



Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

APSREFORM
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APS Reform Annual Progress Report

2025

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A Message from the APS Commissioner

Delivery of APS reform is a shared commitment to creating a public service that is truly people-centric, delivering better services and outcomes for all Australians. This, the third and final APS Reform Progress Report, highlights the movement made towards achieving this vision.

The Australian Public Service plays a vital role in the lives of all Australians. From delivering essential services to shaping public policy, the APS reaches across every facet of our society. Grounded in the legacy of earlier reform efforts, this program has built on these foundations to advance capability, integrity and excellence across the service, ensuring the public service is equipped to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Since 2022 and the launch of the Government's APS Reform Program, the APS has built on what has come before and delivered significant progress in embedding key reform principles, policies, processes and practices. These changes are successfully strengthening the foundations of the public service – its people, systems, and culture – to deliver a more effective, efficient, and responsive service for all Australians.

Drawing on the foundation work established in 2023 and 2024, 2025 has seen significant progress in embedding key reform principles across the APS. Specifically, the focus this year has been on:

- **Empowering our people:** Investing in skills development and creating more flexible and inclusive workplaces, as highlighted in the 2024 report's emphasis on capability uplift.
- **Modernising our systems:** Embracing digital technologies and artificial intelligence to deliver better services faster, for all Australians, and improving data sharing to enhance service delivery and efficiency.
- **Strengthening our culture:** Fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, placing emphasis on psychological safety and building a speak up culture to report on corrupt conduct and to deliver frank and fearless advice.

System level transformation is an enduring feature of the public service. The Government's APS Reform Program has been a starting point from which a culture is built that prioritises continual improvement and innovation and embeds the ethos of stewardship - our individual and collective commitment to leaving the public service better than we found it.

To the APS, each of us have a role to play in ensuring the outcomes of the APS Reform Program continue to be achieved, I thank each of you for the work you have undertaken which has seen the APS Reform Program become one of the transformations that is succeeding and I thank you for the work you have yet to do that will ensure it continues to do so.

Executive Summary

Three years since it began, the Government's APS Reform Program has built on previous reform efforts and is now in its third and final phase 'Continuous Improvement'. This final phase marks a critical juncture as the Program transitions from a defined and centrally managed program of initiatives to a mature, business-as-usual operating state embedded through the APS's governance, behaviour and systems. Work completed across the service has laid the necessary foundations to strengthen the public service: to increase integrity, better partner with people and communities, build capability and position the APS as a model employer. These collective efforts ensure the APS is building the trust and agility needed for future-ready public service delivery.

At present 54 of 59 APS Reform Initiatives are either complete or in delivery, with agencies across the APS actively adopting and embedding changes. This maturation of the Program signals readiness of the service to take ownership of ongoing reform, as many of the original ambitions have matured into standard operations, or the core capabilities, frameworks and relationships have been established to drive continued progress across the system. This evolution of reform into a culture of continuous improvement and innovation is underpinned by the new APS Value of Stewardship, an individual and collective public service commitment to strengthening the service for the future.

59 APS Reform initiatives*			
1 in the design phase (1.5%)	3 in the planning phase (5%)	14 in the delivery phase (24%)	40 are complete (68%)

**1 initiative is on hold (1.5%).*

The completion of initiatives marks not a conclusion, but a shift in momentum from central delivery to distributed ownership, where the work is embedded, evolving and influencing the system it was designed to serve. At this point, the initiatives move from structured delivery into the hands of agencies who bring them to life within their own contexts. This is where transformation gathers momentum, as projects evolve into enduring practices that shape how the system thinks, works and serves into the future.

Over the past year, the focus has extended beyond supporting delivery to enabling this next phase, which is supporting agencies to embed change through clear guidance, shared learning and connecting expertise across the public service. This is strengthening the public service's capacity to integrate, adapt and transform from within, turning program outcomes into lasting, system-wide impact. This positions the APS with the capacity to modernise, and with the agility to adopt emerging technologies and contemporary ways of working with trust, partnership and integrity at the core.

Alongside this work, the evaluation of the APS Reform Program has matured, with an evaluative paper to be published shortly. This publication will show the indicators that demonstrate emerging impacts of reform. It will include reporting on the APS Reform Program metrics, which demonstrates 33 out of 39 (84.6%) performance metrics are meeting their desired outcomes, providing evidence of progress and achieving measurable improvement. It also highlights an influence of reform efforts in delivering value as it matures into longer-term system change.

The Four Pillars of Public Service Transformation

The Government's APS Reform Program was established to strengthen the public service, under four pillars of public service transformation:

- ***The APS embodies integrity in everything it does:*** Initiatives aim to enhance public trust and confidence in the APS. This translates to a more accountable and transparent government that works in the best interests of the public.
- ***The APS puts people and business at the centre of policy and services:*** Initiatives focused on human-centred design, digital service delivery, and enhanced public engagement ensure government services are tailored to the needs of the people they serve. This results in more accessible, user-friendly, and effective services. Dedicated initiatives aimed at supporting genuine partnerships with First Nations people contribute to closing the gap and achieving better outcomes for Indigenous Australians.
- ***The APS is a model employer:*** Efforts to create a more flexible, inclusive, and diverse workplace, combined with investments in skills development, ensure the APS attracts and retains the talent needed to deliver high-quality services and reflects the community it serves.
- ***The APS has the capability to do its job well:*** Initiatives focused on capability reviews, strategic commissioning, and leadership development build a more effective and adaptable APS capable of responding to evolving community challenges and adopting emerging technologies. This results in a more efficient public service that delivers better policy development and service delivery.

Pillar One: An APS that embodies integrity in everything it does

The Ambition: The APS acts with integrity and fairness and is accountable and transparent in everything it does. This builds public trust and strengthens standards of integrity in our federal government. The APS Values, set out in section 10 of the Public Service Act 1999, articulate the Parliament's expectations of public servants in terms of performance and standards of behaviour. The APS Values are: impartial, committed to service, accountable, respectful, ethical and stewardship.

The outcomes:

- Public servants act with and champion integrity.
- Public servants are stewards of the public service.

Over the past year, collective actions across reforms have reinforced accountability, ethical leadership and transparency in everyday practice: from enhancing protections for whistleblowers, to developing APS-wide integrity frameworks and improving how conflicts of interest are identified and managed. Complementary efforts to measure integrity and strengthen performance frameworks for leaders are ensuring expectations are both visible and lived. Together with the new APS Value of Stewardship, these initiatives are embedding

integrity and excellence across every level of the APS and shaping a culture where doing what's right is integral to how the public service thinks, decides and delivers.

Key achievements from 2025 under this pillar include:

- **Enshrining Stewardship as an APS Value:** Stewardship commenced as an [APS Value](#) under the Public Service Act 1999 on 11 December 2024 and was supported by [guidance](#) to employees and agencies and was published on the APSC website. The inclusion of the Stewardship Value strengthens the integrity of the APS by highlighting the important and enduring role that all public servants play in stewarding the APS, and serving the Government, the Parliament, and the Australian public, now and into the future. Enshrining Stewardship as a Value requires all APS employees to be deliberate, active, and reflective in contributing to the continuous improvement of the APS as a professional and trusted public service.
- **Building a pro-integrity culture and the frameworks to support this:** The APS has made strong, coordinated progress in strengthening a pro-integrity culture across the service by advancing both service-wide actions and agency-specific initiatives under the [Louder than Words: An APS Integrity Action Plan](#). Key achievements including the delivery of the [APS-wide Conflict of Interest Management Framework](#), application of the [Commonwealth Integrity Maturity Framework](#), and [building a speak up culture](#) have strengthened capability, consistency and transparency across agencies. Building on this foundation, the Commonwealth Integrity Strategy is planned for release later in 2025 and will provide a clear, cohesive narrative to outline past and current integrity reforms indicating how the Commonwealth public sector is building and sustaining integrity frameworks and systems to support the responsible and ethical delivery of services and programs for Australians.
- **Measuring integrity in the APS:** The Attorney-General's Department, in partnership with the Australian Public Service Commission, has explored a prototype Integrity Data Governance Framework, including potential integrity metrics for further testing and refinement, to enable insights to be provided to APS entities and senior decision makers to enhance integrity data governance, collection and measurement.
- **Improving protections for whistleblowers:** [Consultation](#) has been completed on introducing legislation that would establish a new Whistleblower Ombudsman within the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman. This would be the most significant addition to the federal integrity landscape since the establishment of the National-Anti Corruption Commission, providing strong oversight of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* to ensure disclosures are being made and responded to accordingly.
- **Supporting behaviour and outcomes-based performance:** The [SES Performance Leadership Framework](#) provides an overarching set of requirements that apply across the APS to embed a culture of transparency and accountability for SES Performance. Amendments to the Framework were published in February 2025, strengthening moderation requirements and increasing emphasis on accountability and behavioural requirements. Implementation of the non-SES Performance Framework is underway in consultation with APS Agencies, providing a consistent approach to performance management and embedding behaviour and outcomes-based performance requirements across all APS staff to drive a culture of high performance across the APS.

- **Introducing Performance Frameworks for Secretaries:** A [Secretaries Performance Framework](#) has been recently endorsed to commence in 2026. The Framework includes new requirements for Secretaries to plan and reflect on their performance through identifying performance metrics, focusing on capability development, and following the Secretaries Charter of Leadership Behaviours.
- **Modernising the review of workplace decisions:** The Public Service Regulations 2023 were amended from 1 April 2025 to introduce [own motion powers for the Merit Protection Commissioner](#) to undertake reviews of recruitment processes and consider the merits of the entire process, rather than only considering decision relating to individual candidates. The amendments introduced key definitions for the terms merit pool, ranked merit list and ranked merit pool, and decreased the timeframe to submit an application for a primary review from 120 to 60 days.
- **Supporting the identification and management of conflict of interests:** The [APS Conflict of Interest Management Framework](#) was released in September 2025 alongside a suite of practical resources following consultation across the APS. The resources are relevant to all APS employees, regardless of level or role and provide clear, consistent advice to help employees understand their obligations and contribute to a culture of integrity across the service. In particular, they provide enhancement of existing APS guidance and resources for Agency Heads, SES and employees in designated positions to have increased awareness and capability to manage post-separation risks before and after separation from APS employment and manage confidentiality arrangements when engaging with the non-government sector.
- **Improving Government Appointment Processes:** [The Australian Government Appointments Framework](#) was released in December 2025. The Framework is founded on seven Principles informed by the Final Report into the Review of Public Sector Board Appointments Processes by Ms Lynelle Briggs AO and other relevant sources, such as the Government's merit and transparency policy. Consistent with the recommendations of the Briggs Report, the Framework will support ministers to find the best possible candidates with an emphasis on merit, diversity, transparency and accountability. The Framework goes beyond the scope of the Briggs Report to include all Commonwealth appointments with limited exemptions. This will help standardise the appointment process while acknowledging that the breadth of roles and boards in the public sector requires an approach to appointments that is flexible, responsive and proportionate. Implementation will be supported by complementary operational guidance, resources, tools and templates for use by ministers and government officials.

There are 19 initiatives that contribute to this pillar working to transform the APS.

Outcome 1: Public sector employees act with and champion integrity	
09. Behaviour & outcomes-based performance management	Delivery
20. Improving protections for whistleblowers	Delivery
23. Limitation on Ministerial directions to Agency Heads	Complete
29. National Anti-Corruption Commission	Complete
33. PGPA Fraud Rule anti-corruption provisions	Complete
36. Review public sector board appointments	Complete
37. Set the Standard Report implementation	Complete
41. Strengthen pro-Integrity systems and culture	Complete
46. Merit-based appointments and performance of Senior APS Executives	Delivery
47. Own motion powers for APS Commissioner	Planning
48. APS Integrity Dashboard	Delivery
49. Modernise the review of workplace decisions	Complete
51. Post-employment conflicts of interest for Agency Heads and SES	Delivery
52. SES Integrity Capability	Complete

Outcome 2: Public service employees are stewards of the public service	
03. Annual Ministerial statement on progress of reform	Complete
07. APS Purpose statement	On hold
21. Increase transparency of Secretaries Board	Complete
38. Stewardship as APS Value	Complete
45. Extension of APS Values	Planning

Pillar Two: An APS that puts people and business at the centre of policy and services

The ambition: The APS genuinely engages and partners with the community and other groups to solve problems and co-design the best solutions to improve the lives of the Australian community. The APS is defining what it means to engage meaningfully with people, communities and businesses, the not-for-profit sector and universities, state and territory governments and others. This includes bringing services together to make interactions with Government easier and outlining how Government designs policies and programs alongside the people they are intended to support.

The outcomes:

- The APS delivers human and user-centred policy and service excellence
- The APS has effective relationships and partnerships with First Nations peoples.

Over the past year, government services have shifted markedly toward a people-centred architecture. Policy and partnerships are increasingly shaped through genuine collaboration with communities and stakeholders, ensuring decision are grounded in lived experience and local context rather than imposed from the centre. Service design is now guided by direct user insight and iterative development, staff and leaders are actively immersed in frontline

realities, and data and digital investment is being governed in a way that puts seamless, secure and connected services at the heart. Together this has begun the transformation from siloed program delivery to a more connected, outcome-focused system that designs and delivers services around the people and communities they serve, informed by real-world experience and supported by cohesive digital and policy infrastructure.

Key achievements from 2025 under this pillar include:

- **Supporting the APS to develop genuine partnerships with First Nations People:** The APSC released the [First Nations Partnership Playbook](#) in June 2025 as the first step towards building consistent partnership skills and practices throughout the APS. The Playbook guides public servants to build strong and enduring partnerships with First Nations peoples, communities and organisations. It highlights the elements of strong partnerships, the six functions of government as a partner and guides public servants who may be new to the partnership process. At its core, it engenders trust, understanding of history, openness and sustainable long-term relationships. A wide variety of frontline and policy agencies are already using the Partnership Playbook, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.
- **Formalising partnerships and shared decision-making with First Nations People:** Partnerships with First Nations people are at the heart of priority reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. [Priority Reform One](#) aims to establish formal partnership arrangements and decision making that is shared between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Formal partnerships established in the form of 8 policy partnerships and 6 place-based partnerships will drive stronger collaboration and community-led outcomes. To monitor the broader application for formal partnerships, the Commonwealth has established the Annual Partnership Stocktake as a key indicator of the progress toward embedding this reform. The National Indigenous Australians Agency coordinates the stocktake and received over 108 self-reported arrangements by government agencies working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies to inform the [2024 Commonwealth Partnership Stocktake](#). The 2025 Stocktake is underway and will be published in early 2026.
- **Embedding engagement and service excellence:** Released in January 2025, the [APS Experience Design Principles](#) support the APS to embed the Vision for User-Centred Excellence by designing and delivering people-centric and inclusive policies and services. They provide guidance for embedding human-centred design approaches into the creation of new services and the improvement of existing ones – elevating the experience for government customers, staff, businesses and third-party partners. These principles are supported by the [APS Experience Design Principles Handbook](#) released June 2025, which provides a practical guide to assist Commonwealth entities to understand and implement the Design Principles when designing new services or improving existing ones. It includes information on applying the principles, design criteria, consideration and examples of best practice design.
- **Supporting quality engagement with business:** The APSC and Business Council of Australia partnered on a new Business Immersions Program to give public servants direct insight into how businesses work. Medical devices company, Cochlear, hosted the inaugural program at its global headquarters in Sydney. The event brought together 16 APS officers from eight departments. The event discussed

the need for government and business to work together to reduce barriers and share problem solving to advance Australia's policy and business environment. Direct engagement with senior leaders at Cochlear helped participants gain a deeper understanding of Australia's current economic strengths and the conditions that enable business growth. The initiative highlights the importance of close collaboration and engagement with Australian businesses. It encourages public servants to strengthen networks within government and external partners. This ensures that policy is grounded in real-world perspectives.

- **Investing in Data and Digital Transformation:** The [Data and Digital Government Strategy](#) was released in December 2023 and is accompanied by an [Implementation Plan](#) that is updated annually. The Digital Transformation Agency has improved the [Digital and ICT Investment Oversight Framework](#) to modernise investment approaches, align investment with government priorities, agency strategic priorities and the Strategy's 2030 vision. In March 2025 the Government's annual [Major Digital Project Report](#) provided insights into the performance of 110 projects with an investment value of \$12.9 billion across 46 agencies, showing the majority of projects are on-track. The recent release of the Government's [AI Plan](#) will continue to support proactive adoption of AI tools, capability and systems to improve service delivery, policy outcomes, efficiency, and productivity.
- **Investing in myGov:** The [myGov Roadmap](#) has been published on the Services Australia website since 2024 and continues to be updated on a regular basis. The myGov investment pipeline has been endorsed and funded until October 2028, having already completed discovery and design for four initiatives. The Roadmap and Pipeline will improve the government's ability to deliver digital services focused on proactive and personalised engagement and customer experience.

There are 14 initiatives that contribute to this pillar working to transform the APS.

Outcome 3: The APS delivers human and user-centred policy and service excellence	
11. Charter of Partnerships and Engagement	Complete
12. Data and Digital Government Strategy	Complete
16. Embed the Partnerships Priorities subcommittee	Complete
18. Expand Survey of Trust in Australian public services	Complete
19. Improve quality of digital and ICT investment	Complete
24. Long-Term Insights Reports	Complete
27. myGov User Audit	Delivery
31. Outcomes Based Contracting	Delivery
43. Vision for user centred service excellence	Complete
50. Strengthening transparency of agency customer feedback	Planning
53. Engagement and service excellence guidance	Complete
54. Quality external engagement	Complete

Outcome 4: The APS has effective relationships and partnerships with First Nations peoples.	
01. Action to support genuine partnerships with First Nations people	Delivery
28. National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform One	Complete

Pillar Three: An APS that is a model employer

The ambition: The APS is a great place to work, offering staff a quality employee experience in a dynamic workplace that sets the standard for excellence, diversity and inclusion. The APS delivers outcomes and models behaviours set out in legislation, such as the APS Values. The APS builds on the positive aspects of remote working experienced during the pandemic so public servants have improved flexibility.

The outcomes:

- The APS employee value proposition is attractive
- The APS sets the standard for equity, inclusion and diversity
- The APS sets the standard for First Nations employment and cultural competency.

Over the past year, the APS has continued to strengthen its position as a model employer – one that reflects the diversity, values and aspirations of the Australian community. Progress has been made in building a more inclusive and capable workforce through initiatives supporting cultural diversity, First Nations employment, innovation in hiring practices and action toward sustainability. These are collectively reshaping how the APS attracts and supports its people while creating a contemporary, high-performing public service where people feel valued, supported and motivated to contribute their best in serving Australia. The APS employee Census reflects strong progress toward this goal, with 91% of employees willing to go the extra mile, 88% committed to their agency's goals, and more than 80% agreeing their workplace promotes both inclusion and integrity.

Key achievements from 2025 under this pillar include:

- **Increasing the diversity of the APS:** The [APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Strategy](#) was released in April 2024 with implementation of the Action Plan spanning to 2030. The objectives of the Strategy and Action Plan are to ensure a safe, fair equitable and inclusive workplace, and build a workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the Australian community it serves. Through 2025, progress has been made with 80% of reportable agencies finalising their individual CALD Action Plans. A CALD Sponsorship program to build the promotional talent pipeline for EL2's is being piloted across seven agencies. The latest Australian Public Service Employment Data release (October 2025) shows 11.9% CALD representation for the reportable agencies compared with a 12% target following the first year of implementation.
- **Boosting First Nations Employment and APS Cultural Capability:** Strong First Nations leadership benefits the whole APS by increasing cultural representation and knowledge to strengthen decision making, policy outcomes and public trust. This year, the [SES100](#) initiative exceeded their target of increasing First Nations representation in senior executive service (SES) roles from 54 to over 100 through merit-based selections. Now, the APS is working toward increasing First Nations representation to 5% by 2030. The [Cultural Capability Hub](#) housed on the APS Academy offers training to all APS staff to enhance cultural capability and promote safe and inclusive workplaces.
- **Developing a Monitoring and Accountability Framework:** The Monitoring and Accountability Framework (MAF) will enable agencies to complete self-assessment of their progress toward Priority Reform 3. It aims to drive cultural, systemic, and structural transformation across Commonwealth agencies and provides an evidence-

informed maturity matrix which measures transformation against 5 change levers. The MAF is currently being refined through a targeted pilot with a small number of APS agencies. Outcomes of the pilot will inform how the MAF is implemented in the APS.

- **Innovative Hiring Practices:** The APSC, in consultation with APS agencies, has delivered several actions to support improvements to hiring and recruitment practices across the APS over the last 12 months including the development of an APS Recruitment Handbook, improvements to policies about access to and attraction of talent, and draft APS principles and practices relating to the use of AI by candidates in recruitment selection processes.
- **Working toward APS Net Zero:** In 2025, the Australian Public Service continued to work towards achieving its [Net Zero by 2030](#) target. The Department of Finance is leading delivery across key reform areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by improving energy efficiency, adopting renewable energy, and implementing other emissions reduction strategies. The Government has achieved a number of milestones set out in the [Net Zero Government Operations Strategy](#) including: over one-third of APS electricity is now certified renewable, 75% of new passenger vehicle orders were for low or zero-emission vehicles, and nearly 90% of target entities have developed Emissions Reduction Plans, outlining the specific actions to reduce operational emissions.

There are 12 initiatives that contribute to this pillar working to transform the APS.

Outcome 5: The APS' employee value proposition is attractive.	
06. APS Net Zero 2030	Delivery
15. Embed Secretaries Board Sub-Committee on Future of Work	Complete
25. Maternity Leave Act review implementation	Complete
30. New Workplace Relations Policy	Complete
34. Publish APS Census and action plans	Complete
44. Principle of flexible work in the APS	Complete
55. Innovative hiring practices	Delivery
57. Mobility across the service	Design

Outcome 6: The APS sets the standard for equity, inclusion and diversity.	
02. APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employment Strategy (the CALD Strategy)	Delivery
35. Reduce gender pay gap and report publicly on progress	Complete

Outcome 7: The APS sets the standard for First Nations employment and cultural competency.	
05. APS First Nations cultural capability and boosting First Nations employment	Complete
26. Monitoring and Accountability to embed Closing the Gap	Delivery

Pillar Four: An APS that has the capability to do its job well

The ambition: The APS builds the capability of its staff to create a skilled and confident workforce focused on excellence, and to ensure the APS remains a robust and trusted institution that delivers modern policy and service solutions for decades to come.

The outcome: the APS continuously improves capabilities.

Over the past year, the APS has significantly advanced its capability to meet evolving demands by investing in people, skills and evidence to drive smarter, more adaptive government. Successive rounds of the Capability Reinvestment Fund have built core skills in staff, while ongoing Capability Reviews are enhancing our understanding of the drivers of capability at the agency level and across the APS. The APS Academy is integral capability infrastructure for the public service, delivering the institutional support necessary to assess emerging skills needs, uplift capability and develop professional expertise to support delivery of excellence across the service, this is combined with a renewed focus on evaluation which is embedding a culture of learning and continuous improvement grounded in data and evidence. Strategic commissioning and the expansion of in-house consulting capacity are reshaping how expertise is sourced and shared, ensuring external support complements, rather than replaces, internal capability. Together with the data, digital and cyber workforce plan, these initiatives are positioning the APS to deliver with confidence, agility and insight in an increasingly complex environment.

Key achievements under this pillar include:

- **Reinvesting in APS Capability:** The Capability Reinvestment Fund has facilitated investment in APS-wide organisational capability, supporting the APS to deliver on government priorities and address service-wide challenges and capability gaps. Over two successive rounds, 19 projects have been delivered to support cultural capability, enhance long-term policy development, increase effective use of AI and data, and uplift evaluation capability. The Fund has implemented scalable and effective activities to help all agencies prepare for current and future challenges and has left substantial capability and learning artefacts available through the APS Academy to deliver long-term and meaningful shifts in APS capability.
- **Capability Review Program:** The Capability Review Program aims to embed a culture of continuous improvement across the APS and to ensure agencies have the capabilities to deliver government priorities and outcomes for Australians. To date, capability reviews of 10 APS agencies have been completed and published. The reviews consider what objectives and challenges each agency is likely to face in the future, and what kinds of skills and capabilities it will need to meet them. Agencies respond by producing an action plan which outlines their priorities for capability uplift. The growing body of capability reviews enhances our understanding of the APS workforce, its strengths and the drivers of capability within agencies.
- **Embedding a culture of evaluation:** The inaugural [State of Evaluation in the Australian Government 2025](#) report was published in February 2025 by the Australian Centre of Evaluation (ACE), showing increased evaluation efforts across the Australian Government. The Evaluation Profession was launched in February 2025 to build capability across the APS, and had grown to over 4,000 members as at October 2025. The ACE is supporting the delivery of impact evaluations in partnership with a range of APS Agencies, and delivering a broad range of evaluation guidance and

evaluation training to uplift capability and embed a culture of evaluation across the APS.

- **Supporting In-house consulting:** [Australian Government Consulting](#) (AGC) is an in-house consultancy for the APS. In its first two years, AGC delivered 28 policy, strategy and organisational performance projects, displacing nearly \$6.9 million in spending on external consultants. AGC also supports the APS to get better value from external consulting services, having developed a Consulting Playbook and a Masterclass on “Buying Better” as well as delivering projects to help agencies approach the market more effectively. AGC has demonstrated that the APS can deliver in-house consulting services equal to or better than the private sector, with 100% of clients surveyed reporting AGC’s services were as good as or better than private sector consultants.
- **Strategic Commissioning across the APS:** [The Strategic Commissioning Framework](#) focuses on ensuring the core work of the APS is done by public servants and only outsourced in limited circumstances. Agencies have worked hard to embed the framework in their operations, adjust their procurement practices and take steps to build internal capability. Agencies have been working to bring core work in-house, in line with targets they set for 2024-25. APS-wide, those agency targets totalled \$527.6 million. The 2025 Public Update is expected by the end of 2025.
- **Building the APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce:** The [Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan](#) was released on 7 March 2025 and provides a coordinated approach to attract, develop and retain people with skills in growing areas of need. Implementation of the plan is underway and requires collective effort across the APS to uplift the capability of the workforce to meet today’s demands and increase readiness of the service for future opportunities and emerging technology. Since release, the APS has delivered a suite of foundational Horizon 1 initiatives, including the system-wide [APS Digital Workforce Insights report](#), uplifted digital governance capability and clarified senior executive data accountabilities, with a range of initiatives in progress to uplift capability and attract and retain staff. This work is critical in ensuring leaders are equipped to keep pace with the rapidly changing environment.

There are 14 initiatives that contribute to this pillar working to transform the APS.

Outcome 8: The APS continuously improves capabilities.	
04. APS Capability Reinvestment Fund	Complete
08. Audit of employment	Complete
10. Capability reviews	Complete
13. Delivering Great Policy	Complete
14. Embed a culture of evaluation	Delivery
17. Establish Asia and the Pacific Capability	Complete
22. In-house consulting model	Complete
32. Optimal Management Structures guidance	Complete
39. Strategic commissioning framework	Complete
40. Strategic foresight Capability	Complete
42. Strengthening APS partnerships with Ministers	Complete
56. Leadership at all levels and at scale	Complete
58. APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan	Complete
59. Second round Capability Reinvestment Fund	Delivery

A Strong Foundation for Enduring Transformation

Since its launch in 2022, the Government's APS Reform Program has evolved from strengthening existing foundations to driving a system-wide transformation agenda designed to sustain change well beyond the life of the program. Over three years, the reform effort has shifted from designing the architecture of a modern public service to embedding the mindsets, practices and capabilities that enable continuous evolution. This trajectory reflects a deliberate transition from program-led project management to whole of service change management. Each initiative moves through a natural lifecycle of design, planning and delivery before reaching completion, where the ownership shifts from central project teams to agencies and leaders across the APS. Reform has become not a series of initiatives, but a shared responsibility of transformation that is embedded across the system.

Integrity reform has evolved from building the foundational system architecture to embedding consistent behaviours and expectations of excellence across the APS. Early work focused on strengthening the legislative and policy environment – introducing stewardship as an APS value, uplifting fraud and corruption controls, establishing the National Anti-Corruption Commission, and improving protections for whistleblowers. These early system settings have been reinforced through practical, service-wide actions such as integrity maturity assessments, better practice management of conflicts of interest, guidance on ethical decision making and capability uplift across all levels. The imminent release of the Commonwealth Integrity Strategy will provide a unified framework that will carry the integrity of the APS into future years. What began as centrally driven project outputs are now everyday operating expectations that are shaping culture, ethical decision making and public trust across the service. Results from the 2025 APS Employee Census show improvements in both organisational culture and actual behaviour, demonstrated through a 5% increase of employees saying that their agency supports people to act with integrity since 2024, and a 5% increase in employees saying they had reported corruption in accordance with agency's policies and procedures.

People-centred transformation has also evolved from capability establishment to practice that is being embedded broadly across the service. Initial efforts built core foundations through early investment in user-centred design principles, long-term insights reports and guidance on how to build effective partnerships. This capability is combined with major digital transformations such as improving myGov, secure data sharing arrangements across government and a clear, unified strategy for government investment into data and digital projects. This equips the service to understand lived experience, learn from best practice, translate this into policy and service changes, and deliver user-centred services that meets the needs of the Australian community. The 2025 Trust in Australian Public Services reported that trust in Australian public services has increased significantly in the past year, by four percentage points to 62%. When respondents were asked why their trust had increased, people most often talked about reduced wait times, improved digital services, greater transparency and communication and improved service quality and staff helpfulness.

As a model employer, the APS has used centralised bargaining, common conditions and workforce strategies to make itself more competitive and coherent as an employer in the labour market. Results from the 2025 Census have shown a 5% increase from 2024 in

employees recommending their agency as a good place to work and a 6% increase in employees saying their agency inspires them to do their best work. Improved flexible work and parental leave arrangements have lifted consistency of conditions, while diversity and First Nations employment strategies have created more inclusive workplaces. Momentum is sustained through new transparency obligations on Census results and actions plans that generate the accountability to keep improving year on year. Together, these elements form a clearer and more compelling employment proposition that is modern, diverse and competitive.

On capability, the reforms achieved have coupled new expectations with the means and expertise to deliver them. Capability reviews and long-term insights reports are now legislated features of the system, and establishment of the APS Professions Model and APS Academy offerings are connecting expertise, building core skills and addressing gaps across the APS. Together, these elements form an integrated ecosystem that enables consistent, long-term capability uplift across the APS. The establishment of the Australian Centre for Evaluation and Australian Government Consulting functions have enabled the service to leverage and scale best practice approaches, from policy design to organisational performance. The APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan extends this trajectory, providing a roadmap to attract, develop and retain the specialist skills required to realise ambitious cyber and data strategies into the future. Together these reforms equip the APS with readiness, capability and agility to meet future demands and expectations.

An evaluation snapshot of the APS Reform Program was published in March 2025 and provides an assessment of the Program's progress, achievements and outcomes at key stages of delivery. Shortly, the APSC will release an evaluation paper, which draws on the early findings published in the snapshot and provides additional analysis of achievements and outcomes across pillars, 2025 APS Census headline results and APS Reform Performance Metrics. The Report will also explore how these factors are contributing to transformation at the system-level, and with respect to broader reform efforts over the last decade.

The APS Reform Performance Metrics enable objective monitoring and reporting of program outcomes over time. The metrics are used to publicly report progress and inform whether the APS is on track to achieve APS Reform objectives. Analysis of the data suggests that APS reform has come a long way in terms of strengthening the APS and meeting expectation of government. 33 out of 39 (84.6%) performance metrics with available baselines are meeting their desired outcomes. This demonstrates evidence of progress and achieving measurable improvement. At the pillar level, significant improvement is highlighted in pillar 3 (An APS that is a model employer) and 4 (An APS that has the capability to do its job well) respectively. Under pillar 3, 92% of performance metrics have demonstrated improvement in comparison to baseline data. Under pillar 4, 83.3% of performance metrics have demonstrated improvement in comparison to baseline data.

These signals show that progress across the entire reform program has delivered more than the sum of its parts. Reform has strengthened the APS's integrity, sharpened its focus on people and outcomes, modernised it as an employer and built the capability necessary to steward public service excellence into the future. Crucially, the shift from project-based delivery to system-wide ownership ensures these gains are not temporary. The APS is now better positioned to embed change, operate with integrity, harness emerging technologies

responsibly, and adapt with agility in a world of increasing complexity. Reform has built a durable foundation for a modern public service – one capable not just of responding to change but leading it.

Looking Forward

Building on previous reform efforts, the progress made over the last three years has fundamentally strengthened the APS and laid the groundwork for a more capable, connected and future-ready public service. The reforms delivered across the four pillars of integrity, people-centred services, capability and being a model employer have moved the APS toward a cohesive system that is adapting, learning and responding with greater confidence. This report demonstrates that the APS is making systemic changes, reinforcing our commitment to delivering a better future for all Australians. With 54 of 59 APS Reform Program initiatives either complete or in delivery, the collective efforts of the service are required to steward the program to its completion. Embedding new practices, ways of working and cultural norms is now in the hands of the service, and it is through collective stewardship that the public service will sustain momentum and translate reform into lasting change.

The introduction of Stewardship as a core APS Value is a deliberate and central component of the APS Reform program. It reinforces the existing APS values and the Code of Conduct, while also driving the cultural shift essential for meaningful and lasting reform. Stewardship emphasises long-term sustainability and responsible resource management. It encourages foresight in decision-making and promotes a culture of continuous improvement. It ensures an ongoing focus on the long-term health of the APS which translates into tangible benefits delivered via the reform agenda:

- **Culture Change:** Stewardship fosters a sense of ownership and long-term vision, essential for embedding reform beyond short-term projects.
- **Resource Management:** It promotes responsible and efficient use of resources, maximizing the impact and sustainability of reform initiatives.
- **Collaboration and Innovation:** Stewardship encourages knowledge sharing and collaboration, breaking down silos and driving innovation crucial for integrated service delivery and policy development.
- **Public Trust:** Demonstrating a commitment to Stewardship builds public trust and confidence in both the APS and the Reform program itself.

Stewardship is not just a new value; it is a catalyst for transforming the APS. By embracing Stewardship, the APS can deliver on the promise of the APS Reform program and build a public service that is truly fit for the future, serving the long-term interests of all Australians.

The transformation so far has also positioned the public service to navigate emerging technologies with agility, integrity and purpose. By strengthening our capability systems, investing in digital and data maturity and building a culture that embraces learning and innovation, the APS is now equipped to seize the opportunities presented by AI and modern service design. This next chapter is not simply about adopting new tools – it is about reshaping how the public service designs, delivers and evaluates services in a rapidly changing environment.

Working within their unique contexts, agencies will continue to prioritise:

- **Ethical and proactive adoption of AI:** Embedding safe, ethical and transparent use of AI to improve government service delivery, policy outcomes, efficiency, and productivity.
- **Expanding digital inclusion:** Ensuring all Australians can benefit from digital service improvements, regardless of their location or digital literacy.
- **Strengthening collaboration:** Breaking down silos across government to provide more seamless, integrated and people-centred services.
- **Embedding a culture of continuous improvement and excellence:** Creating a public service that is constantly learning and adapting to better meet the evolving needs of the community.

The path forward belongs to all public service employees. Each agency, each leader and each team has a responsibility to carry this work forward. By embedding transformation and modelling excellence and stewardship, the APS is shaping a public service ready to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead with integrity, confidence and ambition.