



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water

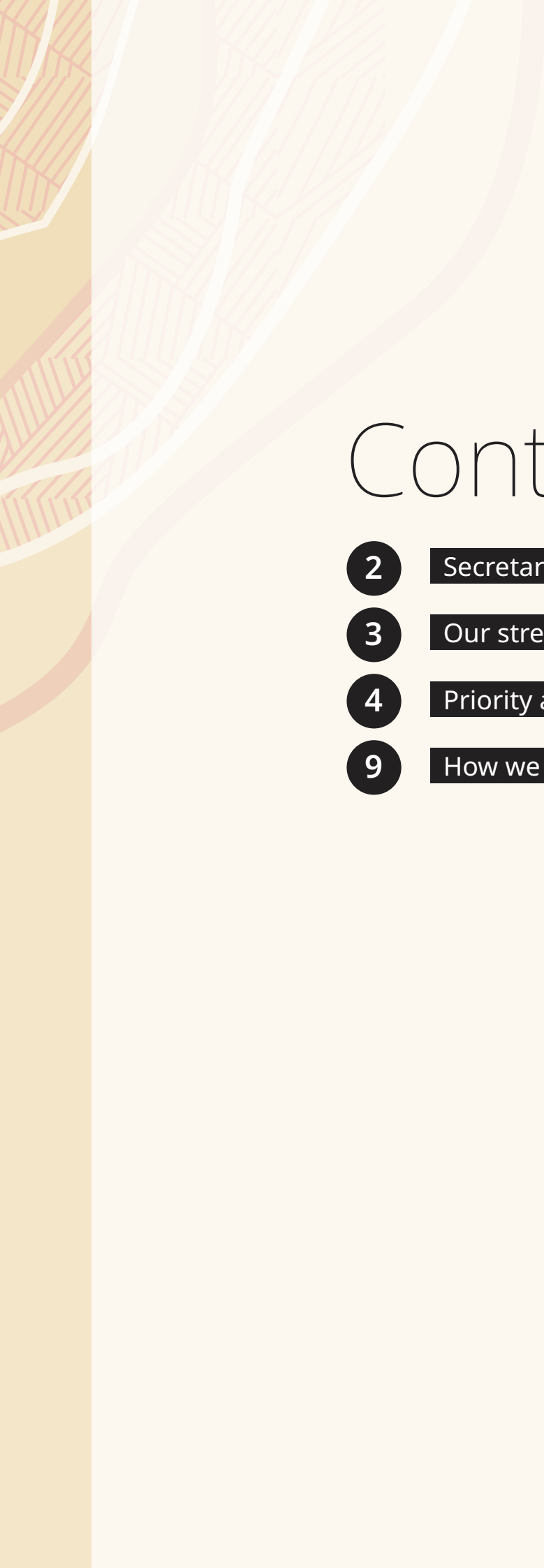


July 2026
Capability Review
Action Plan

Acknowledgement of Country

Our department acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, skies, waters, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.





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Secretary's foreword

Our department has a strong sense of purpose.

Every day, we think ahead and act now on issues that will shape the nation - from climate and energy to nature, heritage, and water. The work we do is consequential and with that comes responsibility and opportunity.

Our Action plan responds to a Capability Review that we requested and sets out how we continue to build on our existing strengths while making the changes needed to be a more connected, focused and high performing organisation.

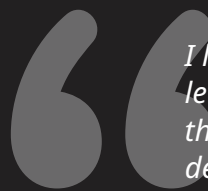
Published on 2 June 2026, the review recognises our strong foundations: talented and committed people, a culture of integrity and inclusion, strong relationships across government, and the trust of our ministers and the community we serve. These strengths have enabled us to deliver in a complex and demanding environment since our establishment in July 2022.

But the review also challenges us to lift our sights. To have the impact Australians rightly expect from us, we must be more open and externally engaged, break down our internal silos, reduce complexity, prioritise effectively, and strengthen accountability for outcomes.

This is not about changing who we are. It is about helping us work at our best, so our people can have an even greater impact as public servants.

I thank the Senior Reviewers — Mike Mrdak AO, Mary Wiley-Smith, Lisa Elliston and Matt Lowe — for their considered and independent assessment of our department.

I look forward to working with our staff, leaders and partners as we implement these actions and continue building a department defined by purpose, impact and service to the Australian community.



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Mike Kaiser

Secretary

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



Our strengths

We don't intend to lose sight of what we have been praised for.

Our strengths are not an accident. They are the result of our deliberate investment, effort and shared commitment.

The review challenges us to build on these strengths. To do this, we will continue to invest in what we do well and strengthen our effectiveness over time.

The review found that our strengths are:

we have a highly skilled
capable workforce

we have an
inclusive
culture

well regarded
by our
Ministers

we have strong
portfolio
relations
and regional
credibility

we have an
enduring
commitment
to First Nations
partnerships

we value
health,
safety and
wellbeing

Priority areas to action

The review identified four priority areas for our department to action:

- overcome silos to operate more cohesively
- plan systematically to support a one-DCCEEW view
- engage partners more openly, and
- take a strategic approach to workforce management.

The priority and supporting actions identified here are the next step in our evolution, to keep building on our strengths to have a greater impact.

Other findings from the review will be addressed through our work on these four priority areas for improvement.





Focus area one

Overcome silos to operate more cohesively

Aim: The issues we work on are deeply interconnected, and our effectiveness depends on our ability to bring together different expertise, perspectives and responsibilities to solve problems collectively. We will drive the cultural shift required to break down silos, with enterprise thinking, shared accountability and cross-departmental collaboration serving as key levers for lifting effectiveness and delivering greater impact.

Priority action:

- By defining **collaboration outcomes**, we are translating enterprise priorities into shared efforts that make the connections between related work and navigate the policy conflicts across organisational structures and policy domains.

Supporting actions:

- **Incorporate collaboration outcomes into business planning** to set the expectation for cross-cutting work and embed collaboration over time.
- **Leverage communities of practice:** build on the success of existing communities of practice to strengthen connections, build capability, and promote collaboration across teams to solve policy and program dilemmas.
- **Performance agreements:** include whole-of-agency advice and joined-up decision-making as core elements of all performance agreements.

What success will look like:

Our success will require cultural change. The expectation is that leadership extends beyond organisational boundaries, with all business areas working together to deliver outcomes for the department and the Australian community.

- Enterprise priorities are understood and acted on across business areas, not only within individual divisions or groups.
- Leaders and teams actively resolve cross-cutting policy, program, and delivery issues.
- Performance expectations reinforce the value of whole-of-agency advice, joined-up delivery, and shared accountability.
- Communities of practice are used to build capability, share what we have learnt and solve common problems.



Focus area two

Plan systematically to support a one-DCCEEW view

Aim: The review rightly challenges us to become more deliberate about our planning and prioritising. We cannot be everything to everyone, all the time. We will align annual business planning processes with enterprise priorities to do less better, and strengthen our impact.

Priority action:

- Guided by our purpose *to think ahead and act now* we are strengthening our **annual business planning cycle** at division and branch level and incorporating an **annual prioritisation process** at the organisational level to create a clearer, enterprise-wide view of our priorities, resources and performance.

Supporting actions:

- Develop a pragmatic, fit for purpose annual business planning process.**
- Strengthen implementation:** enhance implementation capability and reinforce the value of delivery as a core part of every role.
- Embed evidence-led delivery:** integrate evaluation, learning and feedback into policy and program design to strengthen engagement, improve impact and support continuous improvement.

What success will look like:

The expectation is that we make conscious choices about where we focus our effort, align resources behind shared priorities, and deliver on the government's agenda while fulfilling our broader stewardship responsibilities.

- Our annual cycle of business planning helps us fulfil our purpose.
- Our strategic direction is cohesive and understood by external stakeholders and staff.
- Workforce and business planning are integrated, current, and used to align capability and resources to enterprise priorities.
- Leaders are using workforce insights to make deliberate choices about capability, resourcing and delivery.
- Evaluation, learning and feedback are used to improve delivery and strengthen trust with partners and communities.



Focus area three

Engage partners more openly

Aim: Our ambition is to become a more externally engaged department - one that builds trust through openness, transparency and meaningful engagement. A key part of this is being clearer about how and why we are engaging. We want to move beyond traditional consultation approaches. While formal consultation will remain important, we see significant opportunities to more innovatively harness external expertise to inform our work in the public interest.

Priority action:

- We are **strengthening our culture of engagement**, taking a more open, timely, transparent and collaborative approach. We will make **greater use of structured frameworks** (for example IAP2) to be more explicit with stakeholders about when we are **informing, consulting, involving, collaborating or co-designing**, and what influence stakeholders can expect to have on decisions. Greater clarity of purpose and process will help build confidence, trust and more productive relationships.

Supporting actions:

- **Build a culture of open engagement:** invest in staff capability to engage effectively including through leaders modelling open engagement and supporting practical experience and learning by doing.
- **Mature our regulatory posture:** build an enterprise-wide regulatory capability that is fit-for-purpose, risk-based and outcomes-focused.
- **Strengthen First Nations cultural capability:** embed First Nations cultural competency and genuine partnership practices as a core capability expected for all staff.

What success will look like:

Better engagement is not simply about strengthening relationships. It is about improving the quality of our decisions. By engaging earlier, more regularly and more openly, we will build a stronger evidence base, gain a deeper understanding of implementation challenges and opportunities, and provide better advice to government.

- We want to be recognised as a trusted partner that listens, learns, and works constructively with others to address Australia's most complex challenges across climate, energy, environment and water.
- Staff and managers have the capability and confidence to engage with external stakeholders.
- Staff are clear about when and how to engage externally and feel supported to do so openly and constructively.
- Engagement is planned, purposeful and proportionate, using fit-for-purpose approaches including co-design where appropriate.

Focus area four



Take a strategic approach to workforce management

Aim: Our business and workforce planning will be used to strengthen workforce capability including in collaboration and emerging technologies, while aligning resources with strategic priorities.

Priority action:

- Building on our **strengths-based approach** to staff development, we will develop a more responsive workforce model that provides mobility opportunities, targets recruitment to capability gaps, focuses on capability development. We will embed regular **workforce planning** to ensure we have the right skills in the right places to deliver.

Supporting actions:

- **Enable an agile workforce model:** support staff mobility to deliver priority work while enabling targeted recruitment and capability development to meet current and future workforce needs.
- **Build capability:** build the capability of middle managers to lead and of all staff in data, analytics and emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- **Drive safe and practical innovation:** build confidence and capability to use data, analytics and emerging technologies, including AI, in ways that improve the quality, efficiency and impact of our work while maintaining integrity, privacy, security and accountability.

What success will look like:

The expectation is that our leaders take a department-wide view of capability, investing in talent, and planning for future workforce needs to ensure we remain agile and adaptable.

- We will have a clear understanding of workforce capability needs, and a plan to develop our people and attract the right talent from outside the department.
- Staff and managers have the skills, tools and confidence to use data, analytics and emerging technologies safely and effectively.
- Mobility, recruitment and capability development are targeted to priority work and future capability needs.

How we will deliver a capability uplift

Our purpose: To think ahead and act now – to protect the environment and secure prosperity.

Over the next five years, this plan will support us to focus consistently on strengthening capability across these priority areas.

As we navigate to our ideal future state, we will draw on and continue to build our strengths together with our vision, purpose, and guiding principles. Our guiding principles articulate a set of shared behaviours that reflect who we are when we're at our best.

Developed by our people, they serve as a practical reminder of how we show up every day and complement this plan by helping us turn our aspirations into action.

We will demonstrate progress by measuring how this plan is changing the way we work, not only individual actions have been completed.

This approach will allow us to test whether our actions are improving capability, strengthening accountability, and supporting better outcomes for government, partners and the Australian community.



