sydney.
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- s. 42(1) [redacted]
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]

First Month
(July / August)

- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- On 6 August, monitor the YBFZ hearing, s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d), s. 42(1) [redacted]
- s. 47B(a), s. 47B(b) [redacted]
- Update documents for August 2024 Executive Council meetings to reflect new Ministerial arrangements as needed.
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- Review and reissue the National Cyber Security Coordinator Ministerial Directive 1/2024 (if voided).
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- Finalise a new Protective Security Policy Framework, and authorise the Department to administer under the PGPA Act.
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- Consider grant guidelines for growing and professionalising the cyber security industry, scheduled for launch at the Executive Cyber Council on 6 August.

First Three Months
(September - December)

- Potential engagement at The Sydney Dialogue (Cyber, Technology and Critical Infrastructure security themed) on 2 September.
- s. 33(a)(iii) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- Continue consultation with stakeholders on reforms to regional migration settings and new framework for longer-term migration planning with States and Territories
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]
- s. 47E(d) [redacted]
- s. 33(a)(iii) [redacted]
- s. 33(a)(i), s. 42(1) [redacted]
- s. 47C(1) [redacted]

Ministerial Next Steps – Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Specific

First Week (w/c 29 July 2024)	First Month (July / August)	First Three Months (September - December)
• s. 47F(1), s. 42(1) • s. 33(a)(iii) • Provide your signature to update Australian citizenship certificates and citizenship approval letters. • Provide your approval and authority to publish an open competitive grant round for Australian Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities (APMAC) Support Projects.	• s. 34(1)(a) • s. 47C(1) • On 6 August, monitor the YBFZ hearing, and s. 47C(1) • s. 42(1), s. 47E(d) • s. 42(1), s. 47E(d) • s. 47C(1) • s. 47C(1) • s. 47C(1) • Provide approval for a personalised Minister's message to be read at Citizenship ceremonies. • s. 47C(1)	• Continue consultation with stakeholders on reforms to regional migration settings and new framework for longer-term migration planning with States and Territories. • Announce grant round opening periods for Multicultural Infrastructure, Multicultural Grassroots and APMAC grants. • Consider the Review of the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement and introduce new Labour Agreement guidelines. • s. 47C(1) • s. 47C(1) • Finalise policy settings and regulations required to implement the Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES) by end of 2024 • s. 47C(1) • Consult with stakeholders in Regional Australia on reforms to regional visa settings. • Continue to monitor Net Overseas Migration and s. 47C(1) • s. 47C(1) • s. 47C(1) • Continue consultations with state and territories on a four year joint migration planning framework s. 47C(1)

PROTECTED CABINET**Current Issues**

1. NZYQ Court Decision
2. Litigation – YBFZ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
3. Operation Sovereign Borders
4. Net Overseas Migration
5. Student Visa Program
6. Protection Visas
7. Regional Processing
8. Character and Cancellations
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1. NZYQ Court Decision

Key Issues / Risks

- As a result of the High Court decision in the NZYQ matter on 8 November 2023, the Government has been required to release a number of individuals from immigration detention for whom there is no real prospect of removal from Australia in the reasonably foreseeable future. Further, a number of individuals, following their release from prison or the cancellation of their visa, have been unable to be taken to immigration detention due to them meeting the new test. Instead, these individuals have been granted a Bridging (Removal Pending) visa (BVR).
- BVR holders have criminal backgrounds of varying degree, which were the initial driver for the cancellation or refusal of their visas and subsequent detention. s. 47E(d)
[REDACTED]
- As at 17 July 2024, there were 182 NZYQ-affected BVR holders in the community (with 168 of those having been released from immigration detention as a result of NZYQ). This number will continue to grow, as further non-citizens in Australia conduct criminal activity in Australia and fail the character test to hold a visa (or are released from prison/detention). s. 47E(d)
[REDACTED]

Litigation

S. 42(1)

PROTECTED CABINET**s. 42(1)****Community Safety Order (CSO) Scheme**

- The Community Safety Order Scheme provides for the management of high risk offenders that have been previously convicted of a serious violent or sexual offence, punishable by more than seven years imprisonment and who pose an unacceptable risk of seriously harming the Australian community by committing further offences of this nature.
- The Minister is able make an application to the Supreme Court of a state or territory for a Community Safety Order (CSO) in respect of a serious offender.
- The court may make a **Community Safety Detention Order (CSDO)** if the Court is satisfied to a **high degree of probability**, on the basis of admissible evidence, that the offender will commit a serious violent or sexual offence:
 - o that there is no other less restrictive measure available under Division 395 (such as a community safety supervision order) that would be effective in protecting the community from serious harm by addressing the unacceptable risk; and
 - o where the offender is a holder of a visa under the Migration Act that is subject to conditions, the court is satisfied that the conditions imposed would not be effective in protecting the community from serious harm by addressing the unacceptable risk.
- The court may make a **Community Safety Supervision Order (CSSO)** if satisfied on the **balance of probabilities**, on the basis of admissible evidence, that the offender poses an unacceptable risk of seriously harming the community by committing a serious violent or sexual offence; and
 - o where the offender is a holder of a visa under the Migration Act that is subject to conditions, the court is satisfied that the conditions would not be effective in protecting the community from serious harm by addressing the unacceptable risk; and
 - o the Court is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that each of the conditions and the combined effect of all of the conditions to be imposed on the offender is reasonably necessary, and reasonably appropriate and adapted, for the purpose of protecting the community from serious harm by addressing the unacceptable risk.
- When seeking to apply for a CSO, the legislation mandates the Minister for Immigration ensure that reasonable inquiries are made to ascertain any facts known to any Commonwealth law enforcement officer that would reasonably be regarded as supporting a finding that an application for a CSDO or a CSSO should **not** be made in relation to an offender.
- In addition, a CSO application must include statement of any facts that the Minister is aware of that would reasonably be regarded as supporting a finding that the order should **not** be made. These are key safeguards to ensure there are appropriate checks and balances in the CSO scheme.

s. 42(1)**Ministerial Action****s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d)****Ongoing Activity**

s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d)

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s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d)

Operation AEGIS

- On 10 November 2023 Operation AEGIS, a joint Australian Border Force (ABF) and Australian Federal Police (AFP) operation, was established to monitor compliance of the BVR cohort with visa conditions and respond to any breaches. Operation AEGIS works closely with state and territory authorities and law enforcement partners, to ensure the effective management of the BVR cohort through monitoring of compliance and responding to breaches of visa conditions. Any reports of crime are provided to the AFP, for consideration of prosecution in conjunction with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP).
- The ABF Commissioner has operational command of Operation AEGIS, with the function being administered – along with the case management, community support, removal considerations, and program management functions – from the Department's Immigration Compliance Group.

Background

- As at 17 July 2024, there were 182 NZYQ-affected BVR holders in the community – including 168 individuals who were released from immigration detention, s. 47F(1), and 10 individuals who had their visa cancelled in the community. The bulk of the cohort released from immigration detention – 149 individuals – were released between the High Court ruling and 31 December 2023.
- The majority of individuals who have been placed on a BVR could not be removed to their country of origin without breaching Australia's international obligations, for example, because they are owed protection. Other individuals released include those who are stateless, or who have other intractable barriers to their removal that mean there is no real prospect of their removal in the reasonably foreseeable future. However, all individuals have prior criminality or serious character concerns that prevent them from holding other substantive visas without Ministerial Intervention (for example, due to mandatory cancellation requirements).
- The Minister is able to grant BVRs personally to non-citizens; however, this is currently delegated to specified Senior Executive Service (SES) officers in the ABF.
- Individuals released from immigration detention are eligible for enhanced Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) for up to 12 months. Assistance includes intensive case management, accommodation and employment support, and connecting individuals to community services and programs, such as offender targeted rehabilitation and adjustment programs.
- On order to better support the BVR decision-makers, the Community Protection Board (the Board) was established in December 2023 to provide expert advice and recommendations. External Board members are chosen based on eminence in their field of expertise, including law enforcement, corrections, academia, mental health, clinical psychology and the community and multicultural sector. The Board membership also includes senior Department and ABF officials with responsibility for compliance, enforcement and status resolution.
- The Board provides informed, impartial and evidence-based recommendations to the Minister or delegate that support the management of individuals who may pose risks to the safety and security of the Australian community. This includes recommendations on the application of the discretionary BVR conditions. The Board provides recommendations only, and does not have any legislated authority to make visa decisions.
- There are currently 30 different conditions associated with a BVR – 26 mandatory and 4 discretionary. The 4 discretionary conditions include condition 8621 (electronic monitoring), conditions 8617 and 8618

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(financial reporting), and condition 8620 (curfew requirements). Some of the 26 mandatory conditions also only apply if the individual has been convicted of a certain type of crime (e.g. an offence against a minor).

- The government established the Community Safety Order (CSO) Scheme, which allows the Minister to apply to a court for a detention order or a supervision order in relation to an NZYQ-affected individual. No orders have been applied for yet, s. 42(1) [REDACTED]
- The scheme requires that any person a court orders be detained must be held separately from immigration detention and criminal corrections facilities. s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d) [REDACTED]

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2. Litigation – YBFZ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and
Multicultural Affairs

S. 42(1)

3. Operation Sovereign Borders

Key Issues / Risks

- The Joint Agency Taskforce (JATF) Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB) is a multi-layered offshore deterrence approach to deter irregular maritime travel to Australia.

s. 33(a)(iii)

s. 47E(d)

Ministerial Action

s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

s. 33(a)(i)

s. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

- A range of current matters require your awareness:

s. 34(1)(a)

s. 33(a)(i), s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

s. 34(1)(a)

Further background is provided in Section 2.

4. Net Overseas Migration

Key Issues / Risks

- In the Migration Strategy, Government announced its intention to reduce NOM to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024-25. Treasury's NOM forecast for 2024-25 is 260,000, which is half the 2022-23 NOM of 528,000. Treasury forecasts a return to pre-pandemic levels of 235,000 by the end of 2025-26.
- The post-pandemic increase in mobility, with a decrease in migrants departing Australia, is responsible for the temporary increase to Australia's NOM in 2022-23, a significant increase relative to pre-pandemic levels.
- Student visas arrivals are the largest visa holder contributor to this NOM increase, followed by Temporary Skilled Sponsored Visa arrivals and Working Holiday Maker arrivals, all of which are temporary, uncapped, demand driven programs. The annual permanent migration program by contrast makes only a small contribution to NOM (approx. 10,000 people per year out of the program size of 195,000), as these visas are largely granted to people who have already been in Australia longer than 12 months.
- Through measures in the Migration Strategy aimed at addressing the integrity risk in the student visa program, the Department has been seeking to manage student visa grants to reduce the impact on NOM.
s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

Ministerial Action

s. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

- The Department is working closely with Treasury to track the impact of visa grants to NOM.

Background

- NOM is a demographic concept, rather than a migration policy concept. NOM measures the net number of travellers being in or out of Australia for 12 months or more over a 16-month period (12/16 month rule). It includes temporary and permanent visa holders, New Zealanders and Australian citizens.
- Some of this increase in NOM reflects a rebound in demand for travel to Australia from previous cohorts who departed Australia (or never arrived, e.g. students) due to the pandemic. The growth in Student Visa holder arrivals has coincided with a changed caseload since borders re-opened, with many education providers having shifted focus from China to South Asia, a caseload s. 33(a)(iii)

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s. 33(a)(iii) Additionally, fewer Australians are now departing Australia for long periods than prior to the pandemic, likely due to the strength of the local labour market.

- The Government's actions to date have led to substantial declines in migration levels, with Student visa grants down by 35% (376,731 grants in 2023-24 compared to 577,295 in 2022-23).
- On 11 May 2024 the Government released the draft International Education and Skills Strategic Framework that will set a National Planning Level for Australia's international student program, allowing management of the annual number of student visa grants at the point of course enrolment.

5. Student Visa Program

Key Issues / Risks

- Integrity concerns in Australia's international education system and the Student visa program have been identified in three recent key government reviews. A range of measures to improve the quality of the student visa caseload, including increased integrity, have been implemented.
- The enhanced integrity measures have resulted in an increased refusal rate across both onshore and offshore student visa cohorts. As at 23 July 2024, there are just under 101,000 onshore student visa applications on hand, up from just 18,700 on 30 June 2023. s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

- The Student visa program is a key focal point in the drive to lower Net Overseas Migration from 395,000 in 2023-24 down to 260,000 in 2024-25.

Ministerial Action

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

s. 47E(d)

Ongoing Activity

s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d)

- The department will continue to work proactively with the international education sector, relevant regulators and the Department of Education to ensure the long-term quality and integrity of the sector.

Background

- Integrity concerns in Australia's international education system and the Student visa program have been identified in three recent key government reviews:
 - The 2023 *Review of the Migration System* led by Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM found that the international education system was not fulfilling its potential as a feeder of highly skilled migrants, with many students graduating without sufficient levels of English language skills to compete in the labour market, and many becoming permanently temporary, without ever attaining the skills required for permanent migration.
 - *The Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System* (the Nixon Review) found that student visa (and other temporary visa) holders were being lured to Australia for purposes other than study and then exploited in precarious work environments, including by organised crime networks; and
 - the Joint Standing Committee into Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors which examined the post COVID recovery of these sectors, identified significant concerns in how the education system had been regulated.
- The Government has introduced a range of measures to improve the quality of the student visa caseload including increasing integrity measures targeting non-genuine students seeking to come to Australia for work or other purposes rather than to enhance their career opportunities through study.
- The enhanced integrity measures have resulted in an increased refusal rate across both onshore and offshore student visa cohorts.
 - Onshore - from 4.8% in 2019-20 to 16.3% in 2023-24.
 - Offshore – from 12.4% in 2019-20 to 21.7% in 2023-24.
- Lodgements for the offshore student program are slowing and were 1.7 per cent lower in 2023-24 (580,193 applications) compared to 2022-23 (590,304 applications).
 - This trend is expected to continue at a similar rate given a significant increase in refusal rates which are at historical highs. As at 23 July 2024 there were 33,970 offshore student applications and 100,971 onshore student applications on hand.
- The Government's actions to date have led to substantial declines in migration levels, with Student visa grants down by 35% (376,731 grants in 2023-24 compared to 577,295 in 2022-23).

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

s. 47E(d)

- Education providers have been very vocal in expressing concern with the impact of integrity measures on an industry that was severely disrupted during the pandemic. Providers are particularly concerned with measures that ensure greater visa processing priority is given to lower risk providers, which is benefitting inner-city universities in particular, where housing pressures are most pronounced.
- The Department is engaging closely with providers to share advice on how they can select lower risk visa applicants and assist in countering fraudulent claims. The Department is also working closely with the Department of Education to consult the sector on a possible NPL, outlining the benefits to business certainty that would come from the establishment of an annual NPL model.

6. Protection Visas

Key Issues / Risks

- The protection visa (PV) system is open to any non-citizen who arrived in Australia and wants to seek asylum in line with our international obligations (with the exception of unauthorised maritime arrivals). If you engage Australia's protection obligations and meet all other requirements for the grant of the visa, it lets you stay in Australia permanently.

s. 47E(d)

- The PV system has a large backlog of cases (33,524), application rates of over 2000 per month, and a high refusal rate of around 80-90% of applications. These unmeritorious application are clogging the system, creating integrity risks and slowing the processing of genuine asylum application.
- In October 2023, Government invested in PV reform with a focus on increasing staff to manage the caseload and associated strategic communication to deter unmeritorious application including through highlighting the risks of lodging unmeritorious applications. The funding also enabled Home Affairs to develop website wizards to support wayfinding of online applications.

s. 47C(1)

Ministerial Action

s. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

s. 47C(1)

- The resourcing targets for PV reform are due to be completed by end of July 2024. This will support a greater effort in increasing finalisations.

s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1)

- o Operation Abaxial commenced on 26 February 2024 and is focused on identifying and removing from Australia those whose protection visa claims were found to be unmeritorious. As of 16 July 2024, Operation Abaxial has resulted in 74 people being removed from Australia. In addition, 53 people whose protection visa applications were refused have left Australia voluntarily from the community.

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

Background

- The protection visa (PV) system – is open to any non-citizen in Australia (with the exception of unauthorised maritime arrivals).
- Applicants for a protection visa are usually granted a Bridging visa, with work rights, access to Medicare to remain in Australia and support themselves, while their PV application is processed (including while seeking merits and judicial review). PV applications, including all avenues of appeal can take years to progress and finalise, which is why the focus is on effective caseload management.
- The PV is regularly used by non-genuine refugees to prolong their stay in Australia (historical refusal rate of 80-90%). There is also a high review rate (above 70% of all refusals seek merits review), putting pressure on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and courts system which have been unable to keep up with demand.
- Australia has a generous Humanitarian Program (20,000 places) that enables us to help refugees and people in humanitarian need inside and outside Australia.
- Increases in grants in the onshore PV caseload impacts the number of places available for refugees and people in humanitarian need outside Australia.
- PV lodgement drivers are complex, s. 33(a)(iii)
Lodgement rates are susceptible to global trends and s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

7. Regional Processing

Key Issues / Risks

s. 33(a)(i), s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47E(d)

s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47E(d)

s. 33(a)(i), s. 33(a)(iii)

Ministerial Action

s. 34(1)(a)

s. 33(a)(iii)

Ongoing Activity

s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1), s. 47E(d)

Background

- Designation of Nauru as a regional processing country was renewed in February 2023.
 - o The previous arrangement with PNG ceased on 31 December 2021 and related designation lapsed in April 2023.
- The management of individuals in Nauru under the regional processing arrangements is the responsibility of the Nauru. Australia does not have effective control over regional processing arrangements, but supports and assists Nauru to implement arrangements through the engagement of specialist service providers, capacity building, mentoring and training.
- Three primary service providers are contracted to support Nauru:
 - o International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) – primary and mental health services, and access to specialised health services;
 - o Management and Training Corporation (MTC) – garrison, security and facilities management; and

s. 47G(1)(a)

- The Regional Processing Centre (RPC) was returned to 'active state' on 7 September 2023 as a result of the transfer of new unauthorised maritime arrivals (UMAs).
 - o The former cohort was substantially resolved by 30 June 2023.

s. 33(a)(iii)

- Since September 2023 and as at 22 July 2024, 110 UMAs have been taken to Nauru for regional processing.
 - o There are 94 UMAs currently in Nauru.
 - o 17 UMAs have returned home from Nauru voluntarily.
 - o s. 47F(1)
- Nauru has commenced refugee status determination processing for UMAs.
 - o None has been found to be refugees.
- Separately, as at 25 July 2024, there were 881 transitory persons (taken to a RPC on or after 19 July 2013 and before September 2023) temporarily in Australia (and one in Nauru).
 - o Consistent with Government policy, transitory persons will not settle in Australia and are supported to engage in third country migration options including resettlement in the United States, New Zealand, private sponsorship in Canada or other self-identified resettlement pathways; or voluntary return home or to another country in which they have right of entry.

Former Regional Processing arrangements

s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47E(d)

- Individuals remaining in PNG after the end of regional processing in PNG are the responsibility of the PNG Government.
 - o The Department is working with PNG to identify further opportunities for capacity building and funding support.

8. Character and Cancellations

Key Issues / Risks

- Section 501 of the *Migration Act 1958* (the Act) and associated general cancellation powers allow for the refusal or cancellation of a visa where the visa holder may present a risk to the Australian community. A person may fail the **character test** under section 501 of the Act for a number of reasons, including if they have a substantial criminal record or they represent a risk to the community.

s. 47E(d)

- Further, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) may set aside a cancellation or revocation decision made by the Department – including a mandatory cancellation decision – meaning that **visas may be re-instated to individuals with serious character or community protection concerns**. Only the Minister has a non-delegable and non-compellable power to further cancel these AAT set asides, which requires these matters to be brought to the Minister's attention and for the Minister to action.
- On 21 June 2024, Minister Direction 110 (MD110) came into force and replaced MD99. MD110 requires a decision-maker exercising certain powers (whether a delegate of the Minister or the AAT) to take into account certain factors when exercising their discretion and generally to give more weight to certain considerations or less weight to other considerations. They **cannot, however, direct a decision-maker to make a particular decision**. Directions can therefore shape decisions generally but are just one factor among many that a delegate must consider and cannot guarantee an outcome in a particular case.

s. 47E(d)

Ministerial Action

s. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

- The Department has been working to address the significant issue created by insufficient resources to properly escalate and address AAT set aside decisions – resulting in a release from immigration detention

– where the individual may present a risk to community safety. This has involved a surge of resources and staff to address the current backlog.

s. 47E(d)

- The Department will continue to monitor the impact of MD110.
- The Department consults with Ministers to determine the profile of cases they would like to consider and which should be decided by delegates. In some cases, the Minister's non-delegable powers may be recommended or required (for example, AAT set asides). Character and cancellation matters will be a priority for consistent engagement with your office, in particular to discuss sensitive and complex cases, and receive guidance on priority matters.

Background

- All persons who wish to travel to, enter or remain in Australia must meet the requirements of the *Migration Act 1958* (the Act) and the *Migration Regulations 1994* and are subject to health, identity, character and security checks. These checks may be repeated when new information comes to light, or at any time during the person's journey to or stay in Australia.
- In addition to the capacity to cancel visas and refuse visa applications or entry to Australia, the visa cancellation framework supports the Department's core objectives of ensuring the integrity of Australia's borders and visa programs.
- The Minister has a range of delegable and non-delegable powers to cancel, refuse or not revoke the cancellation of a person's visa. Delegable powers can be delegated to departmental officers to enact.

Types of cancellations

- A person's visa must be cancelled (**mandatory cancellation**) if they are serving a full-time term of imprisonment for an offence committed in Australia and they have, at any time, been sentenced to a period of 12 months or more in prison or have had a charge proven for, or have been found guilty of, a sexually based crime involving a child. If a non-citizen's visa is cancelled in these circumstances, the person may apply to the Minister for revocation of the visa cancellation decision within 28 days after being taken to have received the notice.
- The introduction of mandatory cancellation legislation in 2014 necessitate a focus of resources towards this work, reducing the capacity to address the discretionary caseload.
- **Discretionary cancellation** considerations under sections 501(2) and 501(3) occur where a non-citizen residing in the community has been determined to have a substantial criminal record. Ministers can also consider cancellation under section 501(3) for non-citizens who do not clearly fail the character test – i.e. on subjective grounds such as organised crime.
- Discretionary cancellation decisions made under section 501(2) are made with natural justice, while decisions under section 501(3) are made without natural justice.
- **General cancellation** powers (or non-character related cancellation powers) under the Act are broad ranging and provide the power to consider visa cancellation in a number of circumstances both to protect the Australian community and ensure the integrity of the migration program. General cancellation grounds include non-compliance with visa conditions, provision of incorrect information, or where the person may present a risk to the health, safety or good order of the Australian community.

9. Visa Crisis Responses

Key Issues / Risks

s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

s. 47E(d)

s. 33(a)(iii), s. 47E(d)

s. 47E(d)

10. Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism and Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia

Key Issues / Risks

- On 9 July 2024 the Prime Minister and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs announced the appointment of Ms Jillian Segal AO as Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. Simultaneously the Government announced that the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia 'will be announced shortly'.

s. 47C(1), s. 47F(1)

- The Special Envoys report directly to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs with budget, secretariat, strategic communications and policy support provided by the Department of Home Affairs.

s. 47F(1)

Ministerial Action

You may need to consider the following actions:

s. 47C(1)

- Set up an initial introductory meeting with Ms Segal, and discuss her priorities as Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism.

Ongoing Activity

- Setting up the Office of the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism including finalising budget, recruiting staff, and establishing protocols and procedures.
- Supporting the Special Envoy to set up and conduct meetings with key stakeholders across Government, the public and private sector, and in the community.

s. 47C(1)

Background

s. 33(a)(i)

11. Protective Security for Parliamentarians

Key Issues / Risks

- Protection arrangements for parliamentarians are a whole-of-government responsibility, comprised of a multi-layered security approach and delivered by several agencies including the Australian Federal Police, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Finance and Department of Parliamentary Services.
- Since the 2022 Federal Election, there has been a steady increase in threat reporting to the AFP from parliamentarians. Ministers who hold high profile political appointments continue to attract heightened levels of adverse activity. An increase in issue-motivated threat activity and generalised anti-government sentiment within sectors of the Australian community continue to impact the political landscape and parliamentarians in the execution of their duties.
- The Department and the AFP are jointly leading the Review into Protective Security Arrangements for Parliamentarians (the Review) which is looking at current protective security arrangements for Australian High Officer Holders and parliamentarians and ensuring arrangements are commensurate with the security environment. Terms of Reference for the Review were noted by Minister for Home Affairs on 18 March 2024.

Ministerial Action

S. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

- Ministers and Members of Parliament will often approach Home Affairs, the Minister, or the Minister's Office directly to discuss security concerns or requests for additional support. In the first instance, urgent matters should be referred to the police (000). Threats or other security concerns should be directed to the Australian Federal Police's (AFP) Security Protection Diplomatic Liaison (SPDL) team who operate a 24 hour, seven day a week point of contact to provide assistance and advice on matters involving threats and harassment, protest activity, general security and policing matters. When incidents or threats are reported to the AFP, they are assessed and investigated as required.
- Where deemed necessary, the AFP may provide police resources including uniformed police presence, technical solutions or liaison officers. Home Affairs can provide direct support to Parliamentarians who are not designated Australian High Office Holders (AHOH) when threat reporting is assessed as critically urgent and/or involves an elevated risk, and the AFP deem a Parliamentarian 'at risk', or at the discretion of the Minister.

Background

- The Department assesses physical security measures at the residences and electorate offices of Australian High Office Holders (AHOHs), Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices and the Official Establishments (The Lodge, Kirribilli House, Admiralty House and Government House).
- The definition of AHOH includes the Governor-General, the Executive (the Prime Minister and Ministers, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition. AHOH does not include Assistant Ministers, or Senators and Members of Parliament who are not in the Executive.
- In addition to assessing physical security requirements the Department funds and implements recommended security measures at the residences of AHOHs and at Official Establishments. Department of Finance is responsible for Electorate Offices and Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices.

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- If threat reporting is assessed as critically urgent and/or involves an elevated risk, the AFP may deem a Parliamentarian 'at risk'. In the event a Parliamentarian is deemed 'at risk', Home Affairs undertakes risk assessments of residential properties and electorate offices in line with services provided to AHOHs.

12. Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (OMARA)

Key Issues / Risks

- The Department is responsible for the regulation of Registered Migration Agents (RMAs) through the OMARA, which is a critical function in ensuring the integrity of the migration system.
- OMARA has not been performing this role to Government's expectations, with recent findings by multiple reviews that the OMARA has been ineffective;
 - o with limited sanction rates for RMAs;
 - o not actively identifying RMAs who were lodging unmeritorious Protection visa (PV) applications;
 - o inadequate processes to identify onshore Unlawful Providers of Immigration Assistance (UPIAs) operating in breach of the Migration Act; and
 - o a lack of a dedicated Immigration Investigation function to pursue and prosecute UPIAs leading to a view that regulatory functions are ineffective.

Ministerial Action

s. 47C(1)

Ongoing Activity

- The Department has more than tripled OMARA's staffing resources since 2022, to 63 FTE for the 2024-2025 year and uplifted capability of existing staff through:
 - o provision of expert professional training programs for OMARA staff including ensuring new investigative staff hold Certificate IV in Government Investigations;
 - o enhanced training materials and internal policies and procedures across all regulatory functions to support staff; and
 - o embedded enhanced processes to support investigation processes and decision outcomes.
- The Department is committed to implementing the 11 recommendations from the ANAO by 30 June 2025.

s. 33(a)(i), s. 47E(d)

- The Department is reviewing and implementing a revised referral threshold for Immigration offences including UPIA.
- The Department is also developing a pro-active Compliance and Monitoring function.

Background

- The *Migration Act* requires that anyone providing immigration advice or assistance onshore must be a RMA, legal practitioner or exempt person, and that an RMA must conduct themselves in accordance with the prescribed Code of Conduct.

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- The role of the OMARA is to protect consumers of migration assistance and the integrity of the Australian visa system by regulating RMAs through maintaining a register of RMAs and administering the registration process, investigating and assessing complaints and approving who can be a continuing professional development (CPD) provider.
- The OMARA was subject to recommendations from the Nixon Review.
- The ANAO undertook an audit of OMARA in 2023/24, following the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit identifying the regulation of migration agents as an audit priority of Parliament.
- The ANAO audit broadly found that the department's regulation of RMAs was not effective and that appropriate arrangements were not in place to support effective regulation. As a consequence of their finding, the ANAO made 11 recommendations, which the department has agreed to.

13. Multicultural Affairs and Grants

Key issues

- On 24 July 2024, Minister for Immigration Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (MICMA) released the Multicultural Framework Review (MFR) report, and Government Response. To complement the release of these documents, the Minister announced budget measures totalling \$104 million, including \$85.8 million to flow directly to communities made up of:
 - o \$70m for infrastructure projects;
 - o \$9.8m for grassroots communities;
 - o \$4m for support of multicultural peak bodies; and
 - o \$2m for faith leadership training.
- Initial responses to the release of the MFR have been positive, while mixed on the Government response, with further engagement anticipated with key stakeholders and communities as the documents are considered.
- The CLO network is continuing to support the community, and particularly those affected by the Gaza conflict, to understand their particular needs, and support a range of social cohesion, safety, security and community integration objectives. If required, the CLO Network will be leveraged to engage with Lebanese communities in response to global events.
- Multiple lines of grant programs are already underway to support those affected by the Hamas-Israel Conflict, as well as to deliver election commitments and to provide funding for Community Language Schools and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia. There are tailored governance arrangements in place to ensure the risks and timeliness of delivering the grants are effectively managed.
- Government reporting on Multicultural Access and Equity has been overdue for some years, and the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs has recently approved a consolidated 2017-22 report.

Actions being undertaken

S. 47C(1)

- The Multicultural Access and Equity Report is currently being printed in preparation for tabling in Parliament in coming weeks.
- The Department is supporting follow up community and peak body engagement in response to the MFR and Government response.

Background

- More than half of Australian residents (51.5 per cent) were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.

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- The Department drives delivery of multicultural policy and program settings, community engagement via the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) network, and supports your engagement via meetings and community events.
 - o Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024, the CLO Network undertook more than 8,700 engagements with community stakeholders
- On 19 October 2023, the Minister for Home Affairs (and other Ministers) announced a package of measures to support Australian communities affected by the Hamas-Israel conflict, including \$25 million to support Australian Palestinian, Muslim and other affected communities.

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Strategic Priorities

- 1. Overarching Strategic Environment**
- 2. Border Management**
- 3. Immigration**
- 4. Cyber, Technology and Critical Infrastructure Resilience and Security**
- 5. Countering Foreign Interference (CFI), Counter Terrorism (CT) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**
- 6. National Resilience**
- 7. Strengthening Democracy and Social Cohesion**

PROTECTED CABINET**1. Overarching Strategic Environment**

Australia's security environment is evolving and we face a range of challenges across all of our areas of responsibility.

Foreign interference and espionage is our primary security threat – and Australia is the target of sophisticated and persistent activity from nation states. They do this primarily for political and economic leverage, with some actors pre-positioning for higher-end acts of sabotage and destruction (and the ability to coerce Australia accordingly). We have severe challenges in trying to mitigate those threats, particularly as the open and inclusive nature of our systems, institutions and communities make us particularly vulnerable to exploitation. s. 34(1)(a), s. 34(2)

However, technological advancements and increasingly proficient mis- and dis-information powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) will make it challenging to stay ahead of threat actors and we will likely continue to be behind the curve. Greater awareness raising with key sectors, and better coordination nationally and internationally (including on attribution) are needed to keep pace.

The online environment is the most challenging vector for both espionage and criminal activity at scale – making cyber security across all parts of the economy a major priority. Some businesses and individuals do not take cyber security seriously enough or feel disempowered to adequately protect themselves from the evolving cyber threat landscape. Not doing the basic things to make it harder for cyber criminals and state-based actors to infiltrate systems is often at the heart of the problem. In the last year, Australia has suffered some of its largest data breaches as a result of cyber security incidents, and that trend will likely continue as technology and the digital economy continue to be even more integral to our lives, despite improved coordination under the leadership of the National Cyber Security Coordinator and closer partnerships with industry. The democratisation of sophisticated cyber techniques (once the domain of nation states), and AI-powered tools make the problem worse. As we have seen around the world, cyber-attacks can also have 'real world' consequences—shutting down Government services or disrupting critical infrastructure providers, like telecommunications or energy. Government and industry alike must be prepared to effectively respond to and rapidly bounce back from cyber security incidents when they happen—because they will continue to happen. Cyber security is everyone's business, and our public-private partnerships will be fundamental to achieving whole-of-economy uplift. The 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy is putting in place a range of conditions necessary for us to drive the whole-of-economy changes needed, including through cyber security legislation, but implementation is key. s. 33(a)(i)

A centrepiece of making our economy harder to compromise is the work that we are doing on critical infrastructure. Through the implementation of preventative and response measures under the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018* across eleven sectors of the Australian economy and enhanced cyber security requirements for 168 Systems of National Significance, we have the levers in place to drive industry uplift in the most critical sectors. The legislative architecture that we have in place is genuinely world-leading and many countries look to us as an exemplar. But the changes required are difficult for industry partners to introduce – they require boards to prioritise security over profit margins, and often necessitate upgrades to legacy infrastructure or the way that companies operate their businesses. Through our Trusted Information Sharing Network and Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council, we have built world leading partnerships with industry to build best practice and a network used, for instance during the recent CrowdStrike software outage. We have built the conditions for success and need to double-down on those to continue to push industry in the right direction.

Ensuring that the next generation of technologies that we will rely upon are secure-by-design is also critical, so that we do not need to pull major levers and impose major market corrections for security reasons. The work that we are doing now to safeguard AI, smart city technology, future telecommunications technologies, bio-technology and quantum computing and protect the institutions developing those technologies will enable us to mitigate future vulnerabilities. s. 47E(d)

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Outside of the threats we face from nation states, we are also dealing with an evolving community safety and counter-terrorism environment; exacerbated by decreasing social cohesion, decreasing confidence in government and institutions, and strong community reactions to international events. International and domestic interventions to counter religiously-motivated violent extremism have been largely successful, but politically and ideologically motivated violence is increasing. Instead of organised groups planning large-scale attacks, we now face a threat that involves a potentially increasing number of disturbed individuals motivated by multiple external factors to perpetrate violence in the community or against government targets. The diffuse nature of this threat is extremely hard to detect and harder to prevent.

s. 47C(1)

Effective national coordination between the

Commonwealth and jurisdictions will be important, but the most critical component will be early intervention programs in communities, investment in mental health and education, which are needed to fix underlying issues in the community and target the root causes of societal fragmentation and eventual violence.

s. 47C(1)

Our migration system is a strategic asset that can be harnessed to support Australia's ability to deal with these crises. If properly managed, it can boost Australia's economic growth and social cohesion. The Government's Migration Strategy sets us on a path to return migration levels to a sustainable footing, ensure that we are targeting skill gaps in the Australian economy, mitigating misuse of the visa system, providing pathways for key international partners and improving the efficiency of the system as a whole. These steps could genuinely power Australia's transition to net zero, bolster industries that lack the requisite workforce, boost productivity and harmonise our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

s. 47E(d)

Like immigration, the ability to efficiently and quickly process people and goods at the border is key to Australia's economic success – particularly in a world where supply chains are disrupted by conflict and geostrategic competition. Since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a dramatic increase in

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volume at the border, which the Australian Border Force has not been able to match through traditional approaches. We cannot keep attempting to grow the size of the workforce dealing with border management to meet the increasing challenges, and we need to meet these trends with modern (and predominantly technological) solutions. s. 47E(d), s. 33(a)(i)

Securing a longer term investment strategy, including the appropriate sequencing of sustainment will pay dividends. Similarly, we need to continue to invest in our ability to secure our civil maritime domain. Australia has one of the largest and most challenging civil maritime border environments in the world, consisting of 37,000 kilometres of coastline, much of which is in remote regions, an offshore zone covering 10 million square kilometres of ocean, and more than 60 international seaports.

s. 33(a)(i)

A key theme across all of the issues we are grappling with is that the Commonwealth does not hold the levers to mitigate threats and risks directly. We need to work in partnership with other Portfolios, government agencies, with businesses and with communities to have the effect we desire. Solving national security issues are no longer solely the provenance of national security agencies, and we need to be prepared to share more and partner better to make changes.

One of the things that equips us well to handle the challenges we face is the passion of our staff, and their connection to mission. We will continue to prioritise our resources against the highest areas of risk, manage our capital investment and be fiscally disciplined. In tandem, we will continue to pursue the long-term journey we have set for ourselves to change the culture of the organisation and build the capability that will enable us to succeed.

~~PROTECTED CABINET~~

2. Border Management

Civil Maritime Security

Australia has one of the largest and most challenging civil maritime border environments in the world. Maritime Border Command (MBC) manages the eight civil maritime security threats comprising of: illegal activity in protected areas, illegal exploitation of natural resources, marine pollution, prohibited imports and exports, unauthorised maritime arrivals, compromise to biosecurity, piracy, robbery or violence at sea and maritime terrorism. s. 33(a)(i), s. 47E(d)

The capabilities used by MBC are provided through the ABF and the Australian Defence Force. s. 47C(1)

s. 33(a)(i)

There are significant legislative and regulatory requirements in delivering and maintaining marine capabilities in service.

s. 47C(1), s. 33(a)(i)

s. 47E(d), s. 33(a)(i)

With reference to the Defence Strategic Review and consequential Navy Combatant Fleet Review, s. 34(1)(a), s. 34(2)

he ABF continues

to plan for and draw on existing capabilities to ensure border vulnerabilities are managed with targeted operations and deployments.

The ABF capabilities, particularly its vessels and aerial surveillance capabilities have been managed through the provision of base funding and significant value annual NPP or Estimates Variation funding. s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1), s. 34(1)(a)

Priority Actions

s. 47C(1)

s. 34(3)

s. 47C(1)

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- Undertake significant procurement and contract management to deliver the core future aerial surveillance capability from January 2028.

Border Management

Australia's economic prosperity relies on how quickly and easily businesses can trade internationally, and in turn, the collection of revenue in relation to goods traded across the Australian border. As Australia's customs service, the ABF plays a vital role in supporting the facilitation of legitimate cross-border trade and collecting border revenue through ensuring carriers and travellers comply with regulatory controls and their obligations under the *Migration Act 1958*, the *Customs Act 1901*, and other relevant legislation.

Our ABF officers act as a conduit between importers, exporters, port operators, logistics companies and brokers. We are integral to the global supply chain enabling participation in trade, creating a level playing field for industry and contributing to the advancement of Australia's economic interests and competitiveness.

While increasing demand and volume of trade provides the Australian government with revenue and contributes to Australia's national economic prosperity, it also continues to place significant pressure on our operations. Trade is expected to grow by 70% in the next decade. Traders expect streamlined processing, simpler digital services and seamless connectivity, and international trade is becoming increasingly complex with the rise of e-commerce, unknown trade actors and diversified supply chains. Rapid and continual changes in intelligence, technology and data affect how we deliver our policies and services to reduce the impact on the legitimate movement of trade and maintain the integrity of Australia's border.

Priority Actions

s. 47E(d)

- Progress the design, fit-out and commissioning of the passenger terminal and shared Commonwealth facilities to be used by Border Agencies at Western Sydney International Airport.
- Implement the traveller modernisation initiative, including SmartGate rollout and pilot of the Australian Travel Declaration (ATD).
- Attract, train and retain a diverse workforce.

s. 34(3)

s. 47(1)(b)

Illicit Tobacco and E-Cigarette Commissioner

The Illicit Tobacco and E-Cigarette (ITEC) Commissioner is a new statutory position established by the Australian Government under the [Public Health \(Tobacco and Other Products\) Act 2023](#), and intended to address the complex challenges posed by illicit tobacco and e-cigarettes in Australia. While located within the ABF, the ITEC Commissioner operates independently from the ABF Commissioner, reporting directly to the Minister for Home Affairs. An interim ITEC Commissioner was appointed by the Minister for Home Affairs on 1 July 2024, and work is underway to establish the new office, progress initial priorities, and secure ongoing support from all jurisdictions to the new initiative.

As the first role of its kind globally, the ITEC Commissioner adopts a unique whole-of-government approach, integrating within an established framework of law enforcement, health agencies, community groups and aims to unify efforts across Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The Commissioner's mission is to maximise the collective impact of initiatives, ensuring strategic alignment and effective use of resources.

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Central to the ITEC Commissioner's mandate is providing strategic leadership across government agencies to enhance collaboration and engagement. By bringing together key law enforcement and health agencies, the Commissioner leverages collective expertise, resources, and insights to develop and implement a national strategy that resonates across government. This collaborative approach aims to ensure that efforts are synchronised, resources are optimised, and initiatives are aligned towards a common goal.

The ITEC Commissioner also to focus on leveraging data-driven insights to guide policy and operational decisions. By collecting, analysing, and disseminating information, the Commissioner ensures interventions are evidence-based and emerging trends are promptly addressed. Continuous monitoring and evaluation is intended to drive adaptive strategies and interventions that adapt to new challenges in the illicit market.

Moreover, the ITEC Commissioner serves as a trusted adviser to government bodies, providing expert guidance on policy and legislative reforms necessary to address the complexities of illicit tobacco and e-cigarettes. By staying abreast of emerging trends and regulatory developments, the Commissioner ensures proposed reforms are responsive to evolving challenges, enabling informed decision-making and prioritization of resources.

Priority Actions

- Develop Measures of Effectiveness – continuous monitoring and evaluation metrics will be established to assess the effectiveness of interventions across Commonwealth, state and territory governments.
- Develop a National Strategy to Combat Illicit Tobacco and E-Cigarettes – aligning counter-ITEC initiatives and strategic intent across jurisdictions is intended to ensure a unified and targeted approach to addressing the issues.
- Develop an End to end compliance framework and enforcement model – development of a new multi-jurisdictional compliance model will represent a hard-line shift in illicit tobacco compliance and enforcement, delivering improved measurement, evaluation and consideration of tobacco and vape compliance and intervention activities across whole-of-government.
- Implement the National Vaping and Enforcement Framework– application of the new whole of government framework will help stamp out unlawful vapes in the supply chain and prevent illegal markets from emerging. Delivery of initiatives, including enhanced collaboration across law enforcement and health agencies, will take place under the auspices of the National Vaping Working Group (NVWG).

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3. Immigration

The Department supports Australia's economic growth and social cohesion through our managed migration system. Australia is home to 2.8 per cent of the world's immigrants, with more than half of all Australians being born overseas or having a parent born overseas. The Government's Migration Strategy and Action plan was released on 11 December 2023, and the Government's Review of Regional Migration Settings (the Review) was released on 21 June, seeking submissions by 26 July 2024. The Department is also undertaking a range of activities to harden visa and migration system integrity, reduce migrant worker exploitation and work with the Office of Migration Agents Registration Authority to address a range of complexities and issues in the system, and is focused on improving the operational delivery of the immigration system.

Priority Actions

- Support the ongoing implementation of the Migration Strategy, and partner with states and territories in planning for a multi-year permanent migration program that responds to Government needs and economic interests.
- Support community safety, while following the High Court's decision in NZYQ, by appropriately releasing affected individuals and applying and monitoring compliance with visa conditions, including electronic monitoring and curfew and managing ongoing litigation.
- Invest in refining processes for on-boarding and staffing to ensure that complex cases, including those affected by NZYQ, can be managed by an appropriate number of highly trained decision makers in a suitable timeframe.
- Support the ongoing implementation of the Government Response to the Review of Exploitation of Australia's Visa System (The Nixon Review).
- Strengthen visa and migration system integrity to reduce systemic migrant worker exploitation across all industries.
- Enable migrants and refugees to participate and contribute both economically and socially within the Australian community by delivering and administering the onshore and offshore components of the Humanitarian Program (including protection visa reform) and humanitarian settlement support programs.
- Deliver immigration compliance and monitoring activities, including; cancellations, resolving the immigration status of those people whose onshore visa options have been exhausted, facilitating removal, maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable onshore immigration detention network, and giving effect to the community safety order scheme to contribute to community safety.
- Deliver centralised social cohesion and multicultural affairs policy, grants and advice that are fit-for-purpose to assist the Commonwealth to engage with CALD communities as part of implementation of agreed Government recommendations stemming from the Multicultural Framework Review.

s. 47C(1)

Reforming the migration system

Migration is central to Australia's national story and identity and has helped Australia tackle national challenges and build prosperity and security. Over the coming decades, Australia's migration system will need to maintain migration at sustainable levels, while being flexible and responsive to challenges. These include declines in productivity growth and labour force participation, labour shortages, ageing population, global competition for highly skilled migrants, and the changing nature of work itself. At the same time, the migration system itself depends on public confidence as a key enabler.

The current Government has taken substantial progress toward setting a strategic roadmap to reform the migration system into one that can meet challenges and harness the opportunities of the future. The 2023 *Review of the Migration System* led by Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM found that Australia's migration program was not fit for purpose to deliver on the opportunities and challenges of the future. The reviewers found that the objectives of the program are unclear, and successive governments and policymakers have responded to challenges through piecemeal reforms which have not addressed fundamental underlying issues. Further, the Review found that Australia now has a migration program that fails to attract the most highly skilled migrants and fails to enable business to efficiently access workers. At the same time, there was clear evidence of systemic exploitation and the risk of an emerging permanently temporary underclass. Cumulatively, these factors erode public confidence in the migration system.

Following adverse media reporting on the abuse of migrant workers, Ms Christine Nixon, AO, APM, was appointed by the Minister for Home Affairs, Clare O'Neil MP on 16 January 2023 to undertake a *Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia's Visa System* (the Nixon Review). The Review found that gaps and weaknesses in Australia's visa system were allowing sexual and migrant worker exploitation, human trafficking and other organised crime, as well as misconduct by Registered Migration Agents (RMAs).

The Migration Strategy, informed by the Migration and Nixon Reviews, and released on 11 December 2023, outlines the Australian Government's commitment to build a migration system that matches the needs of the nation, delivering for Australia and migrants, underpinned by strengthened integrity. It contains 23 new policy commitments and 7 areas for future reform.

The Migration Strategy includes five core objectives to underpin Australia's migration system and help build a more prosperous and secure Australia:

- **Raising living standards** by boosting productivity, meeting skills shortages and supporting exports
- **Ensuring a fair go in the workplace** by complementing the jobs, wages and conditions of domestic workers and preventing migrant worker exploitation
- **Building stronger communities** by better planning for sustainable migration, and giving migrants the opportunity to invest in their lives in Australia through permanent residence and citizenship
- **Strengthening international relationships** by building stronger economic and social connections with our regional neighbours and international partners
- **Making the system work** by being fast, efficient and fair for migrants and employers.

Collectively, this will re-build confidence and trust in the migration system that supports Australia's national interest, underpinned with integrity.

A significant number of actions have been undertaken to implement the Migration Strategy, with more work in progress to implement Government commitments in 2024:

- **Targeting temporary skilled migration to address skills needs and promote worker mobility** by:
 - o Implementing the Skills in Demand visa by the end of 2024.
 - o Jobs and Skills Australia are consulting on a draft Core Skills Occupation List to underpin the Core Skills pathway of the new Skills in Demand visa.
 - o Indexation of income thresholds, further streamlining of market labour testing and establishment of a modernised sponsorship accreditation pathway are on track to be implemented in mid to late-2024.
- **Reshaping permanent skilled migration to drive long-term prosperity** by:
 - o Publishing a discussion paper in April 2024 on reform of the skilled visa points test to drive long term prosperity, supported by consultation with states and territories and key stakeholders.

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- o Permanent closure of the Business Innovation and Investment Program in July 2024 to new applications.
- o Commencement of the new National Innovation visa in late 2024 for migrants who can drive growth in sectors of national importance.
- **Strengthening the integrity and quality of international education.**
 - o A range of new measures have been implemented to bolster the Department's student visa integrity capability, including a new Genuine Student requirement, restrictions on visa hopping, and higher English language proficiency requirements, and strengthening powers to issue suspension certificates to high-risk education providers, and changes to the Temporary Graduate visa.
- **Tackling worker exploitation and the misuse of the visa system.**
 - o Implementation of a public register of approved sponsors is on track to be implemented by the end of 2024, in line with the new Skills in Demand visa.
 - o Commenced work with the Australian Tax Office to design a data-matching arrangement that will detect unscrupulous employers who may be underpaying, or otherwise exploiting, temporary skilled visa holders.
 - o Commenced development of an information and education package to empower migrant workers through provision of accurate and appropriate information about workplace safeguards, protections and compliance measures related to migration rules.
- **Planning migration to get the right skills in the right places**
 - o From 2025–26, the Migration Program will move to a multi-year planning model for migration, with greater collaboration with states and territories.
 - o Public consultation on the size and composition of the first four-year cycle (covering 2025–26 to 2028–29) will commence later this year.
- **Supporting regional Australia and its workers**
 - o In June 2024, Government published a discussion paper – 'Supporting strong and sustainable regions – Review of Regional Migration Settings', with public submissions closed on 26 July 2024. Further regional consultation is underway.
- **Simplifying the migration system to improve the experience for migrants and employers**
 - o Skilled, family, visitor and student visa reforms will result in the reduction of the number of visa subclasses by 20 in 2024 and 2025.

In addition, Government is delivering on its commitment to restore integrity to the migration system under the Government response to the Nixon Review (released 4 October 2024), to address migrant worker exploitation, and pursue reforms to prevent, deter and sanction individuals who seek to abuse Australia's visa system to exploit vulnerable migrants. This work serves as the foundational integrity improvements on which the Migration Strategy reforms will be built. Key actions and achievements include:

- Re-establishment of a centralised immigration compliance function within the Department (November 2023) to ensure migrant worker protections and employer compliance monitoring.
- Reforms to Australia's Protection visa system (announced 5 October 2023) to significantly reduce processing times and remove incentives for misuse by those seeking to extend their stay in Australia to work.
- Significant whole-of-government measures to strengthen the integrity and quality in Australia's international education sector.
- Commencement of the Strengthening Employer Compliance Act 2023 on 1 July 2024, including new criminal offenses for using a person's immigration status to exploit them in the workplace, a prohibition measure and increased penalties and compliance tools for the ABF to change employer behaviours.

s. 47C(1)

Taken together, these two significant packages of reforms comprise a complex program of work which the Department is managing through a Transformation Program Office. Work is also underway to continue to

PROTECTED CABINET

build the immigration policy capability necessary to ensure the system delivers in the national interest over the longer term. s. 47C(1)



~~PROTECTED CABINET~~

4. Cyber, Technology and Critical Infrastructure Resilience and Security

The global cyber environment is in a continuous state of flux, and is influenced by advances in technology, geopolitical, and demographic factors. Hostile cyber actors, both state and non-state, will continue to engage in malicious cyber activity to exploit and access systems against Government and critical infrastructure. This threat includes sabotage, espionage, financial gain and stealing of sensitive information. The volume, speed and sophistication of cyber-attacks poses a risk to Australia as does trusted insiders and sabotage of our infrastructure.

The establishment of the National Cyber Security Coordinator in 2023, supported by the National Office of Cyber Security within the Department, has created a central point to lead and coordinate initiatives across Australia's national cyber security policy; major cyber incident response; whole-of-Government incident preparedness; and Commonwealth cyber security capability—including initiatives under the 2023–2030 *Australian Cyber Security Strategy*, which was released in November 2023.

Priority Actions

- Implement Horizon One [2023–2025] of the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy to address critical gaps in Australia's cyber shields, build better protections for our most vulnerable citizens and businesses, and support initial cyber maturity uplift across our region, and develop initiatives under Horizon Two [2026–2028] to scale cyber maturity across the economy. Current priorities include to:
 - o hold the second meeting of your Executive Cyber Council on 6 August 2024 to facilitate co-leadership with industry on the delivery of key initiatives
 - o lead the National Cyber Exercise Program and the delivery of other cyber incident response exercises to proactively test the effectiveness of incident response plans, including across Government and Australia's critical infrastructure sectors
 - o support Australia's involvement in cyber deterrence responses, including technical advisories with attribution, Statements of Support for international partners or sanctions
 - o drive continued work under the National Cyber Intel Partnership with industry partners to develop and pilot new approaches for automated, near-real time cyber threat blocking

s. 47C(1)

s. 47E(d)

- Undertake national critical infrastructure protection coordination including via background checking, regulatory, policy, industry engagement and education pathways to support Australian industry and government in safeguarding critical infrastructure assets.
- Continue implementing the 2023 Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy to help industry and government enhance the security and resilience of Australia's critical infrastructure.
- Continue aviation and maritime security policy and reform, and program management, to minimise the risk to the sectors from physical, supply chain, cyber and other threats.

s. 47C(1)

- Bolster offshore risk mitigation through international transport security capability building security critical personnel at overseas last ports of call are skilled and qualified.

PROTECTED CABINET**2023-2030 Cyber Security Strategy****The Australian public is demanding action as the threat environment worsens**

Rapid digitisation has connected Australians with the world, offering new opportunities to work, learn, and live online. However, recent cyber incidents — including Optus, Medibank, Latitude and HWL Ebsworth data breaches — have demonstrated that malicious actors will continue to exploit our interconnectedness to do us harm.

Strengthening cyber security presents rich opportunities for Australia. If we act quickly, Australia can turbocharge our tech sector and create real prosperity for citizens. By 2030, Australia can build new public-private partnerships to accelerate threat sharing and incident response. Through our relationships in the Indo-Pacific, we can lift cyber resilience across the region. The Strategy puts citizens and businesses at the centre of government's approach. It has been developed through deep consultation, including hundreds of interactions with business and the community.

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) reports there is one cyber incident reported every six minutes and that cyber threats are growing in scale and sophistication. Cyber criminals increasingly use capabilities that were once exclusively used by nation states. As we move into an era of increased geostrategic competition, nation states will also target Australia, and the region, and seek to impose their values in international fora.

Cyber Security Strategy

The 2023-2030 Cyber Security Strategy was released publicly on 22 November 2023 and seeks to position Australia as a world leader in cyber security by 2030. Specifically, by 2030 the community and businesses will be protected by six national cyber shields:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Strong businesses and citizens: Our citizens and businesses are better protected from cyber threats, and can bounce back quickly |
| 2 | Safe technology: Australians can trust that their digital products and services are safe, secure and fit-for-purpose |
| 3 | World-class threat sharing and blocking: Government and industry have access to real-time threat data, and we can block threats at scale |
| 4 | Protected critical infrastructure: Our critical infrastructure and essential government systems can withstand and bounce back from cyber attacks |
| 5 | Sovereign capabilities: Australia has a flourishing cyber industry, enabled by a diverse and professional cyber workforce |
| 6 | Resilient region and global leadership: Australia's region is more cyber resilient and we shape and uphold international rules, norms and standards |

Implementation Over Three Time Horizons

The Minister for Cyber Security s. 47C(1) [redacted] the Strategy's implementation and any required updates with three two yearly action plans over three horizons:

- In Horizon 1 (2023–25): strengthening our foundations to address critical gaps in our cyber shields, build better protections for our most vulnerable citizens and businesses, and support improved cyber maturity uplift across our region.
- In Horizon 2 (2026–28): scale cyber maturity across the whole economy and make further investments in the broader cyber ecosystem, continuing to scale up our cyber industry and grow a diverse cyber workforce.

PROTECTED CABINET

- In Horizon 3 (2029–30): advance the global frontier of cyber security and lead the development of emerging cyber technologies capable of adapting to new risks and opportunities across the cyber landscape.

Cyber Security Strategy Funding

The Government has committed \$586.9 million to the Cyber Security Strategy out to 2030. This includes:

- protecting businesses and citizens by investing \$290.8m including support for small and medium business, building public awareness, fighting cybercrime, breaking the ransomware business model, and strengthening the security of Australians' identities
- keeping Australians safe in their homes and workplaces by investing \$4.8m in establishing long-overdue consumer standards for smart devices and software
- uplifting the cyber security of Australia's health system by investing \$9.4m to build a threat sharing platform for the health sector
- defending critical infrastructure by investing \$143.6m in strengthening critical infrastructure protections and uplifting government cyber security
- growing sovereign cyber capabilities by investing \$8.6m in professionalising our cyber workforce and accelerating the cyber industry in Australia, and
- building regional cyber resilience and global leadership by investing \$129.7m in regional cooperation, cyber capacity uplift programs, and leadership in cyber governance forums on the international stage.

Horizon One Action Plan 2023-2025

In the first Action Plan underpinning the Cyber Security Strategy, there are 60 actions under delivery. Some actions have been finished, the majority are substantially progressed and some are working to agreed timeframes but yet to commence. The National Cyber Security Coordinator is coordinating efforts across Government to implement the Cyber Security Strategy Action Plan. The most urgent reforms include a Cyber Security Bill and grant funding alongside an industry and government collaboration (such as the Executive Cyber Council and building a cyber response capability). Other key actions underway in collaboration with ASD, AFP, DFAT, Treasury and other agencies include:

- providing advice and guidance to support small and medium businesses
- building cyber resilience and provide support when an incident occurs
- extending the reach and accessibility of cyber awareness programs and empowering diverse communities to grow their cyber awareness
- building law enforcement and offensive capabilities
- shaping international legal frameworks and cooperation on cybercrime
- enhancing visibility of the ransomware threat, providing clear guidance and driving global cooperation on ransomware operations
- clarifying expectations of corporate cyber governance
- sharing lessons learned from cyber incidents, promoting trusted support after an incident and simplifying incident reporting
- expanding the Digital ID program to help keep Australians' identities safe
- expanding support services for victims of identity theft.
- adopting international security standards for digital technologies
- embedding cyber security into software development practices
- managing the national security risks of digital technology
- protecting datasets of national significance
- supporting data governance and security uplift across the economy
- supporting safe and responsible use of AI
- preparing for a post-quantum world
- sharing strategic threat intelligence with industry, expanding tactical and operational threat intelligence sharing
- developing next-generation threat blocking capabilities and expanding the reach of threat blocking capabilities
- through legislative and operational reforms, ensuring we are protecting the right entities and critical infrastructure assets, enhancing cyber security obligations for Systems of National Significance, ensuring critical infrastructure is compliant with cyber security obligations and helping critical infrastructure manage the consequences of cyber incidents

PROTECTED CABINET

- strengthening the cyber maturity of Commonwealth departments and agencies including S. 33(a)(i) across government and improving the cyber skills of the Australian Public Service (APS)
- conducting national cyber security exercises across the economy, building playbooks for incident response
- growing Australia's cyber skills pipeline, improving the diversity of the cyber workforce and professionalising the domestic cyber workforce and cyber industry growth
- strengthening collective cyber resilience with neighbours in the Pacific and Southeast Asia
- harnessing private sector innovation and expertise in the region
- supporting international standards for transparent and secure development of technology
- advocating for high-quality digital trade rules
- defending an open, free, secure and interoperable internet in international forums
- upholding international law and norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, and
- deploying all arms of statecraft to deter and respond to malicious actors.

PROTECTED CABINET

5. Countering Foreign Interference (CFI), Counter Terrorism (CT) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

Countering Foreign Interference

Espionage and foreign interference are Australia's principal security concern. Australia remains a target of sophisticated and persistent foreign interference directed towards government, academia, industry, the media and communities. Like other complex crime types, foreign interference cannot be eliminated. The role of the Counter Foreign Interference Coordination Centre (CFICC) is to work across sectors to raise awareness and strengthen the resiliency through legislation and policy.

CFICC does not have responsibility for individual case management. Individual operational matters are managed through the ASIO-AFP led CFI Taskforce.

Priority Actions

s. 33(a)(i), s. 47C(1)

Counter Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism

The Department works with key stakeholders to protect and safeguard Australia from the evolving terrorist threat. The Department coordinates proactive and nationally consistent counter-terrorism (CT) efforts across the preparedness, prevention, response and recovery spectrum. The Department counters the evolving threat of violent extremism by ensuring our strategy, legislation, programs, operational capabilities and coordination activities are fit for purpose.

The Department works towards facilitating closer cooperation with Australia's regional and international partners to bolster operational capabilities and to ensure that coordinated measures are well rehearsed to anticipate and respond to the evolving threat environment.

We will brief you separately on CT incident response arrangements.

Priority actions

s. 34(1)(a)

s. 33(a)(i)

~~PROTECTED CABINET~~

s. 33(a)(i)

s. 34(1)(a)

- Provide national leadership across the whole of the Australian government including through the ANZCTC and the CT Coordination Centre to ensure efficient coordination of the Commonwealth's response to terrorism incidents.

s. 33(a)(i)

PROTECTED CABINET

6. National Resilience

National Resilience

Australia faces a number of systemic challenges to our resilience that are exacerbated by the drivers of climate change and geostrategic tensions. Disruptions and crises are becoming more frequent, complex, severe, costly and likely to cascade into other crises – and the frequency of crises from natural disasters through to state-based attacks on Australia's interests are increasing.

s. 47C(1)

Priority Actions

- Develop a National Resilience Framework to guide a whole-of-nation approach to strengthening national resilience.
 - s. 47C(1) [REDACTED]
s. 34(3) [REDACTED]
- Explore alternative Commonwealth crisis response capabilities to reduce reliance on the Australian Defence Force as the primary mechanism of non-financial Commonwealth support.
- Develop options to enhance Commonwealth emergency management powers.
 - s. 47C(1) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The Department administers the *National Emergency Declaration Act 2020*.
- Assess the national security impacts and risks of climate change and develop policies to address critical national security vulnerabilities.
- Enhance national civil preparedness efforts by exploring options to enhance the capability and capacity of Australia's civil domain to manage concurrent national crises and global shocks in the context of a shifting threat environment.
- s. 47C(1) [REDACTED]

PROTECTED CABINET**7. Strengthening Democracy and Social Cohesion**

The Strengthening Democracy Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in January 2023 to determine what can be done, practically, to safeguard and sustain Australia's democratic resilience, in the near term and for the long term. The concept of democratic resilience supports other Home Affairs priorities, including Social Cohesion, Countering Foreign Interference, and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

The Taskforce's report *Strengthening Australian democracy: a practical agenda for democratic resilience* was launched by Minister O'Neil on 15 July 2024 at the Museum of Australian Democracy.

Since May 2024, the Taskforce has led the social cohesion policy agenda for Home Affairs s. 47C(1)

Priority actions

s. 34(3)

s. 47C(1)



Proposed August 2024

Chief of Staff
Rebecca Carpenter

Associate Secretary
Immigration
Emma Cassar

Secretary Stephanie Foster PSM

FAS Transformation Sara Vrh
AS Transformation Samantha Patuto

Group Manager General Counsel Legal Clare Sharp
Deputy General Counsel AS Legal Strategy and Services Alicia Wright
AS Legislation Kevin Cunningham
AS Migration and Citizenship Law Anton Bockwinkel
AS Migration and Citizenship Litigation Peter Frank
AS Privacy, FOI and Records Management Carmen Saunders
AS Community Safety Order Taskforce Marian Agbinya
FAS Disputes and Corporate Law Steve Webber
AS Commercial, Employment and Information Bronwyn Fagan
AS Security, Disputes and Operations Kerrie Cowan
Special Counsel Genevieve Ebbeck

National Cyber Security Coordinator + LTGEN Michelle McGuinness, CSC National Office of Cyber Security
Deputy National Cyber Security Coordinator FAS National Office of Cyber Security Tony Chapman
AS Cyber Security Response Coordination Unit Joe Smith

Deputy Secretary Cyber and Infrastructure Security Hamish Hansford
FAS Cyber & Infrastructure Security Centre Justine Jones
AS Critical Infrastructure Regulatory Operations and Analysis Michael Minns
AS Risk Assessment Sophie Pearce
AS Regulatory Compliance Robert Price A/g *
AS AusCheck Cody Smith
FAS Industry Partnerships & Infrastructure Policy Sally Pfeiffer
AS Industry Partnerships Emily Grant
AS Infrastructure Capability Crystal Fox
AS Critical Infrastructure Policy and Standards Matthew Pedler
SD Systems of National Significance Whitney Harris A/g *
FAS Cyber and Technology Security Policy Peter Anstee
AS Technology Security Policy Britt Ryan
AS Cyber Policy and Programs Nishant Rao A/g (Ashley Bell commences 5 August)
AS Government Cyber and Protective Security Tim Neal

Deputy Secretary Executive Sophie Sharpe
FAS Executive Coordination Chief Risk Officer Chief Sustainability Officer Brian Hickey
AS Ministerial and Parliamentary Alice Ling
AS Performance Governance and Inquiries Pete Berlis
AS Media and Communication Heike Phillips
FAS Strategic Policy James Robinson
AS Strategy Currently vacant (Jason Flanagan A/g commences TBC)
AS Asia and Regional Forums Steven Yates
AS Global and Multilateral Elizabeth White
FAS Intelligence Adam Meyer
AS Mission Management Craig Bickell CSM
AS Strategic Threats Dustin Gold A/g
AS Support to Operations Jeff Carige
SD Identity, Biometric and Forensic Services Heath McMahon
SD Assessments and Services Samantha Clarke A/g *
Data and Economic Analysis Centre Chief Data Officer Pia Andrews
AS Data Services Yvonne Solecka
AS Economic, Policy and Insights Centre Justin Douglas
SD Data Science and Applied AI Rohan Samaraweera

Deputy Secretary Chief Operating Officer Charlotte Tressler Chief Security Officer
FAS Finance Chief Finance Officer Stephanie Cargill
AS Management Accounting Deputy Chief Finance Officer Sanandan Dasgupta
AS Financial Operations Tracy Hobden
AS External Budgets and Revenue Janelle Duke
FAS People Tiffany Blight
AS People Engagement, Planning and Innovation Catherine McLachlan
AS Recruitment, Diversity and Learning Julie Clifton A/g
AS Payroll and Conditions Allan Hollink
AS Health, Safety and Wellbeing Fiona Thornton A/g
FAS Integrity, Security and Assurance Chief Audit Executive Anthony Coles
AS Integrity and Professional Standards Mel Kay
AS Security Rheannon Nicholson
AS Audit and Assurance Alison Sommerville
FAS Procurement, Property and Contracts Chief Procurement Officer Maree O'Neale A/g *
AS Procurement and Contract Support Martine Cooper
AS Property Joel Goodison A/g
AS Specialist Procurement Matthew Ford A/g
SD Common Administrative Services Emma Finnigan A/g
Chief Medical Officer Grant Pegg
SD Health Policy and Assurance Lila Caplice

Group Manager Technology and Major Capability (TMC) Radi Kovacevic A/g *
AS Cyber Risk Services Sean Hugo

FAS Major Capability Claire Roennfeldt
AS Capability Value Realisation Stephen Dryden
AS Sourcing and Vendor Management Ryan Thompson
AS Operational Capability Duane Stokes
AS National Criminal Intelligence System Veronica Jurica A/g
SD Whole of Government Programs Suzie Nermutova A/g
SD Major Sourcing and Acquisitions Sylvia Neves A/g *

Deputy GM Chief Information Officer ICT Division Matt Jones A/g
AS Risk, Data and Insight Systems Tom Bryan
AS Visa, Citizenship and Digital Systems Jakub Bartkowiak
AS Traveller, Cargo and Trade Systems Tim Robinson A/g
AS Corporate and Case Systems Jennifer Bardsley
AS Technology Operations and Support Rebecca Giumelli
AS Architecture, Design and Security Michelle Graham
AS Digital Delivery Simon Aitchison A/g
SD IT Service Management Kerry McKinnon A/g *

Deputy Secretary National Security and Resilience Nathan Smyth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator
Deputy Coordinator FAS Counter-Terrorism Coordination Centre Gemma Smyth
AS Counter-Terrorism Strategic Policy Alisha Warner
AS Counter-Terrorism Operational Coordination Natasha O'Farrell A/g
AS Countering Violent Extremism Alexander Goldie
SD Counter-Terrorism Capability Amanda Koerber A/g *
FAS Lead - CVE Program Evaluation ^^ Lachlan Colquhoun
Deputy Coordinator Counter Foreign Interference (CFI) Coordination Centre Ky Blackman
AS CFI Policy and Coordination David Chick
AS CFI Partnerships Sarah Marshall
FAS National Security Tom Behrens A/g (Philip Kimpton commences 5 August)
AS National Resilience Taskforce Michelle Boundy A/g *
AS National Security and Intelligence Policy Thomas Behrens
FAS Strengthening Democracy Taskforce Jeni Whalan
SD Strengthening Democracy Policy and Reform Melanie Mackenzie

Group Manager Immigration Operations Michael Willard
AS Immigration Network Operations and Governance Steph McManus
AS Immigration Integrity and Assurance Michael Odgers
SD OMARA Emily Winch
SD Visa Support Centre Alice Maclean A/g *
SD Immigration Business Governance Malissa Ness
SD Immigration Outreach and Engagement Leah Tuckwell
SD Immigration Program Management Scott Mann A/g *

Offshore Regional Directors
RD Americas Patrick Hallinan
RD Europe and Sub Saharan Africa Mary Balzary
MC Geneva Andrew Rose
RD Mekong Jodie Bjerregaard
RD North Asia Malcolm McAllister
RD Pacific Jim Anderson
RD South East Asia Lauren Richardson
RD South Asia Steve Biddle
RD Middle-East and North Africa Michelle Pearce
Onshore Regional Directors
RD NSW/ACT Sneha Chatterjee
RD QLD/NT Charlie Shandil
RD VIC/TAS Andrew Heath A/g *
RD WA Ally Paolino A/g *
RD SA Josephine Lamshed

FAS Service Design and Delivery Programs Drew Layton A/g
AS Digital Capability Mark Schofield A/g
AS Service Delivery Operations Matthew Wardell
SD Transformation Program Office Christina Keane
SD Service Delivery Design Chom Isarabhakdi A/g *

FAS Regional Processing Taskforce Joe Feld A/g *
AS Regional Shan Strugnell
SD Regional Processing Contracts Peter Manwaring

Group Manager Immigration Policy Tara Cavanagh
AS Immigration Planning and Policy Framework Paul Denman
AS Migration Reform Brendan Tegg
FAS Immigration Policy Michael Burke
AS Compliance and Community Protection Policy David Gavin
AS Detention Policy Chad Hodgens
Group Manager Immigration Compliance Michael Thomas

FAS Character, Cancellation and Case Resolution Jaycob McMahon
AS Character and Cancellation Gemma Mastin-Smith A/g
AS Status Resolution Programs and Capability David Arnold
AS BVR Case Management Project ^^ Karen Holmes
SD Status Resolution Network Jarrad Town A/g
SD Immigration Compliance and Governance Nigel Muir
SD Resettlement and Support Programs Nerys Jones

Assistant Commissioner Immigration Compliance Operations Sandra Jeffery
Commander Community Protection Board Jake Sharman
Commander Operation AEGIS Shawn Selles A/g *
Commander Field Operations and Sponsor Monitoring Ben Biddington
CS Removal Operations Jodi Stubbs

Below Division: Report To Associate Secretary
FAS Immigration Programs Damien Klier
AS Skilled Visas Kara Mallett
AS Family Visas Matthew Noble
AS Temporary Visas Allison Garrod

FAS Refugee, Humanitarian and Settlement
AS Humanitarian Program Operations Jill Ogden
AS Humanitarian Policy and Child Wellbeing Lavinia Mitchell
AS Migrant English and Language Services (All Mond)
AS Settlement Program Operations Zoe Williams

SD Onshore Humanitarian Program Management Caroline Hatswell A/g *
FAS Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Angela Kirkwood
AS Citizenship Policy Brett White
AS Citizenship Program Delivery
AS Multicultural Affairs Erica Biddle
AS Social Cohesion Taskforce (role name TBC) Allison Roesler-Vannan A/g *

KEY

GM – Group Manager
FAS – First Assistant Secretary
AS – Assistant Secretary
RD – Regional Director
MC – Minister Counsellor
SD – Senior Director
CS – Chief Superintendent
A/g – Acting
* – Vacant role
+ – Officer with a direct reporting line to the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Cyber Security
^^ - Temporary role

Deputy Commissioner Strategy and Capability Kaylene Dale
First Assistant Secretary Strategy and Policy Tharanie Vithanage
Commander Governance and Strategic Partnerships Ben Evans
Assistant Secretary Strategy, Capability and Investment Andrew Tankey
Assistant Secretary Customs and Trade Policy Kimberlee Clydesdale
Assistant Secretary Traveller Policy and Modernisation Alice Stanley
Assistant Secretary Customs and Border Modernisation Ashley Bell <i>(Vacant from 2 August – acting arrangements TBC until Aaron O’Neill commences- expected 2 September)</i>
First Assistant Secretary Civil Maritime Capability Nicole Spencer
Commander Civil Maritime Sustainment Jeffie Kaine
Assistant Secretary Civil Maritime Strategy and Policy Rebecca Tanaskovic A/g *
Senior Director Civil Maritime Acquisitions Ben Zacny A/g *
Outsourced Provider Civil Maritime Capability PMO
Assistant Commissioner Workforce, Safety and Assurance Kylie Rendina
Commander Workforce Planning and Management Lidia Ellenberg
Commander Workforce Operational Policy and Practices Linda Cappello
Commander Safety Capability and Support Claire Halim
Commander ABF College Jason Regan
Commander Chief of Staff ^ Government Relations David Coyles
Chief Superintendent Workforce Transformation Management Office ^^ Roderick Thiele A/g *

Deputy Commissioner Regional Operations Vanessa Holben PSM
Assistant Commissioner North James Copeman A/g
Commander Operations QLD James Ley A/g
Chief Superintendent Operations NT Tracie Griffin
Assistant Commissioner East Rosemaree Cracknell A/g *
Commander Travel East Graeme Campbell A/g
Commander Trade East Asha Patwardhan A/g *
Assistant Commissioner South James Watson
Commander Travel South Chris Holzheimer
Commander Trade South Clint Sims
Assistant Commissioner West Chris Waters
Commander Operations West Ranjeev Maharaj
Chief Superintendent Operations SA Bart England
Assistant Commissioner Onshore Detention Sarah Nicolson
Commander Detention Operations Budhy Tanddo
Chief Superintendent Detention Governance, Strategy and Standards Shabeena Davis
Chief Superintendent Detention Contract Management Fernando Bahamondes

Deputy Commissioner National Operations Tim Fitzgerald
Assistant Commissioner Customs Compliance, Enforcement and Targeting Tony Smith
Commander Customs and Trade Compliance Asha Rajah-Clarke
Commander Border Targeting Penny Spies
Commander Customs Enforcement John Taylor
Commander Compliance, Operations and Delivery Ken McKern
Assistant Commissioner Operational Coordination and Planning Sharon Huey
Commander ABF International Claire Rees
Commander ABF Planning and Preparedness Claudine Cross
Commander ABOC Nerida Byrne
Commander Technical Support to Operations Bjorn Roberts
Commander Border Systems and Program Management Belinda Conn
Commander Maritime Border Command and Operation Sovereign Borders RADM Brett Sonter
Chief of Operations Commodore Troy Van Tienhoven
Deputy Commander OSB JATF Mark Whitechurch
Deputy Commander MBC Neil Horne
Deputy Commander Marine Deployments and Support Sally McAuliffe
Chief Superintendent JATF OSB Operations and Coordination Mel Stewart
Illicit Tobacco and E-Cigarette Commissioner + Erin Dale A/g*
Commander Illicit Tobacco & E-Cigarette Governance, Strategy and Reporting ^^ Fatime Shyqyr

KEY

A/g – Acting
A/g * - Vacant role
^ – Reports directly to the Commissioner ABF
+ – Officer with a direct reporting line to the Minister for Home Affairs
^^ – Temporary role only

PROTECTED CABINET

Australian Border Force

The Australian Border Force (ABF) was established on 1 July 2015, bringing together customs and immigration functions and resources. The ABF is Australia's frontline border law enforcement agency and customs service. The ABF is operationally independent, with the ABF Commissioner as its Statutory Head. The Commissioner is also the Comptroller-General of Customs for the purposes of the Customs Act.

While the ABF is operationally independent, it is not a separate entity under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act). As the Accountable Authority under the PGPA Act, the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs has formal governance, planning, performance measurement, and reporting responsibilities for the ABF. As a statutory officer, the ABF Commissioner is required to meet the duties of officials detailed in the PGPA Act.

The ABF supports national prosperity by facilitating legitimate trade and travel and supports national security by securing Australia's border. The ABF is positioned as a global leader in border enforcement to protect Australia's borders and ensure our customs and border processes can meet today's challenges as well as future requirements.

As Australia's customs service, the ABF is the nation's second highest revenue collector. The ABF delivers a wide range of functions across the border continuum; pre-border, at the border and post border.

The ABF's priorities focus on five key functions:

- Facilitation and Industry Engagement;
- Screening and Intervention;
- Compliance and Enforcement;
- Immigration Detention; and
- Civil Maritime Security.

The Department provides the ABF with strategic policy, intelligence support, planning and coordination support, and corporate and enabling services. The ABF's operational headquarters is located in Canberra with a permanent presence in all states and territories, and international representation in key locations. The Department and ABF work collaboratively to ensure the Department continues to provide enabling and support services to the ABF.

RADM Brett Sonter is the Commander of the Joint Agency Taskforce Operation Sovereign Borders, reporting directly to you on operational matters. RADM Sonter also performs the function of Commander, Maritime Border Command, reporting through the ABF Commissioner, in respect to all other civil maritime security functions.

PROTECTED CABINET

The National Cyber Security Coordinator and the National Office of Cyber Security

The National Cyber Security Coordinator (the Coordinator), Lieutenant-General Michelle McGuinness CSC, is an Australian Army officer seconded to the Department of Home Affairs and is responsible for implementing reforms and initiatives to further improve Australia's cyber resilience, including the implementation of the *2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy*.

While administratively situated within the Department of Home Affairs (the Department), the Coordinator reports directly to the Minister for Cyber Security—in accordance with the s. 47E(d)

The Coordinator supports the Minister to lead whole-of-Government coordination of national cyber security policy; responses to major cyber incidents; whole of government cyber incident preparedness efforts; and strengthening Commonwealth cyber security capability. The Coordinator leads this work in collaboration with the Australian Government's key policy, operational and security agencies.

The Coordinator is supported by the National Office of Cyber Security (NOCS), comprised of approximately 60 personnel mostly concentrated in Canberra, with smaller footprints across most states and territories. The NOCS comprises of:

- the Cyber Security Response Coordination Unit (CSRCU), responsible for incident response, consequence management, preparedness and coordination of industry and whole of government exercise programs;
- Cyber Security Strategy and Policy, responsible for supporting the coordination and implementation of the *2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy*, including key industry partnership initiatives within it;
- Cyber Security Response and Coordination, supporting international engagement and deterrence activities;
- Cyber Security Engagement supporting outreach across Australia; and
- Commonwealth Cyber Security Uplift, responsible for coordinating, monitoring and assuring implementation of uplift under the *Commonwealth Cyber Security Uplift Plan*. The Coordinator is also supported by a dual-reporting cyber communications function that delivers crisis communications, media and public messaging.

Priorities

The Coordinators priorities are informed by the s. 47E(d)

Cyber incident response preparation

- The NOCS supports the Coordinator in leading the National Cyber Exercise Program, which seeks to exercise the full spectrum of incident response plans, consequence management and communication channels across all sectors so that cyber crisis arrangements are practised.

s. 47E(d)

Major cyber incident response

- The Coordinator, supported by the NOCS, advises the Minister for Cyber Security and coordinates incident management activities required to respond to a major cyber security incident.

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- The NOCS works alongside operational agencies, emergency management agencies, industry stakeholders, and state and territory governments to coordinate consequence management activities and engagement in response to cyber incidents.

s. 47E(d), s. 33(a)(i)

Oversight of whole-of-Government implementation of the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy (the Strategy).

- The Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the delivery of the Strategy and for overseeing the implementation and reporting of the *Commonwealth Cyber Security Uplift Plan* across the Commonwealth.
- The Coordinator supports the Minister for Cyber Security's Executive Cyber Council (the Council), and co-leads four working groups with industry members —with a focus on developing industry-led deliverables and forward works plans across four priority areas of the Strategy. The second Council meeting is scheduled for 6 August 2024 in Sydney.
- The Coordinator chairs the National Cyber Intel Partnership, which brings together a group of industry leaders and cyber experts to look at threat intelligence sharing and pilot new threat blocking capabilities on Australian networks.

s. 47E(d), s. 33(a)(i)

Cyber security awareness raising

- The Coordinator has a strong public posture on cyber security awareness raising and cyber incidents, including as the Minister's spokesperson on cyber incident management; social media channels; industry engagement; and public addresses.
- Phase 3 of the *Act Now, Stay Secure* cyber security awareness campaign concluded on 30 June 2024, reaching Australians across metro, regional and remote/rural markets as well as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and First Nations people.

s. 47E(d)

Cyber threats will continue to introduce novel challenges for the affected entity, system or data involved. These may result in untested circumstances and will require the NOCS to maintain an agile operating environment. s. 47E(d)

~~PROTECTED CABINET~~**Key dates and considerations**

- Review and reissue the *National Cyber Security Coordinator Ministerial Directive 1/2024*
- Participate in the Ministerial Council on Law and Security on 30 July–2 August 2024 in Indonesia
- Participate in the Executive Cyber Council confirmed for 6 August 2024 in Sydney
- Convene the National Cyber Intel Partnership in August 2024 and December 2024 (date TBC)
- Attend the health sector cyber incident exercise in August–September 2024 in Sydney (date TBC)
- Engagement in the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's The Sydney Dialogue on 2 September in Sydney
- Participate in the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting (September 2024)

s. 33(a)(iii)

s. 33(a)(i)

s. 47C(1)

Attachments

s. 47E(d)

- c. National Office of Cyber Security organisational chart—July 2024 consultation draft

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Immigration Group Overview

Immigration Group is responsible for the delivery of Australia's immigration and citizenship programs, as well as multicultural affairs, and compliance by non-citizens with their visa conditions and any requirements to depart Australia. Within the delivery of these programs, the group also provides enabling functions such as policy, program management and integrity, systems management and updates, as well as client engagement and management of call centre and service delivery partner contracts.

Immigration Program

Australia's immigration program is broad and includes several specific visa programs across temporary visitor, student and work visas, permanent skilled and family visas and refugee and humanitarian visas – along with an extensive bridging visa program to ensure non-citizens remain lawful while resolving their status. Each visa program has a specific purpose, and in delivering these programs, we have complementary objectives:

- facilitate the entry and stay of those who legitimately seek to visit, study, work, be reunited with family, or obtain protection; and
- Prevent the entry or stay of non-citizens attempting to disguise their identity or intentions, or who otherwise pose a risk to the security or safety of the Australian community or to the national interest.

Every visa applicant must meet health, character and security requirements and Immigration Group has several functions dedicated to the management of these elements.

Non-citizens can seek merits review of visa cancellation or refusal decisions at the AAT. Immigration Group has a role to play in providing visa decision documentation to the AAT, and actioning decisions that require further visa processing. The immigration program is broken up into two components – the Migration Program and the Temporary Visa Program.

Migration Program

The permanent Migration Program is comprised of three streams: Skilled, Family and Special Eligibility. The size and composition of the program is set annually by government, informed by consultation with state and territory governments, academia, industry, unions and community organisations.

The 2024-25 program has been set at 185,000 places, with the following composition:

- **Skilled stream** (132,200 places, approximately 71% of the program) – this stream has been designed to improve the productive capacity of the economy and fill skill shortages in the labour market, particularly those in regional Australia.
- **Family stream** (52,500 places, approximately 28% of the program) – this stream is predominantly made up of Partner visas, enabling Australians to reunite with family members from overseas and provide them with pathways to citizenship.
- **Special Eligibility stream** (300 places) – this stream covers visas for those in special circumstances, including permanent residents returning to Australia after a period overseas.

Temporary visa Program

Australia's temporary visa programs allow people to come to Australia for specific purposes, including to visit, study and work. These temporary visa programs deliver substantial economic and cultural benefits for both migrants and Australians. In particular, the student and visitor visa programs are key enablers to Australia's international education and tourism sectors.

While most temporary visa holders depart Australia after their initial period of stay, a portion apply for an extension of temporary stay, while others opt for permanent stay through the Migration Program.

Bridging visas allow visa holders to stay lawfully in Australia while waiting for the Department's outcome of their visa application or review of a visa decision.

Key temporary visa programs

- **Visitor visas** enable tourists and business visitors to travel to Australia for a temporary purpose. The department finalised over 5.2 million visitor visas in 2023-24.
- **Student visas** enables genuine students from overseas to study at an Australian educational institution. The department finalised approximately 688,000 student visas in 2023-24.

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- **Working holiday maker visas** promote cultural exchange and boost people-to-people connections between young adults from Australia and partner countries. The department finalised close to 230,000 working holiday maker visas in 2023-24.
- **Temporary skilled visas** enable overseas workers to come to Australia and fill temporary shortages in our labour market. The department finalised close to 107,000 temporary skilled visas in 2023-24.
- **Other temporary skilled visas** include special category visas for New Zealand citizens and specialist programs such as the (now closed) Pandemic Event Visa. The department finalised almost 2.4 million other temporary visas in 2023-24.
- **Bridging visas** are usually granted in associated with a substantive visa application, to keep a person lawful in Australia while a new visa application is processed. As at 30 June 2024, close to 323,000 people held a bridging visa.
- **Temporary migrants** are a major source of permanent Skilled stream visa applications, with a number of visas providing a pathway from temporary to permanent residence for those who have demonstrated their ability to contribute to the Australian economy.

Humanitarian Program

Australia has a generous Humanitarian Program (20,000 places) that enables us to help refugees and people in humanitarian need inside and outside Australia. In 2024-25, the Humanitarian program is set to 20,000 places, replicating the allocation for 2023-24.

The **offshore** component of the Humanitarian Program prioritises humanitarian entrants and refugees of nationalities from three major regions:

- the Middle East, such as Iraq, Syria and Iran
- Asia, such as Myanmar and Afghanistan
- Africa, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

The **onshore** component of the Humanitarian Program is delivered through the Protection visa program (see separate brief on Protection visas).

Citizenship Program

The most common way of becoming an Australian citizen is through the conferral pathway, which accounts for over 90% of applications in a given year. Applications for Australian citizenship generally fall within four categories;

- conferral (for permanent residents seeking to become Australians)
- descent (for children of Australian citizens, born overseas)
- adoption (for children adopted from overseas by Australian parents)
- resumption (for former Australian citizens)

In 2023-24, more than 230,000 people applied for Australian citizenship by conferral, an increase of 47% from the previous year.

The increase was driven by the new direct pathway to Australian citizenship for New Zealanders, which commenced 1 July 2023 and over 60,000 New Zealanders have applied.

Although finalisation rates were largely steady year-on-year (193,000 in 2023-24), the on-hand caseload grew by 48%, from 79,548 on 30 June 2023, to almost 118,000 on 30 June 2024 - driven by the twin pressure of increased lodgements and reduced 'front-line' staffing in response to departmental budget constraints.

As a result, processing time has also increased, with 90% of applications finalised within 10 months as at June 2024 (against a performance target time of 90% within 6 months).

Citizenship by conferral requires the person to attend an Australian Citizenship Ceremony in order to acquire citizenship. The department works closely with 537 local government authorities to delivery citizenship ceremonies and celebrates Australian Citizenship Day on 17 September each year. This year is the 75th anniversary of Australian Citizenship.

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The number of approved applicants waiting to attend a ceremony is at the lowest level in more than 3 years, at just over 43,000 on 30 June 2024, and over 90% of those waiting having waited less than 6 months from date of approval.

Compliance Program

The Department has recently brought together functions from the Australian Border Force (including the ABF Intelligence function) into Immigration Group to better align and integrate activity, and enhance collective effort – especially on migrant worker exploitation, community protection, and other malicious activity conducted by, or targeted against, non-citizens in Australia.

Status Resolution Program

The Department's Status Resolution program assists non-citizens who require assistance to resolve their immigration status. Officers working in the Status Resolution program engage with non-citizens to promote self-agency, assisting individuals to self-resolve their immigration status in a timely and appropriate manner.

While the department encourages people to resolve their immigration status as quickly as possible, some non-citizens do not engage and become unlawful (referred to as unlawful non-citizens (UNCs)). Latest figures suggest there are around 70,000 UNCs in the community – this figure has remained relatively stable over the past decade (with the exception of the COVID-affected years).

Individuals – including those who are unlawful non-citizens due to cancellation or expiry of their visa – may enter the Status Resolution program by voluntarily approaching the Department seeking assistance to resolve their immigration status or through location and enforcement activities conducted by the ABF and/or police.

A person's immigration status is considered resolved if they are granted a substantive visa (any visa other than a bridging visa), citizenship or they depart Australia.

Visa Cancellation Program

All persons who wish to travel to, enter or remain in Australia must meet the requirements of the *Migration Act 1958* and the *Migration Regulations 1994* and are subject to health, identity, character and security checks. These checks may be repeated when new information comes to light, or at any time during the person's journey to or stay in Australia.

In addition to the capacity to cancel visas and refuse visa applications or entry to Australia, the visa cancellation framework supports the Department's core objectives of ensuring the integrity of Australia's borders and visa programs.

Immigration Compliance Operations

The Department and Australian Border Force (ABF) manage immigration risks across a continuum – from an individual first engaging the Department or ABF, to making a visa decision, approving uplift ahead of the border with airlines, making a decision at the border and then finally post-border compliance and enforcement activity. The immigration system is complex and efforts are always focused on identifying risk and treating that risk at the most effective part of the continuum.

The Department's immigration structure integrates activity, to enhance collective effort across the immigration continuum. The range of operational activity managed under the immigration program includes field operations, removals, detentions, investigations, regulation monitoring, compliance, community protection, engagement and education.

Multicultural Affairs

More than half of Australian residents (51.5 per cent) were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. The Department drives delivery of multicultural policy and program settings, community engagement via the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) network, and supports the Minister's engagement via meetings and community events.

The Department's CLO network supports Australia's vibrant multicultural society by building and maintaining relationships with a wide range of cultural, ethnic and faith communities. It consists of 50 regionally based staff, who drive engagement to understand community sentiment, improve understanding of Government programs and policies, and provide a feedback loop to the Government on challenges to social inclusion and barriers to participation.

- In 2023-24, the CLO network undertook more than 8,700 engagements with community stakeholders.

On 24 July 2024, Minister for Immigration Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs (MICMA) released the Multicultural Framework Review (MFR) report, and Government Response. To complement the release of

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these documents, the Minister announced budget measures totalling \$104 million, including \$85.8 million of community grant programs.

Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)

Non-citizens can seek merits review of visa cancellation or refusal decisions at the AAT. The AAT provides independent merits review of decisions made under Commonwealth law, and must comply with relevant ministerial directions.

The AAT can exercise all the powers and discretions available to the original decision-maker and we has the power to:

- affirm a decision
- vary a decision
- set aside a decision and substitute a new decision, or
- remit a decision to the decision-maker for reconsideration.

The Minister has existing powers under the Migration Act 1958 to set-aside decisions made by the AAT to set-aside the cancellation or refusal of a visa (meaning that a visa is again cancelled or refused).

On 16 December 2022, the Australian Government announced that it would reform Australia's system of administrative review. The reforms will abolish the AAT and replace it with the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), a new federal administrative review body that is user-focused, efficient, accessible, independent and fair.

The ART is set to commence on 16 October 2024 and the department is working closely with the Attorney General's department to support implementation and transition to the new body. The ART will allow for a greater range of flexible hearing powers to be used in migration cases to ensure timelier finalisation of matters, particularly those involving manifestly unfounded claims.

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Budget Overview

- The Department of Home Affairs (the Department) is responsible for three key PBS outcomes:
 - o Deliver national coordination, regulation and policy that safeguards Australia's Domestic interests from national security threats, including cyber threats
 - o Support a united and prosperous Australia through effective coordination and delivery of immigration and citizenship policy and programs underpinned by robust integrity and assurance
 - o Advance a prosperous and secure Australia through trade and travel facilities and modernisation, and effective customs, immigration, maritime and enforcement activities across the border continuum.
- The Department's **total funding** as at the 2024-25 PBS is \$6.148 billion in 2024-25. The key components of our funding can be summarised as follows:
 - o Departmental (\$4.056 billion)
 - o Operating / Core (\$3.529 billion) – provided for employee and supplier expenses to deliver the Business as Usual activities of the Department.
 - o Capital (\$0.271 billion) – to manage the Department's asset base, examples include enhancement and replacement of ICT, Buildings, Property, Plant and Equipment, Civil Maritime Capability.
 - o Own Source Revenue (\$0.256 billion) – revenue collected from other government and external entities to deliver goods and services. Examples include funding from the ATO to collect GST, funding from ACIC to deliver the National Criminal Intelligence System on their behalf, and revenue for the provision of shared services.
 - o Administered (\$2.092 billion)
 - o Operating (2.051 billion) – provided for services delivered on behalf of the government, which are outside the Department's control. Examples include delivery of our Offshore Regional Processing, Onshore Immigration Detention and Refugee and Humanitarian Administered Programs, and Grant Program payments.
 - o Capital (\$0.041 billion) – to manage the Department's administered base – to enhance and replace assets related to all of our Administered Programs
- The total forecast **Average Staffing Level (ASL)** for the Department in 2024-25 is 15,179, and FTE is 15,132 as at 30 June 2024. The Department and ABF have a presence in 44 posts in 38 countries around the world, including 9 Regional Directors.

Stephanie Foster PSM

Secretary

Stephanie Foster PSM was appointed as Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs on 28 November 2023.



Stephanie joined the Department of Home Affairs in October 2022 as Associate Secretary Immigration. Stephanie led the delivery of Immigration Operations, Immigration Policy, Refugee Policy and Programs, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Legal and Service Design and Delivery Programs.

Prior to this, Stephanie was Deputy Secretary Governance at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in December 2017, where she was responsible for the effective operations of the Executive Branch of Government, management of Cabinet and Cabinet Committees, and advancing the Government's legislative program.

In 2021, Stephanie led a review into practices in parliamentary workplaces related to serious incidents and subsequently implemented recommendations, including the establishment of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service. Stephanie also implemented Government recommendations in the Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces aimed at making Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces safer and more respectful.

Stephanie began her journey in the APS in 1987 as a graduate at the Defence Signals Directorate where she went on to spend 16 years working in a range of analytic and management roles. Stephanie spent four years as First Assistant Secretary of Defence's International Policy Division, providing policy support to overseas operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and East Timor, and managed the Defence Cooperation Program and the Global Network of Defence Attachés.

Stephanie has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from Monash University. Stephanie was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2008 for her policy support to Australian Defence Force deployments overseas, and the French Officier de l'Ordre National du Merite in 2010 for her work to develop defence relations between France and Australia.

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Michael Outram APM

Commissioner

Michael Outram APM was sworn in as the Commissioner of the Australian Border Force (ABF) on 14 May 2018.

Michael joined the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service on 9 March 2015 and was sworn in as the ABF's Deputy Commissioner Operations on 1 July 2015.



Michael has 44 years of experience in a diverse range of law enforcement organisations and settings, including community policing, intelligence operations, protective and major event security, public order management, the investigation of serious crime and border management.

Between 2011 and 2015, as an Assistant Commissioner with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Michael was responsible for the AFP's national protective security function. During this time Michael led the AFP's planning and support for the G20 Summit in Brisbane and the AFP's response to the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over the Ukraine.

Michael joined the AFP from the Australian Crime Commission (ACC). In 2004, Michael was appointed as the ACC's Executive Director, Serious and Organised Crime and he was responsible for the national and international investigative and intelligence functions of the Agency.

Michael's career in Australia started in 2002 at the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales. His migration to Australia followed a secondment in 2000, to the New South Wales Police Service. He was seconded from the London Metropolitan Police Service in the UK, where he joined as a police cadet in 1980 and served as a police officer from 1982.

Michael was awarded the Australian Police Medal in 2014 in recognition of his outstanding service in law enforcement. In 2014 he was also awarded a Master of Business & Technology degree by the University of New South Wales and a university prize for academic achievement. In April 2018, Michael completed the Harvard Kennedy School executive education programme 'Leadership in Crises', which he attended having won a Sir James Wolfensohn Public Service Scholarship.

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Dr Emma Cassar PSM

Associate Secretary Immigration

Dr Emma Cassar commenced as Associate Secretary Immigration on 25 March 2024. In this role, Emma is responsible for policy, program management and service delivery functions for Australia's temporary and permanent migration, refugee and humanitarian, immigration compliance, and citizenship programs.



Emma joined the Department of Home Affairs on secondment arrangement from Victorian State Government, where she was most recently Deputy Secretary Social Policy and Intergovernmental Relations with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, a role she assumed in March 2023.

Emma's career spans more than 20 years in local and international roles, in government, private and not for profit organisations. Over recent years, Emma has served as Commissioner of Corrections Victoria, Deputy State Controller for the COVID-19 Accommodation program, and Victoria's COVID-19 Quarantine Commissioner. In 2024, Emma received a public service medal for outstanding public service and leadership in Victoria's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emma holds a Doctorate in Forensic Psychology from the University of Melbourne.

Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness CSC

National Cyber Security Coordinator

Lieutenant General Michelle McGuinness, CSC was appointed as Australia's National Cyber Security Coordinator (the Coordinator) on 26 February 2024.



As the Coordinator, LTGEN McGuinness leads national cyber security policy, the coordination of responses to major cyber incidents, whole of government cyber incident preparedness efforts, and the strengthening of Commonwealth cyber security capability.

LTGEN McGuinness has served in the Australian Defence Force for 30 years in a range of tactical, operational, and strategic roles in Australia and internationally.

Prior to this appointment, LTGEN McGuinness most recently served as Deputy Director Commonwealth Integration in the United States Defense Intelligence Agency. In this role, she led policy and cultural reform, and technological integration, including interoperability across information technology, systems and data.

Charlotte Tressler

Chief Operating Officer

Charlotte Tressler was appointed as Chief Operating Officer (COO) in February 2024.



Charlotte leads the Group responsible for the corporate and assurance services, including financial performance and budgets, people, human resources, integrity, security, health services, property, procurement and contracts, information communication technology and major capability services. A key objective for the Group is delivering on the Secretary's refreshed vision, particularly the cultural reform, and enabling the Department to deliver its important work.

Charlotte is an experienced COO who has delivered corporate and enabling services to a number of departments and agencies in the Commonwealth. Her career started in the private sector as a financial management consultant which provided her with a strong foundation for these numerous corporate roles.

Most recently, Charlotte was the COO for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) (2020 to 2024), responsible for strategy and performance, people, finance, learning, legal and information technology. She also spent three years at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet as both the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer (2016 to 2019).

Prior to joining the AFP in 2020, Charlotte was the Head of the Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit (BLU) with The Treasury, responsible for engaging with the business community on the impacts of COVID-19 to inform Government's response. This engagement followed a period as Head of Division for AusIndustry – Support for Business within the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

Charlotte is also experienced in leading transformational change, including as Head of Portfolio Strategic Reform for the (then) Department of Immigration and Border Protection, on the integration of customs and immigration and the establishment of the Australian Border Force.

Charlotte holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the Australian National University, Executive Masters of Public Administration and is a graduated member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).

Sophie Sharpe

Deputy Secretary Executive

Sophie Sharpe was appointed as Deputy Secretary Executive on 1 November 2022.



Sophie leads the Group responsible for providing direct support to the Secretary of Home Affairs and Home Affairs portfolio ministers. Executive Group's functions include parliamentary and cabinet support, media and communication, international engagement and coordination, intelligence services to border and migration programs, data and economic analysis, enterprise performance and governance, inquiries coordination, strategic issues management, capability planning and risk, and strategic planning and coordination.

Prior to her role as Deputy Secretary Executive, Sophie held the roles of Group Manager Executive and International, First Assistant Secretary Executive Division, and Chief of Staff to the Secretary in the Department.

Sophie was also the Assistant Secretary, Strategic Coordination in the Centre for Counter-Terrorism Coordination in the Department of Home Affairs and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) where she was responsible for advising on counter-terrorism strategic policy, operations and intelligence, facilitating international counter-terrorism cooperation and advising on counter-terrorism legislative measures.

Before joining the Department in 2017, Sophie had been with PM&C since 2009 where she was also the Executive Officer to the then Secretary, Dr Martin Parkinson. In 2014-15 Sophie enjoyed accompanying her husband on posting to Washington, where she worked for the Department of Defence and Australian Federal Police (AFP). Sophie has also previously held various national security roles, including within the AFP as Coordinator Counter-Terrorism and in the Law Enforcement Cooperation Program and within the Specialist Response and Security division. Sophie has also worked within the Attorney-General's Department working on counter-terrorism related activities.

Sophie has a Bachelor in Asian Studies (specialising in Bahasa Indonesia).

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Hamish Hansford

Deputy Secretary Cyber and Infrastructure Security

Hamish Hansford was appointed as Deputy Secretary of Cyber and Infrastructure Security Group on 1 May 2023.

Hamish leads the Group responsible for bringing together cyber security and critical infrastructure policy, cyber response and coordination functions, identity security and protection, and background checking under the AusCheck scheme (including aviation and maritime security).



CIS Group also provides support and surge functions to the National Cyber Security Coordinator through the National Office of Cyber Security.

Prior to this, Hamish was Group Manager and Inaugural Head of the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Centre, a role he held from 1 September 2021, where he was responsible for reforms to the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018* and led the principal regulatory authority for all critical infrastructure in Australia.

Immediately prior to this role, Hamish was the First Assistant Secretary of the Cyber, Digital and Technology Policy Division, where he led the delivery and implementation of Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020, cybercrime policy, online harms policy including combating terrorist use of the internet and child exploitation, as well as critical and emerging technology and data security policy.

Prior to this, Hamish was the First Assistant Secretary of National Security and Law Enforcement Policy Divisions where he delivered Australia's first ever modern slavery act, surveillance, investigatory powers and lawful access reforms, as well as hardening of Australia's counter money laundering, illicit firearms, terrorist financing and child exploitation regimes.

Hamish has held Senior Executive positions in the former Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the former Australian Crime Commission. Hamish has also served in a range of intelligence, policy, planning, and program delivery roles in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Attorney General's Department, the Australian Senate and the former Office of Transport Security.

Hamish started his career in the National Museum of Australia.

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Nathan Smyth

Deputy Secretary National Security and Resilience

Nathan Smyth was appointed as Deputy Secretary National Security and Resilience on 17 July 2023.



Nathan leads the Group responsible for domestic and international engagement on national security, while broadening our approach to countering terrorism and foreign interference, and strengthening our democratic and national resilience. Concurrently, Nathan was appointed as the Commonwealth's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator. Nathan is focused on developing a more secure and resilient nation.

Before taking up his current position, Nathan served as Deputy Secretary Employment and National Workforce within the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. In that role, Nathan was responsible for the transformative change to the delivery of employment services, including the delivery and implementation of the new employment services model and the Seasonal Worker Program, which provides access to Australian work opportunities by nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste.

Nathan has held a range of senior positions across government, including at the Department of Health, where he was responsible for the implementation and oversight of Tobacco Plain Packaging; the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; the Department of Finance; and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Nathan holds a Bachelor Degree (Political Science) from the University of New South Wales and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales.

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Vanessa Holben PSM

Deputy Commissioner Regional Operations

Vanessa Holben PSM was appointed as Deputy Commissioner Regional Operations for the Australian Border Force (ABF) on 2 February 2023.



As Deputy Commissioner, Vanessa is responsible for national capability relating to air/sea cargo and international mail, air/sea traveller facilitation and intervention, and littoral and district office functions.

Vanessa has led Customs Group as the Deputy Comptroller General and Group Manager, where she had responsibility for ensuring Australia's customs and border policy settings allowed for the unimpeded movement of legitimate goods across the border, preventing the movement of prohibited goods and detecting, deterring and disrupting criminal and national security threats at borders.

Vanessa also had responsibility for whole of agency ministerial, governance, risk and assurance functions to support and facilitate the ABF's high-level governance framework, coordination of ministerial and parliamentary engagements and implementing the risk management framework and assurance program across the ABF.

Prior to this, Vanessa was the First Assistant Secretary of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) within the Department of Home Affairs. The NCM was established to coordinate and facilitate non-health response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic, through strategic and operational engagement with stakeholders across the Commonwealth, states and territories, industry and the private sector. Vanessa has also held the role of First Assistant Secretary Aviation and Maritime Security, the security regulator for the aviation, maritime and offshore oil and gas sectors. In this role, Vanessa was responsible for providing advice and assurance to Government on transport security policy, regulation, compliance and practice.

Vanessa has held other senior executive roles in the ABF including Assistant Commissioner responsible for offshore regional processing arrangements, regional capacity building efforts, and the onshore immigration detention network. In January 2022, Vanessa was awarded a Public Service Medal (PSM) in recognition of her outstanding contributions in support of Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic while leading the NCM. Vanessa holds a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Criminology and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

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Tim Fitzgerald

Deputy Commissioner National Operations

Tim Fitzgerald was appointed as Deputy Commissioner National Operations for the Australian Border Force (ABF) on 17 November 2022.



As Deputy Commissioner, Tim has responsibility for Detention and National Removals, Maritime Border Command and Operation Sovereign Borders. Tim leads strategic and operational planning, civil maritime, technical and surveillance capability support to achieve ABF outcomes.

Tim ensures Australia's customs and border policy settings support the efficient movement of legitimate goods across the border while detecting and preventing the movement of prohibited goods.

Tim was previously Assistant Commissioner for North and Detention Command in the ABF. The Command is responsible for Regional Commands Queensland and Northern Territory including the Torres Strait along with National Removals, and Onshore Immigration Detention Centres throughout Australia including Christmas Island.

Prior to this, Tim was Commander, Australian Border Operations Centre, Regional Commander NSW, and Assistant Secretary, Trusted Trader & Trade Enforcement.

Tim has extensive experience with Customs and Border Protection having worked for the service for over 35 years. Tim commenced his career in Sydney, working in areas such as the International Airport, Shipping Control and Air Cargo.

Tim later undertook the roles of Director Enforcement Operations NSW and Taskforce Polaris (a multi-agency Taskforce examining and investigating organised crime on the waterfront in NSW), Director Investigations NSW, Director Intelligence and Targeting and Counsellor Customs, London Post. These roles required extensive liaison with other law enforcement and border management agencies including Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and Australian Government Solicitor.

Tim has completed a Diploma in Government Fraud Control Investigation; and Certificate IV in Australian International Trade and Facilitation. Tim has undertaken training which includes the Hong Kong ICAC Chief Investigators Course; Customs International Executive Management Program; and the National Security College Course. In addition, Tim has successfully completed the Customs Brokers Licensing Advisory Committee examination.

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Kaylene Dale

Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Capability

Kaylene Dale was appointed as Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Capability for the Australian Border Force (ABF) on 1 February 2023.



As Deputy Commissioner, Kaylene leads the ABF's strategy for modern modernisation and key capabilities including the ABF workforce, business systems, civil maritime and surveillance, operational coordination and planning to deliver effectively for the Government, domestic and international partners, industry and the Australian community.

Kaylene is an experienced senior leader in the Australian Public Service and has an extensive background in border management, having started in the Australian Customs Service in 2000.

Throughout Kaylene's career in the ABF and the Department of Home Affairs, she has been responsible for a wide range of functions, including border operations and enforcement, civil maritime security, strategic planning, risk management and governance, integrity and professional standards, and emergency management.

In 2021–22, Kaylene led the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, with a focus on advancing women's workforce participation, women's economic security and safety.

Kaylene completed a Masters of Public Administration in 2010 (Australia and New Zealand School of Government) and Masters in Applied Criminology in 2020 (University of Cambridge, UK).

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Our Transformation Agenda

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Our vision

We build our nation and secure our future by fostering an environment where we can all succeed through a culture of excellence, integrity, openness and collaboration.

Exemplary leadership

Our leaders epitomise excellence: they set high standards, they are authentic, they inspire, care for and invest in their people, and they model integrity, openness and collaboration.

Investment in capability at all levels

- Deliver a leadership program for the EL cohort as part of leadership development for all levels
- Develop an 360 feedback program to enhance performance feedback, initially for SES and ELs
- Invest in professional capability development for staff at all levels

Drive culture at every level

- Foster a respectful, inclusive and safe workplace
- Define the values and culture that represents One Home Affairs including One ABF
- Extend and embed SES engagement

Get our governance right

- Articulate a clear strategic direction that unifies the organisation
- Actively manage performance and risk to optimise outcomes
- Hold ourselves accountable to deliver our outcomes within budget

Game-changing agenda

We deliver enduring, positive change to Australia's Security, Unity and Prosperity.

Anticipating and building capability for future challenges

- Develop a sophisticated foresighting capability
- Deliver a workforce strategy that positions us into the future
- Recruit and develop deep expertise in our core functions

World-leading delivery/policies

- Deliver on the aspiration of our cyber and migration strategies
- Adapt our national security posture to contemporary threats
- Modernise our border to drive economic outcomes and reduce harm to the community

Enabling for success

- Develop a strategy and win support to upgrade our technology
- Enhance our enablers to better support our staff and business outcomes
- Embed innovation in all we do

Collaboration at our core

Our success depends on harnessing capability across government, business and the community: collaboration must be at the core of everything we do.

One Home Affairs including One ABF

- Communicate a singular and strategic narrative for Home Affairs
- Embed One Home Affairs behaviours throughout the organisation
- Work across boundaries to deliver integrated outcomes

Integrated across Government

- Build genuine partnerships to deliver our cross-cutting agenda
- Foster trust by engaging early, being open and authentic
- Recognise and reward staff who collaborate effectively across government

Seamless partnerships with industry and community

- Genuine co-design and shared ownership on policies and programs
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Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

Capability Review

Department
of Home Affairs

Released by Department of Home Affairs
under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

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Capability Review - Department of Home Affairs

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APS Commissioner's foreword

The 2019 report *Our Public Service, Our Future. Independent Review of the Australian Public Service* (the Thodey review) recommended regular capability reviews for all departments and major agencies across the service. As part of its plan for Australian Public Service (APS) reform, the Australian Government has committed to a pilot Capability Review program.

Capability reviews are an independent, forward-looking activity that assesses an agency's ability to meet future objectives and challenges. The aim is to facilitate discussions around an organisation's desired future state, highlight organisational capability gaps and identify opportunities to address them.

I thank the Department of Home Affairs for participating in the capability review. The enthusiasm of staff to showcase their work and the open and collaborative style of the executive has made for a compelling review process. From Ms Stephanie Foster PSM, Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs, and Mr Michael Outram APM, Commissioner of the Australian Border Force (ABF), to the individual officers who participated, in a time of significant change for the department, the review was embraced as an opportunity to look closely at what capabilities and systems work well and to think critically about what the department wants to improve.

I thank Dr Ian Watt AC, Ms Liza Carroll PSM, Ms Maree Bridger and Dr Mark Bazzacco, who led the Review, as well as the teams that supported them from the Australian Public Service Commission and the Department of Home Affairs.



Dr Gordon de Brouwer

Australian Public Service Commissioner

Senior review team's foreword

We are very pleased to have led this capability review of the Department of Home Affairs. With the appointment of a new secretary it is an exciting time of change and possibility for the organisation. It is also an ideal time to reflect on the department's current capability and identify areas of strength and areas where it needs to improve capability for the future.

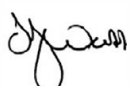
We thank Secretary Foster, ABF Commissioner Outram and their leadership team for their time and willingness to engage in the review process. We also recognise the effort the department went to encourage people with a wide range of views and perspectives to contribute to the review. We appreciate the input we received from a large and diverse range of stakeholders within and outside the department through interviews, workshops, an all-staff survey and site visits. The variety of input was important because of the breadth of the department's functions and the size and varied roles of the workforce.

The department has a dedicated workforce that is highly mission focused, and very aware of and committed to their tasks. The department can build on this strength, and we have highlighted some areas for focus to better position itself for the challenging future it faces.

The review notes a range of areas for improvement in the department including prioritising its focus on addressing stronger joined-up governance arrangements, clarifying and improving the working arrangements between the ABF and the broader department, and leadership development. It is critical leaders at all levels in the department actively and collaboratively support the agenda of transformational change set by the new leadership team.

The leadership team has started on this journey, already initiating change in line with the key findings of this review. This gives considerable optimism for the organisation's future. We look forward to observing the progress of this work over the coming months and years.

It has been a pleasure to work with the department on this review and we thank all staff and stakeholders for their extensive engagement with us. We also thank the Australian Public Service Commission team that supported us through the review. They made an extensive and invaluable contribution.



Ian Watt AC



Liza Carroll PSM



Maree Bridger



Mark Bazzacco

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Context

About the review

The pilot Capability Review program is an investment in longer-term capability and an opportunity to focus on strengths and development areas in the context of the anticipated future operating environment. The aim of the program is to:

- help embed a culture of continuous improvement across the APS
- ensure that APS agencies are better able to deliver government priorities and outcomes for Australians.

This is the fifth capability review undertaken during the pilot program.

The Capability Review Framework is made up of 2 parts:

- an excellence horizon, which establishes what capabilities the agency needs now and in 4 years
- an analysis of organisational capability, which is used to identify capability gaps and opportunities across 5 core domains – leadership and culture, collaboration, delivery, workforce and enabling functions.

The framework was most recently updated in September 2023. This update simplified the structure, reduced duplication between elements and added new elements in areas identified as gaps in the previous framework. The updated framework places greater emphasis on collaboration, including internal collaboration and agency engagement with the public and industry.

Appendix B has more information on these domains and associated elements.

The review assesses the agency's current capabilities and preparedness to deliver critical capabilities in the medium-term. It gives the agency a maturity rating against each of the 18 capability elements to indicate the most important areas for growth and improvement.

Reviews are conducted in partnership with agencies, complement existing initiatives within agencies, and provide an evidence-based independent assessment of actions required to deliver on current and future requirements.

As part of the review process, the Department of Home Affairs completed a self-assessment of its maturity against the elements, to indicate its own understanding of its capability strengths and opportunities for improvement. In addition, the review received 2 letters from the secretary and a letter from the ABF Commissioner outlining their assessments of the department's capability, the actions they had already begun to enhance capability, and plans for further changes.

To further inform the evidence base, the review spoke to department staff at all levels as well as external stakeholders, including ministers, other Australian Government agencies, state and territory government agencies, non-government organisations and industry stakeholders.

Reviewers interviewed over 50 internal and external stakeholders and held 9 workshops with more than 170 members of staff between November 2023 and March 2024. In addition, over 3,100 staff responded to an all-staff survey conducted for this review.

Reviewers also conducted site visits outside Canberra to better understand the frontline services and operations of the department including challenges faced by staff and stakeholders.

This was supported by desktop research and analysis of latest APS workforce data sets including the APS Employee Database (APSED), the APS Employee Census and the APS Agency Survey.

About the agency

The Department of Home Affairs (which includes the ABF) is one of the largest and more diverse organisations in the Australian Government. Its functions cover national security, migration, social cohesion and national resilience. Its guiding purpose is to help enable a prosperous, secure and united Australia.

Every day the department carries out functions that help protect and build Australia's social and economic prosperity, and the stable and secure conditions that underpin it. For example, the department manages migration, humanitarian and refugee programs that enrich the nation's cultural fabric and help ensure Australia can access the workforce needed now and into the future. At the same time, the ABF helps ensure legitimate business and travel is not undermined by the importation of drugs, weapons and other prohibited goods, or the movement of people outside established migration settings. The department helps to make sure Australia continues to be an attractive place to live, learn and do business by helping to protect critical infrastructure from cyber attacks and other disruptions.

The department was established on 20 December 2017 by bringing together the former Department of Immigration and Border Protection with national security functions from the Attorney-General's Department, transport security from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, multicultural affairs from the Department of Social Services, and counter-terror coordination and cyber security policy functions from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In 2017 the department assumed responsibility for coordinating government's cyber security responsibilities. In 2022, Administrative Arrangements Order changes saw protective security services and criminal law enforcement policy functions move to the Attorney-General's Department and emergency management functions move to the National Emergency Management Agency.

The department is organised across 6 main vertical groupings, each led by a deputy secretary: national offices of cyber security; cyber and infrastructure security; executive; operations; national security and resilience; and, in the case of immigration group, an associate secretary. In addition, the ABF is organised across 3 main vertical groupings, each led by a deputy commissioner: strategy and capability; regional operations; and national operations.

The ABF was established as part of the then Department of Immigration and Border Protection on 1 July 2013, assuming the functions of the former Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the immigration related operational functions of the department, including field operations, removals and detention. The ABF enforces Australian law at the border, from facilitating legitimate trade and travel to immigration and customs enforcement.

The ABF Commissioner is a statutory appointee, and the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs is the accountable authority for the department. In November 2023, Ms Stephanie Foster PSM was appointed Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs, following the termination of the previous secretary's employment. The Commissioner of the ABF is Mr Michael Outram APM.

The department serves 3 ministers:

- the Hon Clare O'Neil MP – Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Cyber Security
- the Hon Andrew Giles MP – Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, and Multicultural Affairs
- Senator the Hon Murray Watt – Minister for Emergency Management.

Budget

The total funding for 2023–24 is \$6.3 billion as at the 2023–24 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements. This includes departmental funding plus administered funding to be allocated to specific purposes. The department generates more than \$22 billion in administered revenue each financial year, which makes it the second largest revenue collector in the Australian Government.

The department's operations are vulnerable to unforeseen global political and economic shocks. It reported an operating loss of \$109.2million in 2022–23 but is forecasting a balanced budget outcome in 2023–24, mainly due to \$110 million of critical supplementation and funding for new activities secured in the 2023–24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO).

	2022–23 Actual (\$ million)	2023–24 Budget (\$ million)	2024–25 Estimate (\$ million)	2025–26 Estimate (\$ million)	2026–27 Estimate (\$ million)
Departmental operating expenses	2,884	3,319	2,898	2,827	2,837
Departmental capital	186	249	206	228	200
Own source revenue	290	260	194	196	194
Total departmental	3,360	3,828	3,298	3,251	3,231
Administered expenses	1,828	2,434	1,747	1,654	1,669
Administered capital	21	30	25	26	27
Total administered	1,850	2,434	1,772	1,679	1,696
Total Department of Home Affairs	5,210	6,262	5,070	4,930	4,927

Source: Department of Home Affairs

Staffing profile

The following information is drawn from the APS Employment Database as of 31 December 2023, unless stated otherwise.

The distribution of staff reflects the department's dispersed operating profile. There are significant numbers of staff in each state and territory. The department also has a presence in 52 locations in 45 countries including 9 offshore Regional Directors supported by locally engaged non-APS staff.

Staff numbers

Number of employees (headcount)	15,140
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ABF*	6,537
Other functions of the department*	8,685

*Source: Department of Home Affairs 2022–23 Annual Report

Staff locations

ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	Tasmania	NT	Overseas
5,562 (36.7%)	2,611 (17.2%)	2,614 (17.3%)	1,631 (10.8%)	858 (5.7%)	1,306 (8.6%)	201 (1.3%)	173 (1.1%)	184 (1.2%)

Distribution of classifications

APS1–3, Trainee and Graduate	APS4	APSS	APS6	EL	SES
22.8%	15.0%	18.1%	21.2%	21.8%	1.1%

Diversity

Characteristic	Percentage of total staff
Women	52.8%
Men	47.0%*
Non-binary/other	0.11% (ABF), 0.13% (rest of department)*
First Nations	2.3%
Employees with disability	2.7%
Non-English speaking background	22.5%

*Source: Department of Home Affairs 2022–23 Annual Report

Excellence horizon

The excellence horizon describes how the Department of Home Affairs' operating context may change in the 4 years from now (to 2028) and identifies the critical organisational capabilities it is likely to need to successfully deliver outcomes and government priorities in this changed environment. This high-level forecast is informed by the review's assessment plus analysis of other trend data, forecasts and horizon scanning.

The department will need to focus on the following priorities across this timeframe:

- helping protect Australia from national security and criminal threats, and supporting national resilience through effective national coordination, policy and strategy development, cyber resilience of public and private organisations, emergency management, and regional cooperation
- supporting a prosperous and united Australia through effective coordination and delivery of immigration and a multicultural and social cohesion agenda and using policy levers to achieve economic goals
- advancing a prosperous and secure Australia through facilitation and modernisation of legitimate trade and travel, and effective customs, immigration (including visa programs and settlement), maritime and enforcement activities across the border continuum.

The Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Claire O'Neil MP, told the National Press Club in 2022 that 'Australia faces the most dangerous set of strategic circumstances since the Second World War'. Australia won't necessarily face these circumstances or disruptions one at a time but sometimes in parallel, creating a compounding or cascading effect.

'Imagine a future January, where we see a Black Saturday-size bushfire in the south-east, a major flood in the north, then overlay a cyber attack on a major hospital system in the west. Our country would be fully absorbed in the management of domestic crises. Then consider how capable we would be of engaging with a security issue in our region.'

Minister for Home Affairs, National Press Club Speech, December 2022.

Some of the key disruptions that may affect the department include:

- increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters linked to climate change
- global movements of people displaced by climate change, political upheaval and conflict
- cyber warfare impacting Australians on an ongoing basis, not just when Australia actively joins a conflict
- increased geopolitical uncertainty and competition between nations
- declining trust and threats to democracy as a political system, through growing foreign covert influence and interference
- disruptions impacting on global trade routes and supply chains
- technology increasingly being used to exploit the border and make it harder for detection and disruption

The following environmental and contextual trends will shape the opportunities and organisational capabilities the department will need to meet the expectations of the government and Australians over the next 4 years.

Trends	Opportunities and organisational capability needs
Espionage and foreign interference have replaced terrorism as the most significant domestic security issue Australia faces. Foreign actors seek to exploit, for example, the declining trust in government and undermine democracy as a political system. The Director General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) recently said: 'Australia is facing an unprecedented challenge from espionage and foreign interference and we as a nation may not fully appreciate the damage it inflicts on Australia's security, democracy, sovereignty, economy and social fabric,' (ASIO Annual Threat Assessment, 2024). This trend is also being shaped by shifting geopolitics, emerging technologies, and broader social trends that include online radicalisation and the growth in extreme views, conspiracies and grievances.	• Shifting capability and resources to areas of the greatest risk and strategic priority. • Making the most of collective intelligence and capability across the Australian Government and its partners within and outside government. • Forecasting, preparing and practicing for the next big threat. • Solidifying the resilience of the public and private sector and Australia's democracy to deal with shocks and crises. • Staying ahead of foreign actors and their tradecraft.
Cyber attacks are taking place in high volumes and an attack on an unprecedented scale is likely. This presents significant risks to national security including to critical infrastructure, governments, businesses and individuals. Cyber attacks have already caused social, economic and security impacts and there is high risk of further shocks well into the future. In response, the government aspires to make Australia the world's most cyber-secure country by 2030.	• Building a reliable pipeline of skilled cyber security and intelligence practitioners. • Building strong and effective relationships between all parts of the protective system (public and private) and critical infrastructure. • Increasing education and awareness across governments, businesses and individuals. • Becoming an exemplar agency for strength in cyber security. • Building a technology and data capability of the highest order. • Clarifying roles and responsibilities within and outside government, especially in relation to crisis response.

Trends	Opportunities and organisational capability needs
The national Migration Program faces complicating factors, such shifts in economic priorities, new skills shortages, an altered legal environment when it comes to illegal arrivals and repatriation, and unforeseen geopolitical disruptions. It will also continue to have high case volumes.	• Building strategic forecasting capability. • Building a reliable pipeline of legal and economic policy/economist practitioners. • Creating a more responsive, adaptive and effective migration systems with advanced analytics through policy modelling, impact analysis and monitoring for policy efficacy in close to real time. • Preparing for new challenges from illegal migration.
The volume of people, cargo, mail and other goods entering Australia will continue to grow and, without a change in approach, will far exceed the capacity of the department's services and operations in the near-term. For example, cargo imports are expected to grow by 70% over the next 10 years. In a fiscally constrained environment, the department cannot keep increasing resources and people to meet demand.	• Enabling transformational not incremental change in operations and service delivery. • Developing skilled practitioners in the application of artificial intelligence, automation and robotics. • Ensuring intelligence-led approaches supported by contemporary, technology-enabled infrastructure. • Monitoring for trends and patterns for improved targeting to amplify and leverage the expertise of intelligence functions and front line staff, enabling strategic decision making at all levels. • Taking a long-term (10+ years) approach to management of capital. • Building workforce capability that is effective under new ways of working and operating conditions.
Climate change is a cross-government issue affecting key areas of the department's responsibilities including migration and protecting Australia from threats. There is also an economic imperative to make the most of Australia's natural advantages and become a hub for renewable energy production. This will require the right skills from here and overseas.	• Building strategic forecasting capability. • Building organisational resilience to respond to crises while simultaneously delivering business-as-usual. • Building effective partnerships across government, private and non-government sectors. • Using policy levers to ensure a reliable pipeline of renewable energy skills and capabilities.

Trends	Opportunities and organisational capability needs
Data and digital technologies continue to reshape society and the economy. Australia must ensure the right policy settings are in place to harness the benefits of technological change and create more and equitably shared opportunities for Australians. The department has a role in making sure Australia is a secure, stable and attractive place for digital business to operate, despite growing cyber threats.	• Building a pipeline of skilled data and cyber security practitioners. • Clarifying roles and responsibilities within and outside government, especially in relation to crisis response. • Building strong and effective relationships with Commonwealth partners and the private sector. • Building modern and flexible business systems that harness the benefits of technological change. • Developing user-focused policy capability that considers the full range of user needs, tools and digital abilities. • Building a strategic forecasting and systems thinking capability.
The next 4 years will be characterised by economic uncertainty. The 2023–24 Federal Budget forecasts the next 2 years will be the weakest for global growth in over 2 decades (outside of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Global Financial Crisis).	• Ensuring prioritised and efficient use of existing resources. • Embedding long-term budget forecasting and capital management discipline. • Modelling and preparing for severe financial shocks.

Executive summary

The Department of Home Affairs is a large organisation with a broad and nationally important set of responsibilities. Staff in the department are deeply committed to the mission they have been tasked to deliver. Their dedication and resilience is one of the most persistent themes this capability review encountered.

The department has undergone much change over recent years, driven both internally and externally through machinery of government changes, internal structural changes, global events and geopolitical shifts. In workshops with staff, it was clear that the ability to deliver in the face of these disruptions is a point of pride for the workforce. Staff are described as having a 'can-do' attitude and are confident in their ability to meet challenges head on.

During this review, the department underwent further change, with the appointment of a new secretary. A period of uncertainty preceded the appointment. However, the new leadership team has committed to using this as an opportunity for the department to think about the kind of organisation it wants to be in the future, and to discard some old ways of doing things that no longer work effectively. The new secretary has initiated a process to bring staff into the conversation about changing the department's culture and leveraging the collective wisdom of the department's large and diverse workforce.

Due to the scale and breadth of the department's remit, it has been challenging for the review to make common findings or assessments of maturity that account for all levels of capability across the organisation. With any organisation of this size there will be pockets of very good capability and areas that are struggling. For the purposes of this review, we have adhered to the Capability Review Framework and provided an assessment of capability we feel best reflects the overall level of organisational maturity, acknowledging that this obscures some of the inherent variability and diversity of a workforce in excess of 15,000 people.

The review also recognises that the ABF is an integral part of the Department of Home Affairs and has considered the capability of the organisation as a whole. All references to the department should be considered to incorporate the ABF, unless specified otherwise. The department's new governance reforms to better integrate the ABF into overall decision-making are detailed below.

In this period of transition and cultural change, we hope these review findings and insights will help the department to prioritise changes for the future. This executive summary highlights the changes the review considers needs to be undertaken. While there a significant number identified, the review considers the 3 most important changes are: 1) bridging the current division between the ABF and the rest of department, and building a better-coordinated and more cohesive organisation; 2) developing a better set of governance arrangements and embedding them; and 3) developing a stronger leadership team with better leadership capability. The current leadership team is already taking steps in these directions. Finally, while many of the suggestions made by the review need to start being addressed over the next 12 months, most will take longer to fully implement and embed.

Leadership and culture

Strategic, collaborative and cohesive leadership are fundamental pillars of a successful organisation. Efficient and effective governance and organisational structures enable leaders to better shape the organisation to achieve its priorities, while maintaining a positive and attractive workplace.

To move forward as a unified enterprise, the department needs to develop and articulate a new purpose and strategic direction that considers the challenges and opportunities ahead and emphasises the need for staff to work together. Without enterprise-level strategy setting and execution (for both policy and enabling strategy) the department risks being poorly positioned to foresee, plan and prepare for future challenges and opportunities. It also risks remaining conditioned to respond to the crisis of the day, rather than balancing leadership effort between reacting to issues, and identifying and avoiding or mitigating future risks.

To support this shift, leadership needs to be seen to work together effectively to deliver departmental outcomes and embed cultural change. This requires a senior leadership group that is collectively responsible for effective decision-making, particularly on cross cutting priorities, people, risk, budget and investment. Collaborative leadership across the department should also encourage and reward staff at all levels to look beyond their day-to-day operations and consider future risks, challenges and opportunities. The new Senior Leadership Committee brings together the Senior Leadership Team (the secretary and deputy secretaries), the commissioner and deputy commissioners.

Collaborative and cohesive department leadership, supported by strong whole-of-department governance helps ensure the department can work cohesively to deliver outcomes in the most effective and efficient way. The past approach to governance did not deliver consistent or effective whole-of-department direction setting and oversight to support buy-in by senior staff across the department. The department's current leadership is taking proactive steps to drive transformation from the top.

The new whole-of-enterprise leadership committees include Major Projects and Investment; Performance, Risk and Budget; People Culture and Safety; Leadership and Development Council; and the previously established Audit and Risk Committee, reporting to the Senior Leadership Committee, which will meet monthly. This is a positive step. It will take time for these changes to mature and become effective. Success of the new arrangements will partly rely on transparent communication with staff, buy-in and active role modelling by all leaders as well as actively monitoring and fine tuning the new arrangements as they are implemented.

At a high level, the organisation functions as one entity and the secretary and commissioner are committed to consistency of the broad values and principles that drive the organisation's culture, while allowing for the ABF to have its own unique requirements. That notwithstanding, the ABF has some unique roles and characteristics that require particular leadership approaches, internal governance practices and cultural settings. These include capabilities and requirements such as the conduct of ABF operations, the use of force, the carriage of weapons and the power to search and seize. The secretary and commissioner recognise the need for an ABF identity within the broader departmental structure, noting also the direct reporting line from the commissioner to the Minister for Home Affairs on operational matters.

The department has also initiated a review integrity of systems to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and appropriate. It recently started initiatives to improve risk management, such as a more robust management of conflicts of interest, a review of procurement processes and frameworks, and implementing recommendations of the *Review of Integrity Concerns and Governance Arrangements for the Management of Regional Processing Administration by the Department of Home Affairs* (the Richardson review). This is discussed further in the Enabling functions domain.

Potential priority areas for capability improvement

Develop and support improved mechanisms for the Senior Leadership Team to deliver departmental outcomes and help embed necessary cultural change.

Embed the new governance to deliver effective whole-of-department direction setting and oversight.

Develop a unified purpose and strategic priorities that support policy, operations and enabling functions across the department.

Develop ways of working that encourage and reward staff at all levels to look beyond their day-to-day operations and consider future challenges and opportunities.

Collaboration

The department needs to rely on its collective skills, experience and capabilities to face a future where disruptions and disasters are likely to be more frequent and severe. Building relationships that maximise the sum of these skills and capabilities is critical for future success.

The review looked at the department's collaboration capability from 3 different angles: with partners outside government; with partners inside government; and within the organisation itself. Across all 3 there is a need for the department's leaders to model and reward genuine collaborative behaviour, to embed genuine partnerships as a default operating style. Decision-makers should also consider the disruptive impact that structural and personnel changes have on relationships internally and externally.

The review found the department has effective relationships with its non-government stakeholders, such as partners from the private sector, non-profit sector and peak bodies and associations. However, there remains an opportunity to improve these relationships by mitigating single person risk, making the department easier for external stakeholders to navigate, and fostering and rewarding genuine collaboration over largely one-way consultation. The department should reflect and learn from work areas that have been identified as strong collaborators in this review.

The department's relationships with other public sector bodies are variable in their effectiveness. The review found operational and tactical relationships tended to be strong, but this was not a consistent operating style across the department. There is a particular opportunity and need for the department to build confidence and leverage better collaboration with central agencies and the National Intelligence Community.

Internal collaboration beyond immediate work areas requires immediate attention. The review found that historically collaborative behaviour has not been modelled or rewarded in the department. Without collaboration between work areas, the department will duplicate effort, waste time and resources, and underutilise the skills and experience of its staff. Critical risks and opportunities will end up buried at junior levels within silos. A lack of integrated tools and technology is also getting in the way of sharing information and building networks.

Recognising this capability as a priority, the secretary has identified collaboration as a key pillar for transformation of the department.

Potential priority areas for capability improvement

Develop and support strengthened internal collaboration between different areas of the department.

Support genuine partnering and collaboration with other Australian Government agencies beyond the tactical or operational level.

Delivery

The department has a difficult and complex set of responsibilities, which are subject to sudden shocks and crises. As set out in the excellence horizon, global and domestic disruptions are expected to become more frequent in the future. The department needs to make the most of the delivery levers at its disposal to ensure it can operate in a way that is sustainable and effective in the long-term.

Strategic policy capability is a priority for improvement. This capability is critical to anticipating, mitigating and avoiding future crises. It will need to follow through by ensuring strategic policy work is joined-up, creativity is nurtured, information sharing is encouraged, and leadership is seen to model and reward critical thinking. At an operational level, the strategic policy team's work must be connected with those areas focusing on future operational capability, to ensure coordinated use of data, intelligence, future technologies and risk-based models, and to maximise opportunities.

The department should also prioritise review and evaluation to support its policy and operational activity. Currently this capability is very much a secondary focus in many parts of the department. While there are pockets of activity, there is not a culture of regularly learning from the past or taking the time to review and reconsider areas for improvement.

The review found there is also room for improvement in the department's relationships with ministers and their advisers. The department has an opportunity to make sure it is offering proactive, well developed advice, that is informed by a whole-of-system view, and which leverages its full range of community and business-facing functions. As the department is responsible for many challenging issues, often of interest to parliamentarians and parliamentary committees, it could also review and consider ways to improve how it works with parliament.

Potential priority area for capability improvement

Focus on improving review and evaluation and ways to anticipate, mitigate and/or avoid future crises.

Workforce

The skills and capabilities the department needs today will not necessarily be what it needs in 2, 4 or 10 years. However, capability takes time to develop and the department needs to better anticipate and prepare for the workforce it will need in the future.

The capability review has been impressed by staff's connection to the department's mission. The new leadership's commitment and early actions to address cultural change are also positive first steps towards improving other aspects of workforce culture. The review has noticed early positive sentiment from staff towards the changes. Establishing a new People, Culture and Safety Committee will provide a central forum for senior leaders to focus on workforce challenges.

The department acknowledges it has high SES turnover and risks losing key skills and capabilities as a result. A new Leadership Development Council has begun reducing the number of SES vacancies, and will develop ways to uplift the capability of SES. This will all be underpinned by the department's transformation agenda, driven by a newly established division dedicated to driving and embedding change.

There are significant workforce capability gaps. Strategic workforce planning is not yet adequate to address these shortcomings now or in the future. The department needs a comprehensive and adaptive workforce strategy to ensure its workforce is ready to deal with current and future challenges. Notwithstanding positive recent changes, staff are concerned about the department's culture. The department needs to lift training and development in all areas and at all levels. Staff are exposed to complex physical and psychological safety risks given the nature of the work in operational areas. Improved work health and safety systems are needed to support staff to easily report concerns.

Potential priority areas for capability improvement

Support the development of a comprehensive workforce strategy to address current and future capability gaps, and invest in training and development including leadership development, management and public service craft.

Drive cultural change throughout the department through effective implementation and clear, ongoing communication with all staff about the transformation agenda recently initiated by the department's Senior Leadership Team (including the ABF and broader department).

Enabling functions

A contemporary and strong strategic centre of enabling functions underpins the success of all other organisational capabilities. As the department goes through organisational transformation it is imperative that it can rely on a strong enabling core to help embed these changes.

A lack of sufficient attention to budget, financial management and prioritisation of resources has to-date hampered the department. Budget issues are compounded by a challenging capital situation and degraded assets. Individual managers have not always been held accountable for their budget outcomes, exacerbated by frequent restructuring, changes in senior leadership and the prospect of MYEFO 'top ups'. Staff feel like the department is repeatedly taking on new priorities without additional resources and this is undermining the delivery of existing

goals. This requires action, using the new governance model (described on page 14) to ensure accountability and prioritisation.

Despite the department's dependence on a significant information and communications technology (ICT) footprint, it does not have a single, shared and executable plan for the future of its ICT or data assets, which increases its risk exposure. The department needs to find effective mechanisms to collectively and transparently prioritise its existing work program and ways to modernise its operations, to capitalise on opportunities to make tasks and processes more efficient.

Core enabling functions are reasonably effective in providing support across the organisation but many services are seen as transactional and process-driven. A strategic approach to delivery of enabling functions across the department is not evident. The procurement and contract management area will require particular focus for capability uplift, owing to the scale of the department's capital re-equipment needs, outsourced labour force, operations and the high-risk nature of this work.

The new leadership team is taking positive steps to improve enabling capabilities such as new, more coherent governance arrangements, including a Major Projects and Investments Committee, a focus on the leadership team's budget capability, a deeper examination of its budget and resourcing processes, the enforcement of budget discipline and a review of its procurement capability. This activity is also essential to building confidence with central agencies.

Potential priority areas for capability improvement

Give greater attention to improving financial management of departmental resources including budget prioritisation, direction setting, accountability and discipline.

Focus on ways to improve the capital plan and budget and its ongoing ability to sustain essential operational, physical and ICT assets.

Establish an executable vision, plan and governance to deliver required future ICT and data assets.

Detailed assessment of agency capability

This section provides an assessment of agency capability based on the Capability Review Framework. A full version of the framework is at Appendix B.

Rating scale

Maturity rating scale	High-level maturity rating description
Leading	• Excellent current capability • Strategic and systematic approach to forecasting future capability challenges and opportunities • Widespread environmental scanning identifies opportunities to learn from others • Continuous improvement is an agency-wide priority • Capability uplift activities are highly likely to equip the agency for challenges identified in the excellence horizon
Embedded	• Good current capability • Widespread activity to forecast future capability challenges and opportunities • Some environmental scanning identifies opportunities to learn from others • Widespread evidence of continuous improvement activities • Capability uplift activities are mostly likely to equip the agency for challenges identified in the excellence horizon
Developing	• Inconsistent current capability • Limited forecasting of future capability or opportunity gaps • Early stage activities to improve in areas of future and current capability gaps • Limited environmental scanning or evidence of learning from others • Limited focus on continuous improvement • Capability uplift activities are limited and will not fully equip the agency for challenges identified in the excellence horizon
Emerging	• Capability does not meet the agency's current needs • Little or no evidence of forecasting future capability or opportunity gaps • Little or no awareness of current capability gaps • Little or no evidence of environmental scanning or learning from others • Little or no evidence of continuous improvement • Agency is unlikely to be ready to meet for challenges identified in the excellence horizon

The Senior Review Team's assessment of the department's organisational capability is outlined below.

Leadership and culture

Element	Maturity rating
Purpose, vision and strategy	Developing
Leadership and governance	Developing
Integrity, values and culture	Developing

Collaboration

Element	Maturity rating
Internal collaboration	Emerging to Developing
Public sector	Developing
Non-government partnerships	Developing to Embedded

Delivery

Element	Maturity rating
Strategy	Developing
Implementation	Embedded
User focus	Developing
Review and evaluation	Emerging
Ministers and parliament	Developing

Workforce

Element	Maturity rating
Staff culture and inclusion	Developing
Strategic workforce planning	Developing
Staff performance and development	Developing
Staff safety and wellbeing	Developing

Enabling functions

Element	Maturity rating
Financial management	Developing
Technology and data	Developing
Core enabling functions	Developing

Leadership and culture

Element		Maturity rating
Purpose, vision and strategy	The capability to articulate a purpose, vision and strategy based on government priorities and legislative responsibilities, and successfully communicate this to staff and stakeholders.	Developing
Leadership and governance	The capability of the agency to provide cohesive leadership and direction, and to establish organisational structures that are efficient and effective.	Developing
Integrity, values and culture	The capability to embed integrity and APS values in the work of the agency. The agency engages with risk appropriately and embodies integrity in everything it does.	Developing

Good leaders set the vision, strategic direction and model the behaviours and values they want to see in an organisation. They bring a workforce together behind a common set of goals to ensure everyone is heading in the same direction. Collaborative supportive leadership is especially critical to an organisation going through a cultural transition, as is the Department of Home Affairs. It will be pivotal to the success of the department's cultural reforms that all leaders consistently communicate and model the qualities they want to see in the workforce.

Purpose, vision and strategy

The department has an opportunity to come together around a refreshed common purpose and supporting enabling and policy strategies to deliver improved organisation-wide outcomes. As the department begins its transformation agenda and cultural reset, this should signal a change in direction and describe the end-state organisation it aspires to become, for the benefit of its staff.

While the department previously articulated a common purpose and very high-level vision, this has not translated into strategic direction setting. Gaps persist in how the department develops and executes broader organisational strategy, including in enabling strategies (such as digital and workforce) and strategic policies. Many individual units appear to have a common sense of the direction and priorities for their individual work area. For example, 65% of staff within the department agree the SES clearly articulates the direction and priorities of their area, which is broadly in line with the APS overall (2023 APS Employee Census). However, a sense of the broader departmental direction and strategy remains less apparent, with only 57% of staff agreeing the SES clearly articulate the direction and priorities for the agency, which is 6 percentage points below the results for the APS overall (2023 APS Employee Census). One internal stakeholder said, 'part of the problem is that we are so diverse that we don't have a single North Star we work towards. Everyone works in their own silos to an extent'. This view was repeated by other stakeholders, including other government agencies that felt they needed to engage with multiple parts of the department to ensure a message or an issue was appropriately shared.

'[The department] was like a puzzle with no picture.' External stakeholder

Siloed operations contribute to the department not delivering a cohesive future-focused strategy and set of priorities for the organisation. This was well described by one external stakeholder who said ‘they lack strategic foresight. Where is the part of the department that says, this is what’s coming and how do we get in front of it?’. While the department is responsive to specific directions set by government and reacts to crises, this sometimes comes at the expense of a focus on the broader strategic direction, to ensure it can meet the challenges of the future irrespective of the government of the day. The previous command and control leadership style has not encouraged leaders to collaborate and prioritise whole-of-department strategy setting and execution.

Without a clear and cohesive strategy, the department is poorly positioned to foresee, plan and prepare for future challenges and opportunities. Without change, the focus will remain on responding to the crisis of the day rather than balancing leadership effort between reacting to issues and identifying and mitigating future risks. The review saw little evidence of existing approaches to resolve this lack of enterprise-level strategy setting and execution.

New collective whole-of-department governance arrangements will be important in driving this work forward (see page 14). Success in uplifting capability in this area will require a combination of recruiting staff with the right skills, increasing capability for existing staff, and leaders visibly embracing and reinforcing a whole-of-department strategic direction.

To create a greater shared purpose and strategy, the Senior Leadership Committee also needs to provide more effective direction setting, beyond the expectations of their immediate workgroup. There would be benefit in setting and communicating a strategy framework and process to empower staff to collaborate beyond their immediate workgroup and across the organisation around agreed strategic outcomes. This would assist the SES to address broader departmental priorities. A strategy framework, aligned with the department’s new governance arrangements, would encompass both departmental enabling and policy development and execution. This will require an uplift in leaders’ collective effort, visible role modelling, greater intra-agency collaboration, and capability to develop both enabling strategy and strategic policy.

Ideally, this enterprise-level strategy and planning would be informed by more than internal views, including views of the department’s users, ministers, other agencies and partners. This is explored further in the Collaboration (page 27) and Delivery domains (page 32).

Leadership and governance

Collaborative and cohesive leadership, supported by strong whole-of-department governance, ensures the department can work together to deliver outcomes in the most effective and efficient way possible. Previous leadership and governance was not properly effective. As outlined in the introduction, the department is diverse. This diversity, plus arrangements for ABF within the department, makes leadership and governance more complex.

Current ways of working do not do enough to encourage and reward staff to look beyond their day-to-day operations and consider future challenges and opportunities. This is exacerbated by high turnover of senior executive staff, less experienced leaders across the department and a lack of collective leadership. As previously

mentioned, the approach to governance until recently has not delivered consistent and effective whole-of-department direction setting and oversight.

Leaders and staff consistently raised working arrangements between the department and the ABF as a common challenge. Some staff often do not consider the ABF to be part of the Department of Home Affairs. This perception has been reinforced by the separation of governance arrangements, which is now starting to change. The models of leadership and governance have come from the organisation's history. Since its creation in 2017, the department has been led from the centre with a command and control culture, which limited collaboration and collective leadership.

'We went too far to command and control and a rules basis. People weren't empowered, decision-making was pushed too high. It was too risk averse.' Internal stakeholder

Challenges associated with internal cross-agency collaboration and senior executive leadership turnover and capability contribute to weak collective leadership. This reinforces a negative perception of effectiveness of SES' relationships, both internally with staff and between SES leaders. This perception extends externally, particularly among other government agencies. Senior leaders across the department have become disempowered, in part because of centralised decision-making. They are seen as hesitant to make decisions, take risks, provide a counterpoint view, share new ideas or participate in a productive debate. One internal stakeholder said, 'people's capability to make a decision wasn't developed, and now they can't make a decision unless there is a rule'. This cascades down to staff at lower levels not feeling empowered to make decisions, challenge approaches, be curious or share new ideas. Better alignment with the principle that decisions should be made by staff at the lowest practical level would help here (refer to the [Optimal Management Structures guidance](#) for the APS for further information).

Addressing the leadership and accountability challenges requires better governance and investment in key leadership competencies to deliver the transformational and cultural change needed. Clearly identifying, building and rewarding the leadership skills and behaviours valued by the department would be beneficial.

The rate of SES separations is well above the APS average for both new and experienced SES officers and is trending higher. The department's SES-only separation rate is 18.8%, which is up from 16.8% in 2018–19, and higher than the APS average rate of 16.9%. SES separations peaked in 2021–22 at 20.7%. The department needs to better understand and respond to the causes of this turnover. This may include issues relating to workloads, constant crisis management, disempowering leaders and a lack of professional development opportunities. Action in this area would help improve attraction and retention of talented SES in the future.

'We find they are continually subjected to high turnover and changing staff. Quite honestly, we have to discuss between us who our main contacts are.' External stakeholder

There seems to be high turnover ... particularly in senior roles in the last year. It's noticeable.' External stakeholder

Improved governance should improve collective and collaborative leadership of the department, and rally staff around a common purpose. But governance alone can only achieve so much and must be supported with a willingness and visible action by the broader Home Affairs and ABF leadership teams to work as a collective. Role modelling by leaders, formal mechanisms to incentivise change, developing talent and skills in leaders, and building understanding and support for the transformation change will be very important.

Steps are underway to improve governance arrangements. A new governance structure is detailed on page 14. Success of the new arrangements will partly rely on transparent communication with staff, buy-in and active role modelling by all leaders, as well as actively monitoring and fine tuning the new arrangements as they are implemented.

New governance arrangements and the associated transformation program will require careful planning, methodical staged implementation and monitoring, and a comprehensive communication strategy. Transformation experience across the public and private sector suggests there is a high risk of 'snap back' to old ways of working unless changes are carefully managed, communicated and role modelled persistently by all members of the leadership team. Staff will need to feel engaged and heard as part of the transformation process if the department is to improve staff engagement. It will take time to realise the benefits of these activities but this is essential.

Integrity, values and culture

Integrity will remain an area for attention. The department's integrity framework is not always working as needed. There has also been a heightened focus on integrity matters due to a very public integrity failure at the highest level, which may have affected public and staff perceptions of the department's integrity. It may also lead to staff questioning the use and effectiveness of the current integrity framework.

In interviews, external stakeholders said they generally trust the department to deal with them ethically and in good faith. According to an all-staff survey conducted for this review, 87% of staff agree that people in their workgroup uphold APS values, with only a small proportion of respondents disagreeing (5%). In response to the 2023 APS Employee Census, a similar proportion of staff (4%) said they had witnessed another APS employee in their department engage in behaviour they thought may be serious enough to be viewed as corruption. This proportion is in line with the result for the APS overall. Of these respondents, 57% said they did not report the potentially corrupt behaviour they witnessed, which is a lower rate of non-reporting than the APS average.

The department has a detailed integrity framework within its Professional Standards Framework. However, the Professional Standards Framework is complex, multi-layered and makes it difficult for staff to easily understand their personal obligations in a practical way. Approaches to improve its practical effectiveness and consistent application across the organisation would be highly desirable.

The department is reviewing its whole integrity system to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and appropriate, given it was set up during a different time and context. The review is focusing on achieving a best practice integrity system, improving associated processes and systems, improving accountability mechanisms for leaders, educating staff and evaluating the integrity system to ensure continued improvement. The handling of conflicts of interest has

been improved to ensure greater accountability and oversight. A key part of the integrity system review will be improving education and training to better support staff to understand obligations and corruption vulnerabilities relevant to the department.

Ongoing action will reinforce the priority on integrity, including related to procurement, probity and contract management practices. This will be important to ensure staff and external stakeholders remain confident in the department's ability to deal with the breadth of risk and complexity across its operations. For example, the Richardson review found the department needs to 'enhance its integrity risk process and culture to better inform procurement and contract decision-making for regional processing arrangements'.

Steps to improve integrity can be easily undermined. The absence of clear communications, persistent role modelling by leaders and being an integrated part of transformation agenda can rapidly unravel improvements in this area. To uphold the high standards of APS professionalism, the department's approach to integrity needs to mature from being managed as a compliance process, to being a culture of integrity, relevant to all staff and through all areas of their work. Embedding a culture of integrity will depend on consistent alignment and adherence to shared values and integrity principles.

'Integrity was previously treated in a one-dimensional way – find a wrong and hit people on head. It should be more about a culture of feeling safe.' Internal stakeholder

Risk management practices are critical to integrity but remain uneven across the organisation. While some strategic enterprise risk controls appear to be effective, others need improvement. Staff turnover, role changes, and regularly transferring the ownership of individual risks between staff also creates problems, such as variable understanding of risk mitigation activities and reporting requirements. The application of risk management practices in operational areas also appears to be achieved primarily by prescriptive processes and controls, particularly in high volume processing and operational environments. This includes the use of the command, control and coordination (C3) doctrine within the ABF. While this is effective in many contexts, the management of risk in more complex and ambiguous settings, where prescriptive processes and controls cannot be rigidly applied, is problematic. In these situations, the review found there is a greater likelihood of matters being poorly handled or escalated to leaders who, at times, were ill-equipped with the technical knowledge, visibility of risks and sense of empowerment to effectively intervene.

'There is a tendency to centralise and control things and that has left managers disempowered or without skills. They have always been told what to do.' Internal stakeholder

The maturity of risk management practices should be an area of focus for mid and senior level leaders. This cohort needs to transition from an over reliance on process and compliance towards a culture that engages with measured risk and remains open to how risk may provide both opportunities and threats to their operations and strategic direction. In support of this intent, senior leaders need to also encourage and reward staff to speak up and share concerns, rather than discourage curiosity and diversity of thought. Several initiatives have begun to improve internal communications and more broadly improve risk management and strategic prioritisation. This

includes establishing the Senior Leadership Team along with the Leaders Exchange, to better enable strategic communication across all SES in the department (including the ABF) and National Emergency Management Agency. Monthly webinars open to all staff conducted by the secretary, the ABF Commissioner and deputies are another new initiative. New governance structures should generate an internal exchange of ideas and practices to improve the leadership cohort's risk management capability. In addition, a review of the department's risk management framework is due by the end of 2024. These activities are important steps, but will require both time and supporting leadership behaviours to become embedded and effective. Anything that is seen to undermine the integrity, values and culture of the department inhibits its ability to do its job effectively and maintain the trust of the government and the Australian people.

Case study: Australian Human Rights Commission Partnership with the ABF

The ABF is partnering with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) to improve workplace leadership and culture.

The 2021 APS Employee Census results for the ABF were poor and staff opinions about the workplace were low. To address this, the ABF announced a strategic 5-year partnership with the AHRC in April 2022. The AHRC's role is to ensure the ABF remains accountable, inclusive and diverse. Together the ABF and AHRC are focused on improving strategic leadership, culture, collaboration, communication and engagement.

Turning workplace culture around is not an easy task. It requires leadership commitment. The Minister for Home Affairs recently acknowledged the ABF Commissioner for his leadership in asking the hard questions to improve the workplace.

Collaboration

Element	Description	Maturity rating
Internal collaboration	The capability to engage and establish effective and collaborative internal partnerships, ensuring the agency can make best use of its collective capabilities.	Emerging to Developing
Public sector	The capability to establish enduring and collaborative relationships with other public sector agencies that support agency and government priorities.	Developing
Non-government partnerships	The capability to establish enduring and collaborative relationships with non-government entities to support agency and government priorities.	Developing to Embedded

The Department of Home Affairs relies on collaboration at many different levels to effectively deliver almost every aspect of its responsibilities. It has never been more critical to build relationships that maximise the sum of these skills and capabilities. Given the breadth of change that needs to happen, success will require extensive and genuine cross-departmental collaboration.

Internal collaboration

The review found that internal collaboration beyond immediate workgroups is not fully effective. In workshops and interviews, staff said there is not a culture of genuine engagement and collaboration across groups and functional areas. This was also recognised by external stakeholders as a concern.

The department's self-assessment recognises that internal collaboration requires improvement, and that stewardship and collaborative behaviour is not demonstrated consistently. Responses to the 2023 APS Employee Census show collaboration within teams and workgroups does not translate to collaboration between these areas. In total 86% of respondents said colleagues in their immediate workgroup cooperate to get the job done (12 percentage points below the APS overall), while only 62% said their SES manager promotes cooperation within and between 'agencies' (4 percentage points below the APS overall), and 50% said internal communication within their agency is effective (6 percentage points below the APS overall).

Several interviewees commented that engagement, collaboration and integration of work between the ABF and the rest of the department has declined over recent years, and the review observed this as often being poor.

'How ABF and Home Affairs work from a leadership and governance perspective? In one word "awkwardly".' Internal stakeholder

'There seems to be a disconnect between areas of the department.' External stakeholder

The limited collaboration is driven by a variety of factors, but the following 4 stand out:

- collaborating to achieve business-as-usual outcomes, outside of managing a crisis, has not historically been modelled or rewarded
- information channels seem designed to enable information to flow up the organisation, rather than across it – a reflection of past management styles
- senior leaders are not seen to dedicate time to collaboration
- there is evidence of ‘patch protection’ and internal communication is not strong.

Collaboration is further impeded by a lack of integrated systems and tools that stands in the way of easy networking across the department. External stakeholders feel that constant internal restructures and staff turnover make it difficult to locate the right people to collaborate with.

‘This department is constantly changing who is responsible for what and it is hard to keep up.’

External stakeholder

Other reviews have noted similar concerns. For example, the Richardson review found internal collaboration was inadequate. As a result, serious integrity risks were not identified or shared in regional processing procurement and contract management processes. The Richardson review recommended the department ‘foster and promote an “ask and tell” operating environment that encourages collaboration, cooperation, proactive enquiry and information sharing’.

Limited internal collaboration, and in particular collaboration between the ABF and the rest of the department, makes it harder to ensure the government’s expectations, priorities and risk tolerances are widely understood. A failure to pool and leverage collective capabilities also makes it harder to achieve outcomes for the community, users and ministers. The department is also missing an opportunity to model the ‘collaboration craft’ to develop junior staff.

The new secretary and ABF Commissioner are making greater internal collaboration a priority focus for the leadership team. The new Senior Leadership Committee and recently established Leaders Exchange will give senior leaders a mechanism, as well as signalling permission, to act as stewards of the department, take a whole of-enterprise approach to the delivering outcomes, and actively demonstrate collaborative behaviours. Incorporating full participation of the ABF leadership into the new governance arrangements is a positive step towards embedding this engagement, and ensuring collaborative efforts are appropriately focused and aligned. The secretary and the ABF Commissioner are proactively working together to realise these goals. More on the governance reforms is on page 14 of this report.

The establishment of a dedicated Transformation Division in March 2024 to drive reform across the organisation, including leading the response to this review, is also positive. It will be important the division is transparent and genuinely collaborates and engages with staff as its work program is settled. It will also be important for the division to regularly communicate about its progress and have genuine consultative mechanisms for staff to make suggestions and input into this reform work.

The development of a culture of collaboration will take time and training to ensure staff have right the skills and a sense of permission to reach out and work together. Improving internal collaboration will also have flow on improvements for how the department engages and collaborates externally.

Public sector

The department engages with public sector partners across a range of groups and jurisdictions including portfolio agencies, other Australian Government agencies, state and territory governments and international partners. This collaboration is variable in its intent and effectiveness. There was evidence of good collaboration in pockets of the department, though often at the operational level. The review heard cases of effective partnerships to deliver operational outcomes in areas such as Operation Sovereign Borders, Counter Terrorism and international airports. In these instances, the collective goals were clear, roles were well understood, stakeholders felt they were heard, and the department demonstrated the ability to adapt, while ensuring the relationship was maintained.

However, the review also found that genuine collaboration and working in partnership with other public sector organisations is not the default operating style in all parts of the department. The review heard that staff, including senior leaders, were not previously given licence to genuinely collaborate. 'They don't always have a good fix on whole-of-government. They are very inward focused,' said one external stakeholder.

The review also heard many public sector relationships depend on individuals, especially at the senior executive level, which leaves networks vulnerable to restructuring and high SES turnover. Stakeholders said collaboration with central agencies and the National Intelligence Community is relatively weak. This results in a lack of trust in the department, making genuine collaboration even harder, and missed opportunities to influence key strategic issues across government.

'We have work to do on our relationship with the centrals. We're seen as a department of smoke and mirrors.' Internal stakeholder

A more collaborative approach internally should provide a model for collaboration across the public sector. The department is also refining a dedicated bilateral engagement plan for 2024, with a view to strengthening its relationships across government. This is a positive early sign, with leadership clearly signalling the value it places on genuine engagement and the development of this capability. There is an opportunity to build on the lessons that can be learned from areas that have been able to establish strong, enduring and collaborative relationships. These should be considered as the engagement plan and approach is finalised. As outlined above, it will also be critical that senior leaders value, reward and model good collaboration and prioritise development of this capability. Without this, any change for the department, and improvement in public sector relationships, will be much harder.

Non-government partnerships

The review found the department has good working relationships with industry and other non-government stakeholders. During interviews, feedback from external stakeholders was largely positive.

'They engage us as issues arise.' External stakeholder

'They are getting better at authentic engagement on the ground.' External stakeholder

In interviews, staff also pointed to positive relationships with non-government stakeholders.

'We put a lot of effort into our relationships with industry. We have formal industry engagement groups, and we engage frequently.' Internal stakeholder

There are many examples of mature engagement networks, such as Immigration Community Liaison Officers, Business, Industry and Regional Outreach Officers, Settlement Network Officers, the Trusted Information Sharing Network, the National Committee for Trade Facilitation, National Passenger Facilitation Committee and National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee – all are valued by industry and the community. However, the review also heard staff and stakeholders would like to see more co-design and genuine partnerships.

External stakeholders did raise some areas for improvement. For example, frequent turnover of staff, particularly at senior levels, resulted in a loss of corporate knowledge and affected the sustainability of relationships, especially on long-term and complex projects. Some stakeholders also said they did not feel they understood who does what, given the breadth of the department and the frequent structural changes. They also feel it is often up to external partners to repeat the same message to different areas of the organisation, including when engaging with both the broader department and the ABF.

'They are cumbersome as an agency ... parts don't have an understanding of what other parts do. Important information doesn't get shared.' External stakeholder

The review found the department sometimes lacks the maturity to reflect on collaboration processes and is not always open to modernising or making the process more efficient.

'The department is not known for its adaptability – it is more about sticking to the process.'
External stakeholder

There is also an opportunity now for the department to review its engagement strategies, such as the *Industry Engagement Strategy 2020 – Trade, Customs and Traveller* and *Industry Engagement Strategy 2020 – Migration and Mobility*, which were published in 2015.

The recent invitation to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to co-chair the ABF Commissioner's Advisory Board is a good example of using convening power to bolster relations between government and industry. Similarly, the secretary's proposed approach to minimise future restructurings will make continued contact easier for external stakeholders.

The department must continue to prioritise building collaboration, including over the longer-term. In the process of achieving better internal and cross public sector collaboration, it will be important to not let the already good collaborative work with industry slip.

Case study: Outreach teams leveraging community networks

A range of dedicated outreach teams promote understanding of and participation in the department's immigration programs.

The Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO) officers engage directly with business, industry and regions across Australia to promote Skilled Visa Programs and discuss visa options to fill employment gaps. They have a presence in all states and territories.

BIRO activities vary from running small business meetings, large industry events or sector-specific education activities to improving understanding and use of skilled migration programs. They have established location-specific forums and conferences to meet the needs of their various partners.

A network of Community Liaison Officers is dedicated to working with specific migrant communities. They deliver official information to multicultural communities, and act as a mechanism for community members to share information about their priorities and concerns. They conducted 9,100 engagements in 2022–23.

Outside Australia, Global Skills Attraction officers based in key overseas locations promote Australia's Migration Program in an effort to attract more skilled migrants.

Delivery

Element	Description	Maturity rating
Strategy	The capability to understand the system/s the agency operates in, the government's agenda, and to develop high-quality advice to deliver outcomes for Australians.	Developing
Implementation	The capability to deliver efficient and effective services, programs and other initiatives.	Embedded
User focus	The capability to use an understanding of the people and organisations affected by the agency to deliver effective and fit-for-purpose outcomes for them.	Developing
Review and evaluation	The capability to use review and evaluation activities to maintain performance and drive improvement.	Emerging
Ministers and parliament	The capability to meet the needs of ministers and the parliament.	Developing

The department's challenging and complex responsibilities can be subject to crises and disruptions, which are only expected to become more frequent in future. The department will need to use all available delivery levers to be resilient to future shocks and operate in a sustainable and effective way the longer-term.

Strategy

The capability review found the department does not have a well-integrated or effective strategic policy capability. This capability has not been adequately prioritised and there has been limited investment in developing and maintaining this function. The department acknowledges it has given limited focus on long-term strategic planning and believes this partly stems from spending time on the next urgent task and crisis.

'We are constantly planning for the year we're in, not the year ahead.' Internal stakeholder

'They need to put in place some capacity, what is coming up over the horizon and what are they going to do about it. Instead of looking at crisis management skills.' External stakeholder

The review heard there are pockets of strategic policy capability within specific workstreams. This is reflected in the work to develop the 2023–2030 Cyber Security Strategy by the Cyber Policy and Programs Branch and the Migration Strategy by the Migration Reform Taskforce. The review also heard some whole-of-department environmental scanning is being undertaken in the Intelligence Division and Data and Economic Analysis Division.

Despite these efforts, strategic policy work is not joined-up across the organisation, and opportunities to effectively influence decision-making across government, and at the enterprise level, have been missed. A strategic foresighting and policy capability was previously deprioritised and requires rebuilding. The review

understands the department is considering ways to establish an internal strategic policy capability to help plan for the risks that it faces. This is a positive step. Such a capability has potential to accelerate the development of whole-of-enterprise insights and an integrated understanding of downstream impacts and changing community expectations. It would also provide the opportunity, at an enterprise level, to coordinate horizon scanning and improve the application of lessons learned from past crises, to identify opportunities where crises could have been avoided or mitigated to limit future disruptions and crises.

If done well, this will signal permission for more strategic policy work to occur and drive the development of this capability. The new capability could be fully centralised or organised around a hub and spoke model, where a small central team coordinates and adds value to distributed capabilities. The latter is likely to be more effective. It will, however, need strong support from the leadership team to ensure a high degree of cross-department cooperation. As the dedicated team will be small, to maximise impact it will be important to form strong links with other areas of the department. A two-way flow of information and data must occur with the dedicated team acting as type of broker or community of practice. Clear parameters around who owns which strategic policy work will need to be established, and the work of the strategic policy function should also be set and prioritised by Senior Leadership Committee. To achieve this rebuild, there is a need to invest in people and capability development, including skills uplift for emerging senior leaders in the craft of strategic policy development. Ultimately this capability would encourage a more systematic approach when providing advice to government and give the department an opportunity to proactively, rather than reactively, shape, inform and influence the direction of the government's response to complex social, economic, environmental, and geopolitical challenges. It will also help the department manage some of the risks it faces.

Implementation

Home Affairs is a large, primarily operational department. Its operational functions include immigration, citizenship and settlement services, facilitation and regulation of travellers and trade, maritime surveillance and immigration detention. Based on responses to the 2023 APS Employee Census, at least half of the employees are in operational roles.

Evidence suggests the execution of operational functions is sound. According to the 2022–23 Annual Report, the department:

- met/substantially met 8 out of 10 performance measures
- delivered 195,004 Migration Program outcomes against a planning level of 195,000
- maintained or improved processing times in 8 of 10 visa categories despite a 152.4% increase in the volume of visa applications, compared with the previous reporting period
- facilitated more than 17 million air and sea travellers arriving in Australia, as well as over 86 million air cargo and over 6 million sea cargo consignments
- conducted more than 2,182 patrol vessel days, while contracted surveillance assets delivered 12,691 flying hours
- seized 4.78 tonnes of cocaine

- through the ABF-led Illicit Tobacco Taskforce, detected 168 instances of revenue evasion worth around \$522 million.

The design and delivery of many of programs have been independently assessed as largely effective. For example, a 2023 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audit of the Family Migration Program, which accounts for about 30% of annual visa places, found the department's design and delivery of the program was sound. In addition, a 2023 ANAO audit of the Implementation of the Government Response to the Black Economy Taskforce Report also found the department is implementing its recommendations effectively. Like several other capabilities throughout this report, however, delivery capability varies across the organisation.

Staff consider delivery to be one of the department's strengths. The review witnessed this dedication while meeting with staff in Sydney and Canberra. External stakeholders also commented on the commitment and dedication of staff. 'They have been given missions that are incredibly hard and they are focused on the delivery of those,' said one external stakeholder. The department, and particularly the ABF, rely on detailed standard operating procedures to enable large-scale delivery at a consistent standard, and employ subject matter experts with deep technical expertise built up over many years. The regular need to respond and divert resources to manage unforeseen events or crises does, however, draw attention and capability away from the delivery of key departmental outcomes and has meant limited scope to focus on exploring future delivery approaches.

The department also needs to ensure it considers the operating model used and prioritises addressing risks and issues as they come up to avoid and mitigate challenges and crises. This was not observed during the review, and interviews highlighted the lack of prediction and mitigation of issues. Workforce, enabling systems and the intelligence function present challenges and opportunities to delivering the most efficient and effective operating model.

The department should consider whether its Intelligence Division requires stronger connections and feedback loops with operational and community-facing areas, particularly the ABF, to both leverage and input into on-the-ground intelligence and to make sure staff have a deep appreciation of tactical intelligence needs. The ABF needs specific intelligence to help target its operations and enhance its results. Without it, the success rate of their activities will decline. The importance of the department's intelligence area providing information to help with this targeting is hard to overstate.

There are also many ageing enabling and ICT systems, which are a potential risk until they are replaced and decommissioned. Staff highlighted the potential of upgraded systems, and a more data-driven approach to boost productivity and to gain efficiencies. The use of emerging technologies may also provide opportunities to more effectively and efficiently deliver and scale the scope of operations (more on this in the Enabling functions domain on page 45). Maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of this large-scale operational delivery capability should be a long-term priority and it will require investment and uplift in other enabling capability areas, such as strategic policy, long-term budgeting, collaboration and workforce planning.

User focus

The *Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme* (2023) reinforced the importance of a user-centred approach to policy and program design and service delivery. Having a consistent focus on users will help the department gain a deeper understanding of who its users are, what motivates them to use its services, and any pain points in the user experience. Though some areas demonstrate a user-centred mindset, including in the Immigration Group and ICT Division, at an enterprise level there is a tendency to focus on the process rather than the user. Recognising the organisation's many regulatory functions, there is always an appropriate time and place to follow operational policy and procedure. However, there is also a role for considering a more systematic approach to user-centred design. The review considers there are opportunities for greater focus on the long-term benefits of designing services with users in mind. As staff design and administer new laws, regulations, policy, programs and services, they must not lose sight of their impact on their user community.

'They need to think not about the process but the people who are caught up in the process.'

External stakeholder

Feedback throughout the review suggested the department is not making the most of its user data, or deep knowledge of users held in community-facing functions, to inform policy, service and regulatory design. Greater use would add significant value, as is explored in the case study on page 31. There is a real opportunity to harness the expertise of staff in areas that regularly engage with the community and industry to sharpen the focus on the user across the whole department. The *APS Charter of Partnerships and Engagement* and associated good practice guide can help inform ways to improve putting people and business at the centre of policy, implementation and delivery.

Review and evaluation

A culture of continuous improvement is critical to ensuring that an organisation, particularly one as large and diverse as Home Affairs, builds on its successes and learns from its mistakes. However, the review found there is no systematic approach to evaluation. Evaluation is treated as a secondary focus in many parts of the department. It is highly reliant on informal networks and tacit knowledge of individuals rather than more systematic approaches to review, discover and share knowledge. Of particular concern is the inconsistent approach to capturing, sharing and incorporating lessons learned from crises or even ongoing business activities. The department has not sufficiently prioritised or invested in review and evaluation. This sort of activity is rarely costed into New Policy Proposals (NPPs).

'There is a lack of intrinsic learning. They start from scratch all the time.' External stakeholder

The department does have a small team dedicated to evaluation activity (3 full-time equivalent staff), providing evaluation advice for NPPs and working on an evaluation framework for the *Cyber Security Strategy*. However, a team this size cannot be expected to deliver evaluation capability on the scale required to embed this into departmental practices. The department is also redrafting its *Enterprise Performance Evaluation and Monitoring*

Policy Statement and its *Business Planning Policy Statement*, which creates an opportunity to build on. There is also a dedicated evaluation function specifically targeted at development of ABF-led NPPs as well as policy evaluation in the ABF more broadly.

This capability requires significant improvement to embed a culture of evaluation and knowledge sharing, both internally and externally, and continuous improvement. The department would benefit from more systematic analysis of operational and delivery outcomes and challenges, considering what worked well or what went wrong and identifying ways to prepare for and anticipate future challenges. This will also contribute to better risk management.

Ministers and parliament

The capability review spoke to stakeholders from the department, the broader public service and ministers about the department's relationship with portfolio ministers and their staff. While there is a sense that interactions are improving, there are areas where the organisation could improve this capability.

The review heard the department should be more proactive in the delivery of new ideas, well-informed policy options, recommendations and risk mitigations for decision. This is tied to comments elsewhere in this report about the need to build strategic capability and a sense of permission to voice creative solutions. Similarly, staff should ensure they are presenting ministers with a full range of options and associated risks to address an issue, without being constrained by assumptions about their risk appetite.

The department should also ensure it is fully leveraging its data, experience and community contact in advice to ministers. Ministers want the department to take a whole-of-system view and develop relationships with other stakeholders in that system. Advice should be informed by environmental scanning, both inside and outside the APS, and harnessing the insights of staff in areas that regularly engage with industry and the community, such as the Business, Industry and Regional Outreach units or the Critical Infrastructure Partnerships team.

The review heard that a small number of committed, high-performing staff are regularly called on to respond and deliver policy advice to ministers. Trusted relationships with ministers, their staff and departmental officers are valuable but should be broadened to avoid single person risk. At times the structure and breadth of the department made it challenging for ministers and their staff to understand who to go to for advice, and at times it was unclear what the desired outcome was and who was responsible for delivering it. Broader engagement with both senior staff and subject matter experts would also help better meet ministers and their office's needs. The department would also benefit from regularly re-evaluating whether routines of engagement between SES and ministers and advisory staff in each minister's office are sufficiently transparent, coordinated, aligned and effective.

The department could also review how it works with, responds to and supports parliament and its processes. As it has responsibility for challenging issues, undertakes considerable legislative activity, and is regularly called on to give evidence at parliamentary committees, this warrants focus.

The new secretary is focused on collaboration and improving the organisational culture and relationship with ministers. She has made it clear this is one of her highest priorities. Senior staff need to take her lead and model similar behaviours. This is something that cannot be done overnight. The challenge will be to build on this early work and repeatedly deliver and improve over time.

Case study: Automating administrative processing

The department is leveraging Robotic Process Automation to make repetitive tasks easier.

An example of this is the work done to streamline freedom of information (FOI) processing and reduce processing time, particularly for personal FOI requests. In February 2023, a client waited 185 days on average for a response to their personal FOI request. This has been reduced to an average wait time of 52 days.

One of the key tools was the use of automation for simple FOI processing tasks, through the use of FOIBOT dubbed 'Bob'. Bob is now also being used to process invoices and triage emails.

In the first 3 months of 2024, Bob completed 955 transactions with an average processing time of 1.6 minutes. This includes processing 205 invoices and verifying 750 final bills alongside 325 FOI registrations and triaging 2,160 FOI emails in the same period.

As the department received over 16,800 FOI requests in 2022–23, this creates a significant opportunity to improve finalisation timeframes.

Workforce

Element	Description	Maturity rating
Staff culture and inclusion	The capability to develop and maintain an inclusive working environment that gives staff a sense they belong and are valued.	Developing
Strategic workforce planning	The capability to understand and act on current and future operating and workforce requirements, including critical job roles, succession management and recruitment/retention strategies to prepare for future needs.	Developing
Staff performance and development	The capability to develop staff in ways aligned to the future needs of the APS, and to improve the performance of individuals and teams.	Developing
Staff safety and wellbeing	The capability to maintain a physically and psychologically safe working environment for staff.	Developing

Over the next decade, the department will need different skills and capabilities than it requires today. However, capability takes time to develop and it is necessary to begin preparing for the workforce of the future today. This review considered workforce strengths and capability gaps to assess whether the department is adequately developing its workforce, and to identify workforce changes that will position it to realise the goals of its organisational transformation and government priorities.

Staff culture and inclusion

The review has been impressed by the staff across the organisation and their connection to its mission. This came through strongly with staff in frontline operational areas but was evident across the whole department. During engagements with staff through site visits, interviews and workshops, the reviewers were impressed by the professionalism and dedication displayed in dealing with an array of issues such as complex visa cases, immigration detainees, passenger processing, handling of illegal goods and other challenging scenarios. It is an organisation that is often asked to respond to challenging circumstances.

While staff are connected to the department's mission, 2023 APS Employee Census results show this has not translated to a workforce that is as proud to say they work at Home Affairs, as staff at other APS agencies – with 69% agreeing with the proposition 'I am proud to work in my agency', 7 percentage points below the result for the APS overall.

The department has stated its commitment to reforming its culture and processes, and the senior executives have been working to address staff feedback. While this is positive, and results have been improving over the past 5 years, there is still a way to go. Staff pride, a willingness to recommend the department as a good place to work and a sense of personal attachment to their agency all remain below the result for the APS and other extra-large agencies (2023 APS Employee Census). While 57% of staff recommend the department as a good place to work

(8% percentage points higher than the previous year), this remains 11 percentage points below the APS overall and 8 percentage points below the result for larger operational agencies (2023 APS Employee Census). A total of 70% of staff agree that the department supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture. This is a 6 percentage point improvement on the previous year's Census result but remains 9 percentage points below the APS overall and 8 percentage points below the result for both larger operational agencies and extra-large sized agencies. To maintain a sustainable workforce the department will need to ensure can attract and retain the best and brightest talent to tackle the challenges of the future.

'We were already on a pathway to shift culture.' Internal stakeholder

'There needs to be a cultural reset. It's critical to be clear about what that means. Top brass has to show a commitment to it.' Internal stakeholder

As identified in the Leadership and culture domain, staff are committed to the mission of their individual workgroup but demonstrate less understanding of how this connects to the broader departmental purpose and strategy.

'At a local team level it can be great, and very supportive. At a department level it verges on being actively harmful.' Internal stakeholder

'Lots of indications of an "us and them" mentality – not just between ABF and the rest of the department, but between all kinds of work units.' Internal stakeholder

The new leadership team's commitment to cultural change is an important and a positive first step towards changing the department. However, this will take time, careful planning and careful implementation to realise improvement. A dedicated culture change program to address shortcomings in the existing culture requires resourcing and genuine leadership engagement with staff. This includes paying particular attention to building a thriving culture of inclusivity, curiosity and innovation, as well as connecting local workgroup activities with the broader organisational priorities and addressing existing challenging ways of working to empower staff. Establishing a new People, Culture and Safety Committee is an opportunity to help align leadership with this commitment.

Clearly articulating how the command, control and coordination (C3) doctrine works alongside other models of leadership and management in the department, and how and when it should operate, will be important to working at scale while also encouraging curiosity and innovation. Leadership is already reviewing and removing rigid process that are barriers to delivering outcomes. This should continue. Just as importantly, leaders need to role model desired behaviours to demonstrate that the command and control approach, all too synonymous with the agency's past, can be reconciled with creativity.

The leadership has not consistently encouraged or rewarded curious and innovative thinking. During the review there was evidence of incremental process innovation occurring across aspects of the department, however the

curiosity and thinking required for more disruptive innovation is not evident. The department sits 5 percentage points below the APS overall in the proportion of staff who agree that one of their responsibilities to continually look for new ways to improve the way they work, and 6 percentage points below the APS overall average in the proportion of staff who agree their immediate supervisor encourages them to come up with new or better ways of doing things (4 percentage points below the result for extra-large sized agencies) (2023 APS Employee Census). Leaders necessarily have a disproportionate role to play in shaping the future culture of the department. Senior leaders need to model and reward innovation and curiosity to strengthen this capability. It is critical they do this through all areas of the organisation.

The review found limited mechanisms for staff at all levels to raise ideas and have them considered and/or resourced. While some such mechanisms had ceased in recent years due to budget constraints, in September 2022, the Immigration Group opened an online ideas form that any staff member could use to submit an improvement idea to enhance immigration delivery. Since that time, staff have contributed 240 ideas – with more than 50 implemented or being explored and tested. More recently, an Innovation Coordination team has been set up to field innovative ideas submitted by staff for possible implementation. This is a good sign in one area of the organisation. The department should explore how the lessons from this experience might be adapted for improvements in the broader organisation.

Strategic workforce planning

To deliver on its outcomes, the department must ensure it has staff with the necessary capabilities for their current and future work. Strategic workforce planning is an essential business process to effectively recruit, develop and retain the diverse talent required over the short- and long-term.

The existing workforce planning is not sufficient and some of the current workforce allocation practices are counterproductive. A lack of strategic planning, prioritisation and foresighting limits the ability to create informed long-term workforce plans and exacerbates annual cycles of tactical and reactive resource allocation.

The department acknowledges it has significant workforce capability gaps, and its People and Workforce Plan aims to address this. However, the plan and related activity is limited in its effectiveness. While the department has developed workforce guides and templates, workforce planning does not generate a systematic connection from strategy through to budget allocations.

'Workforce planning is ad hoc. There is little time and space for workforce planning. The organisation more broadly needs to do better.' Internal stakeholder

Embedding strategic workforce planning into broader capability planning and prioritisation processes would enable the department to identify emerging skill needs and set up training and development programs to address them, so it can access necessary skills and resources when needed.

Currently, staff have limited visibility of recruitment and planning decisions and feel workloads and resourcing are not always balanced, leading to a concern that some workgroups are expected to carry heavy workloads

compared with other areas. As future strategic workforce planning is developed, communication and transparency can help staff understand future workforce changes, including the rationale for workforce levels and structures.

'How ever we are structured, it is about the right people in the right place and with the right capabilities.' Internal stakeholder

The department has already begun addressing workforce planning by establishing a new People, Culture and Safety Committee, to provide a forum for senior leaders to focus on workforce challenges. In addition, a recently established Leadership Development Council has already made good progress reducing the number of SES vacancies and working on development and management skills of senior staff.

The department needs to prioritise the explicit coupling of workforce planning with departmental strategic planning, investment and budgeting processes. As new measures to better integrate the ABF are implemented, there is an opportunity to learn from its defined career pathways and identify aspects that could benefit the whole organisation. This should be supported with appropriate investment in the workforce planning function, along with senior leader buy-in to the value of workforce planning. The current department and ABF's workforce plans expire in 2025, and this provides a timely opportunity to renew both, including identifying future skills requirements to target the department's efforts.

Staff performance and development

Staff development and performance management is another way the department can address capability gaps. The review found that while the People and Workforce Plan and the equivalent ABF people strategy (Realising Our Full Potential) do address staff development, additional effort is required.

In an all-staff survey conducted by this review, staff were asked to identify what they think the department should focus on improving. A total of 38% of staff selected learning and development opportunities and 36% of staff selected workforce planning. In response to the 2023 APS Employee Census, 50% of staff said there are current skills or capability gaps in their workgroup, which is 4 percentage points above the APS average. A total of 70% of staff said they were able to access relevant formal and informal learning and development when and where required, which is up 10 percentage points from 2022 and in line with the APS overall. However, through workshops and staff interactions, the review heard that staff perceive senior leaders had reduced the priority and reduced budgets for development and training. 'Here you learn by doing. The department has not had the money and investment in staff development,' said an internal stakeholder.

There is a significant difference between the ABF and the rest of the department when it comes to training and development. The ABF has specialised requirements for its workforce. This includes entry level roles where training is managed in-house by the ABF College. The challenge for the ABF is retaining entry level specialist staff, especially after investing in 12 months of training on top of the security clearance processes.

'The ABF has different training and staff requirements, which can be perceived as being difficult or expensive. For example, things like use of force, operational requirements, C3, college curriculum and training re-certification are different and costly special requirements.'

Internal stakeholder

In positive signs for the broader department, the new Leadership Development Council will identify, develop and manage the SES cohort. Further work is needed to identify and deliver on the future training needs of the remaining cohorts. The department needs to prioritise investment in its people and leaders to create the skilled workforce it needs and as a signal to staff that leaders value them and their development. It should consider greater emphasis on mentoring and dedicated training, in addition to recruiting and on-the-job training as the primary model for capability development.

The department needs to continue to develop APS craft skills training, including policy development, as well as focus on increasingly high demand skills including data analytics and intelligence. A continuation of leadership training for middle and senior leaders will enhance the overall leadership of the organisation and support improvement to the culture. The SES leadership would benefit from development programs focused on key leadership competencies, including those necessary to deliver the transformational and cultural change. This will build on efforts by the new Leadership Development Council to uplift SES capability, including through a pilot talent development program based on the work of the APSC-led talent councils.

There also needs to be a renewed focus on managing performance. Staff feel high performance is often taken for granted, while poor performance is not properly managed. In the current cycle, only 58% of staff across the department had completed a formal performance development agreement on time and 10% of staff still do not have a current performance development agreement in place. Formal performance management numbers are also relatively low given the workforce size, with the 2023 APS Agency Survey reporting 14 staff undergoing performance management, well below the average of extra-large agencies (28). This may be due to a lack of leadership competencies to engage in difficult conversations on poor performance.

'We have a way to go empowering managers and investing in their capability. We lost sight of basic training for performance management, having difficult conversations etc.' Internal stakeholder

The department should review its awards and recognition framework to ensure it appropriately reflects key behaviours and skills identified in this review as currently being undervalued, including curiosity, innovation and collaboration. In doing so, the department will recognise and reward behaviours in support of the culture it is seeking to create.

Staff safety and wellbeing

The department is exposed to a broad and complex safety risk profile given its work across a diverse range of locations and operational tasks. Staff, contractors and outsourced service providers work in environments that pose high physical and psychosocial risks, such as user-facing roles at airports, detention and immigration processing centres, and in remote environments dealing with industrial equipment, dangerous weather conditions and potentially hazardous materials. Just over half of staff (53%) said they believe the department cares about their health and wellbeing, a 6 percentage point increase from the previous year, but still 8 percentage points below the APS overall (2023 APS Employee Census). Frequently responding to a crisis and poorly managed change across the department adds uncertainty and complexity. Only 36% of staff believed change is managed well, 7 percentage points below the APS overall and that of other extra-large agencies (2023 APS Employee Census).

Staff told the review they feel burned out by constant change, unrealistic delivery expectations and the nature of the work. More than half of staff (54%) felt they aren't always or often consulted about change at work, 3 percentage points higher than for the APS overall (2023 APS Employee Census).

'...there is a sense of operating at crisis level permanently and it is a problem. I have faith in the resilience of our people but it is relentless. I won't be surprised if there is a disaster and the root cause is fatigue and people being stretched too far.' Internal stakeholder

'It is a hard place to work. They live in the world of wicked problems.' External stakeholder

The department needs to identify key change activities and affected staff, and more genuinely engage staff in supporting the effectiveness of future change activity. It may look to work by the Australian Human Rights Commission with the ABF for lessons learned (see the case study on page 26). It is important to recognise the zero tolerance on some risks the ABF includes in its risk assessments. As mentioned earlier, the review recognises the department is starting a transformation program, including by establishing a Transformation Division and culture reset activity to drive the development and delivery of the reforms.

In terms of work health and safety (WHS), there was evidence of safety reporting and sound WHS practices in parts of the department, particularly within the ABF. However, the review agrees with the department's self-assessment that additional attention is required to improve WHS systems to enable staff to easily report and manage investigations and enhance safety reporting to leaders.

In deciding how to minimise and manage physical and psychosocial risks, it will be important the department continues to engage with potentially affected staff. A people-centric approach to safety will not only ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to manage safety but will be symbolic of how senior leaders value their people and will support more effective change management.

Case study: disposing of confiscated vapes

Some of the department's activities are far more complex than they seem on the surface.

New laws taking effect on 1 January 2024 prohibit the importation of disposable vapes into Australia, subject to very limited exceptions. This required the ABF to add vaping products to the scope of its detection activities at the border.

Detecting these devices is a new capability for the ABF, as is the destruction of the confiscated items. For example, between 1 January and 12 March 2024, over 358,000 vaping products were seized by the ABF, including over 100,000 seized in a single day.

Vaping devices comprise a battery, a nicotine and/or nicotine pods and often packaging. All of these component parts must be removed by hand before the seized goods can be destroyed. This is currently completed by a contracted provider but must be witnessed by 2 ABF officers at all stages.

These volumes are likely to increase following the expansion of regulation on 1 March 2024 to prohibit the import of all vaping products, unless importers have a relevant import licence and permit.

Enabling functions

Element	Description	Maturity rating
Financial management	The capability to deliver financial plans that support the agency's strategic objectives, and to ensure the use of public funds is transparent, accountable, and fit for purpose.	Developing
Technology and data	The capability to make efficient, effective and forward-looking use of technology and strategic data assets to support the work of the agency.	Developing
Core enabling functions	The capability to effectively identify, design, resource and deliver whole-of-agency shared functions to internal customers that are most important to the agency and its work.	Developing

A contemporary and strong strategic core underpins the success of other organisational capabilities. It is imperative that the department can rely on strong enabling functions to help implement and embed the kinds of change required through its transformation agenda. This section considers the effectiveness of the design and operation of current enabling functions to assess whether they are fit-for-purpose, sustainable and can effectively deliver in a changed and uncertain future.

Financial management

A lack of attention to budget and financial management has hampered the department's ability to deliver its priorities. These challenges have produced budget uncertainty, difficulty planning, regular budget reworks within financial years, and challenges to funding changing priorities. Poor financial management follows poor financial governance. The review has found a tendency for budgets to be handed down from 'on high' with little discussion among other senior leaders, and little opportunity for leaders throughout the organisation to have a voice in the investment and budget setting processes. The result has been limited buy-in and a lack of budget ownership. In an all-staff survey conducted for this review, only 52% of staff agreed there is a planned approach to managing funding/spending within the department.

'Previously the budget was set from the top down and people were not really held to account.'
Internal stakeholder

The operating budget issues are compounded by a challenging budget situation for capital assets. Major capital upgrade are required in the coming years, for both ICT and operational capital assets. This needs to be managed through the development of a prioritised capital management plan that is executable over a reasonable period (including beyond the forward estimates). It should be aligned with both the department's enabling strategies and government's priorities, and tailored to available funding. While the department's self-assessment noted that

processes and governance for its Capital Investment Program (CIP) are sound, the review did not encounter widespread awareness or effective application of this process.

'The organisation needs to go back and prioritise what it wants to do and live within its means.'

Internal stakeholder

Individual managers have not always been held accountable for their budget outcomes. This has been exacerbated by restructuring, changes in senior leadership and the prospect of regular MYEFO 'top ups'. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) does not appear to have had the senior leadership support required to help embed financial discipline. This has contributed to individual groups, divisions and branches lacking budget certainty, making it difficult to commit to plans. Continual in-year budget revisions have resulted in further redistribution of resources, making it harder for workgroups to find the resources they need to respond to changing priorities. Budget management through staffing caps has created perverse incentives and a perception among some managers that they need to have staff in place or have spent funds at the end of a financial year to maximise the chance of obtaining future funding.

'Funding has always been contested ... SES have no accountability for budget management.'

Internal stakeholder

Staff feel the department continually takes on new priorities without additional resources, and that it has not been sufficiently funded to deliver its remit since its inception. They feel frequent shifts in priorities have come at the expense of properly delivering other, pre-existing, outcomes. Poor financial management has diminished confidence in the department's ability to prioritise and deliver on its budget, particularly among central agencies. It will take a more transparent approach and time to rebuild this confidence.

'They are running hand to mouth. They have no ability to invest and build a robust capability.'

External stakeholder

'They need a long-term budget where centrals are involved...It needs to be transparent.' External stakeholder

The leadership team is taking steps to improve financial management capability, initially by improving budget accountability. It is addressing a prospective 2023–24 budget deficit by instilling budget discipline as a key leadership priority along with a range of measures to bring the budget to balance. It will also build budget management skills and capability into the department's leadership development program. Time and consistent attention will be required to change past behaviours.

There is also a need to address broader financial management weaknesses identified in this review and build a culture of stronger financial management and accountability. It is currently conducting a deeper and separate

examination of its budget and resourcing processes, and its level of funding, to identify improvements. As mentioned on page 14, a re-design of enterprise governance structures aims to improve internal cross-collaboration and strategic oversight, which will be critical to achieving a more coherent investment and budget process.

New governance arrangements should include the CFO in all appropriate forums. The CFO needs to be properly empowered and supported to do their job. The Senior Leadership Committee also needs to pay sustained attention to budget discipline and financial management to achieve enduring reform in this area. This will also contribute to rebuilding the central agencies' confidence in the organisation's financial management capability, which will be critical to gaining traction in future budget processes and financing decisions.

Development and execution of a capital management plan will also require buy-in from central agencies. A revised plan should be an immediate priority and should focus, where feasible, on incremental delivery of major developments. The department should embed capital management considerations into its strategy, investment and budget process. It should develop this plan in collaboration with central agencies and partnering delivery agencies. Transparent review and updates on the delivery of funded capital items will help build confidence in the department's ability to deliver on capital projects.

The capital plan and budget require urgent attention to deliver essential operational, physical and ICT assets. This is a major priority as it feeds into other capabilities described in this review, such as strategy, workforce planning, implementation and collaboration with its stakeholders.

Technology and data

The department depends on a significant ICT footprint to undertake its day-to-day operations, including SmartGates and kiosks, CCTV cameras, communications satellites, detection and inspection technology units, wearable defence equipment units, desktops, applications, servers and data centres. Over 40% of the 480 distinct business systems have already reached end of life, and the department carries significant risk of failure and increasing costs to sustain its technology environment. Resources required to sustain, and in future replace, these assets are yet to be fully funded. This technical backlog is preventing the department from establishing more efficient operations and capitalising on emerging technologies.

The department does not have a single, shared and executable plan for the future of its ICT or data assets, despite this risk exposure. The endorsed Technology Strategy is 4 years old and focuses on addressing the findings of a review conducted in 2016. It sets out a roadmap to re-architect and rationalise the existing technology environment down to a streamlined set of platforms and to decommission legacy ICT capabilities over a 5 to 10 year timeframe.

The Technology and Major Capability Group faces resourcing challenges supporting the existing ICT footprint in addition to almost 200 active projects. It relies heavily on a contractor workforce to support this activity, with a ratio of approximately 50:50 contractors to APS staff. Notwithstanding the existing Technology Strategy and the recently revised governance arrangements, the department does not have effective mechanisms in place to collectively and transparently prioritise its existing work program.

The past failure to address legacy technology creates cycles of reactive activity and inefficient workarounds for staff. On a visit to the department's offices, the review team observed visa processing staff switching between multiple systems to finalise an application, and in one case using a 39-year-old visa system to process humanitarian visa claims. In workshops, staff pointed to IT as a major impediment in their day-to-day work.

'A visa processing officer will navigate up to 15 systems to process a complex case. We are incredibly efficient at being inefficient – people will flick between systems.' Internal stakeholder

The department needs to modernise to capitalise on opportunities to make tasks and processes more efficient. The number of separate systems also inhibits information sharing and prevents the department from realising the full potential of its considerable data holdings. The breadth and scale of the data it holds is a major asset, which could be better leveraged for assessing and forecasting risks and generating insights for the department's operations. However, the department lacks an endorsed data and analytics strategy. The capability to effectively access, share and analyse this data across the enterprise is critical for the department to be more effective in the future.

Ageing ICT also increases the risk of failure. Risk exposure will increase over time as legacy systems become increasingly vulnerable to cyber security incidents and system outages. While there have been initiatives to leverage both data and analytical capabilities across the department in recent years, these agendas have experienced setbacks with wavering support, both in terms of leader sponsorship and resources. Two attempts to modernise visa platforms (Global Digital Platform and Permissions Capability) have been terminated since 2017. Both programs ultimately did not proceed.

As mentioned earlier, the department is committed to initiating an enterprise-wide transformation. Without greater attention on its current and future ICT and data capability, it will miss the opportunity to enable future effectiveness, efficiency and scale. The department is currently not positioned to deliver beyond 'maintenance' let alone improve its ability to radically transform its technology and use of data.

A newly established Major Projects and Investments Committee, with a remit to examine major technology investments, represents an opportunity to re-prioritise technology modernisation and drive a more strategic approach to long-term planning for the department's ICT footprint. An organisation-wide business transformation creates an opportunity to refresh its ICT roadmap, consider a data strategy to exploit and protect its data holdings, and uplift data and analytics skills across the organisation.

This forward planning is a priority and should be incorporated into new governance structures and future investment processes.

Core enabling functions

The core enabling functions (for example, finance, legal, research, procurement, ethics, technology, property) are seen as transactional and process driven. However, there is no strategic approach to delivery of enabling functions across the department. Historically, leaders in corporate areas have not always been empowered to

exercise this level of strategic influence due to a lack of endorsed and sponsored enabling strategies and limited governance mechanisms to effectively enact their roles. In the absence of effective enabling strategy and governance, core enabling functions have had to rely on ad hoc sponsorship and influence from senior leaders to achieve broader department outcomes.

An orientation towards process has an impact on staff in the broader department who do not always feel supported by corporate areas. In response to an all-staff survey conducted for this review, only 56% of respondents agreed they can find the support they need from enabling services to deliver their work effectively.

Procurement and contract management is an area that will require particular focus, due to the scale of outsourced capability, operations and the high-risk nature of this work. The Richardson review found significant shortcomings in the way the department managed high-risk contracts. The capability review also heard from interviewees that the department (including the ABF) does not start to think about contract expiry early enough, resulting in reactive action to manage near-term risk to delivery. Procurement processes have begun for several major commercial agreements, including the multi-billion-dollar onshore detention contract and department-wide ICT managed services arrangement. According to contract information from AusTender, the ABF alone will need to renew contracts for support of its vessels, aerial surveillance, container handling and transport this financial year, and one of its contracts for civil maritime surveillance services (Rotary Wing) will expire in June 2024 after being in place for 19 years.

The department is undertaking a review of its procurement capability and use of the Capability Management Framework. It will look at whether the central procurement structure, processes and workforce are fit-for-purpose for managing contract lifecycle risk, integrity and due diligence, and creating a culture of accountability and responsibility among decision-makers. This review should not be viewed in isolation from other efforts to improve risk management and crisis mitigation, as it forms one piece of this broader cultural shift.

There are examples of the department bolstering its enabling functions to manage emerging risks. The legal area has recently been strengthened with new senior executive leadership and proactive activity to help mitigate adverse outcomes, in recognition of the volume and complexity of its caseload. This workgroup handles the highest litigation caseload in the Commonwealth, with over 17,000 migration and citizenship cases alone. Similar attention to other enabling areas of increasing importance to departmental priorities may be warranted.

The corporate functions form a critical role balancing the operational requirements of the organisation while also collectively working as a strategic centre to form a common departmental view. Supporting a strong strategic centre remains important to identifying and delivering cross-departmental outcomes, which may not otherwise be identified or led within individual groups, divisions or branches. New governance structures also include senior corporate leaders, which is a positive step towards enabling strategic input from these areas.

Case study: A new generation of SmartGates

Third generation SmartGates are being installed at 8 Australian international airports, with rollout to Australia's busiest international airport, Sydney, due to be completed in June 2024.

The 'Gen 3 Arrivals SmartGates' will provide an improved experience for travellers, increase the reliability of the technology, and provide a stable technological base for future enhancements.

The overall 'cycle time' for the passenger through the kiosk and gate has been reduced – 38.78 seconds (for Gen 3) compared with 41.58 seconds (for Series 1).

The Gen3 technology is also more accessible, allowing wheelchair users and people of short stature to use a dedicated accessible self-service kiosk.

Enhanced biometrics facilitate improved matching, reducing the opportunity for non-genuine travellers to circumvent border processes and improving facilitation for genuine travellers.

The new technology base provides a foundation for future enhancements, including contactless travel and a digital incoming passenger card.

The department's response

The Capability Review has come at a seminal moment for the Department of Home Affairs. Over the past several months we have managed a leadership transition, begun a significant transformation program, and responded to major disruptive externally-driven change. I am extremely grateful to the Senior Review Team for working with us on this journey, and for their support for our reform efforts. It is no small feat to review an agency of this size and complexity in a steady state, let alone to assess both its current capabilities and its emerging direction. I thank the Team not only for their collaborative and supportive approach, but for what I believe is a fair and balanced assessment of the department as it is and as it is becoming.

I am particularly grateful to see the Team's recognition of the dedication and resilience of our staff, their 'can-do' attitude, and their focus on delivery. I thank them too for leaning in to the Review. One of the things that makes Home Affairs stand out is the passion of our staff, and their connection to mission. We deal with complex issues that impact individuals, whether that be through their migration journeys, their trade interests, or their security and sense of belonging. In our challenging and rapidly evolving geopolitical environment, there's never been a more important time to have a highly capable, collaborative and innovative department as we work to help keep Australia prosperous, secure and united.

I accept and am taking concrete action to address the recommendations of the Review. Our efforts will be spearheaded by a newly established Transformation Division, which will shape and drive our agenda to strengthen core capability and transform our culture. In this context, I am giving particular emphasis to the need for strong strategic policy direction. Together with our strengthened governance arrangements and focus on building leadership and workforce capability, this will ensure we are anticipating and preparing for the challenges of the future. It will position and drive us to identify gaps, integrate our efforts, enhance collaboration internally and externally, and build in effective review and evaluation mechanisms. Strong fiscal discipline and active management of performance and risk will also be critical enablers of success.

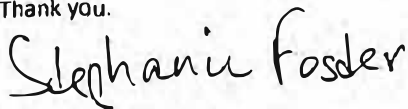
The Review identified the importance of doing more to integrate the work of the ABF and the department. We agree, and are making good progress on this, balancing the need for us to work seamlessly together in delivering the Government's agenda with the unique role played by the ABF within the department.

While much remains to be done, it was heartening that the Review identified and acknowledged the recent positive shift in our culture. This is a major focus for us, and we are working hard to ensure that every Home Affairs leader is communicating our vision, living our values and listening to our staff. As the report notes, this is an opportunity to 'leverage the collective wisdom of the department's large and diverse workforce'.

A core element of our future success will be our capacity to work in partnership with others. We agree with the Review's assessment on both the strength of our external relationships, and on the need for a significant uplift in the way we collaborate internally and across the APS. Our capacity to work with others and build coalitions is fundamental to the success of all our endeavours, most acutely in our security functions, but also in our immigration and border functions.

Commissioner Outram and I have engaged with staff across the organisation and know that many of the findings resonate with them. The Review will be enormously beneficial in ensuring we are fit for the future.

Thank you.



Stephanie Foster PSM
Secretary
Department of Home Affairs

Appendix A: Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Description
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ABF	Australian Border Force
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
C2	Command and control
C3	Command, control and coordination
CCTV	Closed circuit television vision
Census	APS Employee Census
CFO	Chief financial officer
CIP	Capital investment program
COVID	Coronavirus disease
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Department	'department' means the Department of Home Affairs including the Australian Border Force (ABF)
EL	Executive level 1 or Executive level 2 job classification in the Australian Public Service
Enabling strategy	Enabling strategy translates overarching organisational level strategic direction to those structures and support systems that facilitate an organisation's operations. Examples include workforce, data, asset and strategies
ICT	Information and communications technology
MYEFO	Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook
NPP/s	New policy proposal/s

Abbreviation or acronym	Description
SES	Senior executive service job classification in the Australian Public Service
Senior Leadership Team	Senior Leadership Team includes the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs, ABF Commissioner and deputy secretaries and deputy commissioners of the Department of Home Affairs
Strategic policy	Strategic policies serve as guardrails for managers and employees, ensuring that their choices are aligned with the organisation's overarching goals and values.
User	Someone who uses a product or service.
Richardson review	<i>Review of Integrity Concerns and Governance Arrangements for the Management of Regional Processing Administration by the Department of Home Affairs</i>
Thodey review	<i>Our Public Service, Our Future. Independent Review of the Australian Public Service</i>

Appendix B: Capability Review Framework

Leadership and culture

Element	Description	Characteristics
Integrity, values and culture	The capability to embed integrity and APS values in the work of the agency. The agency engages with risk appropriately and embodies integrity in everything it does.	• Agency can monitor, measure and address integrity and cultural issues as needed • Agency ensures third party providers also embed integrity and APS values in their work for the agency • Leaders model the APS values • Staff are committed to the APS values • Staff balance risk and opportunity in a way that is consistent with the agency's risk appetite
Purpose, vision and strategy	The capability to articulate a purpose, vision and strategy based on government priorities and legislative responsibilities, and successfully communicate this to staff and stakeholders.	• Agency has meaningful strategy that aligns with government priorities • Staff can link the purpose, vision and strategy to their work • Agency is future focused and anticipates changes to its operating environment • Purpose, vision and strategy can adapt to external change
Leadership and governance	The capability to provide cohesive leadership and direction, and to establish organisational structures that are efficient and effective.	• Leadership team is of a high quality • Leadership team works together effectively • Agency has effective and efficient organisational structures, including optimal management structures for the agency's needs • Effective governance is in place (including cadence of meetings, membership, meeting discipline, and documentation) • Leaders are identified and developed at all levels to meet emerging agency needs

Collaboration

Element	Description	Characteristics
Public sector	The capability to establish enduring and collaborative relationships with other public sector agencies that support agency and government priorities.	• Agency identifies and acts on opportunities to collaborate with local, state, Commonwealth and international bodies • Agency has mechanisms in place to ensure relationships are sustainable • Consultation with public sector agencies is systemic and built into standard processes • Agency's collaboration reflects agency strategy • Agency's collaboration supports the public sector to operate more effectively and efficiently • Agency has a track record of delivering outcomes in partnership with other public sector agencies • (for departments of state) Department has clear lines of communication and works collaboratively with portfolio agencies
Non-government partnerships	The capability to establish enduring and collaborative relationships with non-government entities to support agency and government priorities.	• Agency identifies and acts on opportunities to collaborate with business, not for profit organisations, academia and peak bodies • Agency has mechanisms in place to ensure relationships are sustainable • Agency assesses the value of collaboration on an ongoing basis • Agency's collaboration reflects agency strategy • Agency's collaboration supports entities within the sector to operate more effectively and efficiently • Agency chooses appropriate methods to establish and maintain relationships based on their purpose and audience, drawing on APS, Australian and/or international standards
Internal collaboration	The capability to engage and establish effective and collaborative internal partnerships, ensuring the agency can make best use of its collective capabilities.	• Agency presents a whole-of-agency view that reflects cooperation across different functions • Agency teams share their expertise to benefit the whole organisation • Consultation with internal partners is systemic and built into standard processes • Staff report it is easy to find help or the answers they need internally • Agency encourages innovation through systems that enable engagement at all levels

Delivery

Element	Description	Characteristics
Ministers and parliament	The capability to meet the needs of ministers and the parliament.	• Agency sustains effective working relationship with ministers and offices • Agency demonstrates an understanding of the different roles of the APS, government and parliament • Agency provides impartial, evidence-based advice and information that is responsive to the needs of government and the parliament and consistent with APS values • Agency engages effectively and appropriately with parliamentary processes (Senate Estimates, Questions on Notice, inquiries, legislative processes, reporting etc.)
User focus	The capability to use an understanding of the people and organisations affected by the agency to deliver effective and fit-for-purpose outcomes for them.	• Agency regularly engages with the people and organisations it serves in an open and authentic way • Agency understand the needs of the people and organisations it serves, including at the cohort level • Agency designs and updates services and policies to reflect feedback and research into user needs • Agency anticipates and responds to changing needs of users • Agency considers the views and needs of a diverse range of stakeholders • Agency chooses appropriate engagement methods for their purpose and audience, drawing on APS, Australian and/or international engagement standards
Strategy	The capability to understand the system/s the agency operates in, the government's agenda, and to develop high quality advice to deliver outcomes for Australians.	• Agency understands the system/s it participates in, including trends and likely changes, the levers for reform, and the government's vision • System participants, roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and understood by staff and stakeholders • Agency's advice is timely, clear, well-reasoned, forward looking and provides relevant context • Agency provides advice on different delivery options (e.g. technologies, engagement models, uses of data), including assessing risks • (for departments of state) The portfolio has the strategic policy capability to consider complex, whole-of-government issues

Element	Description	Characteristics
Implementation	The capability to deliver efficient and effective services, programs and other initiatives.	• Agency implements government policy, programs and services effectively and efficiently • Agency designs performance indicators to track progress for any services or programs • Agency routinely improves implementation methods • (where relevant) Agency can efficiently and effectively use third party providers to deliver outcomes for the Commonwealth
Review and evaluation	The capability to use review and evaluation activities to maintain performance and drive improvement.	• Agency routinely reviews and evaluates policy advice and implementation • Review and evaluation findings inform policy advice and implementation • Review and evaluation practices are embedded in agency processes and are sustainable

Workforce

Element	Description	Characteristics
Strategic workforce planning	The capability to understand and act on current and future operating and workforce requirements, including critical job roles, succession management and recruitment/retention strategies to prepare for future needs.	• Workforce planning activities are consistent with agency's vision, purpose and strategy • Agency understands the expertise of its workforce at individual and whole-of-organisation levels and applies them effectively • Agency understands its future skill needs and strategically uses recruitment, retention, succession management, mobility, reskilling and other activities to meet those needs • Agency proactively manages the talent pipeline for the agency
Staff performance and development	The capability to develop staff in ways aligned to the future needs of the APS, and to improve the performance of individuals and teams.	• Agency identifies and supports high value staff development activities based on workforce planning activities and individual needs • Managers understand, value and enable staff development as a core responsibility • Agency measures the effectiveness of skills development • Agency effectively encourages high performance and remedies low performance • Managers encourage and enable staff development and learning relevant to their role and the future needs of the APS
Staff culture and inclusion	The capability to develop and maintain an inclusive working environment that gives staff a sense they belong and are valued.	• Agency recruits, retains and values a diverse workforce • Agency encourages diverse ideas, cultures and thinking • Agency staff are empowered to take risks and experiment • Staff engagement is high
Staff safety and wellbeing	The capability to maintain a physically and psychologically safe working environment for staff.	• Agency meets its work health and safety obligations • New policies and initiatives consider the health and wellbeing of staff in their design • Staff consider their workplace to be physically and psychologically safe • Agency takes proactive measures to improve safety • Responses to incidents are effective in reducing risk

Enabling functions

Element	Description	Characteristics
Financial management	The capability to deliver financial plans that support the agency's strategic objectives, and to ensure the use of public funds is transparent, accountable and fit-for-purpose.	- Investment and resourcing decisions are aligned with agency priorities - Financial planning is effective and appropriate across all parts of the agency - Agency can provide a single source of truth on budget and spending - Agency understands its economic environment and likely financial trajectory - Resources can be adapted and shifted as priorities change - Agency can identify, investigate, report on and address financial issues
Technology and data	The capability to make efficient, effective and forward-looking use of technology and strategic data assets to support the work of the agency.	- Technology capability meets staff needs - Agency maintains and monitors the use of technologies - Agency has mechanisms to ensure a pipeline of contemporary digital and technology expertise - Agency makes strategic decisions about the comparative value of different technologies, including when to use whole-of-government or in-house solutions - Agency proactively improves the agency's technologies and considers emerging technologies to meet future needs - Agency ensures the quality of information and data held by the agency and enables its use internally as well as share appropriately with external stakeholders. - Agency manages data ethically and confidentially - Agency ensures the security of agency data and systems
Core enabling functions	The capability to effectively identify, design, resource and deliver whole-of-agency shared functions to internal customers that are most important to the agency and its work.	- Agency actively decides which staff-facing functions will be delivered centrally (for example finance, legal, research, procurement, ethics, technology, property etc.) - Agency manages the tension between central and distributed functions effectively - Core functions are adequately resourced and supported by leadership - Core functions meet staff needs