Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

# State of the Service Report

2025–26



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Public Service Commission proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea, waterways, skies, and songlines woven throughout.

We recognise and value the ongoing leadership, contributions and work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

We celebrate the rich cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations and pay our respects to their Elders past and present, for they are the holders of knowledge and wisdom.

## Contact us

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This document must be attributed as the *State of the Service Report 2025–26*.

Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

The Hon Patrick Gorman MP
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister
Assistant Minister for the Public Service
Parliament House
Canberra ACT  2600

Dear Assistant Minister

In accordance with Section 44(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, I present you with my report on the state of the Australian Public Service for 2025–26.

Section 44(3) of the *Public Service Act 1999* requires that this report is laid before each House of Parliament by 30 November 2026.

Yours sincerely



Jacqui Curtis PSM
Australian Public Service Commissioner
22 October 2026

# Introduction

Section 44 of the *Public Service Act 1999* states that the Australian Public Service Commissioner must give a report to the Agency Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, on the state of the Australian Public Service during the past year.

The State of the Service Report is a collaboration between the Australian Public Service Commission and APS agencies.

It shows how the APS is supporting the priorities of the Australian Government, the Parliament and serving the Australian community.

The 2025–26 State of the Service Report includes the following topics:

- how the APS workforce and workplaces are evolving, supported by research and data insights
- strengthening APS capability through leadership and partnering initiatives
- building public trust through stronger accountability and integrity initiatives
- advancements in data and AI capability through innovation and ethical use
- better health, safer communities and stronger support system for Australians
- working with business and industry to create economic opportunities
- national resilience in times of global disruption
- how APS teams are serving the Australian community.

This is the first State of the Service Report to be submitted to the Australian Parliament by APS Commissioner Jacqui Curtis PSM.

It is prepared as a digital-first report and is the latest in a series of reports on the Australian Public Service dating back to Federation.

Use of AI disclosure

The State of the Service Report was prepared with assistance from Microsoft Copilot, an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. This tool was used to support the editing process. It was not used to analyse data or draw conclusions. The tool was deployed within a secure enterprise environment.

All AI outputs were subject to human review and quality assurance processes before publication. The APSC remains accountable for the content of this document, including all findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

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# A message from the APS Commissioner



It is a privilege to present my first State of the Service Report as Australian Public Service Commissioner.

Throughout my career in public service, I have seen the dedication, professionalism and expertise APS employees bring to serving Australians. Every day, public servants deliver essential services, provide advice to government, respond to emergencies and support communities. Their work makes a difference to people's lives and strengthens the institutions Australians rely on.

The State of the Service Report provides an opportunity to reflect on where the APS stands today, recognise what is working well and be clear about where we need to improve.

APS Commissioner Jacqui Curtis PSM

Image: Australian Public Service Commission

Fifty years ago, the Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration, commonly known as the 'Coombs Royal Commission', called for a public service that was efficient, responsive and accountable. The reforms that followed helped shape the APS we know today, and those principles remain just as relevant now.

What has changed is the complexity of the challenges we face.

Cost-of-living pressures, housing affordability, climate resilience, cyber security, aged care and social cohesion do not sit neatly within individual portfolios or agencies. Neither do efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These challenges require coordinated responses, drawing on expertise from across government. Rapid technological change, shifting community expectations and global uncertainty add to that complexity.

This year's report draws on more than 122 submissions from 41 agencies. Together, they show an APS working across boundaries, strengthening its expertise and building on recent reforms. The focus is increasingly on implementation. Agencies are embedding change into everyday practice and ensuring reforms deliver lasting benefits. The stories throughout this report demonstrate how that change is taking hold across the service.

**Working across boundaries to deliver outcomes**

Collaboration is fundamental to how the APS operates. Agencies are bringing together expertise, identifying connections across their activities and sharing what works. This is not just about better coordination. It is about improving productivity, reducing duplication and making better use of the knowledge and resources we have across the service.

**Building capability for the long term**

A capable and resilient APS depends on sustained investment in its people, skills and institutions. We need the right expertise to deliver today while continuing to prepare for what comes next.

One of our greatest strengths is the institutional knowledge held by public servants. It is built through experience, through understanding what works and what doesn't, and through the judgement that comes from years of serving government and the community. Retaining and sharing that knowledge is

essential to the APS's long-term effectiveness. We have a responsibility to pass it on to the next generation of public servants.

Developing our people and future leaders is an important part of that responsibility. This year marks a decade of deliberate investment in talent management through initiatives such as the Talent Councils. These efforts have helped create an enduring pipeline of leaders with the experience and networks needed to lead in a complex environment.

Capability Reviews continue to help agencies identify opportunities for improvement and share lessons across the service. Through the Strategic Commissioning Framework, agencies are also rebuilding core capability in-house. This is about strengthening the APS for the long term, not achieving short-term savings. Alongside ongoing investment in data, digital and professional skills, these efforts are strengthening the capability and resilience of the APS.

**Preparing for AI and the work of the future**

Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities to improve productivity, reduce routine work and deliver better services. As technology evolves, many roles across the APS will augment, and we need to ensure our people are equipped and confident to adapt.

The value of public servants will increasingly lie in what technology cannot replicate. Critical thinking. Judgement. Ethical reasoning. The ability to build trust.

The stories throughout this report show agencies preparing for that future. They are testing new ways of working. They are building new skills. And they are helping their people adapt to change.

The pace of change means these efforts must continue.

The challenge is not just technological. It is institutional. It is ethical. And it is human. As AI becomes more widely used, we must ensure it is adopted safely, transparently and responsibly. Public confidence depends not only on what technology can do, but on how it is used.

**Trust, stewardship and public value**

Trust is earned through what we do and how we do it. Australians need to be confident that the APS will provide frank and impartial advice, act with integrity and deliver services fairly and effectively.

Across this report, agencies demonstrate how trust is earned and maintained through their work with communities, businesses and other institutions.

The APS continues to perform strongly across many measures of trust, capability and service delivery. These results are encouraging, but we cannot take that confidence for granted.

Stewardship is part of that responsibility. We must deliver on today's priorities while maintaining the institutions, expertise and knowledge that future governments and communities will depend on. We need to be responsive without compromising accountability and meet immediate needs without losing sight of the longer term.

Productivity and efficiency matter, but they are not the only measures of a successful public service. Government is ultimately experienced by individuals, families, businesses and communities. Trust, fairness, inclusion and the outcomes we deliver matter too. Strong institutions and social cohesion also contribute to Australia's prosperity, even when their value cannot easily be captured in financial measures.

**Continuing to improve**

The report also highlights areas requiring continued attention, including preparing our workforce for technological change, maintaining momentum on recent reforms, and improving diversity in senior leadership.

Recognising these challenges is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of a mature organisation that is committed to learning, adapting and improving. The APS is well placed to meet these challenges because it continues to invest in its people, strengthen its institutions and build the capability needed for the future.

The APS has demonstrated throughout its history that it can adapt to change while remaining grounded in its enduring values. Fifty years on from the reforms that followed the Coombs Royal Commission, that responsibility continues.

The challenges facing us will keep changing. Our tasks will not: to provide trusted advice, deliver effective services, improve productivity and steward the institutions Australians rely on.

The strength of the APS has always been its people. I am confident that by continuing to invest in their skills and experience, learning from what works and remaining focused on the people we serve, we can ensure the public service remains ready for the future.



**Ms Jacqui Curtis PSM**
Australian Public Service Commissioner

# Report summary

**A capable and future ready APS**

The APS continues to strengthen capability across the service. The Report highlights ongoing investment in practitioner-led leadership development and the 3 new APS Professions, the Complex Project Management Profession, Evaluation Profession, and Procurement and Contract Management Profession. In their first full year, the 3 new professions attracted more than 17,500 members, reflecting strong demand for capability development and the sharing of expertise. The new professions have joined the existing Human Resources, Data, and Digital Professions.

Innovative approaches, including co-leadership models and targeted sponsorship programs, are supporting more inclusive leadership and a stronger pipeline of future leaders. The 6R Relational Leadership Capabilities Skill labs have become an ongoing APS-wide program, with positive participant feedback demonstrating their practical value.

Workforce planning is becoming more mature and evidence based. At the same time, Capability Reviews are helping agencies identify strengths while highlighting ongoing challenges.

The Report outlines how the APS is strengthening internal capability and reducing reliance on external providers through initiatives such as the APS Academy, Australian Government Consulting, Defence Consulting and implementation of the Strategic Commissioning Framework.

Partnerships across government, academia and service delivery organisations are translating capability into improved outcomes. Sustaining and scaling these initiatives will be critical to addressing future workforce, technology and service delivery challenges.

*Read more: A capable and future ready APS page 41.*

**Supporting Australia's economic future**

Australia's economy continues to be influenced by global economic conditions, changes in the workforce, challenges in improving productivity, and the emergence of new industries and technologies. The APS contributes to Australia's economic resilience through advice to government, better regulation, informed decision-making, and collaboration with industry and communities.

The National Measurement Institute partnered with Australian biotechnology company Vow, to support the introduction of Australia's first cultured meat products. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources combined deep learning algorithms and econometric methods to develop the Emerging Industries Database. The database enables better insight into Australia's emerging industries, what they look like and how they are growing.

Efforts to broaden workforce participation include the Equality at Work initiative, which is testing practical solutions to improve employment outcomes for people with disability, and the Office for Women's leadership of Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Major reform agendas to improve productivity are underway, including through the *Regulatory Reform Agenda*, *Better Regulation Roadmap*, coordinated financial sector reform and the *Red Tape Reduction Review*. New data initiatives, such as Australia's first complete Monthly Consumer Price Index, are improving understanding of inflation and cost-of-living pressures, while housing initiatives are supporting home ownership.

In regional Australia, workforce transition programs and the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program - which has supported more than 3,000 jobs - are helping communities build local

employment and economic opportunities. Together, these efforts demonstrate the APS's role in supporting a productive economy while preparing Australia for long-term change.

*Read more: Supporting Australia's economic future page 67.*

**Protecting the nation and the region**

Australia's security and prosperity depend on a stable region, resilient supply chains and strong international partnerships. During 2025–26, APS employees worked across governments, jurisdictions and international partners to strengthen national resilience and respond to emerging risks, including geopolitical uncertainty, supply disruptions, cyber threats and severe disasters.

The Report highlights how coordinated APS action helped manage the impacts of escalating conflict in Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, reducing risks to fuel, fertiliser and other critical supplies. The establishment of the Critical Minerals Strategic Reserve in March 2026 further strengthened Australia's ability to manage critical supply chain vulnerabilities.

Work also continued to strengthen climate and disaster resilience, protect biodiversity, enhance cyber security and prepare Australia for increasingly complex and interconnected risks. For example, in 2025–26, the National Situation Room and the National Security Hotline teams, operated by the National Emergency Management Agency, produced 678 notifications and situational products, handled more than 28,578 hotline contacts and supported 6 Crisis Coordination Team activations spanning 199 days. This support enables government to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies.

*Read more: Protecting the nation and the region page 87.*

**A healthy and safe Australia**

Australians need the right care, in the right place, at the right time. The APS is working with states and territories, healthcare providers and community organisations to make it easier for people to access healthcare, medicines and essential services, while improving the health systems Australians depend on.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics are helping people get treatment closer to home. The new 1800MEDICARE service, launched on 1 January 2026, provides free health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Medicines have also become more affordable, with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme general patient co-payment falling to $25 from 1 January 2026.

Digital health initiatives are helping to make healthcare safer and more connected. Improvements include stronger cyber security, a national vaccination record and better information about medical devices. The APS is also helping the health system respond to challenges such as medicine and medical supply shortages. For example, the Therapeutic Goods Administration coordinated the national response to the intravenous fluid shortage, working with governments, suppliers and healthcare providers to address the issue.

The Report details how Australians experiencing disadvantage, family and domestic violence, or other complex challenges are receiving better support through new pathways to seek redress, specialised training for frontline workers, expanded social security debt waivers and tailored service plans.

*Read more: A healthy and safe Australia, page 103.*

**Serving the community**

Across Australia and around the world, APS teams deliver services, implement programs and support communities. Although their work differs across locations and agencies, they are united by a common purpose: improving outcomes for Australians.

The Serving the Community stories featured in this Report show what that looks like in practice. They highlight how the APS listens to communities, uses data and technology to inform decisions, and brings together people with different skills and expertise to address complex challenges. From early childhood services and tax administration to water management, veterans' support, road safety and the preservation of national collections, APS teams are finding practical ways to understand people's needs and respond to them.

This year's Report features teams contributing to:

- improving outcomes for children and families
- supporting regional and remote communities
- making it easier for people to access government services and payments
- reaching culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- engaging communities in environmental and water resource management decisions
- improving road safety through standards, data and evidence
- supporting veterans through lived experience and digital innovation
- conserving and sharing Australia's service history and cultural heritage

*Read more: Serving the community page 123.*

**AI and digital innovation**

AI and digital technologies are increasingly being used across the APS to improve services, support better decision-making and help agencies work more efficiently. The AI Plan for the APS, launched in November 2025, sets out a shared approach for using AI to improve service delivery, policy development and productivity.

Maintaining public trust remains a priority. The Australian Government's 8 AI Ethics Principles, together with strong oversight, accountability and security measures, help agencies use AI safely, responsibly and securely while managing emerging risks.

The Digital Transformation Agency's Digital Governance Program is strengthening the leadership capability needed to oversee major digital and technology projects. By July 2026, more than 120 senior leaders had completed the program.

High-quality, trusted data remains essential to the responsible use of AI. The APS is creating opportunities for agencies to test new technologies, learn from each other and share practical experience. The Report highlights initiatives such as the AI CoLab Alliance, which enables agencies to trial AI tools, compare approaches and share lessons before wider use. The Agentic AI Addendum, published in June 2026, provides practical guidance for agencies exploring new AI capabilities while maintaining appropriate protections and controls.

*Read more: AI and digital innovation page 143.*

**A trusted and accountable APS**

The APS continues to build public trust by delivering reliable services, strengthening integrity and protecting public resources. In 2025–26, trust in Australian public services remained at a historical

high of 62%, while satisfaction with public services increased to 70%. Trust in the Australian Government also rose from 38% in 2021 to 51% in 2025, above the OECD average of 40%.

The Report outlines how agencies are making government services easier to access and understand through clearer communications, simpler processes and more user-friendly services. For example, collaboration between Services Australia and the Australian Passport Office is improving how people navigate government services and access support.

The APS is also strengthening efforts to prevent fraud and protect public money. Integrity initiatives delivered by the National Disability Insurance Agency and the Fraud Fusion Taskforce are estimated to generate more than $4.1 billion in benefits by June 2029, with substantial savings already realised through preventing and redirecting non-compliant payments. Operation Protego highlighted how APS agencies can work together quickly and effectively to respond to a major fraud event affecting the tax system.

The APS is strengthening accountable government through merit-based appointments and robust integrity institutions. In 2025–26, the National Anti-Corruption Commission assessed more than 2,600 referrals, commenced 16 corruption investigations, and secured 2 convictions, helping strengthen accountability and trust in government.

*Read more: A trusted and accountable APS page 167.*

**Working in the APS**

The APS relies on a skilled and resilient workforce to deliver high-quality advice, services and support to government. Opportunities to learn and develop, meaningful work and inclusive workplace cultures play an important role in attracting and retaining employees and helping them perform at their best.

Results from the 2026 APS Employee Census show continued high levels of engagement, connection to agency purpose and willingness to go the extra mile to achieve team and organisational goals, despite a backdrop of fiscal constraint across the Service. Improvements made in 2025 in supporting new ways of working and innovation have largely been maintained.

Agencies are continuing to simplify processes, modernise systems and reduce administrative burden through greater use of digital tools, data and automation. Similar approaches are helping make regulation and government services simpler and easier for individuals and businesses to navigate.

Creating workplaces where people of all backgrounds and abilities can succeed remains a key APS priority. During 2026, agencies focused on preventing and responding to antisemitism, alongside broader efforts to address racism, discrimination and intolerance and implement recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission.

A more inclusive APS also helps improve outcomes for Australians. Agencies are increasingly drawing on a wider range of perspectives and diverse lived experiences in the design and delivery of services, policy development and governance to improve the quality of advice, services and outcomes for Australians.

*Read more: Working in the APS page 189.*

# APS profile

Understanding who works in the APS, where they work and the skills they bring helps build a picture of the APS's current capability and future workforce needs. Where employees are located influences access to talent and connections with local communities. Information about workforce demographics helps agencies plan for future workforce changes, while occupational data shows where specialist skills and expertise are concentrated. Diversity data provides insight into how well the APS reflects the Australian community.

**Workforce size and location**

As at 30 June 2026, there were 196,322 people employed in the APS, a decrease of 0.7% from the previous year. Despite changes in workforce size over time, the APS remains a relatively stable share of Australia's workforce, making up around 1.3% of all employed people.

The APS has employees across Australia and overseas, with around two-thirds working outside Canberra, predominantly in Victoria (18.5%), New South Wales (17.0%) and Queensland (13.3%). While geographically dispersed across states and territories, most of the workforce is in capital cities (87.1%).

Workforce location varies by the type of work being performed. Employees working in service delivery, health, compliance and regulation, and science roles are more likely to be based outside Canberra, helping agencies deliver services and engage with communities across Australia. Employees working in policy, ICT and digital roles are more likely to be based in Canberra, reflecting the concentration of national policy and coordination functions.

**Areas of work**

APS employees work across a wide range of roles, which are grouped into "job families" based on the type of work they do. The largest group is service delivery, with almost one in four employees (24.7%) working in roles that provide services and support to the public. Other major areas of work include compliance and regulation (11.5%), business and organisational management (10.7%), project and program and portfolio management (9.4%), and policy (9.3%).

Figure 1 (APS at a Glance) shows some differences in the types of roles held by men and women. Policy roles are among the five largest areas of work for women, while ICT and digital roles are among the five largest areas of work for men.

**Workforce demographics**

The APS workforce is experienced, with more than half of employees aged between 35 and 54. Over the past 2 decades, the APS workforce has become slightly older, with the median age increasing from around 40 years to around 44 years. However, recruitment since 2022 has brought in younger employees, graduates and early-career staff, slowing the ageing trend (see Appendix 2, Additional Data).

Women make up just over 60% of the workforce and have reached parity at all classifications except for Senior Executive Service Band 3. The APS also reflects a diverse range of backgrounds and

experiences, including employees who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (27.8%), First Nations (3.5%), people with disability (6.1%) and who identify as neurodivergent (12.6%).

**Workforce characteristics**

The APS workforce is highly skilled. Nearly half of all employees work at the APS 6 and Executive Level 1 (EL1) classifications, where they play an important role in turning government priorities into policies, programs and services.

Many APS employees have built up significant knowledge and experience over their careers, with almost one-third having worked in the APS for 15 years or more.

Overall, the composition of the APS has remained relatively stable over time, with a workforce that is experienced, a similar mix of classification levels, and many employees choosing to stay and build long-term careers in public service.

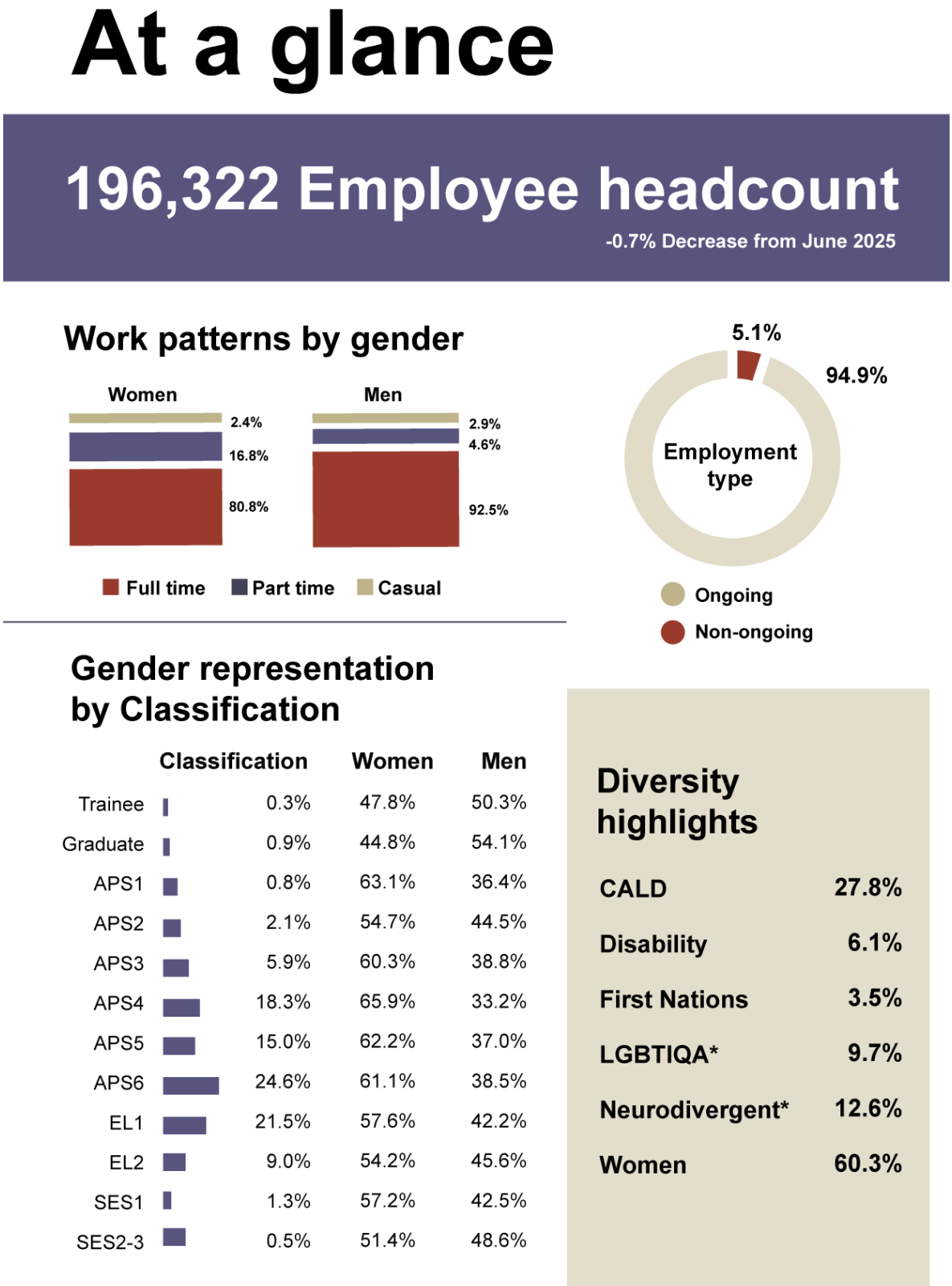
**Data and reference periods**

The APS workforce profile draws on two main data sources: the APS Employment Database (APSED) and the APS Employee Census. APSED contains workforce information reported by agencies through their HR systems twice a year. The APS Employee Census is an annual survey that collects employee views on topics such as engagement, leadership, innovation and workplace performance.

Often the APSED data spans 20 years. Longitudinal workforce data provides important context for interpreting recent changes. Looking across two decades of APS workforce trends helps identify structural shifts and enduring patterns, while also placing more recent events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent workforce adjustments, within a broader historical context.

# The APS at a glance

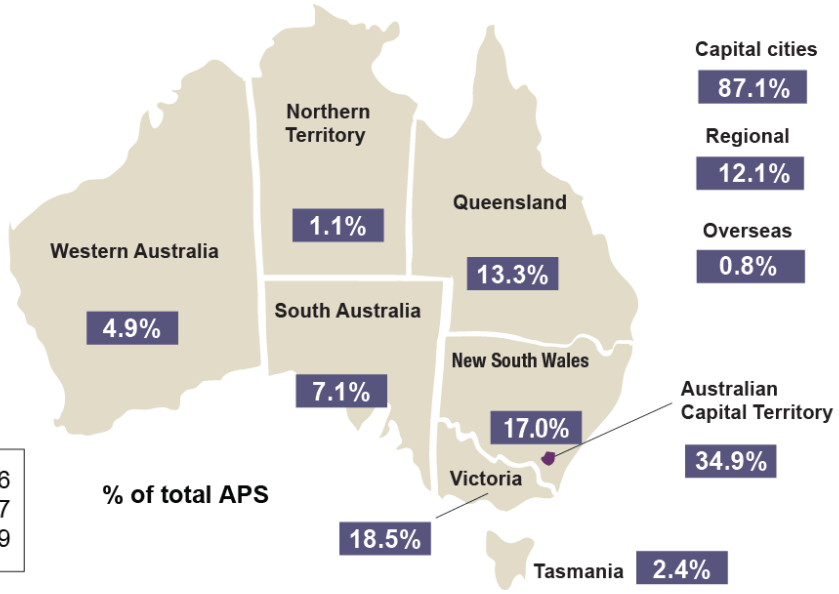
**Figure 1: APS at a glance data (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: All data are sourced from APSED, except for LGBTIQA+ and neurodiversity data, which are drawn from the 2026 APS Employee Census.

| APS headcount | |
|---|---|
| ACT | 68,451 |
| VIC | 36,302 |
| NSW | 33,402 |
| QLD | 26,168 |
| SA | 13,919 |
| WA | 9,603 |
| TAS | 4,655 |
| NT | 2,223 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Capital cities | 170,986 |
| Regional | 23,737 |
| Overseas | 1,599 |



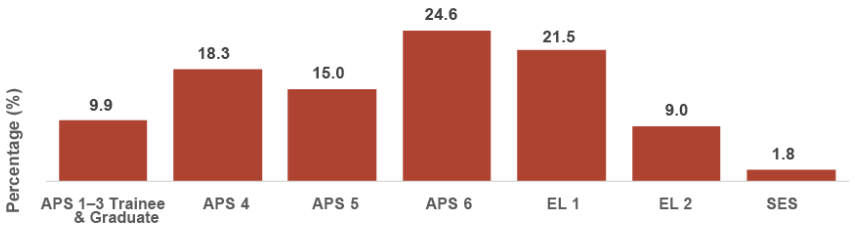

## Top 5 Job Families — Men

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Delivery | 18.5% |
| Compliance and Regulation | 13.7% |
| ICT and Digital | 10.2% |
| Business and Organisational Management | 9.4% |
| Portfolio Program and Project Management | 8.5% |

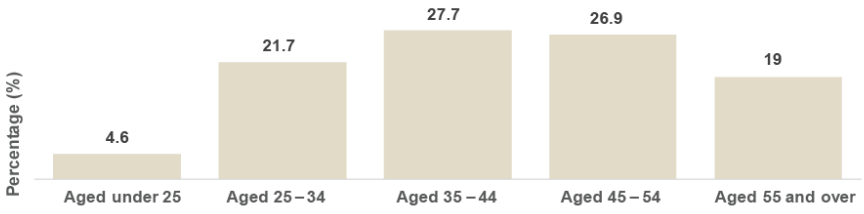
## Top 5 Job Families — Women

| | |
|---|---|
| Service Delivery | 28.7% |
| Business and Organisational Management | 11.5% |
| Compliance and Regulation | 10.1% |
| Portfolio Program and Project Management | 10.0% |
| Policy | 9.9% |

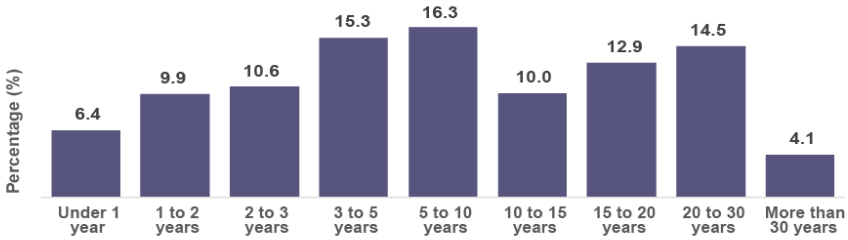
### Classification Level




### Age Group




### Length of Service




Source: APSED

**Table 1: APS employee headcount (at 30 June 2026)**

| Employee type | Number of employees (2025) | Number of employees (2026) |
|---|---|---|
| Ongoing employees | 184,412 | 186,259 |
| Non-ongoing employees | 13,258 | 10,063 |
| All employees | 197,670 | 196,322 |

Source: APSED

**Table 2: Patterns of work of APS employees by gender (at 30 June 2026)**

| Gender | Full-time (%) | Part-time (%) | Casual (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 80.8 | 16.8 | 2.4 |
| Men | 92.5 | 4.6 | 2.9 |

Source: APSED

**Table 3: Proportion of employees by classification and gender (at 30 June 2026)**

| Classification | Percentage (%) | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trainee | 0.3 | 47.8 | 50.3 |
| Graduate | 0.9 | 44.8 | 54.1 |
| APS 1 | 0.8 | 63.1 | 36.4 |
| APS 2 | 2.1 | 54.7 | 44.5 |
| APS 3 | 5.9 | 60.3 | 38.8 |
| APS 4 | 18.3 | 65.9 | 33.2 |
| APS 5 | 15.0 | 62.2 | 37.0 |
| APS 6 | 24.6 | 61.1 | 38.5 |
| EL 1 | 21.5 | 57.6 | 42.2 |
| EL 2 | 9.0 | 54.2 | 45.6 |
| SES Band 1 | 1.3 | 57.2 | 42.5 |
| SES Band 2 and 3 | 0.5 | 51.4 | 48.6 |

Source: APSED

**Table 4: Diversity in the APS (at 30 June 2026)**

| Diversity group | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| First Nations employees | 6,811 | 3.5 |
| Employees with disability | 12,013 | 6.1 |
| Employees whose first language is not exclusively English | 42,817 | 27.8 |
| Women | 118,454 | 60.3 |
| Employees who consider themselves to be neurodivergent | 18,660 | 12.6 |
| Employees who identify as LGBTIQA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender diverse) | 14,344 | 9.7 |

Source: All data are sourced from APSED, except for LGBTIQA+ and neurodiversity data, which are drawn from the 2026 APS Employee Census.

**Table 5: Number and proportion of employees by location (at 30 June 2026)**

| Location | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australian Capital Territory | 68,451 | 34.9 |
| Victoria | 36,302 | 18.5 |
| New South Wales | 33,402 | 17.0 |
| Queensland | 26,168 | 13.3 |
| South Australia | 13,919 | 7.1 |
| Western Australia | 9,603 | 4.9 |
| Tasmania | 4,655 | 2.4 |
| Northern Territory | 2,223 | 1.1 |
| Capital | 170,986 | 87.1 |
| Regional | 23,737 | 12.1 |
| Overseas | 1,599 | 0.8 |

Source: APSED

**Table 6: Proportion of APS employees by gender in the top 5 job families (at 30 June 2026)**

| Top 5 job families for women | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Service Delivery | 30,206 | 28.7 |
| Business and Organisational Management | 12,144 | 11.5 |
| Compliance and Regulation | 10,646 | 10.1 |
| Portfolio Program and Project Management | 10,493 | 10.0 |
| Policy | 10,381 | 9.9 |
| **Top 5 job families for men** | **Number** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Service Delivery | 12,749 | 18.5 |
| Compliance and Regulation | 9,444 | 13.7 |
| ICT and Digital | 7,000 | 10.2 |
| Business and Organisational Management | 6,502 | 9.4 |
| Portfolio Program and Project Management | 5,853 | 8.5 |

Source: APSED

**Table 7: Number and proportion of employees by classification group (at 30 June 2026)**

| Classification Group | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| APS 1-3 Trainee & Graduate | 19,435 | 9.9 |
| APS 4 | 35,885 | 18.3 |
| APS 5 | 29,424 | 15.0 |
| APS 6 | 48,280 | 24.6 |
| EL 1 | 42,114 | 21.5 |
| EL 2 | 17,636 | 9.0 |
| SES | 3,548 | 1.8 |

Source: APSED

**Table 8: Number and proportion of APS employees by age group (at 30 June 2026)**

| Age group | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Aged under 25 | 9,110 | 4.6 |
| Aged 25–34 | 42,694 | 21.7 |
| Aged 35–44 | 54,285 | 27.7 |
| Aged 45–54 | 52,878 | 26.9 |
| Aged 55 and over | 37,355 | 19.0 |

Source: APSED

**Table 9: APS employees Length of Service (LOS) (at 30 June 2026)**

| LOS in APS years | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Under 1 year | 12,516 | 6.4 |
| 1 to <2 years | 19,399 | 9.9 |
| 2 to <3 years | 20,804 | 10.6 |
| 3 to <5 years | 29,987 | 15.3 |
| 5 to <10 years | 32,095 | 16.3 |
| 10 to <15 years | 19,626 | 10.0 |
| 15 to <20 years | 25,407 | 12.9 |
| 20 to <30 years | 28,491 | 14.5 |
| 30 years or more | 7,997 | 4.1 |

Source: APSED

# Workforce diversity

Table 10 presents the proportion of APS employees identifying in each diversity group.

The APS workforce has become increasingly diverse over time, supporting its capacity to reflect and serve the Australian community. Since 2017, there have been notable increases in the proportion of employees born overseas, employees whose first language is not exclusively English, and employees with disability.

Women's representation has remained stable at around 60% of the workforce, while First Nations representation has remained broadly consistent over the period.

The Agency Benchmarking section outlines how agencies are performing in the context of the Government's commitment to targets / benchmarks for First Nations, people with disability and the employment of culturally and linguistically diverse Senior Executive Service employees.

Appendix 2 presents trends in APS workforce classification levels and employee age profiles over time.

**Table 10: Proportion of APS employees by diversity group (at 30 June 2017 to 2026)**

| Diversity group | 2017 (%) | 2018 (%) | 2019 (%) | 2020 (%) | 2021 (%) | 2022 (%) | 2023 (%) | 2024 (%) | 2025 (%) | 2026 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 59.0 | 59.0 | 59.6 | 59.9 | 60.1 | 60.4 | 60.4 | 60.4 | 60.5 | 60.3 |
| First Nations | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| People with disability | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.8 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 6.1 |
| Born outside of Australia | 22.4 | 22.4 | 22.5 | 22.4 | 22.8 | 23.2 | 24.2 | 25.1 | 25.8 | 26.1 |
| First language spoken not exclusively English | 21.7 | 22.0 | 22.2 | 22.4 | 23.0 | 23.6 | 24.8 | 26.1 | 27.1 | 27.8 |

Source: APSED

## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employees

Table 11 presents the proportion of respondents identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse in the APS Employee Census.

**Table 11: Proportion of employees who identified as culturally and linguistically diverse**

| Do you identify as culturally and linguistically diverse? | % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 27.7 |
| No | 72.3 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Table 12 presents the proportion of respondents identifying with a specific cultural background in the APS Employee Census.

**Table 12: Proportion of employees who identified with a specific cultural background**

| How would you describe your cultural background? | % |
|---|---|
| Australian (excluding Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander) | 69.7 |
| Anglo-European | 14.1 |
| South-East Asian | 12.3 |
| Southern and Eastern European | 6.0 |
| Southern and Central Asian | 5.1 |
| North-East Asian | 3.5 |
| Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander | 3.3 |
| North-West European (excluding Anglo-European) | 2.8 |
| North African and Middle Eastern | 1.5 |
| New Zealander (excluding Maori) | 1.4 |
| Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian | 1.3 |
| Sub-Saharan African | 1.2 |
| South and Central American and Caribbean Islander | 1.1 |
| North American | 0.8 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Respondents could select more than one cultural background.

## APS employees with disability

Table 13 presents the proportion of APS Employee Census respondents with an ongoing disability.

**Table 13: Proportion of respondents with an ongoing disability**

| Do you have an ongoing disability? | % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 13.0 |
| No | 87.0 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Table 14 presents the proportion of respondents with an ongoing disability who have shared that information to their agency's human resource information system.

**Table 14: Respondents with an ongoing disability who have shared that information to their agency's human resources information system**

| Have you shared your ongoing disability to your agency's human resources information system? | % of those with an ongoing disability |
|---|---|
| Yes | 45.8 |
| No | 33.4 |
| Not sure | 20.8 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Table 15 presents the factors that contribute to those with an ongoing disability not sharing that they have an ongoing disability to their agency's human resource information system.

**Table 15: Factors that contribute to respondents with an ongoing disability not sharing that they have an ongoing disability to their agency's human resources information system**

| Have any of the following contributed to your decision to not share this information? | % of those with an ongoing disability who have not shared their ongoing disability to their agency's human resources information system |
|---|---|
| I do not see any reason for, or benefit in, sharing this information with my agency | 47.9 |
| I do not require any adjustments to be made to perform my role | 43.0 |
| I am concerned about being discriminated against | 38.4 |
| It is private information I do not wish to share | 33.1 |
| My disability is not relevant to my employment | 28.5 |
| I have never been asked for this information | 27.9 |
| I am unsure how to share this information | 16.0 |
| Other reason | 8.3 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

## Understanding neurodiversity in the APS

Table 16 presents the proportion of respondents who considered themselves to be neurodivergent.

**Table 16: Proportion of employees who considered themselves to be neurodivergent**

| Do you consider yourself to be neurodivergent? | % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 12.6 |
| No | 70.6 |
| Maybe | 12.3 |
| I am unsure what neurodivergent means | 4.5 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

# Workforce size and location

APS staffing levels have now stabilised over a 12-month period, signalling a balanced workforce profile following several years of growth. The APS has continued its transition towards ongoing employment and a reduction in non-ongoing staffing arrangements.

At 30 June 2026, there were 196,322 employees in the APS:

- 186,259 ongoing employees, up by 1.0% from 184,412 ongoing employees at 30 June 2025
- 10,063 non-ongoing employees, down by 24.1% from 13,258 non-ongoing employees at 30 June 2025.

Under Section 22 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, the engagement of Australian Public Service employees must be as an ongoing APS employee or for a specified term, for the duration of a specified task, or for duties that are irregular or intermittent. Of the non-ongoing employees at 30 June 2026, 4,947 (49.2%) were employed for a specific term or the duration of a specified task and 5,116 (50.8%) were employed on a casual basis (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Ongoing and non-ongoing APS employees (at 30 June, 2022 to 2026)**

| Year | Ongoing APS employees | | Non-ongoing APS employees | | Total APS employees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Headcount | % | Headcount | % | Headcount |
| 2026 | 186,259 | 94.9% | 10,063 | 5.1% | 196,322 |
| 2025 | 184,412 | 93.3% | 13,258 | 6.7% | 198,529 |
| 2024 | 170,145 | 92.0% | 14,698 | 8.0% | 184,858 |
| 2023 | 151,094 | 88.8% | 18,995 | 11.2% | 170,086 |
| 2022 | 140,868 | 88.5% | 18,315 | 11.5% | 159,179 |

Source: APSED

Over the past decade, the APS workforce has remained stable relative to the Australian labour force. While the number of APS employees has grown, the APS has consistently represented around 1.3% of Australia's employed population.

Over the period from June 2006 to June 2026:

- the APS workforce (employee headcount) increased by 50,361 (34.5%)
- the Australian labour force (employed persons) increased by 4,713,871 (46.6%)
- the Australian population increased 7,635,207 (37.3%)

Table 18 shows the APS employee headcount in the context of the Australian labour force and Australian population at five-year intervals from June 2006 to June 2026.

**Table 18: APS headcount as a proportion of the Australian labour force, and the Australian population, at five year intervals from June 2006 to June 2026**

| | Jun-2006 | Jun-2011 | Jun-2016 | Jun-2021 | Jun-2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| APS employees[1] | 145,961 | 165,475 | 155,607 | 153,571 | 196,322 |
| Employed persons[2] | 10,109,198 | 11,205,658 | 11,962,848 | 13,058,932 | 14,823,069 |
| APS employees as % of employed persons | 1.44% | 1.48% | 1.30% | 1.18% | 1.32% |
| Australian population[3] | 20,451,000 | 22,340,000 | 24,190,900 | 25,685,400 | 28,086,207 |
| APS employees as % of Australian population | 0.71% | 0.74% | 0.64% | 0.60% | 0.70% |

Sources:

1. APSED
2. Labour Force, Australia, (Australian Bureau of Statistics), Labour Force, Australia, Series: A84423043C (Labour force status by Sex, Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original). https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release
3. Estimated Residential Population (Australian Bureau of Statistics), National, state and territory population, Series: A2133251W, Population and components of change - national. The June 2026 estimate is a population projection figure: 'High Series' (Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022-base—2071), Population Projections, Australia. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release

The APS continues to evolve as a geographically distributed workforce, with the proportion of employees located outside the ACT continuing to grow over time (Table 19 and Figure 2).

This geographic spread reflects the diverse work of the APS and supports the delivery of government services, programs and regulatory functions across the nation.

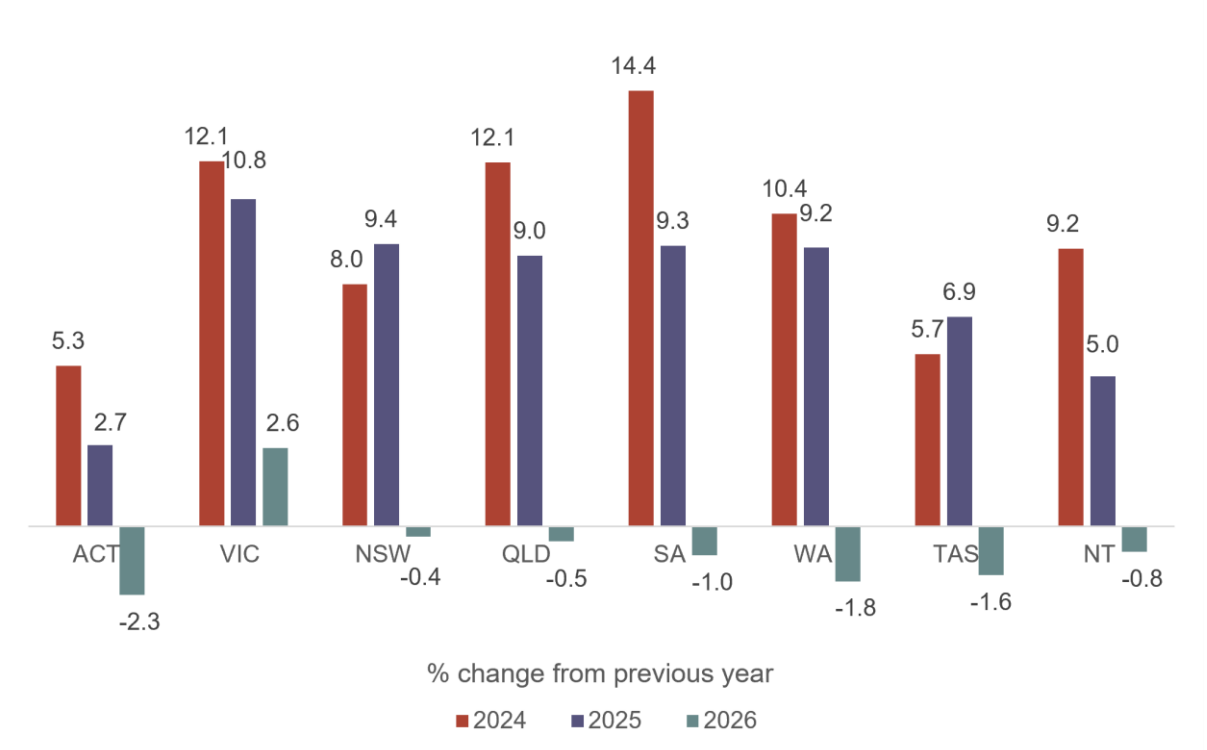
**Table 19: Location of APS employees (at 30 June 2025 and 2026)**

| Location | 2025 | | 2026 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Headcount | % | Headcount | % |
| **ACT** | 70,051 | 35.4% | 68,451 | 34.9% |
| **VIC** | 35,386 | 17.9% | 36,302 | 18.5% |
| Melbourne | 29,909 | 15.1% | 31,077 | 15.8% |
| Regional VIC | 5,477 | 2.8% | 5,225 | 2.7% |
| **NSW** | 33,520 | 17.0% | 33,402 | 17.0% |
| Sydney | 23,726 | 12.0% | 23,967 | 12.2% |
| Regional NSW | 9,794 | 5.0% | 9,435 | 4.8% |
| **QLD** | 26,299 | 13.3% | 26,168 | 13.3% |
| Brisbane | 19,423 | 9.8% | 19,507 | 9.9% |
| Regional QLD | 6,876 | 3.5% | 6,661 | 3.4% |
| **SA** | 14,056 | 7.1% | 13,919 | 7.1% |
| Adelaide | 13,592 | 6.9% | 13,543 | 6.9% |
| Regional SA | 464 | 0.2% | 376 | 0.2% |
| **WA** | 9,782 | 4.9% | 9,603 | 4.9% |
| Perth | 9,069 | 4.6% | 8,933 | 4.6% |
| Regional WA | 713 | 0.4% | 670 | 0.3% |
| **TAS** | 4,732 | 2.4% | 4,655 | 2.4% |
| Hobart | 4,041 | 2.0% | 4,059 | 2.1% |
| Regional TAS | 691 | 0.3% | 596 | 0.3% |
| **NT** | 2,242 | 1.1% | 2,223 | 1.1% |
| Darwin | 1,531 | 0.8% | 1,449 | 0.7% |
| Regional NT | 711 | 0.4% | 774 | 0.4% |
| **Total Capital Cities** | 171,342 | 86.7% | 170,986 | 87.1% |
| **Total Regional** | 24,726 | 12.5% | 23,737 | 12.1% |
| **Overseas** | 1,602 | 0.8% | 1,599 | 0.8% |
| **All** | 197,670 | 100.0% | 196,322 | 100.0% |

Source: APSED

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

**Figure 2: APS employee headcount (% change from previous year, 2024 to 2026)**




Source: APSED

# Engagements and separations

The number of engagements into the APS and internal mobility have reduced in the past year, while the number of staff separating from the APS remained stable.

Over the year to 30 June 2026, there were:

- 13,539 engagements of ongoing employees to the APS, down by 48.0% from 26,024 engagements in the year to 30 June 2025
- 4,067 ongoing employees moved to another APS agency, down by 43.6% from 7,214 moves in the year to 30 June 2025
- 11,602 separations of ongoing employees from the APS, down by 0.3% from 11,634 separations in the year to 30 June 2025.

Table 20 shows the engagement, mobility and separation rates of ongoing APS employees from June 2022 to June 2026.

**Table 20: Engagement, mobility and separation rates of ongoing APS employees from June 2022 to June 2026**

| Year ending | Engagement rate | Mobility rate | Separation rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jun-2026 | 7.3% | 2.2% | 6.3% |
| Jun-2025 | 14.7% | 4.1% | 6.6% |
| Jun-2024 | 19.1% | 5.3% | 7.2% |
| Jun-2023 | 15.1% | 5.5% | 8.1% |
| Jun-2022 | 13.1% | 5.4% | 8.1% |

Source: APSED

Note: Mobility rate excludes employees who moved as part of a Machinery of Government change.

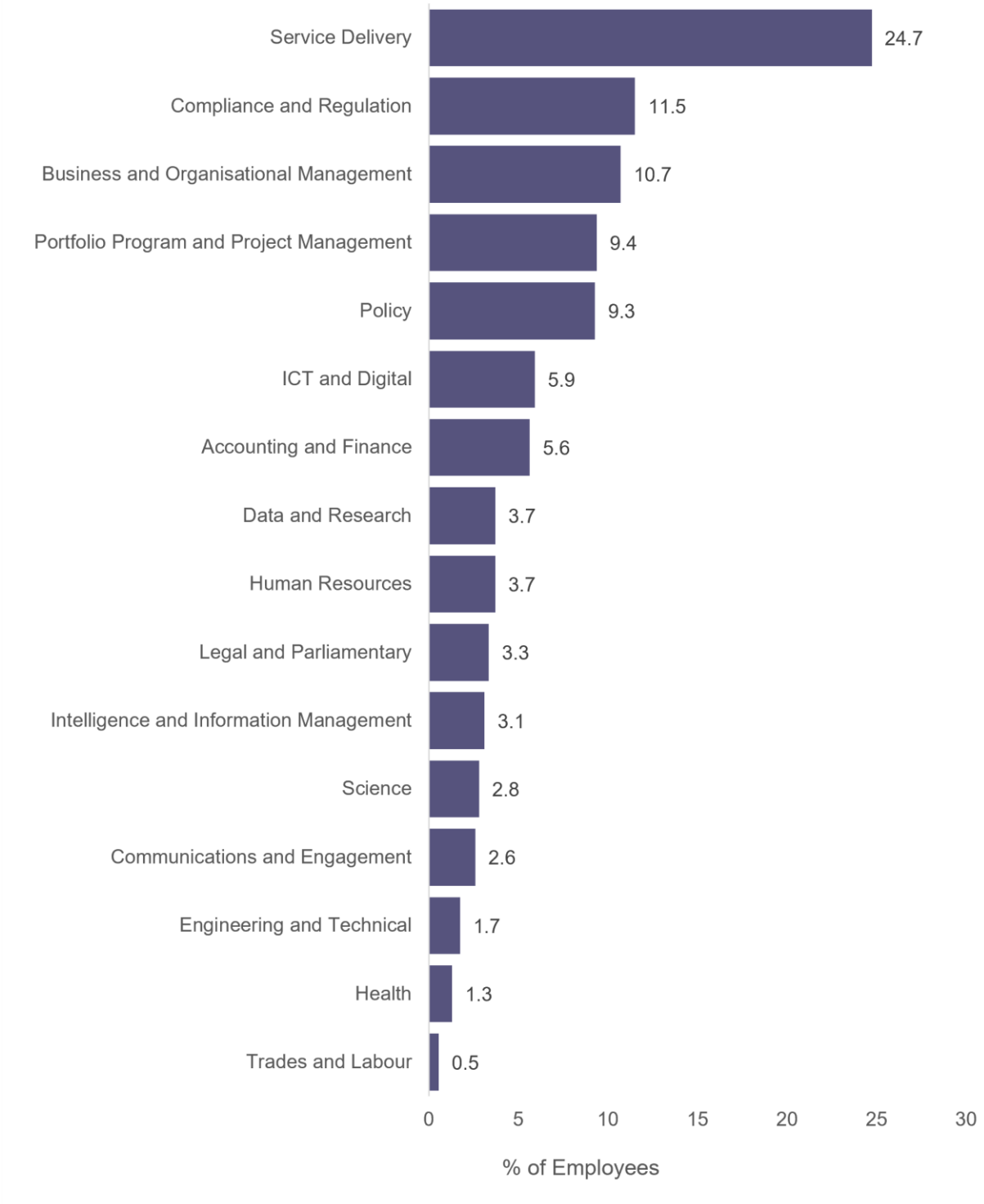
# Job families

The APS undertakes a wide range of functions on behalf of the Australian Government, from designing policy and delivering advice to administering programs, regulating industries, supporting national security, and delivering services to the public. The diversity of job families across the APS reflects this breadth of responsibility, bringing together policy, operational, corporate, technical and specialist expertise to meet the evolving needs of government and the Australian community.

The Australian Public Service Job Family Framework classifies jobs at 3 levels ─ family, function and role.

As at 30 June 2026, 67 agencies supplied job family data relating to 175,067 APS employees (89.2%). The top 3 job families were Service Delivery (43,289 employees), Compliance and Regulation (20,148 employees) and Business and Organisational Management (18,729 employees) (Figure 3).

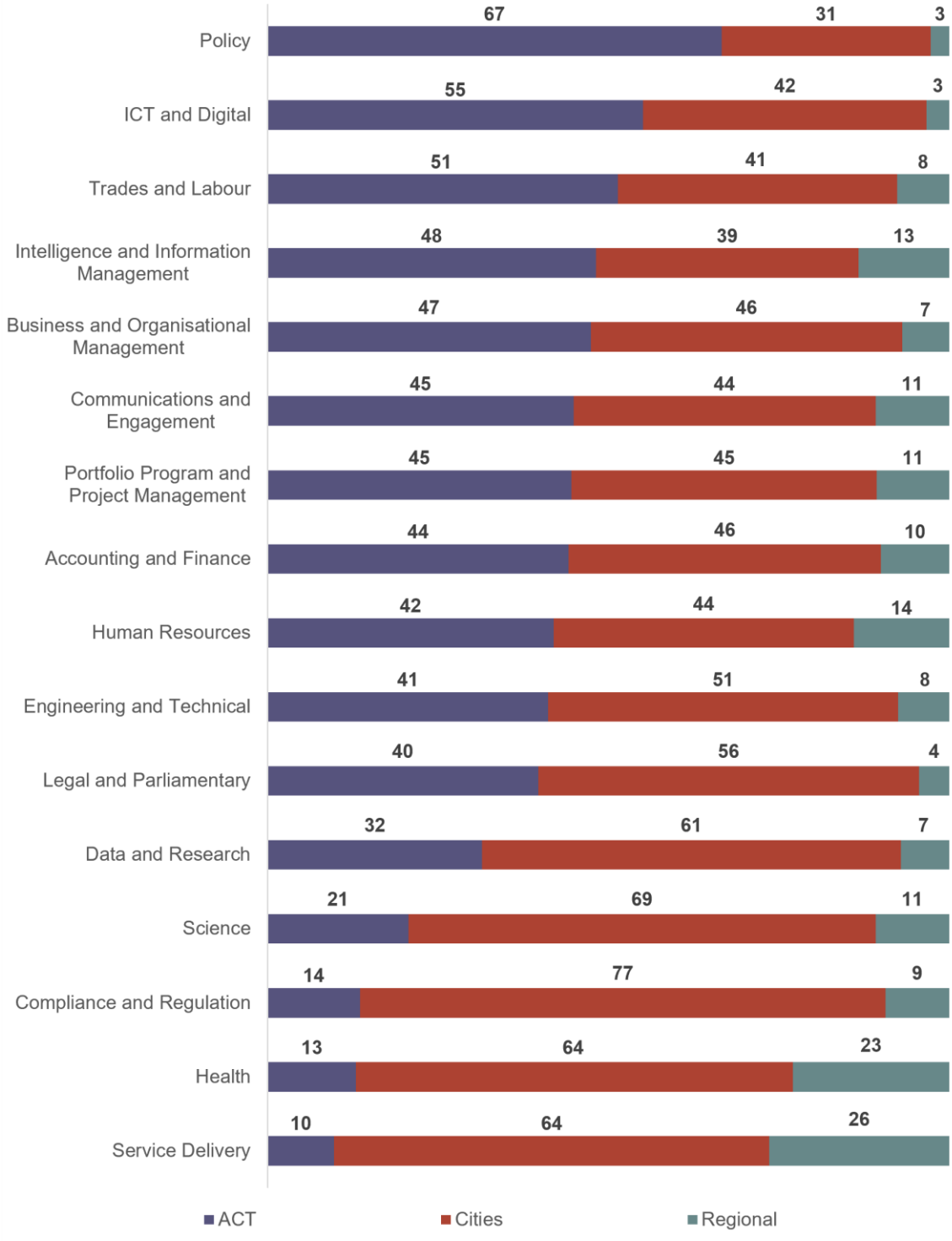
**Figure 3: Proportion of job families in the APS (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

Figure 4 presents the location of APS job families across Canberra, other cities and regions across Australia. This shows Policy roles have the highest concentration in Canberra of all job families (67%) while Service Delivery roles have the highest concentration in other cities and regional locations (90%).

**Figure 4: APS job families proportion by location (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

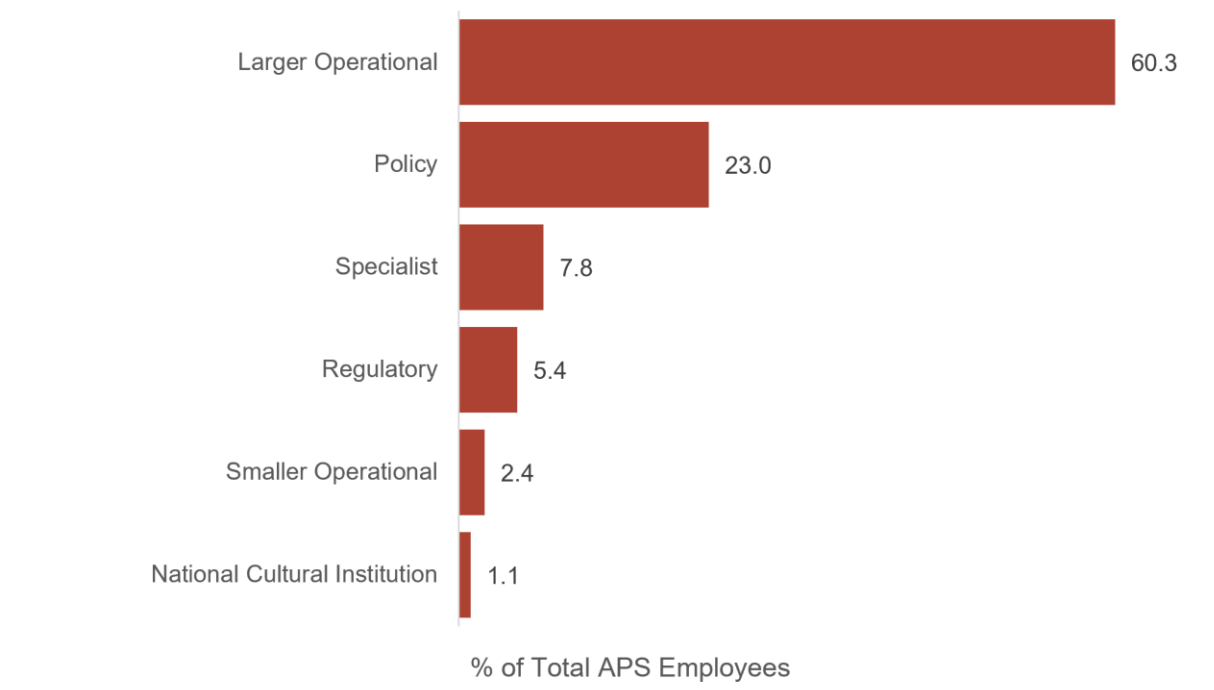
# APS agencies and headcount

APS agencies are grouped into functional clusters to show agencies with similar primary functions. The functional clusters applied to APS agencies are:

- **Policy** – agencies involved in the development of public policy.
- **Smaller operational** – agencies with fewer than 1,000 employees involved in the implementation of public policy.
- **Larger operational** – agencies with 1,000 employees or more involved in the implementation of public policy.
- **Regulatory** – agencies involved in regulation and inspection.
- **Specialist** – agencies providing specialist support to Government.
- **National cultural institution** – agencies that maintain collections of material and offer public programs relevant to Australia's cultural heritage.

Figure 5 shows the representation of functional clusters within the APS at 30 June 2026.

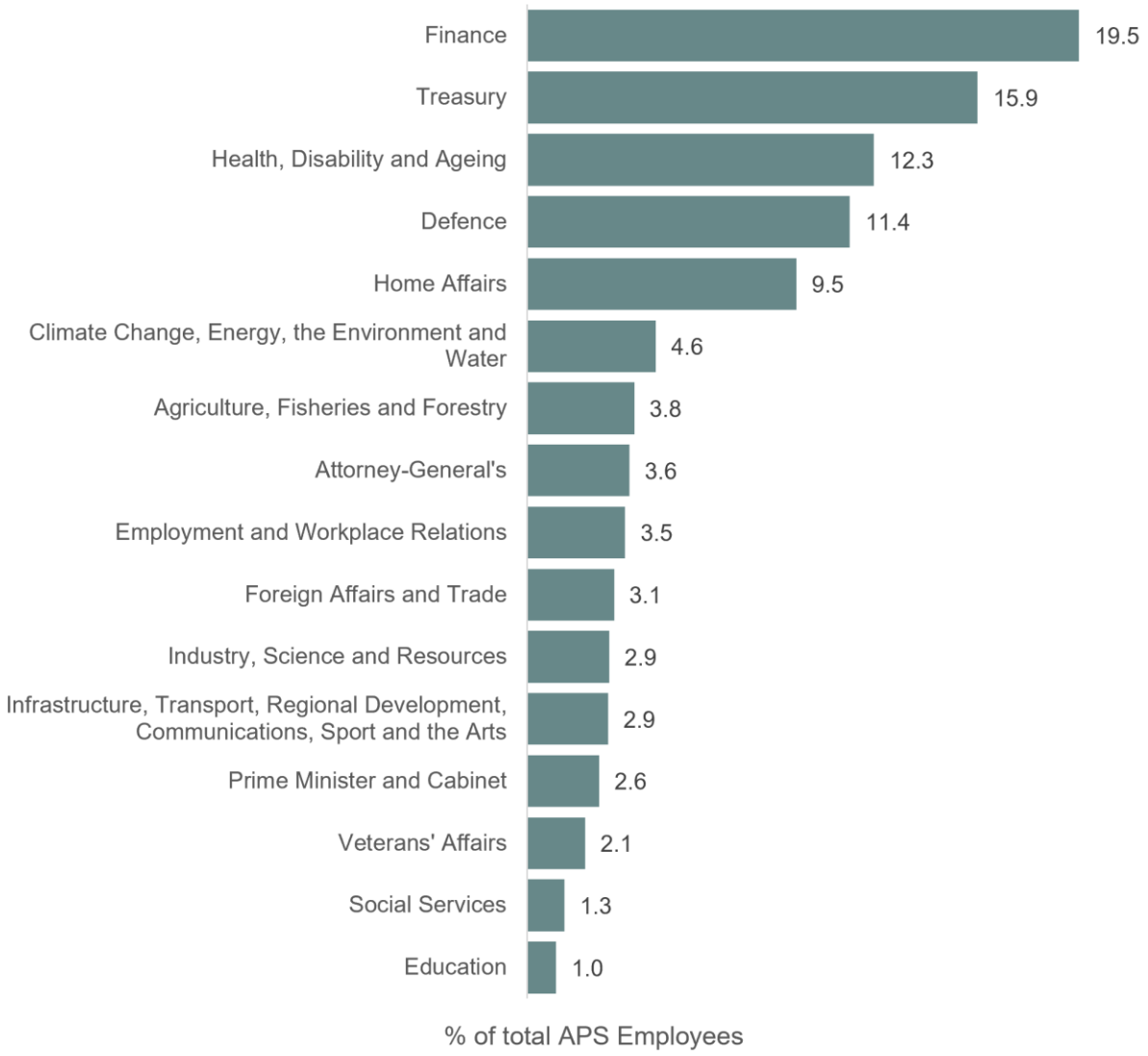
**Figure 5: Functional clusters as a proportion of APS headcount (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

Figure 6 shows the proportion of APS employees in each portfolio in the APS at 30 June 2026. Appendix 3 lists the number of employees in each APS agency.

**Figure 6: Portfolios as a proportion of APS headcount (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

Tables 21 and 22 show the agencies with the largest increases and reductions in number of employees from 30 June 2025 to 30 June 2026.

**Table 21: Agencies with the largest annual increases in employee headcount (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency | Ongoing | | Non-ongoing | | Net increase | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Headcount | % | Headcount | % | Headcount | % |
| Australian Taxation Office | +1,089 | +5.5% | -105 | -6.1% | +984 | +4.6% |
| Home Affairs | +511 | +3.3% | -33 | -5.1% | +478 | +3.0% |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | -22 | -0.7% | +495 | +162.3% | +473 | +12.9% |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | +575 | +5.7% | -222 | -47.2% | +353 | +3.3% |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | +344 | +21.7% | -33 | -21.6% | +311 | +17.9% |

Source: APSED

Figures represent the net change and the percentage change from 30 June 2025 to 30 June 2026

Note: Around a third of the Home Affairs increase is due to MOG change.

**Table 22: Agencies with the largest annual reductions of employee headcount (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency | Ongoing | | Non-ongoing | | All employees | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Headcount | % | Headcount | % | Headcount | % |
| Australian Electoral Commission | -75 | -6.4% | -2,058 | -76.3% | -2,133 | -55.1% |
| Services Australia | -1,484 | -4.3% | -261 | -59.6% | -1,745 | -5.0% |
| Social Services | -1,028 | -30.1% | -71 | -51.1% | -1,099 | -30.9% |
| Industry, Science and Resources | -185 | -3.4% | -110 | -31.4% | -295 | -5.1% |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | -167 | -3.9% | -83 | -46.6% | -250 | -5.6% |

Source: APSED

Figures represent the net change and the percentage change from 30 June 2025 to 30 June 2026

Note: Industry, Science and Resources were subject to MOG changes however their decreases were not primarily due to the MOGs. Around half of the Social Services decrease is due to MOG changes.



# A capable and future ready APS

A capable and future ready APS is one that can respond when emergencies and unexpected events occur, support communities when they need help, and adapt to changing circumstances. It also means continuing to earn public trust and deliver good outcomes for Australians, even as the challenges facing government become more complex.

Capability continues to strengthen across the APS as successful programs expand, professional communities grow and agencies build the skills needed to respond to future challenges.

Leadership is becoming more inclusive and practical, with initiatives such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission's co-leadership model bringing lived experience into decision-making and the Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Sponsorship Program supporting future leaders from culturally diverse backgrounds.

This year also marks a decade since the APS began investing more deliberately in future leaders through initiatives such as the Talent Councils. Those efforts have helped create an enduring pipeline of leaders with the experience and networks needed to lead in a complex environment.

The APS is building capability at scale. The 6R Relational Leadership Capabilities Skills Lab has transitioned from a pilot to an ongoing leadership development program, with strong participant feedback and more than 170 SES and EL2 leaders taking part since October 2025.

APS Professions continue to grow, with more than 17,500 members joining the three newest professions in their first full year.

Agencies are taking a more strategic approach to workforce capability. Results in 2025–26 showed significant improvements in foundational workforce planning capability. The use of evidence to inform workforce priorities increased substantially, with 97% of agencies' workforce plans drawing on evidence (an increase from 64% in 2021).

Capability Reviews are providing clearer insights for agencies into strengths and areas for improvement. Thirteen reviews have been completed, with more than two-thirds of the first cycle underway.

The APS is strengthening its internal capability and reducing reliance on external providers by investing in internal expertise. The APS Academy has recorded more than 210,000 learning engagements in 2025–26 across facilitated courses, eLearning and events. Australian Government Consulting delivered 19 projects, while Defence Consulting supported major transformation and workforce initiatives.

Reporting under the Strategic Commissioning Framework shows agencies are embedding disciplined approaches to identifying core work. Agencies are also recruiting for priority skills, investing in training, providing guidance and supporting workforce mobility to build sustainable in-house capability and support better service delivery.

Partnerships across government, academia and the community are also helping translate capability into better services. Collaboration between Comcare, the APS Academy and Curtin University helped embed SMART work design principles into Leadership Edge, providing practical tools to improve

workplace wellbeing, performance and innovation and ways to address psychosocial risks at their source. The ABS and Services Australia partnership enabled more than 130,000 people to subscribe to receive 2026 Census information through myGov. The establishment of the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People also demonstrates the potential of shared leadership and partnership-driven reform.

While further work is needed to strengthen digital, data, workforce planning and collaboration capabilities, the APS has strong foundations for the future. This growing capability helps position Australia among the world's leading public services, with international measures consistently ranking Australia among the top-performing OECD countries for government effectiveness, digital government and satisfaction with public services (Blavatnik School of Government, 2024; OECD, 2024; 2025a; 2025b; World Bank, 2026).

# Effective and inclusive leadership

As the APS responds to increasingly complex and interconnected challenges, effective leadership extends beyond formal authority and technical expertise. APS leaders must be able to build trust, work across boundaries, navigate uncertainty, and bring diverse stakeholders together to achieve shared outcomes and deliver public value.

APS agencies are increasingly integrating leadership development as part of their broader workforce, organisational and stewardship capability. They are connecting leadership to:

- culture and integrity initiatives
- digital and artificial intelligence transformation
- diversity and inclusion strategies
- succession management.

Throughout 2025–26, the APS continued to strengthen leadership capability. It did so by combining future-focused, adaptive skills and knowledge with relational leadership, with whole-of-APS Academy programs. These programs aimed to:

- strengthen frontline and middle-management capability
- develop senior executive stewardship and systems leadership
- build leadership communities across agencies and academic partnerships rather than rely solely on agency-specific development
- expand leadership diversity and inclusion through sponsorship, coaching and targeted talent-pipeline initiatives.

Sixty-four leadership programs were delivered to 6,245 participants in 2025–26, with 94% of evaluation respondents indicating that the programs have had a positive impact on their work performance (against a quality benchmark of 80%).

The examples in this year's State of the Service Report showcase the diverse ways leadership capability is being developed across the service.

## A positive co-leadership model at the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Most federal agencies are led by one person (for example, a secretary, a commissioner or an agency head). While the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is led by one commissioner, the practical day-to-day work, strategy and decision-making is enhanced by a co-leadership model. Commissioner Louise Glanville and Associate Commissioner Natalie Wade jointly lead the national NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

Natalie is a leader with disability and a NDIS participant with deep regulatory and research knowledge and lived experience. This ensures that decisions are made in the interests of people with disability who place their trust in the NDIS to provide safe, high-quality support. With Louise's experience, this enhances strategic effort, a strong human-rights regulatory approach, and a deep understanding of experience on the ground to respond to complex challenges.



NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commissioner Louise Glanville and Associate Commissioner Natalie Wade.
Image: NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

NDIS's co-leadership model operates through shared stewardship and collaborative governance. Louise and Natalie bring complementary strengths and perspectives to decision-making and to setting the strategic direction that underpins the NDIS Commission's Disability Action Plan 2025–2030. Their demonstrated commitment to inclusion, participation and shared decision-making influence culture and capability-building initiatives such as the Enable Employee Network. Their commitment also fosters greater trust among stakeholders across the disability sector. Formal mechanisms, including the NDIS Commission's Advisory Council and Sector Consultation Forum, provide ongoing input from people with disability, advocates and sector representatives.

Beyond the commission, many entities are working together to create a stronger disability ecosystem. This includes the National Disability Insurance Agency, Health, Disability and Ageing, Commonwealth and state regulators, state and territory governments, service providers, advocacy organisations and the broader disability community.

## Leading the way in psychological and psychosocial safety

Strong leadership in psychological and psychosocial safety contributes to safer workplaces, better mental health and wellbeing, and stronger organisational performance. Psychological safety, also referred to as 'speak up culture' in the APS, is built through everyday interactions. It starts with developing the relational skills that enable open, honest conversations, where people feel comfortable raising concerns, challenging ideas, and speaking up without fear of negative consequences. When these foundations are in place, organisations are better positioned to identify and address psychosocial risks, support their people, and achieve better outcomes.

To build these capabilities, the Australian Public Service Commission's Mental Health and Psychological Capabilities Unit developed the 6R Relational Leadership Capabilities Skill Lab. These labs provide experiential, skills-based workshops to help senior leaders strengthen the relational skills underpinning psychologically safe workplaces.

Originating as the Senior Executive Service Skills Lab and Mentoring Project under the Capability Reinvestment Fund, the program's success as a pilot in 2024–25 saw it transition to an ongoing leadership development offering. Re-established as the 6R Relational Leadership Capabilities Skills Lab, the program has been delivered on a fee-for-service basis since July 2025 and expanded to include Executive Level 2 cohorts.

Since October 2025, more than 170 Senior Executive Service and Executive Level 2 leaders have participated in workshops, gaining practical insights into many aspects of relational leadership. This includes how it can strengthen wellbeing, foster psychological safety, and support high-performing teams. Workshops are delivered in small groups of up to 12 participants to foster meaningful engagement, reflection and practice. They are delivered through the APS Academy and as tailored in-house programs for agencies of varying sizes, with demand continuing to grow.

Participant feedback has been strong. A total of 97% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that 6R is an effective tool for understanding and developing relational leadership skills. A total of 96% reported they were likely or very likely to apply the capabilities in their day-to-day leadership practice.

The 6R Relational Leadership Capabilities Skill Lab complements the ADDRESS: Psychosocial Hazard Suite, by the Mental Health and Psychological Capabilities Unit. This APS-wide approach supporting agencies to identify and control psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

Together, these initiatives strengthen psychologically safe, respectful and high-performing workplace cultures by combining practical risk management tools, with evidence-informed leadership capability development. The ADDRESS suite won the Comcare National Work Health and Safety Prevention Award in November 2025.

## A decade of investing in future leaders

In 2026, the APS marked 10 years of the cross-APS Talent Councils.

The Councils were established to bring a more deliberate and connected approach to talent development. They have since become an important part of how the APS develops senior leaders across the service.

The idea is straightforward: a capable APS depends on capable leaders. By strengthening leadership capability across the service, the APS is better placed to deliver for the community and respond to increasingly complex challenges.

As current and former Talent Council members reflected on the past decade, one lesson stood out. Leadership potential is about more than technical expertise or intellectual capability.

Experience has shown that effective leaders need judgement, adaptability, self-awareness and emotional intelligence. These qualities have become increasingly important as leadership roles have grown more complex.

The work has also reinforced the value of honest feedback. In the past, high performers did not always receive the regular, honest and constructive feedback needed to prepare for more senior roles. The Councils helped address this gap by giving leaders a clearer understanding what they are good at, what they need to work on and the areas they should focus on to prepare for future roles.

The Talent Council approach is now being applied to specific capability priorities across the APS. This includes strengthening leadership pipelines in professions such as HR, finance and digital, and supporting initiatives that improve the visibility and development of culturally diverse leaders.

This marks an important evolution. Talent approaches are being used not only to develop generalist leaders, but also to strengthen specific capabilities and leadership pipelines that the APS will need in the years ahead.

Ten years on, the central lesson remains clear. Developing future leaders is not the responsibility of individual agencies alone. It is a shared stewardship responsibility.

The Talent Councils reflect a more connected APS. Agencies are increasingly working together to strengthen leadership across the service. That collective effort will help ensure the APS remains ready for the future and continues to deliver for the Australian community.

## APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Sponsorship Program Pilot

The APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Employment Strategy is a call to action for CALD leaders to be better represented within the Senior Executive Service (SES). It incorporates a sponsorship program pilot tailored to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse staff that is helping build that talent pipeline.

In 2025–26, a group of Secretaries, led by SES CALD Champion Secretary Jim Betts, steered a pilot sponsorship program for high-potential CALD EL2 leaders, with support from the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). The pilot provided participants with coaching, SES Band 2 sponsors and opportunities to showcase their leadership capability.

Secretary Betts championed the initiative across agencies, securing support and funding for its delivery.

This is the first APS sponsorship program specifically designed to:

- strengthen the CALD leadership pipeline
- support culturally and linguistically diverse employees progress into senior leadership roles.

The program responded to the continued under-representation of CALD employees at SES level by providing targeted development opportunities for high-potential EL 2 staff. It also recognised and addressed cultural factors that can influence career progression. This, in turn, helped create more equitable pathways to senior leadership across the APS.

The pilot began in early 2026 matching 37 CALD EL 2s with 37 SES Band 2 sponsors. The program includes coaching and training for sponsors and participants, masterclasses and sponsorship opportunities across the APS.

The CALD Sponsorship Program Pilot was a genuinely rewarding experience for Amaly Khalaf, APSC Principal Psychologist and Director, Mental Health and Psychological Capability Unit. Of the pilot, Amaly said:

> *The trusted relationship with my sponsor was particularly valuable, providing honest reflections and insights from their SES experience across the APS. Combined with coaching and masterclasses from senior leaders, the program helped me better understand my strengths as a leader, identify opportunities for growth, and build my confidence in pursuing future executive leadership opportunities.*

The program also had unexpected benefits for sponsors. One participant said it was a privilege to support the development and career of an incredibly talented EL 2 in their department. Paula Stagg,

First Assistant Secretary at the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, said:

> *And while I expected to give a lot of myself to support the program, the surprise has been how much I have learned and gained from the experience. The reverse mentoring has been a real highlight for me personally and talking to the other sponsors in my agency we all have the same reflection about our own personal learning and growth as a result of participating as sponsors.*

The pilot involved 8 agencies and was designed to be scalable with the potential to be offered annually across 20 APS agencies on a cost-recovery basis.

The sponsorship program supports the development of CALD SES leadership for the APS. This is important where CALD employees remain under-represented at senior executive levels compared with the broader Australian population. This results in an APS that is better able to deliver policies and services that reflect and meet the needs of the diverse communities it serves.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Strengthening APS capability to deliver, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 53.

Agency Benchmarking, Perceptions of immediate supervisors, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 266.

Agency Benchmarking, Perceptions of SES leaders, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 256.

Agency Benchmarking, Speak Up Culture, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 307.

A trusted and accountable APS, A culture of integrity and stewardship, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 174.

## Find out more

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Australian Public Service Academy (2026) *ADDRESS APS Psychosocial Hazard Suite*, APS Academy website, accessed 14 August 2026. https://www.apsacademy.gov.au/learning-experiences/resources/address-aps-psychosocial-hazard-suite.

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# Workforce development and learning

As the government's operating environment becomes more complex and less predictable, the APS increasingly recognises that technical expertise alone is not sufficient in serving the public. A key trend in workforce development has therefore been a move away from traditional, episodic training programs towards continuous learning and capability building.

Alongside professional knowledge and subject matter expertise, public servants also need adaptive capabilities. This includes collaboration, systems thinking, judgement, learning agility and the ability to lead through change. Public servants face rapid technological change, digital transformation and complex policy and service delivery challenges. These challenges require public servants to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn throughout their careers.

The Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025 was launched in 2021. It presented a service-wide approach to ensure the APS had the people and skills to tackle immediate and emerging challenges. The strategy focused on 3 key areas:

- attract, build and retain skills, expertise and talent
- embrace data, technology and flexible and responsive workforce models
- strengthen integrity and purposeful leadership.

At the strategy's end in 2025, workforce development and learning in the APS had evolved. The APS Academy, celebrating 5 years in 2026, has innovated workforce design and delivery. It has done so through:

- practitioner-led learning
- co-learning partnerships and networks across agencies, centres of excellence, and academic platforms
- testing and refining new practices, including learning sprints, communities of practice, social learning networks, just-in-time learning, and cross-agency development opportunities.

Since its establishment, demand for Academy learning and development offerings has grown, with participation rates more than tripling between 2022–23 and 2025–26 from 61,044 to 211,121. E-learning programs have been the main driver of these year-on-year increases.

The APS Professions model reached a new milestone in 2025–26. Three new professions attracted more than 17,500 members in their first full year, demonstrating strong demand for professional development, connection and capability building across the APS. Together, the 6 professions are helping create a skilled, connected and future-ready workforce.

## Practitioner-led learning for effective public sector leadership

Practitioner-led learning is central to the APS Academy's approach to building leadership capability. In partnership with experienced APS leaders from across the service, the Academy offers Senior Executive Service (SES) leadership programs. These draw on and amplify practitioners' collective wisdom to support the next generation of leaders.

By sharing expertise, experience and judgement, practitioners help emerging senior leaders navigate the increasingly complex challenges of public administration. They offer practical insights into accountability, inclusive leadership and citizen-centred service delivery, grounded in humility and authenticity.



*As a proud Aboriginal SES officer, one of the most rewarding experiences of my career has been the opportunity to sit down with a new generation of APS leaders and share what I have learned from both worlds. The structures and disciplines of the public service, and the wisdom, resilience and relational strength of the world's oldest living culture.*

Jason Regan, Branch Manager, National Indigenous Australians Agency and APS Academy practitioner, Closing the Gap

The Academy's networked partnership approach involves a diverse group of senior leaders. This includes:

- Andrea Henson, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous SES Network Chair
- Carla Jago, Deputy Auditor-General for Australia, Australian National Audit Office (ANAO)
- Jason Regan, Branch Manager, National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Natalie Wade Associate Commissioner and Chief Legal Counsel, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

### Strengthening accountability through experience

Accountability ensures that decisions, actions and outcomes are transparent and can be explained and scrutinised. When embedded in Senior Executive Service (SES) leadership practice, it strengthens confidence that the APS is delivering value and achieving its objectives.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) contributes to the SES Orientation Program through its Accountability Review Bodies sessions. The sessions provide new SES officers with insights into the roles of accountability, integrity and oversight bodies across the APS. These sessions highlight the importance of embedding accountability in everyday leadership and decision-making. They also share practical lessons and common themes observed through audit work, including approaches to managing conflicts of interest, maintaining integrity and navigating complex ethical situations.

Session presenter Carla Jago, Deputy Auditor-General for Australia, emphasises the value of exploring real-world scenarios and discussing challenges in a supportive learning environment.



*SES leaders have a critical role in fostering a culture of accountability and integrity. Through discussion and shared experiences, the Accountability Review Bodies session supports SES officers to strengthen accountability, model expected behaviours and foster integrity within their teams and organisations.*

Carla Jago, Deputy Auditor-General for Australia, ANAO.

### Building understanding and cultural competence

One of the most impactful sessions in the Senior Executive Service (SES) Orientation Program focuses on Closing the Gap and the role senior leaders can play in advancing outcomes for First

Nations Australians. Advancing outcomes occurs not only through policy and program delivery, but through the quality of the conversations and partnerships that help address shared challenges.

In this session, newly appointed SES leaders engage with experienced First Nations leaders to explore complex policy and service delivery environments. Discussions help participants connect strategic leadership with practical insights at system, agency and personal levels.

*The conversations are not only focused on compliance, policy frameworks or performance measures; they are about building understanding. They create space for leaders to reflect on how they lead, how they engage with communities and stakeholders, and how relationships influence outcomes.*

Andrea Henson, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous SES Network Chair



Led by practitioners from the Indigenous SES Network and Champions Network, the sessions deepen participants' understanding and strengthen their cultural competence. They do so by combining lived experience, professional expertise and open dialogue.

### Bringing community perspectives into leadership practice

Community-centred leadership is at the heart of the APS Academy's Senior Executive Service (SES) Band 2 Leadership Program. The program's sponsor is Natalie Wade, Associate Commissioner and Chief Legal Counsel at the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Natalie brings valuable insights to the program from her experience as a disability rights lawyer, reform advocate and senior public sector leader.

Twenty-three SES Band 2 participants visited Geelong, Victoria, in 2025. They met with local community members and businesses to better understand how government policies and services are experienced on the ground. The visit reinforced the importance of embedding community perspectives in their work and building enduring partnerships with the people and communities the APS serves.

For Natalie, developing leaders who can navigate complexity, build trust and deliver for citizens is central to a future-ready APS.

'The program's focus on strengthening leadership capability, with a particular emphasis on adaptive leadership and delivering for citizens, is critical to building a future-ready, modern and inclusive APS,' says Natalie. 'Programs such as this support the development of leaders who can navigate complexity, foster trust and deliver meaningful outcomes for the Australian community.'



*My experience has consistently shown that meaningful engagement with people who have lived experience leads to more informed decision-making, particularly when addressing complex or polarising issues.*

Natalie Wade, Associate Commissioner and Chief Legal Counsel, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and SES Band 2 Leadership Program Sponsor

## Maturing the APS Professions model

The APS Professions is a capability-building model, designed to strengthen public sector expertise, skills and networks across critical workforce domains. Three new ones were launched in early 2025:

- Complex Project Management Profession
- Evaluation Profession
- Procurement and Contract Management Profession.

In 2025–26, these new professions achieved significant reach and engagement across the APS workforce.

Together with the human resources, data, and digital professions, which began in 2019, the model continues to mature. In doing so it helps staff to build knowledge and skills in critical disciplines, collaborate, and explore new ways of working. This helps staff to meet the demands of a rapidly changing public service environment.

**Complex Project Management Profession**

Government projects can be complex, costly and challenging to deliver. They often operate under intense public scrutiny and heightened expectations for transparency and accountability. With more than 5,900 members, the APS Complex Project Management Profession aims to build the capability of APS staff leading or working on complex and large-scale projects.

While no 2 projects are exactly alike, project managers often face similar challenges. They also rely on common practices, tools and methodologies to guide them from initiation to completion. The Complex Project Management Profession promotes the sharing of these resources, tools and insights to strengthen project management capability across the APS.

One example is the development of a lexicon for the APS – a common set of terms and definitions for use across the public service, developed in consultation with multiple agencies. The lexicon promotes a shared understanding of complex project management concepts. It also supports the exchange of ideas and information and encourages ongoing discussion about project management practices. This initiative demonstrates how the Complex Project Management Profession is helping to better equip APS project managers and strengthen the capability of the project delivery workforce.

Heads of the Complex Project Management Profession:

- Chris Deeble AO, CSC, Deputy Secretary, Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, Defence (from September 2024 to June 2026)
- Dr Liz Develin, Deputy Secretary, Prevention, Primary Care & Medicare, Health, Ageing and Disability.

**Evaluation Profession**

Evaluation helps government understand what works, why, and what can be improved for better outcomes. The APS Evaluation Profession delivers regular seminars and engagement opportunities featuring practitioners, experts and academics to approximately 8,000 members. Sessions showcase emerging thinking, innovative approaches and the diverse ways evaluation is applied across government,

“Eval Folk: People of the Profession” was introduced as a regular series, in which evaluators across the APS share real-world experiences on a range of evaluation topics. Participants can ask questions, learn from peers, and explore different career pathways and evaluation approaches. So far 1,022 participants have attended the 3 facilitated sessions held since March 2026.

A testament to collaboration and knowledge sharing, initiatives such as Eval Folk: People of the Profession sessions highlight a key feature of this professions model – building capability across the APS through professional connection and collective learning.

Heads of the Evaluation Profession:

- Danielle Wood, Chair, Productivity Commission.
- Dr Shane Johnson, First Assistant Secretary, Macroeconomic Analysis & Policy Division, The Treasury

**Procurement and Contract Management Profession**

Building a confident and capable workforce across the APS is being supported by the Procurement and Contract Management Profession. Connecting a growing community of more than 4,000 officials to guidance, resources, and professional development opportunities, it supports the recognition of procurement and contract management skills in delivering government priorities. Officials to develop specialist skills through access to contemporary learning opportunities, international resources, tailored webinars and workshops delivered by professional bodies.

The Procurement and Contract Management Profession is part of a broader suite of efforts. These efforts are designed to strengthen capability across the service and help businesses better understand how to engage with and sell to government. Bringing together government and industry perspectives helps APS officials achieve value for money while supporting a more effective and collaborative marketplace.

Heads of the Procurement and Contract Management Profession:

- Julia Pickworth, Deputy Secretary, Industry and Commercialisation Group, Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
- Marisa Purvis-Smith, Deputy Secretary, Commercial Group, Finance

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Strengthening APS capability to deliver, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 53.

AI and digital innovation, Building capability for an AI-enabled workforce, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 146.

AI and digital innovation, Innovations in data and digital capability, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 159.

Agency Benchmarking, Senior Executive Service Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 223.

Working in the APS, Removing barriers to talent and contribution, *Service Report 2026,* page 198.

## Find out more

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# Strengthening APS capability to deliver

Navigating unexpected events and rapid change requires an APS that can identify emerging signals, explore multiple possible futures, and prepare before crises occur. It must be anticipatory, adaptive, digital by design and outcomes focused.

At the same time, the APS must continue to deliver services reliably, equitably and ethically. It must also continue to fulfil legislative and statutory obligations; and demonstrate transparency and trustworthiness across its functions. These responsibilities do not diminish in times of disruption. Indeed, the need for responsive, transparent and reliable public services often increases.

The APS has been achieving this through:

- strategic workforce planning, especially in the context of artificial intelligence
- its Capability Review Program which covers overall progress and key insights as the service matures
- embedding and scaling in-house capability.

## Lifting workforce planning maturity across the APS

Workforce planning maturity is a measure of how well an organisation understands, plans for and manages its workforce to meet future service delivery needs. For APS agencies, this critical capability supports performance and accountability obligations and enables delivery of government priorities.

As rapidly evolving technologies reshape work, mature workforce planning is increasingly a strategic imperative. It is central to how agencies reskill and redeploy their workforce to maintain effective, efficient and sustainable service delivery.

The APS Workforce Strategy and Planning team within the Australian Public Service Commission uses biennial assessments of agency workforce plans to identify capability gaps and target support activities. Assessments consider the plan itself and its use of data. They also consider evidence to identify priorities and arrangements for delivery and implementation. This includes integration with broader organisational processes, accountability and measurement.

Baseline assessments in 2021 identified 2 key maturity gaps: use of data and evidence; and implementation. Over one-third (36%) of assessed plans did not draw on evidence, while three-quarters had limited targets or accountability mechanisms.

To help agencies address these gaps, the team delivered a Workforce Planning program with targeted capability uplift between 2021 and 2025. It did so through:

- 21 in-depth analyses across 12 job families, showcasing best-practice workforce insights and highlighting workforce risks that supported agency workforce planning
- 22 workforce analysis seminars and masterclasses, providing training and capability uplift to close identified workforce planning gaps
- 12 workforce planning forums, supporting peer-to-peer learning
- expansion of the Workforce Planning Resources Hub
- updated metrics and reporting guidance for workforce planners to build foundational workforce analysis capability
- 36 foundational (start-up) and technical (boost) courses through the APS Academy.

Results in 2025–26 showed significant improvements in foundational workforce planning capability. More agencies reported having or developing a workforce plan than in 2021 (81%, up from 72%). The use of evidence to inform workforce priorities increased substantially, with 97% of plans drawing on evidence. Among developed plans, implementation also improved through stronger integration with business planning and clearer targets for monitoring and evaluation.

Analysis showed that agencies engaging with the team and Workforce Planning program demonstrated greater improvements in workforce planning maturity than those that did not. This reinforces the value of targeted support in lifting workforce planning capability across the APS.

## Generating system-wide lessons through APS capability review

The APS Capability Review Program is an Australian Government initiative designed to:

- promote a culture of continuous improvement across the public service
- help agencies strengthen their ability to deliver government priorities and services by identifying organisational strengths, capability gaps, risks, and opportunities for improvement.

Under the *Public Service Act 1999,* all departments of state, the Australian Public Service Commission, Services Australia and the ATO must undergo a capability review every 5 years. The reviews are:

- independent, conducted by a review team that includes external reviewers and senior APS executives from other agencies
- forward-looking, focusing on an agency's future capability needs rather than simply reviewing past performance.

The program began in late 2022. Nineteen agencies are covered, with 13 reviews completed to date and 2 underway.

Some consistent themes have been emerging. Reviews highlight that APS staff are committed to the mission of their agency and improving the lives of Australians. In particular, reviews consistently find that APS people are committed to delivering outcomes in a way that is ethical, respectful and lives up to the trust placed in the service. Completed reviews have identified areas of high capability across agencies. This includes strong integrity, a commitment to the APS Values, inclusive cultures, and sustained investment in the safety and wellbeing of staff.

Capability reviews focus on what changes agencies are likely to face and what they can be doing now to be future ready. Reviews have encouraged agencies to continue to build capability in areas like technology, data, strategic workforce planning and collaboration within organisations.

All agencies are required to develop an action plan outlining how they intend to lift capability in response to the findings of their review. Some of the most frequently adopted actions include:

- establishing clear statements of agency purpose and priorities to shape planning at all levels of the organisation
- modernising digital and information and communications technology capabilities, including strengthening cyber security, improving data governance and preparing for the safe use of artificial intelligence
- building a future-ready workforce, by ensuring employees are developing the right skills, and the agency has levers to attract and retain talented staff.

Through their responses, agencies are positioning the APS to deliver better outcomes and adapt to change, supporting APS capability and productivity.

## Transforming leadership, culture and capability at Home Affairs

An ambitious transformation journey was started by Home Affairs in March 2024 to build a culture of excellence, integrity, openness and collaboration.

Anchored in 3 core pillars – Exemplary Leadership, Game-Changing Agenda and Collaboration at our Core – the department set a clear direction for change. Oversight from a dedicated transformation team, coupled with a clear focus and support from the senior leadership team, drove significant progress throughout 2025–26, embedding new ways of working, enhancing organisational culture and building capability.

Shaped by insights from new senior leaders, recommendations from the Home Affairs Capability Review and staff feedback, the transformation program has delivered more than 60 initiatives. These are designed to strengthen leadership, improve staff engagement and build capability in support of the department's strategic priorities.

A key feature of the transformation program’s success is the commitment of senior leaders to embrace new ideas, honest dialogue, and direct engagement. Alongside collaboration with staff and partners, this is helping to create the conditions for lasting change.

One initiative resonating with staff is monthly Senior Leadership Team webinars. Attended by around 5,000 employees each month, these sessions are a forum for open, unscripted conversations on issues staff identify as most important. Through a live question-and-answer format, staff engage directly with senior leaders, seek clarity and share feedback. This fosters greater transparency and trust.

The introduction of Senior Executive Service Engagement Plans is also helping senior leaders strengthen relationships with staff, colleagues across government and external stakeholders through purposeful and structured engagement.

The Chatroom forum is another initiative bringing leaders and subject-matter experts together to discuss complex and emerging issues while providing a safe space for questions and discussion. This initiative consistently attracts audiences of more than 1,500 staff. Designed in response to staff feedback, this transformation initiative offers a dedicated forum for learning, connection and cross-organisational collaboration. Topics range from online extremism and illicit tobacco to artificial intelligence and other strategic priorities.

The transformation journey continues through 2026, evolving in response to changing priorities, organisational needs and staff feedback. The focus remains on embedding sustainable improvements that strengthen capability and enhance collaboration, while introducing new initiatives that support leadership development and organisational capability. These efforts help position Home Affairs to meet future challenges and deliver better outcomes for the Australian community.

## Building APS transformation readiness with the Commonwealth Priority Reforms Roadmap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is an agreement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives (through the Coalition of Peaks) and all levels of government in Australia. It is designed to reduce the differences in life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. At its heart is the idea that better outcomes happen when First Nations people have a genuine say in decisions affecting their communities.

For these outcomes to be achieved, governments need to change how they work with community. Four key changes – or priority reforms – are necessary:

- genuine, shared decision-making
- community-controlled services
- transforming government organisations
- shared access to data and information.

The Priority Reforms Roadmap was launched in February 2026 as a practical guide to help the APS work differently with First Nations people. It provides agencies with a clear framework to begin or strengthen their transformation efforts.

The roadmap focuses on Closing the Gap Priority Reform Three. This aims to transform government organisations. Transformation is through rebuilding trust, improving service delivery and strengthening accountability for how systems work with and for First Nations people.

Central to transformation is improving the way the APS works in partnership with First Nations people. Stronger partnerships support:

- better-designed policies and programs
- more sustainable outcomes
- culturally safe workplaces
- enhanced public service capability
- greater community confidence.

The Priority Reforms Roadmap helps agencies build readiness for change and provides a practical pathway for embedding reform into everyday operations. It is structured around the transformation elements of the national agreement. These include eliminating racism, practising cultural safety, strengthening accountability and transparency, and improving engagement with First Nations communities.

To support implementation, the roadmap identifies 5 change levers agencies can use to drive organisational change, and 13 priority actions to help initiate and sustain reform. It also introduces a maturity pathway to support agencies at different stages of their transformation journey, from foundational to leading practice.

Collectively, measures support the delivery of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. They also contribute to a more accountable, leadership-driven public sector that eliminates racism, strengthens trust, and delivers better outcomes for First Nations people.

## Building APS capability through Australian Government Consulting

Australian Government Consulting (AGC) is the APS's in-house consulting capability located within Prime Minister and Cabinet. It provides an alternative to external consultants by enabling capability to be built and retained within the APS, while reducing reliance on external labour.

In 2025–26, AGC partnered with agencies across the Commonwealth to deliver 19 projects addressing strategic, policy and organisational priorities. Work included:

- strategy development and reviews
- evidence-based policy design
- quantitative analysis
- organisational design
- operating model reform
- large-scale stakeholder engagement.

Through these engagements, agencies gained access to specialist consulting expertise while strengthening their own capability through close collaboration with AGC teams.

AGC's impact extends beyond individual projects. Unlike external providers, AGC consultants are public servants. They operate within the same policy and accountability frameworks as their APS client agencies. Teams combine an insider's understanding of government with an outsider's perspective gained from working across agencies and sectors. The result is advice that is practical, grounded in the realities of government, and informed by insights and lessons from across the public service.

AGC’s in-house consulting service provides agencies with specialist expertise while ensuring capability, knowledge and intellectual property remain within the public service. This enables specialist skills and knowledge, which may be difficult for individual agencies to sustain independently, to be retained and shared across the APS. It also allows lessons, methods and insights developed in one part of the public service to be applied to challenges in other parts of the service.

The Australian Government's commitment in its 2025–26 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook is to establish AGC as an enduring capability. Plans to expand the AGC to 150 staff by 2029–30 reflects confidence in the service.

By providing opportunities for staff to work across portfolios and policy areas, AGC contributes to the development of a skilled, connected and adaptable APS workforce. As it grows, AGC will continue to:

- provide agencies with access to specialist expertise
- strengthen whole-of-government capability
- support the APS to address increasingly complex challenges.

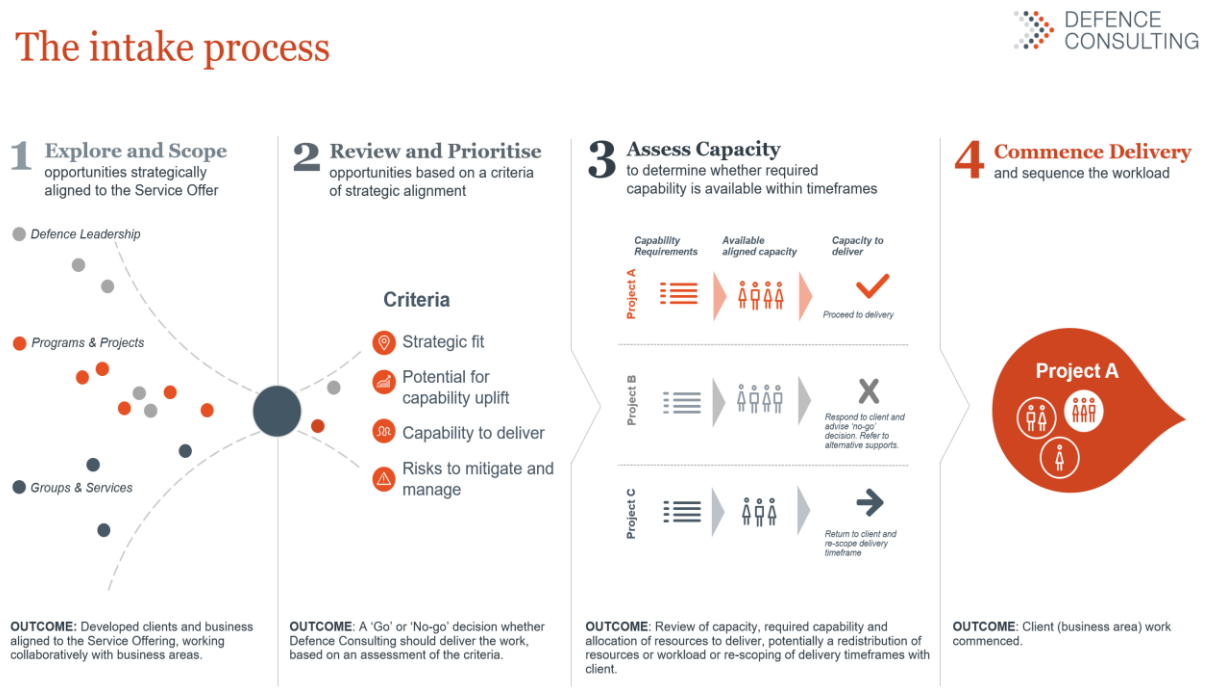
## Building Defence’s internal consulting capability

Defence Consulting delivers tailored, in-house strategic consulting services – for Defence, by Defence. Established in 2024, it supports Defence groups and services to deliver strategic projects and strengthen its self-reliance.

In-house consultants with a strong understanding of Defence are rapidly deployed to address organisational challenges. This reduces reliance on the external consulting market while accelerating the speed of product delivery. Key services delivered across the Defence portfolio include strategy

design, organisational design, organisational change, and project and program design and establishment.

Projects can be both directed by the senior executive – aligned to Defence's most pressing strategic priorities – and requested by business areas. They are assessed against a prioritisation framework and resource capacity to deliver. Following this, a resource and delivery approach is developed with the client area before delivery actually begins.




Defence Consulting intake process visual.

Image: Defence

Various tools and methodologies are used to deliver the key services. They include bespoke, co-designed approaches specific to the Defence context and globally recognised frameworks.

Examples of projects delivered by Defence Consulting include:

- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Value Chain Strategic Roadmaps (Client: Business Transformation Office, Associate Secretary Group). The ERP Business Transformation Office engaged Defence Consulting to develop transformation roadmaps for each value chain across its program. The work defined future-state visions, identified key transformation initiatives and outcomes, and established strategic measures to track progress. This provides a structured pathway to support delivery of the ERP transformation.
- Operating Model Design (Client: Strategy, Policy and International Group). Ahead of the establishment of the Australian Nuclear-Powered Submarine Safety Regulator in November 2025, Defence was required to establish an internal, associated policy function. Defence Consulting assessed the scope, scale and anticipated workload of the new function. It also developed an operating model and functional design to support its effective establishment and ongoing delivery.

## Strategic Commissioning Framework

The APS Strategic Commissioning Framework (SCF) is helping agencies move from outsourcing work that is the core role of the APS.

The framework was published in October 2023. It sets the expectation that core work will be delivered by APS employees. It also outlines limited circumstances in which external workforces could be appropriate, and ensures the APS maximises the benefit of external arrangements.

The SCF applies to all agencies that employ staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Agency heads are accountable for implementation in their agency. The Australian Public Service Commission has provided guidance and support to help agencies meet their SCF implementation and reporting obligations.

**Efforts to reduce outsourcing of core work**

The SCF's initial implementation period runs from 2024–25 to 2026–27, with agencies reporting for the third time in 2026.

Both the 2024 and 2025 SCF public updates provide a snapshot of the foundational work completed by agencies. This is work that reduces outsourcing of core work and embeds the SCF in the first 2 years of implementation.

In 2024, agencies set a combined target to reduce supplier expenditure by $527.6 million as they brought core work in-house. This target was slightly exceeded, with agencies collectively achieving actual reductions of $542.3 million, noting results varied across agencies. In 2025, agencies set a combined target to bring another $438.9 million of core work in-house.

In the first 2 years, targets were an important part of implementing the policy. So too were agencies' identification of their core work and ongoing efforts to bring such work in house. Most agencies now report they no longer outsource core work and operate in line with the SCF. Recognising the progress agencies have made, SCF implementation and reporting efforts will focus on supporting agencies to bring – and keep – core work in house.

Agencies are required to continue reporting on SCF implementation in corporate plans and annual reports.

**Agencies implementation progress in 2025–26**

The 2026 reporting requirements are aimed at continuing to drive progress, transparency and accountability. All agencies in scope of the SCF reported on their progress through the APS Agency Survey.[1] Table 23 shows agency reporting of core work by job family for 2026–27.

[1] The information gathered is based on self-reporting. The Australian Public Service Commission has not undertaken quality assurance of data provided by agencies and, as such, caution should be taken when analysing the data and drawing definitive conclusions.

**Table 23: Core work by job family**

| Job Family | Number of agencies |
|---|---|
| Accounting and Finance | 70 |
| Portfolio, Program and Project Management | 70 |
| Policy | 65 |
| Communications and Engagement | 63 |
| Data and Research | 62 |
| ICT and Digital | 61 |
| Legal and Parliamentary | 61 |
| Compliance and Regulation | 59 |
| Human Resources | 59 |
| Service Delivery | 55 |
| Business and Organisational Management | 52 |
| Intelligence and Information Management | 48 |
| Engineering and Technical | 18 |
| Science | 18 |
| Health | 15 |
| Trades and Labour | 9 |

All APS agencies reported taking steps to embed the SCF and build in-house capability to deliver core work. The most common steps taken by agencies to embed the SCF were:

- working with business divisions to identify the agency's core work (75% of agencies)
- establishing and/or strengthening internal reporting processes for the SCF (62%)
- communicating expectations for hiring and procuring managers (62%)
- reviewing/updating procurement policies and forms (61%).

The most common actions taken by agencies to build in-house capability to deliver core work were:

- recruiting employees with priority skills (86% of agencies)
- investing in training and development (74%)
- upskilling staff through guidance or standard operating procedures (70%)
- supporting staff development through mobility opportunities (67%).

Agencies that set a target for 2025–26 were also asked to provide an early indication of target progress.[2] Of the 40 agencies that set a target for this financial year:

- 24 reported being on track to achieve their target
- 9 reported they were not on track
- 7 were unable to advise (for example, if the agency had not finalised internal reporting to determine if it was on track to meet its target).

Agencies that set a target for 2025–26 are required to report on achievement of targets in their annual reports.

[2] Figures reported are as at 9 September 2026 and reflect information agencies provided through the 2026 APS Agency Survey and in follow up engagements with the Australian Public Service Commission.

In 2026, 8 agencies reported outsourcing core work outside the SCF's limited circumstances, down from 15 in 2025. For at least 4 of these, outsourcing was reported to be minimal and related to just one or 2 positions within each agency.

Agencies reported they are taking action to bring this core work in-house. This includes continued upskilling of employees, reallocation of resources, supporting training and development, and recruiting priority skills. Additionally, agencies that outsourced core work outside the limited circumstances are required to include this information in annual reports.

**Looking ahead to 2026–27**

The expectation for agencies to continue taking steps to embed the SCF continues in 2026–27, the final year of its initial implementation period.

While agencies have made wide-ranging efforts to embed the SCF in their operations, there is more work to do. Reporting highlights areas where action from agencies has been less common. For example, fewer agencies reported taking steps to update:

- finance and procurement and human resources systems to enable reporting (48% of agencies)
- Budget processes (36%)
- project planning to consider the SCF (19%).

Another example is that fewer agencies reported taking certain actions to build in-house capability. This included:

- building knowledge transfer requirements into new contracts (41% of agencies)
- reviewing and updating workforce plans (40%)
- planning for succession (39%)
- partnering across the APS to deliver core work (21%).

Noting SCF is intended to be implemented over time, these areas may represent opportunities for agencies to focus efforts as part of ongoing implementation.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Effective and inclusive leadership, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 43.

A capable and future ready APS, Workforce development and learning, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 48.

## Find out more

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# Partnership capability for impact

Partnership capability is increasingly important in the APS. This is because many challenges facing government are complex, interconnected and beyond the influence of any single agency. Issues such as climate change, natural disasters, cyber security, housing, and Closing the Gap require coordinated action across governments, sectors and communities.

As a result, public servants must be able to work effectively across organisational and jurisdictional boundaries. Strong partnership capability enables the APS to draw on diverse expertise, perspectives and resources. This leads to more innovative, responsive and citizen-centred policy, and service delivery outcomes.

Partnerships are also critical to implementation. Many government initiatives rely on collaboration with state and territory governments, service providers, industry, academia and community organisations. Success therefore depends on a range of skills, alongside traditional policy and technical expertise. Examples include stakeholder engagement, influence, negotiation, collaboration and co-design.

As the APS increasingly operates in a networked environment, partnership capability has become a core public service skill. It supports stewardship, systems thinking and cross-agency collaboration, helping ensure the APS can respond effectively to complex challenges and deliver better outcomes for the Australian community.

## Working to build good work design capability – APS Academy and Comcare

The modern APS comprises agencies of varying sizes, functions and geographic locations. This creates challenges for traditional learning approaches that rely on classroom delivery and static content.

To address these challenges, the APS Academy has developed a scalable social learning model that strengthens leadership, management and APS craft capability across the service. It does so through an integrated learning ecosystem combining technology-enabled learning, practitioner-led facilitation, peer interaction, coaching, and workplace application.

Working with APS practitioners, subject matter experts, academics and cross-agency groups ensures learning is credible. It also ensures that learning is evidence informed and grounded in the realities of public administration. This approach now underpins the APS Graduate Development Program, APS Leadership Edge Program and APS Management Edge Program. Together these create connected development pathways from graduate to executive levels.

The partnership between the APS Academy, Comcare and Curtin University's Centre for Transformative Work Design in 2025–26 demonstrates the effectiveness of this collaborative model. The 2024–25 Capability Reinvestment Fund project, Building Safety and Integrity Capability Across the APS integrated SMART work design into Leadership Edge.

The initiative provided education, case studies and practical tools to help participants identify and address work design issues. Participants explored how work design influences wellbeing, performance and innovation, and how psychosocial risks can be addressed at their source. Social learning enabled participants to test concepts in their own contexts, share challenges with peers and apply SMART work design principles in practice.

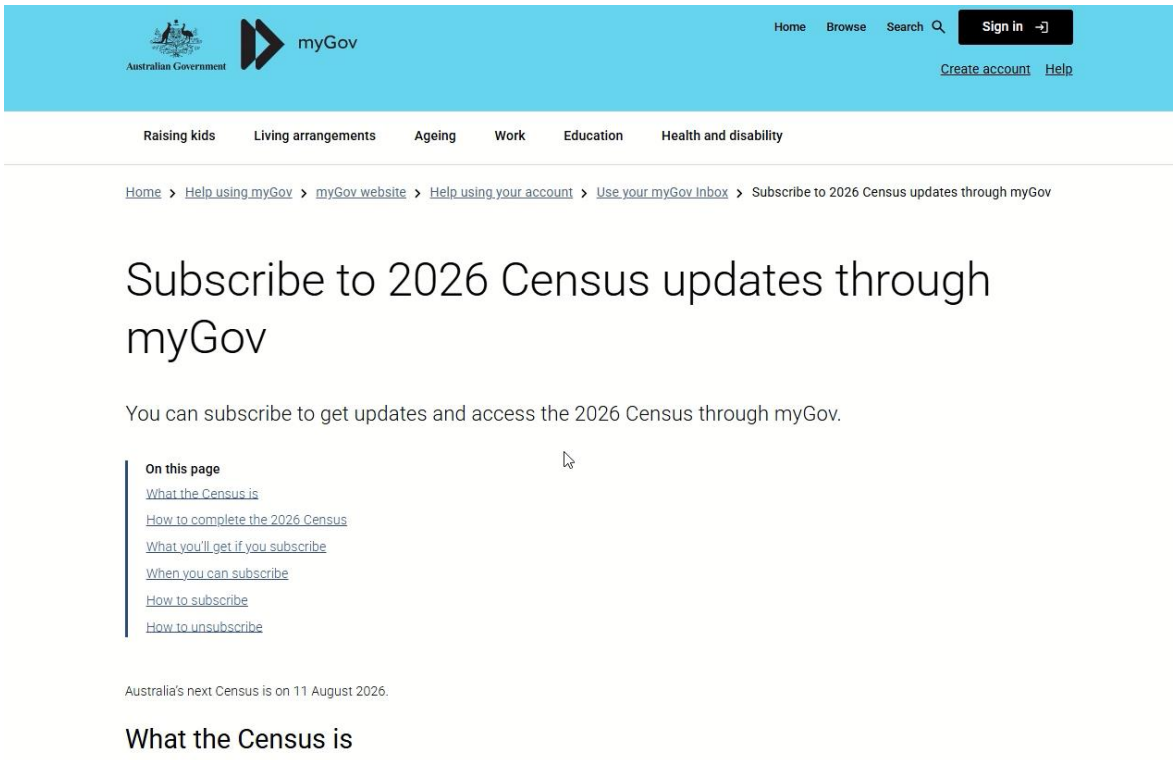
Evaluation of the Leadership Edge pilot found that the SMART work design framework improved role clarity, workload management and task allocation. Team collaboration was the most consistently

reported outcome. Participants describe stronger team dynamics, more open dialogue and improved peer coaching and cross-functional communication.

The partnership combines the APS Academy's leadership capability expertise with Comcare's strengths in:

- work health and safety
- psychosocial risk management and return to work
- embedding good work design across APS leadership development and agency practice.

## Expanding Census participation through myGov




myGov website screenshot.
Image: Services Australia

The 2026 Census of Population and Housing was held on 11 August 2026. Services Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) partnered from 1 July 2024 to deliver a new secure and accessible subscription option through myGov.

Many Australians already use myGov to access a range of government services and information. This new option made it easy for people to get updates and access the 2026 Census online through a trusted and familiar channel.

More than 130,000 people subscribed between 18 May and 14 June 2026 to get Census information, reminders and a secure link to their Census form through their myGov inbox.

Services Australia and the ABS built an integrated, multidisciplinary partnership. This brought together policy, business and technology expertise from both agencies. The objective was to provide a simple, helpful and transparent experience while maintaining strong security and privacy protections. Combining myGov's digital platform with the ABS's role as custodian of Census data showed how government services can work together to encourage participation and deliver people-focused outcomes.

Services Australia coordinated contributions across its product, engineering, cyber security, fraud, legal, and operations teams to design and deliver the myGov integration. This ensured the solution was secure, scalable and aligned with customer needs while meeting legislative, assurance and fraud control requirements.

The ABS, as the agency responsible for delivering the 2026 Census, provided business requirements, content and core digital service capabilities. It also led Census program governance, readiness activities and overall delivery of the Census. Communications teams from both agencies worked together to develop content and communications materials to build awareness of the new myGov option.

Joint governance forums, shared delivery plans and integrated testing meant coordinated decision-making, while regular engagement enabled the early identification of risks and dependencies. This enabled both agencies to focus on their respective strengths while operating as a single delivery team. The result was a secure, coordinated and accessible service delivered at national scale.

The integration of the 2026 Census into myGov complements existing paper and online channels. This provides Australians with another simple, accessible and familiar option to participate in this important national activity. It supports high-quality national data collection and demonstrates the value of connected people-focused digital services. It also has the potential to reduce future costs while providing a more consistent customer experience by better aligning digital services across government.

## Partnership-driven reform establishes new national commission

The *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026* came into effect on 1 July 2026, establishing a permanent, independent statutory agency. This agency protects and promotes the rights, interests, development, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and build on their strengths.

Following decades of advocacy by First Nations leaders, the Department of Social Services and the National Commission worked in partnership to establish a legislated National Commission to drive systemic reform. The partnership was grounded in mutual respect and trust, shared leadership, and a willingness to collaborate beyond traditional processes to find new ways of working.

Throughout the legislative development process, the department collaborated with the National Commission, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise and leadership as central to policy design and fundamental for lasting change. The establishment of a fully independent National Commission demonstrates systemic and structural transformation within government. It does so under Priority Reform Three of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The legislation establishes a permanent National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. The Commissioner’s role is to:

- identify systemic barriers through inquiries and research
- hear directly from children and young people about matters affecting their lives
- support children and young people to understand and assert their rights
- advise government on the development and delivery of policies, programs and services.

The National Commissioner promotes stronger coordination across governments to address issues that disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Examples include out-of-home care and youth detention.

Intentionally embedding a relational approach to developing the Bill involved collaborating with stakeholders across Commonwealth, state and territory governments and First Nations leaders. This ensured diverse perspectives were reflected in the Bill to achieve legislation that was celebrated within the community. The approach helped to build trust and transparency. It also allowed teams to respectfully contest ideas, refine and agree on policy measures that could be implemented in pursuit of the shared goal.

This outcome could not have been achieved through traditional, siloed approaches, and the legislation may not have been as strongly supported by communities had the department acted alone. Working in partnership with multiple levels of government, Aboriginal leadership and key non-government stakeholders delivered a transformative piece of legislation reflecting the innovative and collaborative approach taken. It provides a model of best practice for working with non-government and First Nations partners. It also illustrates how working across institutional and historical boundaries can translate long-standing aspirations into enduring outcomes.

## See also in this report

Protecting the nation and the region, Protecting Australians through integrated crisis management, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 97.

Supporting Australia's economic future, Innovation through business and industry partnerships, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 67.

Serving the Community, Community engagement shapes the future of the Murray-Darling Basin, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 133.

Working in the APS, Driving innovation and productivity, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 194.

## Find out more

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# Supporting Australia's economic future

The APS is helping Australia respond to economic change and build future prosperity. As global markets, technology, workforce needs and industries evolve, agencies are providing the analysis, advice and support needed to help businesses, communities and governments adapt.

Across the APS, evidence, expertise and partnerships are being used to support innovation, productivity and economic participation. The National Measurement Institute's collaboration with industry, for example, supported the introduction of Australia's first cultured meat products, helping enable innovation while maintaining consumer confidence.

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Emerging Industries Database combines deep learning algorithms and econometric methods to provide better insight into emerging industries, their scale, capabilities and workforce, supporting future economic prosperity, resilience and security.

The APS is also building a stronger evidence base for inclusive economic participation. Equality at Work brings together employers, people with disability, community organisations, researchers and industry partners to design, test and evaluate practical solutions to systemic employment barriers. The Office for Women is placing women and gender equality at the centre of policy and decision-making through its stewardship of Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Following the national Economic Reform Roundtable in August 2025, APS agencies have translated reform ideas into policy options and implementation plans. Regulatory reform remains a focus, including the *Regulatory Reform Agenda*, *Better Regulation Roadmap*, coordinated financial sector reform and the *Red Tape Reduction Review*. The final Report of the Strategic Examination of Research and Development, *Ambitious Australia*, has also identified opportunities to unlock Australia's research and development potential.

Targeted initiatives are also helping more Australians understand and respond to economic conditions. Australia's first complete Monthly Consumer Price Index is providing more timely information about inflation and cost-of-living pressures. In 2025–26, 2 initiatives were also rolled out to help more eligible Australians buy a home by reducing the time needed to save for a deposit and lowering ongoing mortgage repayments.

Regional development remains a key focus. Agencies are working with employers, industry, community organisations and local leaders to support growth, employment and investment. Regional Workforce Transition Officers are working directly with local stakeholders across the Hunter, Gippsland, South-West Western Australia and Central Queensland to identify workforce challenges and opportunities.

The Remote Jobs and Economic Development program is supporting community-led employment and economic development. The first 2 grant rounds in 2025 created around 1,700 jobs. Following the third grant round in July 2026, a further 1,300 jobs were approved, bringing the total to over 3,000 jobs.

These efforts are helping Australia navigate immediate economic pressures while laying the foundations for long-term growth, productivity and resilience.

# Innovation through business and industry partnerships

The APS is working with businesses, industry, researchers and communities to support innovation, create jobs and strengthen Australia's economy. These partnerships help bring new products and technologies to market, improve workforce capability and support investment in future industries.

Across government, agencies are combining expertise and evidence to help businesses grow and compete in changing markets. The National Measurement Institute and an Australian biotechnology company collaborated, to support the introduction of Australia's first cultured meat products. The collaboration is helping foster innovation while maintaining consumer confidence.

The APS is also strengthening the data and insights that businesses and governments use to make decisions about investment, workforce planning and economic growth. Through procurement, supplier engagement and industry partnerships, agencies are helping businesses work more effectively with government while delivering better outcomes for Australians.

By bringing together expertise from across sectors, the APS is supporting a more productive, innovative and resilient economy that benefits Australian communities.

## Partnering to bring cultured meat to market



Staff from the National Measurement Institute worked with researchers from Vow to produce lab grown meat for market.

Image: National Measurement Institute

A partnership between the National Measurement Institute and Australian biotechnology company Vow demonstrates how scientific expertise can support the safe introduction of new technologies while helping businesses bring products to market.

Vow, a Sydney-based biotechnology technology company, produces cultured meat from animal cells. Using Japanese quail cells, the company developed 3 products:

- foie gras
- whipped parfait

- edible tallow candle.

Before these products could be sold in Australia or overseas, they required approval from food regulators.

As cultured meat is a novel-food, regulators required robust scientific evidence to assess its safety and suitability. To support this process, National Measurement Institute worked closely with Vow. Together, they developed specialised testing methods and provided scientific information for regulatory review.

Both entities joined forces in December 2021. Working together early in the product development process, they identified the information regulators needed and developed a practical testing approach. This early planning created a clear path from product development to regulatory assessment.

The National Measurement Institute brought specialist expertise in measurement science and testing. It analysed product samples, developed new methods to assess cultured meat and prepared clear findings that could be used as evidence in approval applications. In early 2025, Vow provided product samples and technical information, while food regulators assessed evidence and made final approval decisions.

The process also drew on regulatory requirements in multiple jurisdictions to help inform the evidence needed to support assessment of the products. Jurisdictions included Food Standards Australia New Zealand, the Singapore Food Agency and the United States Food and Drug Administration. Understanding requirements early supported the testing program to produce information that could be used across different markets.

The project demonstrates the value of combining innovation with strong regulatory frameworks. Reliable testing and expert scientific advice helped regulators make informed decisions while maintaining confidence in the safety of new products. This approach supports consumer protection and helps build public trust in the regulatory system.

Broader economic benefits emerged. When Australian businesses can meet regulatory requirements more effectively, they can bring products to market sooner and compete in global markets. This can support investment, create jobs and encourage growth in emerging industries.

This collaboration highlights how government and industry can work together to support innovation while maintaining rigorous standards. It demonstrates how scientific expertise, clear regulation and effective partnerships can help Australian businesses commercialise new technologies. This, in turn, contributes to the government's Future Made in Australia agenda and supports long-term economic growth.

## Illuminating Australia’s invisible industries




The Department of Industry, Science and Resources team celebrates receiving the APS Data Award, recognising its work to strengthen the use of data and evidence in government decision-making.
Image: Department of Industry, Science and Resources

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) combined deep learning algorithms and econometric methods to develop the Emerging Industries Database (EID). The database enables better insight into Australia’s emerging industries, what they look like and how they are growing. This project received an APS Data Award in March 2026.

The EID illuminates Australia’s previously invisible emerging industries:

- artificial intelligence
- quantum
- biotechnology
- prefabricated construction
- clean energy
- robotics
- space industries.

These industries will shape Australia’s future prosperity, resilience and security. Policymakers have had limited visibility of their scale, capabilities and workforce. The EID fills this gap, providing a robust evidence base to inform decisions on investment, skills, and industry policy.

By making emerging industries visible, the database enables more targeted and effective policy. This helps ensure Australia can capture opportunities, respond to global competition, and build the industries that will drive the next generation of economic growth.

DISR partnered with United Kingdom-based Glass.AI between December 2024 and April 2025 to identify businesses in emerging industries based on their online presence. Glass.AI used cutting-edge and privacy-compliant deep learning to classify businesses into policy-relevant industry definitions, creating a new way to map these fast-moving sectors.

Between April and July 2025, DISR collaborated with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to link this information with secure tax and employment data in the ABS DataLab. This integration enables rigorous population-scale analysis of emerging industries. By making the EID available to government and researchers, DISR has turned previously invisible sectors into a shared evidence base for policy and research.

Following the successful pilot, a second iteration of the EID was developed in 2025–26. It expands coverage substantially and establishes the basis for an annual longitudinal asset. DISR is working with the ABS and Glass.AI on how this method of data collection can tackle other tricky policy questions.

## Australian Human Rights Commission's Equality at Work project

While people with disability continue to face barriers to employment, career progression, and workplace participation, employers often lack the practical support and confidence needed to create truly inclusive workplaces. The Australian Human Rights Commission's Equality at Work project is helping to address these challenges, through a collaborative, human rights-based approach.

Equality at Work is led by the Disability Discrimination Commissioner. It brings together employers, people with disability, community organisations, researchers and industry partners to design, implement and evaluate practical solutions to systemic employment barriers. Rather than applying a single model, participating organisations develop and test tailored initiatives within their own workplaces. In doing so, they generate evidence about what works in different contexts.

The principle of 'nothing about us without us' is at the centre of the project. People with disability play leadership roles across governance, design, delivery and evaluation. The project includes 6 expert advisory group members and 14 ambassadors with disability, from diverse industries, backgrounds, and lived experiences. This ensures the initiative is practical, relevant and grounded in human rights.

Many organisations have participated. Examples include the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Burwood Council, City of Sydney Council, Ernst & Young, Hotel Etico, New South Wales Health, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Wollongong City Council, YouthWorX NT, JobAccess, Australian and New South Wales public service commissions, Australia Post, Boston Consulting Group, CommBank, Herbert Smith Freehills, Kmart, Medibank, Microsoft, Rio Tinto, University of Queensland, Westpac and Woolworths. La Trobe University is the project's developmental evaluation partner.

Over the past year, all 9 pilot employment programs have been implemented. Two pilots have been completed and 7 are approaching completion. The project is generating practical insights into what works, for whom, and under what conditions, helping build an evidence base for disability-inclusive employment practices across Australia.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has published a suite of resources to support employers and people with disability understand their rights, responsibilities and obligations. In the past year, the project has delivered disability rights employment training to more than 150 participants across Australia. This training has increased understanding of disability rights, workplace inclusion, accessibility and adjustments.

In the Northern Territory, YouthWorX NT has completed a train-the-trainer program with the commission as part of the Equality at Work project. YouthWorX NT is now preparing to deliver disability awareness training in Darwin and Alice Springs. Several young people with disability who completed the program are now taking lead roles in delivering training themselves.

A key initiative has been the delivery of listen and learn sessions. These bring together senior organisational leaders and employees with disability to share experiences and identify practical actions to improve workplace culture and inclusion. These facilitated conversations create safe spaces for honest dialogue. They also increase understanding of lived experience and strengthen organisational commitment to change.

The Equality at Work project is strengthening inclusive employment systems at scale and delivering benefits for people with disability, employers and the wider community. Early findings indicate participating organisations are:

- increasing leadership engagement
- strengthening workplace inclusion practices
- improving confidence in meeting their obligations under disability discrimination law.

Pilot initiatives, including workplace adjustment passports, are also supporting implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Effective and inclusive leadership, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 43.

Supporting Australia's economic future, Forecasting Australia's tourism future, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 75.

Working in the APS, Making regulation work better for people and business, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 194.

Working in the APS, Improving accessibility and disability inclusive workplaces through the Disability Royal Commission Taskforce, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 200.

## Find out more

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# A prepared and prosperous Australia

A prepared and prosperous Australia starts with people and businesses having the information and opportunities to make confident decisions. During 2025–26, the APS strengthened these foundations through better economic data and practical support for participation and growth.

Timely measures of inflation, including Australia’s first complete Monthly Consumer Price Index, give Australians and businesses a clearer picture of changing economic conditions. Tourism forecasting also brings together economic data, industry knowledge and expert advice to help businesses and governments plan with greater confidence.

Creating economic opportunity means making it easier for businesses to engage with government and for Australians to build financial security. Procurement support for more than 1,100 businesses and new housing initiatives during 2025–26 are examples of this work in practice.

Economic prosperity is strongest when people across the community can participate and benefit. Gender Responsive Budgeting strengthens the evidence behind policy decisions and helps decision-makers understand how policies may affect different groups.

## Building a clearer picture of economic change



Monthly Consumer Price Index publications helping consumers make decision around cost of goods.
Image: Australian Bureau of Statistics/Getty Images

Australia's first complete Monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) Indicator is transforming how Australians understand inflation and cost-of-living pressures. At a time of strong public interest in inflation, timely information helps Australians better understand changing economic conditions.

On 26 November 2025, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released the first complete Monthly CPI publication, which became Australia's primary measure of headline inflation. This milestone was the culmination of more than 2 years of effort. Work began with government investment in July 2023 to design and rebuild the tools and cloud infrastructure needed to support full monthly data collection and processing from April 2024. The move aligned Australia with international best practice and

strengthened the nation’s economic information infrastructure. More frequent data enables earlier detection of economic trends. It also provides better information for evidence-based decision-making across governments, businesses, financial markets, researchers and the Australian community.

For decades, Australia's headline measure of inflation was published quarterly. Through its Big Data, Timely Insights program, the ABS modernised its statistical systems, data collection and analytical methods. It did so to deliver a complete Monthly CPI, significantly improving the timeliness of one of the nation's most important economic indicators.

Delivering Australia's first complete Monthly CPI required collaboration across government, industry, academia and the broader statistical community. The ABS partnered with a range of stakeholders. This included:

- the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA)
- state and federal treasuries
- Department of Social Services
- the Australian Financial Markets Association
- Professor Kevin Fox (UNSW)
- Professor Rodney Strachan (UQ)
- the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence
- the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- experts from the national statistical offices of Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

These partnerships informed the design, testing and implementation of a new approach to measuring inflation. Throughout the project, the ABS worked closely with key users of inflation statistics to ensure the new measure met Australia’s needs while maintaining confidence in official statistics. Users included the RBA, Australian Office of Financial Management and International Monetary Fund.

Australian businesses supported the initiative by providing more frequent price data, improving the timeliness, quality and coverage of inflation statistics. Before the complete Monthly CPI, around 50% of the CPI basket was priced each month. This increased to 87% once monthly price collection was expanded. When combined with the 9% of the basket collected annually for items that typically change price once a year, such as school fees and private health insurance, the Monthly CPI now covers 96% of the CPI basket.

Formal consultation was held in late 2023 with government agencies, economists, researchers and other key users. Consultation emphasised the importance of maintaining data quality and coverage, retaining key analytical series and continuing the publication of detailed CPI data and commentary. Feedback informed the final design of the Monthly CPI and was published by the ABS in February 2024.

ABS teams modernised infrastructure and expanded monthly data collection and redesigned production processes. Teams worked across methodology, data acquisition, technology, operations, and communications and dissemination. This organisation-wide effort helped ensure the transition was smooth, transparent and trusted.

In its November 2025 Statement of Monetary Policy, the RBA described the introduction of the complete Monthly CPI as a ‘significant milestone’. It also noted that the indicator would align Australia with international best practice. The Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen AO, highlighted the benefits of earlier detection of inflation trends and stronger evidence for policy decisions.

By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives, the ABS delivered a major enhancement to Australia's statistical system while maintaining the quality, integrity and trust underpinning official statistics. The transition brings Australia into line with other leading economies that publish monthly inflation statistics. It also strengthens relationships with data providers and users and supports better decisions for Australians.

## Forecasting Australia’s tourism future




Visit Victoria promotion photo.

Image: Australian Trade and Investment Commission

Each year, Tourism Research Australia publishes forecasts on the expected trajectory of domestic and international tourism in Australia. Forecasts provide an updated view of projected visitor numbers, nights and expenditure over a 5-year horizon. They support policy and industry planning by providing a shared evidence base for the sector’s future direction.

Tourism forecasts are an important resource for industry, governments, investors and communities. They inform workforce planning, infrastructure investment and policy settings, helping stakeholders prepare for changing demand and market conditions.

By providing a consistent, evidence-based view of the outlook, the forecasts reduce uncertainty and support more coordinated planning across the visitor economy. Industry and government stakeholders use these insights to inform strategic planning and investment decisions.

Tourism Research Australia uses a hybrid forecasting methodology combining quantitative modelling with expert advice and stakeholder consultation. These ensure that projections are both data-driven and informed by industry expertise.

This methodology draws on a broad range of more than 20 data sources. Examples are official tourism statistics, broader economic indicators, and qualitative insights from industry reports and economic outlooks. A Tourism Forecasting Expert Panel provides advice on key assumptions, risks and emerging trends. In addition to the expert panel, Tourism Research Australia’s forecasting work is supported by ongoing consultation with state and territory governments and industry stakeholders. In total, it consulted with more than 30 stakeholders during the project.

Forecasts are delivered through a suite of products, including detailed reports, data tables, infographics, webinars and conference presentations. This helps stakeholders access and apply insights in formats that suit their needs.

This approach was recognised internationally, leading to collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to establish effective tourism forecasting processes in Europe.

## Building procurement capability across government and industry



Staff from the Procurement Capability Branch, Finance.

Image: Finance

Finance is strengthening procurement and contract management capability across the APS while helping businesses better understand how to work with government.

The Procurement Capability Branch is building skills, supporting professional development and improving access to practical guidance for both APS officials and suppliers. This work helps create a more effective and collaborative procurement system, supporting better outcomes for government, businesses and the community.

The branch delivers learning opportunities through facilitated training, eLearning and microlearning programs. Initiatives such as Pathways to Procurement and Procurement Capability Week help APS employees build the skills needed to manage procurement and contracts with confidence.

The Procurement and Contract Management Profession complements this training by providing career pathways, specialist development opportunities and communities of practice. As at September 2026, more than 3,900 officials were connected through the profession’s community platform, sharing knowledge, discussing common challenges and learning from each other's experiences.

The branch also works directly with Australian businesses to improve understanding of the Commonwealth Procurement Framework. In 2025–26, the branch delivered 19 workshops that supported more than 1,100 businesses. These workshops, together with online resources, help

suppliers better understand procurement processes, identify opportunities and prepare stronger responses to government tenders.

Feedback from agencies and businesses plays an important role in shaping the program. Finance uses a test-and-learn approach, piloting new training products, gathering feedback and continuously improving resources. This helps ensure guidance remains relevant and accessible for users.

The impact of this work is being seen across the APS. More than 23,000 training completions were recorded across more than 130 entities since September 2023. Around 80% of participants reported improved knowledge and greater confidence in applying procurement and contract management principles in their roles.

Strong procurement and contract management capability supports agencies to achieve value for money, manage risk and deliver services effectively. It also strengthens integrity and accountability in the management of public resources.

## Helping Australians into home ownership pathways



Helping more Australians into home ownership

Image: Treasury/Getty

Helping more people into home ownership is an important part of the Australian Government's housing agenda. The government rolled out 2 initiatives in 2025–26 to help more eligible Australians buy a home of their own. Initiatives reduced the time it takes to save for a deposit and lowered ongoing mortgage repayments.

Housing affordability remains a significant challenge for many Australians. Home ownership rates have declined over past decades, while dwelling prices have increased relative to income. Saving for a deposit has been a substantial barrier to entering the housing market – and that is where these initiatives are helping.

### 5% Deposit Scheme eligibility settings

On 1 October 2025, eligibility settings for the 5% Deposit Scheme were expanded. Annual limits on the number of places and applicant income caps were removed, while property price caps were increased. This is enabling more people to access the scheme and buy a wider range of homes.

The 5% Deposit Scheme enables eligible home buyers to buy a home with a 5% deposit, or 2% for eligible single parents and legal guardians, without paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance. The scheme reduces upfront costs associated with buying a home.

Since 1 October 2025, the 5% Deposit Scheme has helped more than 104,000 people buy a home, including more than 1,000 single parents (as of 30 September 2026).

### Help to Buy Scheme

On 5 December 2025, the Help to Buy Scheme launched. The scheme will support up to 40,000 low-to middle-income Australian households to buy a home during its first 4 years of operation.

Under the scheme, the Australian Government contributes up to 40% of the purchase price of a home through a shared equity arrangement. This reduces the size of the deposit needed to buy a home and the size of the home loan, resulting in lower mortgage repayments.

Since its launch in December 2025, more than 7,000 scheme applications have been approved, helping more than 9,000 Australians buy their own home (as of 30 September 2026).

Housing Australia delivers the 5% Deposit Scheme and Help to Buy Scheme with support from The Treasury. Following machinery-of-government changes in mid-2025, The Treasury now oversees all Australian Government housing functions.

These programs form part of the Australian Government's $47 billion Homes for Australia plan to rebuild the housing system, so it works for all Australians. The plan brings together actions to build homes faster, support renters and make it easier for people to buy their first home. It includes recent changes to the tax system to level the playing field for first home buyers.

## Assessing gender impacts of government policy and investment

The Office for Women works across government to place women and gender equality at the centre of policy and decision-making through its stewardship of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). GRB is a core Australian Government commitment. It drives gender equality by giving decision makers information about the gendered impacts of proposals being considered by the Cabinet and its committees. GRB progresses the ambitions of Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality, by ensuring policies are evidence based and consider impacts on gender equality.

In December 2025, the Office for Women updated Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment. The guide helps policymakers deliver high-quality gender analysis, a process critical to policy development. It includes conducting research, interrogating data, exploring stakeholder or community views, and considering the different ways a policy may impact people based on gender.




Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality infographic.
Image: Office for Women

GRB is the responsibility of all Australian Government departments. It helps shine a light on the costs and benefits of government investment across different groups in the community, so decision makers can make choices based on the best information available. By weaving consideration of gender equality through the Cabinet and Budget processes, GRB helps the government in multiple ways. This includes identifying funding and supporting measures to close gender gaps and avoiding decisions that could inadvertently exacerbate gender inequality.

GRB informs a wide range of economic and social policies where gender gaps exist. The Women's Budget Statement showcases government investments across the priorities of Working for Women. Priorities include gender-based violence, unpaid and paid care, economic equality and security, health and leadership, representation and decision-making. The statement includes examples of where gender analysis has been used to inform policies including tax, superannuation and housing.

A guiding principle of Working for Women is that efforts to drive gender equality must be inclusive. Existing inequalities, attitudes and stereotypes can drive inequality, so even when a proposal seems gender neutral it can still impact people differently or disproportionately. It can do so based on personal gendered experience and the interaction of other circumstances and characteristics. Using data and evidence to examine the complexity and diversity of people's experiences provides insights into the systemic and cultural causes of inequality. These then provide the basis for good policy design and solutions that are culturally appropriate, accessible, equitable, evidence based and targeted.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Maturing the APS Professions model, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 51.

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# Investing in regional growth and employment pathways

The APS is helping regional communities, people and businesses build strong and sustainable local economies. By working closely with employers, industry, community organisations and local leaders, agencies are creating opportunities for growth, employment and investment across Australia.

Place-based approaches are helping communities respond to economic change and make the most of emerging opportunities. The APS is supporting workforce planning, skills development and career transitions, particularly in regions experiencing industry change or benefiting from Australia's transition to net zero. These efforts help workers access new opportunities while supporting local businesses and industries.

In remote and regional Australia, community-led partnerships are creating jobs, supporting enterprise development and building local capability. By strengthening economic participation and investing in local strengths, the APS is helping regional communities attract investment, build resilience and share in the benefits of long-term economic growth.

## Supporting communities through workforce transition

When the Whyalla Steelworks entered administration in February 2025, workers, families and businesses faced significant uncertainty. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) responded by leading the Whyalla Transition Support Network. The network is a coordinated, place-based response designed to help the community navigate a period of major economic disruption.




Alan Sibbons, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations South Australia Relationship and Engagement Manager, and Kylee Blot, National Transition Support Network, accept the 2025 Spirit of Service Award for Community Engagement. Image: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

DEWR worked closely with partners across the Australian Government, Government of South Australia and local government. This included:

- Apprenticeship Employment Network SA
- North West Country South Australia Job Coordinator
- Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula
- Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance
- the South Australian Skills Commission
- Whyalla City Council

These partnerships extended across employment, business and community support services. They created a coordinated network that helped workers, businesses and families access the assistance they needed. This collaborative approach enabled services to respond quickly to changing community requirements and support the region through a period of transition.

This integrated model enabled services to be mobilised quickly and ensured affected workers received clear, consistent and timely information. Strong connections between partners also improved referrals across employment, training and community support services. This helped people access the assistance they needed when they needed it.

The initiative delivered tangible benefits across the region, with 124 workers accessing the Career Transition Service, resulting in 20 employment outcomes. The service has made 30 referrals to the $1.1 million Whyalla Skills Fund, supporting access to 90 training opportunities. Participants received a range of assistance. This included resume preparation, cover letters, training and reskilling applications, vacancy updates, and referrals to employment and training providers. Businesses were connected with assistance measures that helped sustain local economic activity during a period of uncertainty.

The initiative demonstrated how place-based collaboration can reduce the social and economic impacts of large-scale workforce change while supporting communities through periods of transition. This includes providing on-the-ground coordination and connections to employment, reskilling and wellbeing services.

The success of the initiative was recognised through the 2025 Institute of Public Administration Australia Spirit of Service Award. The award highlights the impact of a collaborative approach to help support workers, families and businesses through a significant workforce transition.

## Building regional workforce resilience



Regional Workforce Transition Officers from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.
Image: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Australia's transition to a net zero economy is creating new opportunities for regional communities while reshaping traditional industries and workforces. Supporting workers, businesses and communities through this change requires a coordinated approach by government that reflects the unique circumstances of each region.

Helping communities prepare for and respond to this change are Regional Workforce Transition Officers (RWTOs) from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. RWTOs are based in the Hunter in New South Wales, Gippsland in Victoria, and in South-West Western Australia and Central Queensland. They work directly with local stakeholders to identify workforce challenges opportunities.

Embedded within their communities, RWTOs build trusted relationships with employers, workers, unions, education and training providers, First Nations organisations, state and local governments and community groups. Drawing on these connections and their understanding of regional labour markets, RWTOs help communities in many ways. This includes identifying workforce challenges and opportunities, accessing government support, and preparing for economic and industrial change.

Working across all levels of government and with industry and community partners, RWTOs bring stakeholders together to develop practical, place-based responses tailored to local priorities. Examples are:

- workforce planning
- skills and training initiatives
- career development activities
- targeted support during periods of workforce disruption
- helping communities strengthen resilience and prepare for future growth.

During periods of significant change, such as major industry restructuring or workforce reductions, RWTOs help connect affected workers and employers with employment, training and career transition services. By coordinating local networks and facilitating access to support, they help communities respond more effectively to emerging challenges.

By combining local knowledge with a strong understanding of government policies and economic change, RWTOs help communities prepare for future workforce needs while identifying opportunities for growth. Their work supports workforce participation, strengthens regional capability and helps ensure local perspectives inform national policy and program design.

## Creating jobs and economic opportunities in remote communities



The Remote Jobs and Economic Development program is helping to create jobs across remote Australia in various sectors. Image: National Indigenous Australians Agency

The Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program funds community-led projects that respond to local priorities and opportunities. By supporting employment pathways and economic development activities, RJED helps people build skills, gain work experience and access jobs that contribute to their communities.

Funded projects support people to develop work-related skills, gain practical experience and access jobs that contribute to their communities. This approach helps build individual capability while supporting community development and economic resilience.

The program's investment is already delivering results. In 2025, the first 2 RJED grant rounds were completed and around 1,700 jobs created. Following the finalisation of the third grant round in July 2026, a further 1,300 jobs were approved, bringing the total to more than 3,000 jobs. The approximate breakdown of jobs across remote Australia is:

- Northern Territory: 1,374
- Western Australia: 820
- Queensland: 616

- South Australia: 209
- Western New South Wales: 46

Funded projects reflect the diverse economic opportunities available in remote Australia. They include initiatives that:

- create jobs
- support Indigenous-owned businesses
- strengthen local industries
- build the capability of organisations supporting local employment and economic development opportunities.

This broad approach helps communities develop sustainable economic opportunities tailored to local circumstances.

The program also supports collaboration between employers, community organisations and local leaders to identify opportunities and address barriers to employment. Working together helps create pathways into work and strengthen the foundations for long-term economic development.

A key feature of RJED is its focus on locally driven solutions. Communities identify priorities and design projects that reflect local knowledge, culture and economic opportunities. This approach supports practical outcomes, strengthens community ownership and helps ensure investments deliver lasting benefits.

Through its focus on jobs, skills and enterprise development, the RJED program is helping remote communities build workforce capability and expand economic opportunities. By supporting locally designed initiatives and creating pathways to employment, the program is contributing to stronger communities and more resilient local economies across remote Australia.

## See also in this report

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A capable and future ready APS, Partnership-driven reform establishes new national commission, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 65.

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# Protecting the nation and the region

Australia's safety and prosperity depend on a stable and secure region. Protecting Australia involves more than defending our borders. It also means keeping trade routes open, maintaining strong international relationships and preparing for challenges such as natural disasters, cyber threats, foreign interference and disruptions to critical supplies. These efforts help ensure Australians have access to essential goods and services, reliable infrastructure, secure digital systems and safe communities.

The APS plays an important role in protecting Australia and supporting regional stability. Agencies work together, and with international partners, to strengthen national resilience, improve disaster preparedness, enhance cyber security and support security in the Indo-Pacific. As global events become more connected, the APS helps Australia identify risks, respond quickly to changing circumstances and protect the nation's interests.

Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but is vital to Australia's security, economic prosperity and quality of life. By supporting defence, security, emergency management and international engagement, the APS helps create the conditions for Australians to live, work and do business with confidence. During 2025–26, APS agencies responded to several significant international challenges. Escalating conflict in the Middle East, including military action involving Iran, disrupted global supplies of oil, gas, fertiliser and other critical materials and contributed to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

This resulted in higher fuel and fertiliser prices for Australian households and businesses and increased the risk of supply shortages. The impact cut across several markets and Commonwealth policy portfolios, requiring a coordinated response across the APS to support informed Government action. The Fuel Supply Taskforce in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet played a critical role in coordinating cross-government advice and shaping Australia’s response to these unprecedented disruptions.

The APS is also helping strengthen Australia's economic and national security through critical minerals. These minerals are essential for defence capability, advanced technologies and the transition to cleaner energy. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources is working to expand Australia's processing capability and strengthen supply chains. A major milestone in 2025–26 was the establishment of the Critical Minerals Strategic Reserve. The reserve will help secure supplies of selected critical minerals, address supply chain vulnerabilities and strengthen access to reliable sources for Australia and its partners.

Australia's emergency preparedness and response capability was strengthened in 2025–26 through coordination, partnership and planning. The National Situation Room in the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provided around-the-clock monitoring and national coordination during major emergencies, helping governments respond quickly to emerging risks. Services Australia and NEMA worked together to improve disaster support, making assistance more accessible for affected communities. Australia also enhanced preparedness for radiological and nuclear emergencies, with the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency introducing a new national plan and strengthening coordination arrangements. Together, these initiatives improved national resilience, supported informed decision-making, and helped communities prepare for, respond to and recover from crises.

# Resilience in the face of global uncertainty and disruption

Australia is operating in an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment, shaped by geopolitical tensions, economic volatility, technological change, cyber threats, supply chain disruptions and the growing impacts of climate-related events.

The APS plays a critical role in helping government anticipate, manage and respond to emerging risks and disruptions. Agencies work together across portfolios to deliver coordinated policy advice, strengthen national preparedness and maintain the continuity of critical services and infrastructure. By leveraging shared data, intelligence, digital capabilities and operational networks, the APS is increasingly adopting a multi-agency approach to resilience that enables faster responses, more informed decision-making and stronger outcomes for Australians in times of uncertainty and change.

## National Fuel Security Plan

The conflict in the Middle East and the resulting closure of the Strait of Hormuz caused significant disruptions to supply chains and markets for oil, gas, fertiliser and other critical materials. Australian consumers and businesses felt the impact immediately. They faced an increase in prices for fuel and fertiliser and the prospect of more significant supply shortfalls that would disrupt economic activity. The shock cut across several markets and Commonwealth policy portfolios, necessitating a coordinated response across the APS to support informed government action.

**Fuel Supply Taskforce coordinates response to supply shock**

On 19 March 2026, the Australian Government appointed Ms Anthea Harris as Fuel Supply Taskforce Coordinator to lead the Fuel Supply Taskforce in Prime Minister and Cabinet. This provided a central point of coordination and collaboration with taskforces established across the APS, including:

- Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Employment and Workplace Relations
- Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Industry, Science and Resources
- Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication Sports and the Arts
- National Emergency Management Authority
- The Treasury.

In total, more than 260 APS officials worked in taskforces to respond to the fuel market shock. The Fuel Supply Taskforce played a critical role in coordinating cross-government advice and shaping Australia’s response to the unprecedented shock to global markets.

**Strategic action and diplomacy to minimise impact**

The effectiveness of the Australia Government response to the Middle East conflict has been underpinned by collective action across the APS. The Fuel Supply Taskforce coordinated the development of submissions and policy proposals across the APS to define the government’s response to the market shock.

An early achievement, which provided the structure for the government’s ongoing response, was the National Fuel Security Plan. Agreed by National Cabinet on 30 March 2026, the plan is a staged 4-

level framework to coordinate responses across the Commonwealth, states and territories to disruptions in fuel supply. Alongside the plan's release, the government also implemented temporary cuts to fuel excise and road user charging for heavy vehicles. It did so with support from states and territories, to address price pressures for households and business.

**Trusted source of essential public information during crises**

Clear and consistent public communication was essential to improve understanding of the government's response and help Australian households and businesses buffer themselves against potential impacts. To support this outcome, an advertising and communication campaign, centred around the National Fuel Security Plan was developed. Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sports and the Arts coordinated development. The campaign provided clear dissemination of information on the National Fuel Security Plan and Australia's current standing. It also provided practical tips for consumers to save on fuel use and associated costs.




Promotional material for the National Fuel Security Plan.

Image: Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Delivering outcomes by intervening at leverage points in complex systems**

Multiple actions were undertaken across the APS to form the collective response to the market shock. Key interventions included:

- Leveraging partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region for mutually assured energy security through leader-level and ministerial statements, including in multilateral fora.
- Ensuring robust and timely data collection, analysis and dissemination, including through weekly publication of fuel supply and price information. This information kept households and businesses informed and ensured government was aware of market conditions.
- Supporting, through the Export Finance Australia Fuel and Fertiliser Security Facility, the purchase of cargoes of fuel and fertiliser in tight global markets to sure up domestic supply.
- Engaging with industry stakeholders across fuel supply and demand, through a range of fora to understand challenges and communicate responses.

- Engaging with regulators to ensure the regulatory settings supported the collective response to the market shock. This included the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

These coordinated interventions delivered tangible outcomes. Other actions were also implemented to ensure adequate supply of fuel and other critical materials. These included releasing fuel reserves and amending fuel standards to increase supply and establishing the fuel and fertiliser security facility within Export Finance Australia. By 30 June 2026, Export Finance Australia, working with Australian suppliers, had supported the purchase of:

- 792 million litres of diesel fuel
- 154 million litres of jet fuel
- up to 340,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser.

These actions enabled access to critical, in-demand products and helped underpin Australia's energy and supply security. They did so through strong international partnerships, effective stakeholder engagement, targeted regulatory responses and strategic financing mechanisms.

## Critical minerals build Australia’s economic and national security

Critical minerals are crucial to building a Future Made in Australia agenda. They support Australia’s economic sovereignty, defence capabilities, critical technologies and the clean energy transition.

Industry, Science and Resources is helping turn this opportunity into greater onshore processing capability and more resilient supply chains.

A major milestone in realising this opportunity is establishing the Critical Minerals Strategic Reserve (CMSR) following passage of legislation in March 2026. The CMSR will secure the supply of select critical minerals, initially focused on antimony, gallium and rare earth elements, to:

- address supply chain vulnerabilities
- support Australia's economy and national security
- strengthen access to reliable sources of critical minerals for Australia and its partners.

Minerals were selected based on their suitability, priority and potential. This includes minerals:

- with vulnerable supply chains where Australia has the strongest potential to meet demand
- that are most important to national security and economic resilience
- relating to Australian projects in the pipeline that could meet identified needs.

The CMSR also supports collaboration with key international partners to diversify critical minerals supply chains. Partners include:

- Canada
- Europe
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- United Kingdom
- United States.

The CMSR is already helping advance critical minerals projects. In May 2026, the government provided a non-binding letter of support from the CMSR enabling Arafura Rare Earths to make a final

investment decision on its Nolans Project. This paved the way for construction to start in 2026. Once operational, the project will mine and process rare earths in Australia. This will strengthen Australia's capability to supply processed rare earths and capture more value from these resources onshore.

## See also in this report

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# Protecting the environment

Australia faces significant environmental challenges, including climate change, threats to biosecurity, pressure on natural resources, and the growing impact of natural disasters. At the same time, these challenges create opportunities to strengthen resilience, support sustainable economic growth and accelerate the transition to a low-emissions future. Addressing these complex issues requires coordinated action across governments, sectors and communities. This action must be supported by evidence, science and long-term planning.

The APS plays a central role in helping government protect, restore and sustainably manage the environment. Agencies work together across portfolios to deliver policy, regulation, investment and services that support environmental outcomes, drawing on expertise in areas such as climate, energy, agriculture, water, emergency management and infrastructure. Increasingly, agencies are leveraging shared data, research, digital platforms and operational infrastructure to reduce duplication, improve decision-making and deliver more effective, joined-up outcomes.

## Australia's complex environmental, climate and resource management challenges

Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water works on Australia's most complex environmental, climate and resource management challenges. Departmental staff are guided by shared principles that shape how they make decisions, manage risk and deliver outcomes for Australians.

These principles are reflected in practical actions every day, from reducing emissions and protecting biodiversity to strengthening water management and supporting First Nations partnerships.

**Making progress in complex environments**

Many of the department's challenges require action before every variable is known. Teams are demonstrating ‘progress not perfection’ by using the best available evidence, adapting to new information and continually improving their work.

This approach is evident in the development by one team of new savanna fire management methods under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme. Methods combine traditional First Nations fire management knowledge with the latest carbon accounting science. This supports long-term carbon abatement while recognising practices that have sustained landscapes for thousands of years. During 2025–26, the team also released the Savanna Carbon Accounting Model. This new greenhouse gas abatement tool supports project proponents and strengthens the integrity and capability of savanna fire management projects.

The same principle guided preparations for the potential arrival of H5 bird flu outbreak in the Murray-Darling Basin. Recognising that environmental watering decisions could potentially influence waterbird movement, and therefore disease spread, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder got to work. It developed a decision-making framework and established an Expert Scientific Panel to ground decisions in the best available science as understanding of the disease evolves. This work strengthens preparedness and environmental water management decision-making capability, supporting broader whole-of-government preparedness efforts.

These examples show how staff balance urgency with evidence, enabling action while remaining responsive to changing circumstances.

**Taking considered risks**

The work of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water often involves balancing environmental, social and economic considerations. Rather than avoiding risk, staff demonstrate what it means to be risk aware, not risk averse.

In Antarctica, the Australian Antarctic Division acted used a rare access window to rapidly deploy an Autonomous Remote Environment Monitoring System unit to a remote location. Although the available technology was not the newest version, the opportunity to establish long-term monitoring capability outweighed the risks. The deployment will support the collection of valuable environmental and wildlife data from one of the world's most isolated and environmentally sensitive regions.

The department's growing environmental crime capability provides another example. Through operations targeting illegal wildlife trafficking, investigators have strengthened partnerships across jurisdictions and applied specialist expertise to protect Australia's unique biodiversity. During Operation Ramsey, the department achieved its first asset forfeiture arising from an environmental crime investigation is completed, demonstrating its growing enforcement capability.

Environment Information Australia is also demonstrating this principle through the development of integrated information products that draw together multiple datasets. These tools provide richer insights into biodiversity and environmental values. They also help decision makers identify high-value habitat, assess environmental risks, and support transparent, evidence-based decision-making. The enhanced mapping is available publicly, supporting more informed environmental assessments, conservation planning and policy decisions.

**Better outcomes through collaboration**

Many of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's achievements rely on people working across teams, disciplines, portfolios and jurisdictions. The principle that 'together we're better' is evident throughout the department's work.

The review of the Snowy Water Deed has brought together governments, Snowy Hydro, communities and First Nations groups. Together, they are evaluating the effectiveness of existing water management arrangements and investigating improvements that balance the needs of the environment, energy and social outcomes. Joining expertise from water, energy, finance and environmental management has helped identify evidence-based solutions and assess potential implications. Stakeholders and First Nations groups actively participated in the review through deliberative engagement processes that has resulted in practical solutions with strong community support. The final review report was provided to the department at the end of August 2026. Supporting evidence, consultation reports and the outcomes of the deliberative engagement are published on the department's website.

Collaboration also underpinned the development of the pilot Saving Native Species dashboard. Supporting the Threatened Species Action Plan's 110 Priority Species and 20 Priority Places, the dashboard draws together information from multiple systems and partners. This provides decision makers with a clearer understanding of progress under the plan and supports more informed policy and investment decisions.

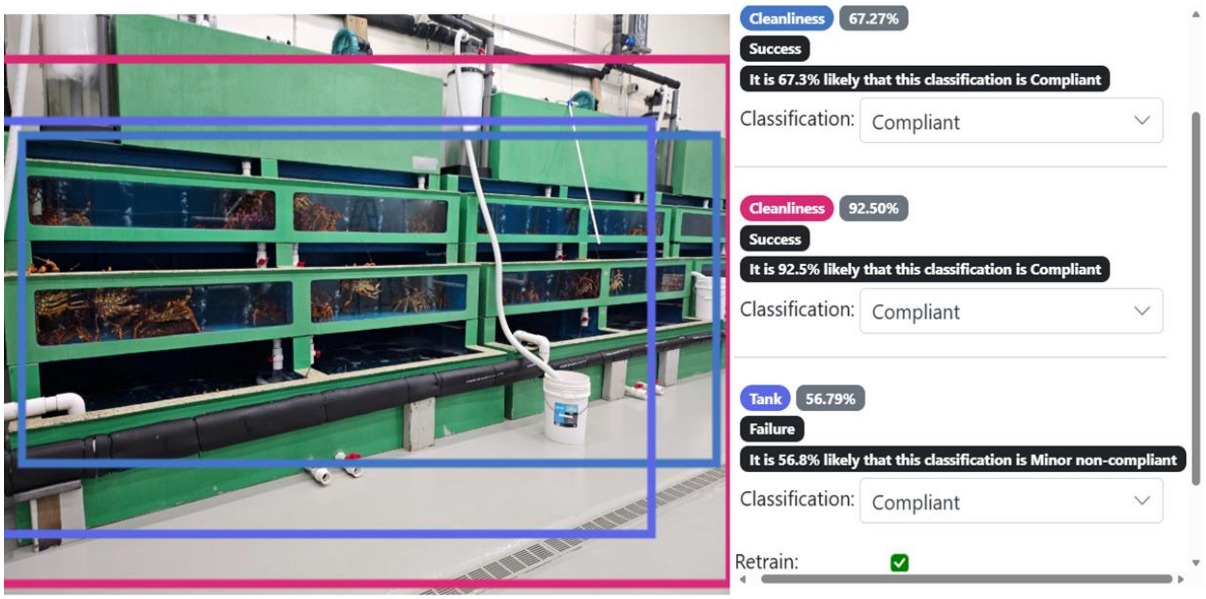
**Integrity in decision-making**

The Climate and Clean Energy Analytics team demonstrates the principle of integrity over impulse through its work supporting international climate and energy policy.

During the development of Australia's 2035 emissions reduction target, the team analysed rapidly evolving global emissions and energy commitments. Despite significant time pressures, staff

maintained rigorous quality assurance processes, testing assumptions, validating data and applying consistent analytical standards. This ensured decision makers had access to credible and comparable international data during a critical period of policy development.

## Protecting Australia's biosecurity and export reputation




Artificial intelligence analysis of live seafood tanks, trained to determine compliance with export requirements.

Image: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is improving how it supports Australia's exporters by making services simpler, faster and more efficient while maintaining high regulatory standards.

Through digital innovation and close collaboration with industry, the department has modernised key export processes, reducing regulatory burden and helping Australian businesses access international markets more quickly.

One example is the reform of audit arrangements for low-risk dairy, egg and fish export establishments. Working alongside industry, the department designed and implemented a new online audit model that replaces traditional onsite audits. The model is supported by a digital platform that uses artificial intelligence to assist compliance assessments, while maintaining the level of assurance required for food safety and importing country requirements.

The dairy, egg and fish industries have realised direct cost savings of up to $64,978 a year across the industry. This reflects an estimated 50% reduction in departmental regulatory costs associated with audit activities before, during and after audits. This reduction does not include the additional indirect benefits experienced by industry, such as reduced administrative burden, reduced staff time, and improved operational efficiency.

A $2,000,000 estimated benefit for fishing vessels specifically was also achieved as they are no longer required to return to port for audit. This avoided reductions in profits associated with voyage costs and loss of production time when returning to port. This estimate is based on a company’s estimate for their fleet of vessels, which has been multiplied to the entire sector.

The department has also strengthened support for businesses seeking to enter export markets through its Export Facilitation Service. Dedicated facilitators for dairy, egg and seafood exporters work directly with businesses to help them understand export requirements and navigate regulatory processes and the export registration process.

This tailored support has significantly reduced the time taken for new exporters to achieve export registration (from approximately 10 months to 3 months), helping businesses access international markets sooner and realise the benefits of export opportunities more quickly. At the same time, greater awareness of regulatory obligations supports stronger compliance outcomes across the sector.

## Improving climate reporting and transparency




Chief Sustainability Officer Network event in June 2026, featuring a panel with Finance, SBS and the Australian Climate Service.
Image: Finance

The APS is reducing emissions across its operations while improving transparency in climate reporting and disclosure. This work is progressing the APS Net Zero 2030 Target and is guided by the Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy.

In 2025–26, Finance strengthened Australia's whole-of-government approaches to emissions reporting and climate-related transparency. The work is helping entities report more consistently and better connect emissions data, climate risk management and emissions reduction planning.

Key achievements included:

- Launching the Emissions Data Portal, providing a secure and streamlined way for entities to submit emissions data. The portal helps improve data quality, validation and reporting efficiency. A trial with 19 Commonwealth entities helped test the portal and prepare for broader implementation for 2025–26.
- Expanding the Transparency Portal to include Commonwealth entities' climate disclosures and emissions inventories. New functionality supports standalone climate disclosure reports and emissions inventories as interrogable datasets, improving public access to climate-related information.

- Improving climate disclosure support through practical guidance, tailored advice, a climate disclosure review service and compliance checks of draft disclosures.
- Embedding emissions reduction planning across government. As of June 2026, every entity in-scope for the 2030 Target had developed an organisational Emissions Reduction Plan, outlining actions to reduce operational emissions.
- Building climate capability across the APS through the Climate Action in Government Operations Education Program on APS Learn. The program includes 8 e-learning courses covering practical aspects of climate action in government operations. A partnership with RMIT Online also delivered 2 Greening Government Microcredentials. These are helping build skills to apply climate considerations across areas such as property, fleet, procurement and emissions reporting.
- Strengthening collaboration across government through the Chief Sustainability Officer Network and the Climate Action in Government Operations Community of Practice. These forums support knowledge sharing, collaboration and access to guidance and resources. The Chief Sustainability Officer Network includes more than 100 participating Commonwealth entities and companies. The Community of Practice has more than 900 members across 174 Commonwealth entities and companies.

## See also in this report

AI and digital innovation, Innovative approaches to data in the Australian Antarctic Data Centre, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 162.

Serving the Community, Community engagement shapes the future of the Murray-Darling Basin, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 133.

## Find out more

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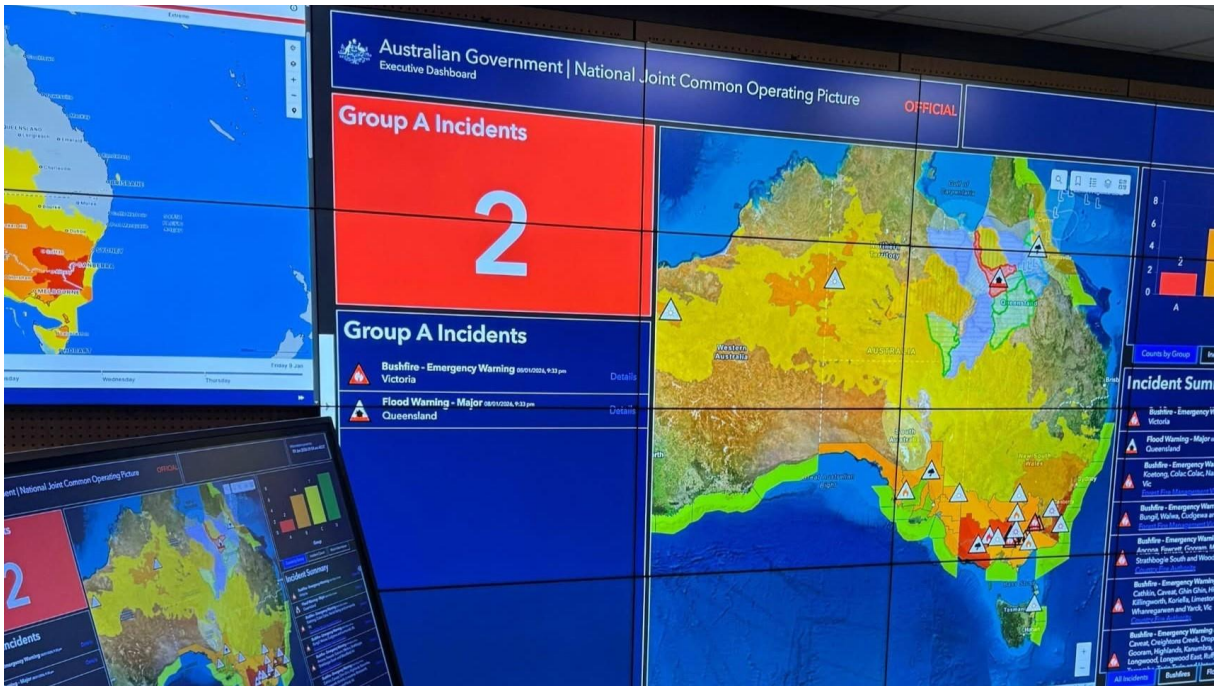
# Connected and ready – national emergency preparedness

Australia faces an increasingly complex emergency risk environment, with natural disasters occurring alongside evolving cyber, health, infrastructure and security threats. The scale, frequency and interconnected nature of these events highlight the importance of preparedness, resilience and the ability to respond rapidly when crises occur. Advances in technology, data sharing and cross-jurisdictional collaboration create opportunities for the APS to strengthen national readiness and improve outcomes for communities before, during and after emergencies.

## Protecting Australians through integrated crisis management




The National Situation Room.

Image: National Emergency Management Agency

Australians rely on governments to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies. The National Situation Room (NSR), operated by the National Emergency Management Agency, plays a key role in supporting that response.

In 2025–26, the NSR and National Security Hotline teams:

- produced 678 notifications and situational products
- handled more than 28,578 hotline contacts
- supported 6 Crisis Coordination Team activations spanning 199 days.

The NSR also supported national coordination arrangements for significant domestic and international events. Operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the NSR monitors emerging risks, assesses potential impacts and supports national coordination during significant events. This helps governments prepare for and respond to severe weather, bushfires, floods, tropical cyclones, international emergencies and other complex crises.

The NSR brings together situational awareness, crisis intelligence and planning capabilities in a single environment. Working alongside specialists from the Bureau of Meteorology and Defence, NSR staff maintain a shared understanding of emerging situations and provide timely advice to decision makers.

This integrated model enables information to move quickly from monitoring and analysis to planning and action. It helps governments identify emerging risks, understand potential consequences and consider response options before situations escalate.

Partnership is central to the NSR's work. To support information sharing and coordinated responses during major events, the NSR works closely with state and territory governments, emergency services, industry partners and Australian Government agencies. This includes Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Geoscience Australia, and Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The value of this approach is particularly evident during periods of multiple concurrent emergencies. By drawing on expertise from across jurisdictions and sectors, the NSR can maintain a continuous national capability while supporting several events at the same time.

## Helping Australians access disaster support when most needed

Services Australia and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) are working together to make it easier for Australians to access support before, during and after a natural disaster. By combining their expertise, networks and channels, these agencies are improving how information, warnings and services reach communities, regardless of the disaster or where they live.

Services Australia deployed service officers and specialist staff to recovery centres in 36 locations, providing support to 5,800 people during the 2025–26 disaster response. Their mobile service centres visited 11 communities and supported more than 200 people to claim disaster assistance and connect with social work services, counselling and other government and community services. A total of 28,100 claims were received and $17.1 million dollars paid to customers across 5 disaster events activated during the 2025–26 Higher Risk Weather Season.

The collaboration is helping government better understand the experiences of different communities and design services that meet their needs. For example, Services Australia has shared initial findings from its research into the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during emergencies with NEMA. The research identified opportunities to improve service delivery, communication products and claims processes. These opportunities will inform improvements to emergency management planning, culturally safe service design, community engagement and future co-design activities. This will help ensure disaster support is more accessible, responsive and aligned to the needs of First Nations communities.

The agencies are also working together to support NEMA’s AusAlert team through community-based trials and the national test. Services Australia is using its specialist teams, community networks and digital channels to help Australians understand, prepare for and participate in the trials. This includes supporting more inclusive engagement with:

- First Nations peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- older Australians
- people with disability
- people affected by family and domestic violence.

This approach helps make emergency warnings more accessible and inclusive, particularly for communities that may face greater barriers to receiving or acting on information. It also provides an opportunity to test what works with communities and improve services before they are needed at scale. Clearer processes and better coordination can help Australians access support faster and more consistently, supporting earlier recovery. Shared planning, communication and community engagement also help agencies respond more effectively as needs change during a disaster.

The work demonstrates how APS agencies can combine their capabilities to deliver services that are responsive, scalable and accessible. Services Australia's collaborative approach improves the timeliness, consistency and accessibility of support provided to disaster-affected communities. Strong governance arrangements, regular preparedness activities, established communication channels and real-time information sharing help agencies coordinate responses. It also helps agencies reduce duplication and support faster decision-making during emergencies.

By continuing to share insights, test approaches with communities and improve service pathways, Services Australia and NEMA are strengthening Australia’s national disaster response. They are also helping communities prepare, respond and recover.

## Radiological and nuclear emergency preparedness

Preparing and planning for radiological or nuclear incidents is vital to protecting Australians and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation. Emergency preparedness and response is a key role of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.

In April 2026, the agency published the Australian Government Radiological and Nuclear Events Plan, marking an important step in strengthening the nation's emergency management arrangements. The plan embeds radiological and nuclear emergency management within the Australian Government's broader all-hazards approach to crisis response. This ensures that radiological and nuclear incidents can be managed through the same coordinated national arrangements used for other emergencies. It also helps governments respond effectively and proportionately when needed.



Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency staff in the Radiation Emergency Coordination Centre, Melbourne, during the 2025 Middle East conflict. Image: Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency

At the centre of these arrangements is the Radiation Emergency Coordination Centre, based in Melbourne. The centre provides a national coordination capability during significant radiological or nuclear events. Drawing information from jurisdictions, national systems and international partners, it supports understanding of emerging situations and enables consistent, evidence-based advice across government. It also maintains strong links with international organisations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, helping Australia remain informed about global developments and best practice.

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency works closely with a range of entities to support preparedness and response arrangements. Entities include Foreign Affairs and Trade, the National Emergency Management Agency, state and territory governments, and other specialist agencies like the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation. Ongoing collaboration helps ensure Australian Government capabilities are integrated with jurisdictional emergency management systems and can be deployed effectively when required.

This approach reflects a shared understanding that radiological and nuclear incidents may occur alongside other emergencies, such as natural disasters or industrial accidents. Integrating specialist expertise into broader emergency management arrangements strengthens coordination and supports a unified response across multiple hazards.

National preparedness activities help build resilience across governments, emergency services, industry operators and local communities. Clear plans, established partnerships and well-defined coordination mechanisms improve readiness, strengthen decision-making and support faster mobilisation when required.

## See also in this report

A healthy and safe Australia, National coordination for access to essential medicines, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 113.

Protecting the nation and the region, Critical minerals build Australia's economic and national security, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 90.

Protecting the nation and the region, National Fuel Security Plan, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 88.

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# A healthy and safe Australia

Australians need the right care, in the right place, at the right time. The APS is working with states and territories, healthcare providers and community organisations to make it easier for people to access healthcare, medicines and essential services, while improving the health systems Australians depend on.

At the same time, the health system faces growing demand, demographic change, more complex conditions and workforce pressures, as well as the challenge of providing services across a large country.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics are helping people get treatment closer to home for urgent but non-life-threatening conditions. The new 1800MEDICARE service, launched on 1 January 2026, provides free health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, connecting people with registered nurses and appropriate care options.

Medicines have also become more affordable. Changes to bulk billing incentives have expanded access, while the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme general patient co-payment fell to $25 from 1 January 2026. New and amended medicine listings have also expanded access to treatment.

Digital health initiatives are helping to make healthcare safer and more connected. By 2026, the Australian Digital Health Agency's Cyber Champions Program has participants across more than 100 healthcare organisations helping to protect Australians' health information and support safe, connected care. The Australian Immunisation Register provides a national vaccination record, while the Australian UDI Database improves visibility of medical devices. From July 2026, manufacturers must label devices with a unique identifier.

The APS is also helping the health system respond to challenges such as medicine and medical supply shortages. For example, the Therapeutic Goods Administration coordinated the national response to the intravenous fluid shortage, working with governments, suppliers and healthcare providers to resolve the shortage in 2026.

Australians experiencing disadvantage, family and domestic violence, or other complex challenges are receiving better support through new pathways to seek redress, specialised training for frontline workers, expanded social security debt waivers and tailored service plans.

# Accessible and affordable primary healthcare

Australia's healthcare system continues to evolve to meet community needs and manage growing demand. Strengthening Medicare through national urgent care clinics, 1800MEDICARE, increased bulk billing, and cheaper medicines is improving access to healthcare for all Australians.

## Fast, bulk-billed treatment without the hospital trip




The Medicare Urgent Care Clinics program won the 2025 Institute of Public Administration Spirit of Service Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation People's Choice Award.
Image: Health, Disability and Ageing

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics mean millions of Australians now have faster access to treatment for urgent but non-life-threatening conditions, reducing demand on hospital emergency departments. Patients are treated for concerns like minor fractures, wounds and burns. Extended opening hours and no out-of-pocket costs mean patients in need have an alternative to busy hospital emergency departments.

The clinics are a product of Health, Disability and Ageing collaborating across federal, state and territory governments, primary health networks and service providers to make it easier to access healthcare for millions of Australians. Providing care for people with urgent, but less complex conditions, supports hospitals to focus on treating more serious conditions.

Since the first clinic opened in June 2023 and to 30 June 2026, more than 3.3 million presentations were recorded across Australia. Interim evaluations conducted in 2025–26 indicate that the clinics are reaching intended patients and contributing to a reduction in demand for emergency departments. Evaluation findings include:

- An estimated 10% decrease in comparable emergency department presentations, suggesting that clinics are helping divert some people with less urgent health needs from emergency departments and into more appropriate care.

- Around 30% of visits occur on weekends, with survey findings demonstrating that access to after-hours care outside traditional general practitioner hours is a key reason for visiting an urgent care clinic.
- Over 1 in 4 visits have taken place on the weekend and approximately 25% of visits occur after 5 pm on weekdays. This highlights the value of extended operating hours for people who need care outside standard business hours.

APS staff in the Urgent Care Branch and across the department play a critical role in delivering and monitoring the Medicare Urgent Care Clinic program. They achieve this by combining data driven decision-making, stakeholder collaboration and strong governance.

## 1800MEDICARE – 24/7 health support with a call or click

On 1 January 2026, 1800MEDICARE launched as a free, 24/7 national health service providing health information, advice and connections to appropriate care. People can speak to a registered nurse by calling 1800MEDICARE (1800 633 422), visiting medicare.gov.au/1800 or using the 1800MEDICARE app.

Delivered through Healthdirect Australia, registered nurses assess symptoms, provide health advice and connect callers with appropriate care. Depending on clinical need and time of day, callers may be referred to their general practitioner (GP), a Medicare Urgent Care Clinic, an emergency department or a 1800MEDICARE GP telehealth consultation. The service provides an alternative pathway to care, particularly in the after-hours period and in rural, regional and remote communities.

Between 1 January and 30 June 2026, a total of 699,118 people received free health information and advice from a nurse through 1800MEDICARE and associated Healthdirect services. Of these, 33,071 went on to have a free telehealth consult with a 1800MEDICARE GP. The service also helped 101,316 people avoid an unnecessary trip to the emergency department or 000 call, safely diverting 63.3% of people who intended to go to an emergency department or call 000.

The 1800MEDICARE app provides people with secure access to their electronic prescriptions and Active Script List, and key health information uploaded to their My Health Record. The app and website also provide access to digital tools, including a Service Finder and Symptom Checker. These tools allow people to find and book services, check their symptoms and search for trusted health information.

## Medicare incentives for more bulk billing




Staff at a recently registered Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program practice, with Medicare Bulk Billing Practice signage. Image: Health, Disability and Ageing

Changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule have expanded eligibility for bulk billing incentive items to all Medicare-eligible patients. A new incentive program, the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program, supports increased bulk billing. It does so by providing participating practices with an additional 12.5% incentive payment on eligible MBS services when they bulk bill all eligible patients. This is shared between the practice and the general practitioner (GP).

Delayed or avoided GP visits can result in poorer health outcomes and increased demand on hospitals due to preventable conditions. In recent years, declining bulk billing rates and rising out-of-pocket costs have affected access to primary care. After hitting a high-point during the COVID-19 pandemic, the bulk billing rate for GP non-referred attendances fell from 88.8% to 77.3% in 2025. Over the same period, total patient out-of-pocket costs more than doubled, from $780 million to $1.66 billion. So did the proportion of people delaying or deferring GP care due to cost, from 3.5% to 8.8%.[3]

Expanding bulk billing supports earlier diagnosis and treatment in primary and preventive healthcare. From 1 November 2025, bulk billing incentives became available for all Medicare patients. Previously, eligibility was limited to children under 16 and people holding Commonwealth concession cards. These measures have increased the national GP non-referred attendance bulk billing rate. It rose to 84.1% during April to June 2026, a 4.9 percentage point increase compared to the same period 12 months before. Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the largest year-on-year quarterly jump in bulk billing in 20 years. As a result, approximately 97% of Australians are now within a 20-minute drive of a registered Medicare bulk billing practice, improving access to affordable care for all Australians.

APS agencies, including Health, Disability and Ageing and Services Australia, collaborated closely with health sector partners to design, implement and deliver on the intended outcomes of the policy. To support participation in the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program, participation, Health, Disability

[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). Patient Experiences, 2023–24, Australian Bureau of Statistics

and Ageing has developed tools to help practices assess eligibility, understand the financial benefits of participating and monitor progress towards incentive payments. These include the:

- Bulk Billing Incentives Calculator with prefilled data to help busy healthcare providers and businesses calculate their expected incentive revenue
- Eligibility Assessment Forecast Tool to support practices track progress against program requirements and forecast their eligibility for incentive payments.

The Bulk Billing for All Australians Mapping Tool allows patients to enter their postcode and find a bulk-billing practice near them, making it easier to access affordable health care services.

APS staff delivered targeted communications, including more than 6,600 tailored letters through Health Professional Online Services. Letters explained the reforms and provided indicative financial modelling. Partnerships helped target communications and support across the sector. This included with the Australian Association of Practice Management, the PHN Cooperative, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and other networks.

A national webinar series brought together policy, data and service delivery experts to turn complex policy and modelling information into practical guidance. More than 4,000 people registered and nearly 3,000 attended, helping GPs and practice managers make informed decisions.

Together, these efforts strengthened practice readiness, supported diverse primary care providers and contributed to strong early uptake of the program, exceeding initial projections.

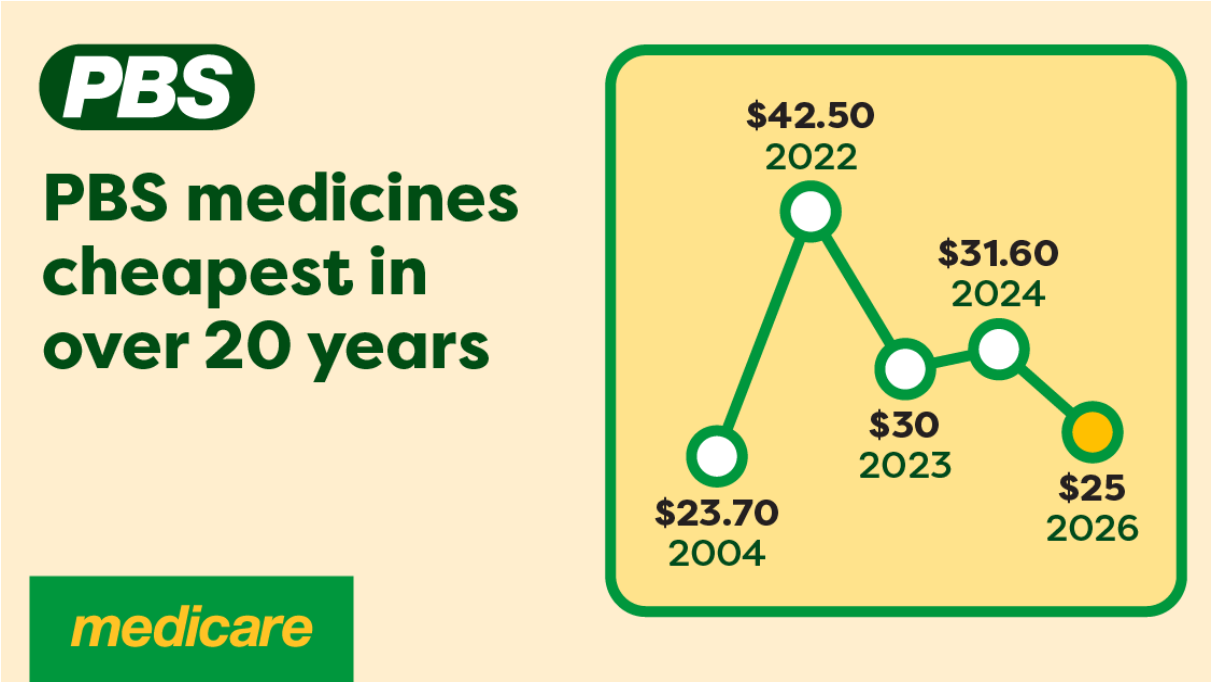
## Safeguarding access to affordable and high-quality medicines

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme helps Australians access medicines at a lower cost. From 1 January 2026, the co-payment for general patients fell to $25, alongside new and amended listings for a range of medicines.

Cheaper medicines support more Australian patients to fill the scripts that their health practitioners have said are important for their health. This ensures that more Australians have timely, safe and reliable access to the effective high-quality medicines they need. At a public health level, reforms that improve patient access to the right medication can reduce the burden of chronic disease and deliver better health outcomes.

People not taking their medicines as prescribed has significant impacts on patient health outcomes and health system expenditure. In 2024–25, the Australia Bureau of Statistics' Patient Experience Survey showed that cost was a barrier to filling prescription medications for 7.5% of Australians. The 2025–26 survey data was not available when this report was prepared.

These reforms support Australians to purchase the medicines they need. Reducing the co-payment to $25 provides a saving of over 20% on the maximum charge for general patients who need medicines that previously cost $31.60 per prescription. New and amended medicines in 2025–26 included the world's first single PBS listings for nivolumab (Opdivo®) and ipilimumab (Yervoy®) to cover multiple advanced cancers. This makes it easier and faster for patients to access immunotherapy.




Infographic from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme price reduction campaign.
Image: Health, Disability and Ageing

Delivering cheaper medicines for Australians is a joint effort between Health, Disability and Ageing and Services Australia. APS implementation of the $25 co-payment initiative was supported by a public communications campaign featuring a multi-pronged media strategy. Listing of new and amended medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme by Health, Disability and Ageing helped all eligible Australians. It did so by providing reliable, timely, and affordable access to high-quality, clinically effective, cost-effective medicines recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

## See also in this report

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# A safe, reliable health system

A safe and reliable health system people can depend on is essential to the wellbeing of Australians. The APS plays an important role in ensuring the health system is safe, dependable and capable of delivering care when people need it.

Across the health system, APS agencies are putting trust, integrity and stewardship into practice. Their work helps strengthen patient safety, secure essential supplies, build resilience and support effective public health oversight.

Good stewardship means looking beyond immediate challenges and preparing the health system for the future. It means working with health professionals, providers, industry and communities to identify risks, respond to emerging issues and keep essential services operating.

The APS also supports strong systems and safeguards that help protect patients and maintain confidence in health services. Effective oversight, reliable information and clear accountability help identify problems early and support better decisions.

## Strengthening cyber resilience across the health system




Infographic from the Digital Health Cyber Champion Network.

Image: Australian Digital Health Agency

The Australian Digital Health Agency launched the Cyber Champions Program in August 2024 to strengthen cyber security across the health system. By 2026, it had built a network of 141 participants across 113 healthcare organisations, helping protect Australians' health information and support safe, connected care. This is increasingly important as Australians rely on digital health services to access care, share information and support clinical decisions.

The Cyber Champions Program equips healthcare professionals to become trusted local champions for cyber safe practice. Interactive, instructor-led online sessions cover real-world risks, including:

- phishing and ransomware
- business email compromise

- social media and digital footprints
- supply chain risk and vendor management.

Participants learn to recognise threats, protect systems and information, support incident response planning and promote safer cyber behaviours in their workplaces.

The program's community-led model is central to its impact. Rather than treating cyber security as a one-off compliance task, it connects national expertise with frontline experience, helping organisations turn national guidance into practical action. Participants understand the pressures and risks in their own settings, while the agency provides structured training, practical resources, current advice and national leadership.

Participants span the breadth of Australia's health system, including:

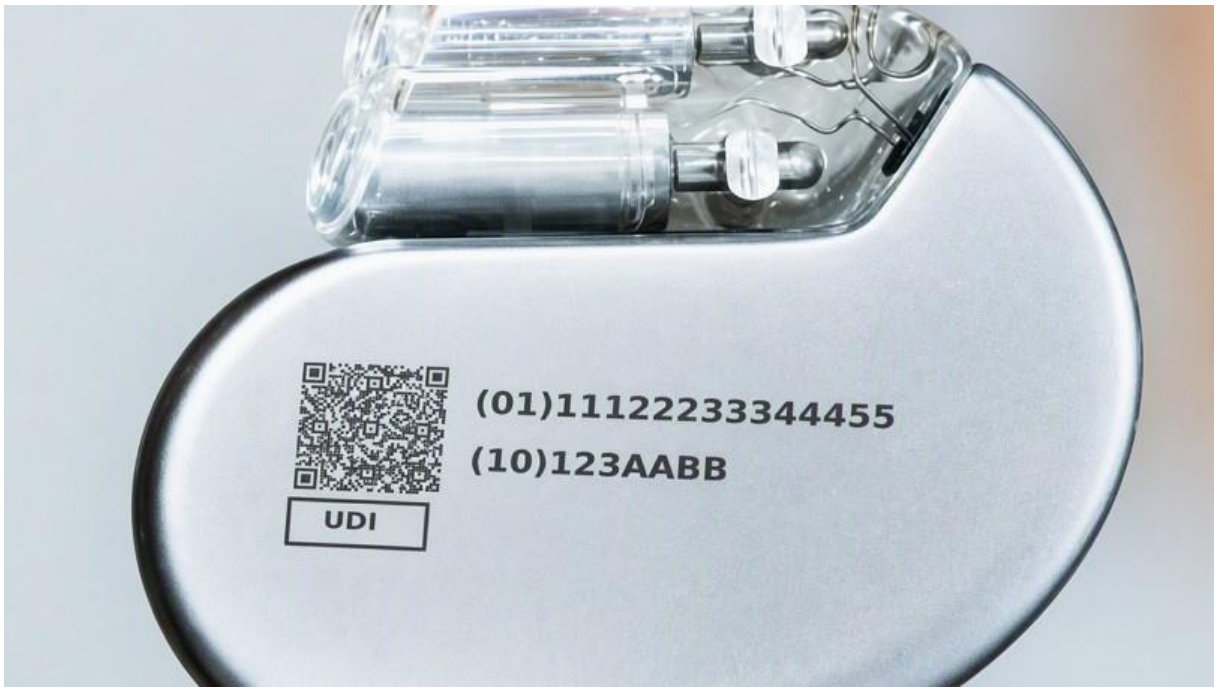
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- aged care and disability services
- allied health
- ambulance services
- general practice
- health software providers
- hospitals
- medical imaging
- pathology
- pharmacy
- Primary Health Networks
- specialist healthcare providers

This broad participation helps strengthen cyber capability across metropolitan, regional and smaller practice settings.

The program is offered at no cost, reducing barriers to participation and supporting equitable access to cyber capability. After induction, champions remain connected through the Cyber Champions Network, receiving ongoing resources, updates and opportunities to share insights. This helps make cyber security part of everyday practice and supports a stronger, shared cyber culture across the sector.

For Australians, stronger cyber resilience means greater confidence that personal health information is protected, and digital systems support safe, connected care when services are under pressure.

# Building a safer medical device identification system




Australian Unique Device Identification system.

Image: Health, Disability and Ageing

When a medical device such as a pacemaker or hip joint fails, every minute counts. Australia's health system has historically faced challenges quickly identifying affected devices, where they were used and which patients received them.

Through amendments to the Therapeutic Goods (Medical Devices) Regulations 2002, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) introduced unique device identification requirements for medical devices. From 1 July 2026, medical device manufacturers are required to label devices with a unique identifier. This identifier and related information are available through the Australian Unique Device Identification Database (AusUDID), a free, public source of data for healthcare providers, patients and registries. Together, the identifier and data form the Unique Device Identification (UDI) system, providing an internationally consistent way to identify medical devices in Australia.

The TGA designed the UDI as 4 connected streams: regulation, digital delivery, stakeholder engagement and healthcare adoption. Progressing these streams together joined regulatory reform, digital infrastructure and sustained collaboration across the health system. This created a national data capability that supports safer care and better decision-making.

The TGA established the regulatory framework and delivered the AusUDID, which continues to grow and evolve. More than 310,000 device records are now in the database, demonstrating strong industry adoption and building a public source of trusted device information. Manufacturers provide the UDI through device labels and patient implant cards, while healthcare providers and clinical quality registries can record the information in clinical systems.

Delivery involved international device regulators, device manufacturers, Australian device suppliers, hospitals, clinicians, clinical quality registries, state and territory governments, patients and consumers. Regulatory, digital and policy teams worked together to ensure the system was technically robust and practical to use. Real-world pilots and early adopter programs also helped test UDI in clinical settings and refine the approach using local and international experience.

For Australians, the UDI delivers its greatest value when safety issues occur. Healthcare providers and registries can use it to accurately identify affected devices and patients, enabling faster action to stop supply, reduce harm and support safer clinical decision-making.

For patients, the UDI provides a clearer long-term record of implanted devices. It can be included on patient implant cards, shared with a general practitioner or recorded in My Health Record.

By making device information publicly available at no cost, AusUDID is laying the foundation for a more connected, transparent and data-driven healthcare system.

## National coordination for access to essential medicines



Team members from the Medicine Shortages Section, Therapeutic Goods Administration.
Image: Health, Disability and Ageing

The Medicine Shortages Section at the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), part of Health, Disability and Ageing, monitors Australia's medicine supply. It also works to reduce the impact of shortages on patients and healthcare professionals. Medicine shortages can have a real impact on health and wellbeing, making access to the medicines Australians need essential.

A recent example is the response to the intravenous (IV) fluid shortage, a complex disruption affecting all parts of the health system that commenced in 2024 and resolved in 2026. Medicine Shortages Section rapidly assessed and approved 29 overseas alternative IV fluid products. It also coordinated national supply modelling to inform conservation measures and maintain patient access.

The response brought together:

- state and territory health departments
- 9 sponsors – 3 major IV fluid sponsors and 6 supplying overseas alternatives
- National IV Fluids Response Group
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- international medicine regulators.

Alongside managing the shortage, the Medicine Shortages Section progressed legislative reforms throughout 2025 and 2026. It did so to strengthen medicine shortage reporting, improve visibility of critical medicines and support earlier intervention. The reforms team worked alongside the operations team to update the Reportable Medicines Determination to bring IV fluids into the reporting framework. This was supported by a public consultation and significantly improved visibility and monitoring of IV fluid supply in Australia.

The Medicine Shortages Section consolidated information through national forums and communication channels to support a shared understanding of potential impacts and risks. For the IV fluid shortage, these included:

- National IV Fluids Response Group
- Medicine Availability Working Group
- Medicine Shortages Stakeholder Forum
- TGA public alerts.

The TGA met with stakeholders in forums more than 40 times across 2024 to 2026. Medicine availability modelling was conducted 6 times to assess Australia's IV fluid supplies. Modelling relied on the voluntary sharing of supply and demand data from sponsors, jurisdictions and healthcare providers. This demonstrated the strong relationships and trust the TGA's Medicine Shortages team has built across the sector.

The TGA's response ensured Australians continued to have access to essential hospital medicines during a prolonged global supply disruption. Supply has now stabilised, and the shortage was resolved on 22 June 2026.

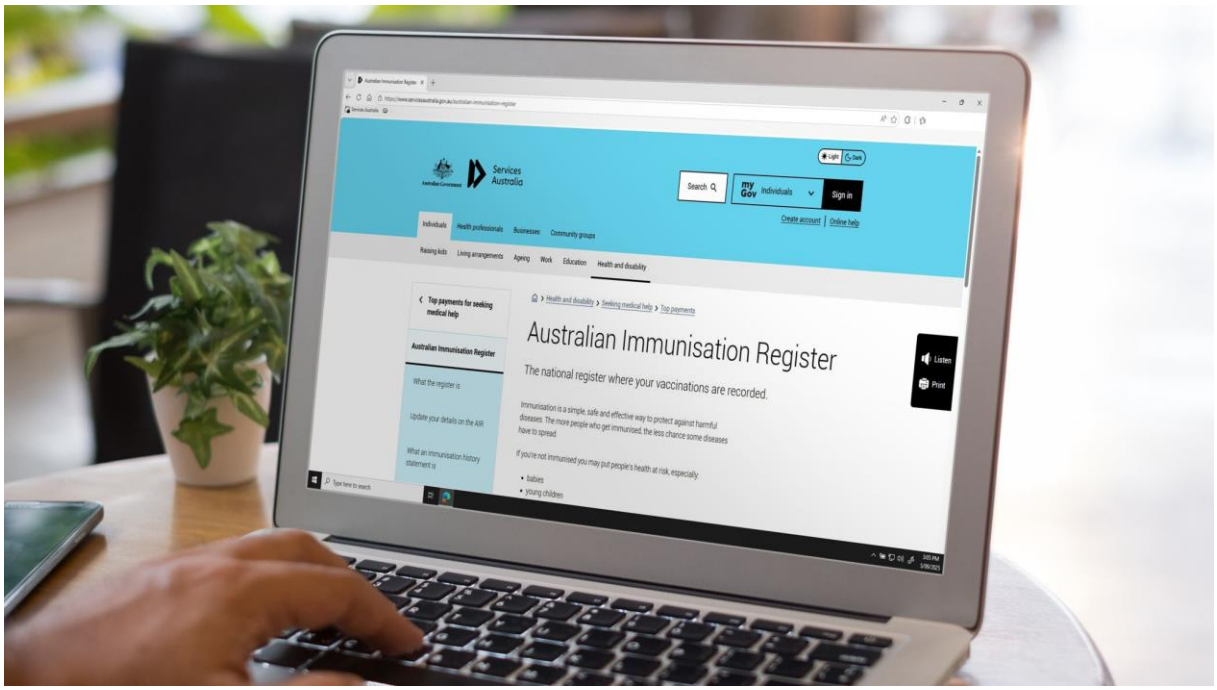
Reforms to include IV saline fluids in the Reportable Medicines Determination improved visibility of supply and strengthened the TGA's ongoing monitoring. This has improved Australia's ability to identify risks earlier and respond more effectively to future disruptions.

## Australian Immunisation Register

The Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) is a national system that records vaccinations for everyone in Australia. Services Australia delivers it in partnership with Health, Disability and Ageing, vaccination providers, state and territory health authorities, and a broad network of health, research and technology partners.

Taking an integrated approach to immunisation, the AIR connects individuals, healthcare providers and governments through a single, trusted source of vaccination information. This helps Australians access their immunisation history, receive reminders when vaccinations are overdue, and obtain proof of vaccination for school, childcare, work and travel. Healthcare providers can view a person's vaccination history to support informed clinical decisions. Governments can use AIR data to monitor vaccination coverage and respond to emerging health risks.

The AIR evolved from a childhood register into a whole-of-life system in 2016. This change created a more complete view of immunisation across a person's life and strengthened Australia's ability to plan and respond to public health needs.




Laptop displaying the Services Australia Australian Immunisation Register information page.
Image: Services Australia

The system relies on collaboration across government and the broader health system. Within Services Australia, multidisciplinary teams work together across provider engagement, policy and governance, operations, digital delivery and system improvement. External partners contribute policy direction, immunisation data, digital integration, research, and specialist expertise. Regular engagement and shared decision-making align policy, service delivery and system capability.

This collaborative model also supports continuous improvement. Engagement with vaccination providers helps improve data quality and reporting, while partnerships with software vendors enable secure and efficient reporting from clinical systems. Research and health partners provide insights that help identify risks, improve vaccination coverage and inform public health responses.

The AIR has supported records for more than 44 million individuals and captured more than 366 million vaccination events. It has generated more than 241 million immunisation history statements, including up to 3.2 million in a single day during periods of high demand.

AIR data also supports national immunisation monitoring and planning, with just over 93% of children aged 0 to 6 years fully vaccinated in 2026 (as at 31 Aug 2026).

By bringing together people, data, digital systems and expertise, the AIR provides a simpler and more connected service for Australians. It does so while supporting better public health decisions and more responsive government.

## See also in this report

A healthy and safe Australia, Safer interactions while supporting customers with complex needs, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 121.

A healthy and safe Australia, Safeguarding access to affordable and high-quality medicines, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 107.

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# Protection and support for people experiencing vulnerability

People can face times when navigating government systems feels difficult, overwhelming or unequal. The APS plays an important role in making sure they can access the support and services they need, particularly when experiencing vulnerability.

APS agencies work to make systems easier to navigate and respond to people's different circumstances. This includes providing clear information, accessible services and appropriate support for those who may be dealing with complex or traumatic experiences.

Good public administration recognises that people do not always start from the same place. Services need to be designed around their needs and delivered with care, fairness and respect.

Across the APS, this work helps people understand their options, access essential services and have their needs considered when decisions are made. It also helps agencies identify where systems may create barriers and improve how services respond.

These efforts demonstrate how integrity, stewardship and a focus on people can make government services more accessible, fair and responsive for those who need support most.

## Improving outcomes for survivors through the new application pathway



National Redress Scheme team members. Back row, from left: Jaimee Cordina, Todd Wilson, Amy David, Melissa Cavenagh, Nerrida Poke, Amelia Brassington, Kelly Ters, Melissa Sleegers, Tiana Cassimaty. Front row, from left: Tenille Vaughan, Emily Gervaise, Laura Creighton, Tina Buecher, Bradie Logue, Keiran Evans, Olivia van Woerden. Absent: Amber Hidasi, Sarah Hussein, Jasmin Lyneham, Jess Mercia, Tori Panoutsopoulos, Kris van Oorde.
Image: Department of Social Services

The National Redress Scheme was established in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It supports people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse in many ways. This includes through:

- redress payments
- counselling and psychological care
- a direct personal response from the responsible institution where chosen (which gives the person an opportunity to have their experience of abuse and its impacts acknowledged in a meaningful way).

Introduced in February 2026 by the Department of Social Services, a new application pathway is helping improve the experience of people seeking redress. It is also enabling new applications to move through the process quickly, predictably and with greater care.

Applicant experience is already improving. While applications across the scheme take an average of 16 months to finalise, the new application cohort managed through the pathway has reduced this timeframe to 72 days.

Thirteen weeks after the scheme launched, 1,322 applications were allocated to end-to-end processing. This showed strong demand for the scheme and the value of focused operational reform for survivors navigating a complex service system.

The application pathway combines rapid resolution, proactive telephone contact and fewer handovers. By focusing on impact rather than process completion, it:

- gives staff clearer visibility of application progress
- strengthens triage and decision-making authority
- uses data and quality assurance to support consistent outcomes
- reduces handovers between teams
- applies a consistent, trauma-informed approach
- keeps staff focused on applicant outcomes.

For survivors, the pathway means less time waiting for an outcome and a more coordinated application experience. It also provides a practical model for managing complex applications in a way that improves visibility, supports timely action and reduces unnecessary delays.

While the pathway focuses on managing incoming applications, other specialised teams continue to progress applications on hand, enabling multiple streams of work to progress concurrently. Importantly, lessons and improvements identified through the new application pathway are being incorporated more broadly across scheme operations. This includes application processing approaches used for existing applications, older applications and complex cases.

The National Redress Scheme began in 2018 and is due to close in 2028. Its application pathway provides a practical, scalable model, while providing timely and consistent support for survivors.

## Enhancing police responses to family, domestic and sexual violence

The Attorney-General's Department has been working with state and territory police organisations, as well as government, academic and non-government stakeholders, on a new national training package. A first-of-its-kind, the new package enhances police responses to victims and survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV).



Honour, Enhance, Acknowledge, Respond training participants from South Australia Police.

Image: Attorney-General's Department

The HEAR (Honour, Enhance, Acknowledge, Respond) Training Program is an immersive education package. It is informed by research expertise, local training needs, and the experiences of FDSV victims and survivors. One in 4 women experience violence by a partner or family member, and one in 5 experience sexual violence. With these statistics in mind, police play a critical role in ensuring victims and survivors are safe and that perpetrators are held to account.

HEAR training uses virtual reality and 360-degree video case studies to explore the experiences of FDSV victims and survivors and identify opportunities to achieve better outcomes. Police receive training on topics including:

- identifying the primary aggressor to reduce instances of misidentification
- understanding coercive control
- recognising indicators that can help identify more subtle forms of FDSV, such as technology-facilitated abuse.

The training program also includes content on culturally safe policing practices to minimise retraumatisation.

HEAR training is delivered through facilitated face-to-face sessions, facilitated virtual sessions, and online self-paced learning through a secure, custom-built learning management system.

The development of the training package represents a truly innovative and collaborative effort involving community, not-for-profit, non-government, academic and government stakeholders. Extensive consultation, research and testing ensured the package meets the needs of police operating

in diverse contexts. It ensured the package, reflects best-practice evidence in adult learning. It also ensured the package incorporates the experiences of people with lived experience of FDSV who have sought assistance from, or had interactions with, police. This includes, but is not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

This training is set to be delivered to thousands of police officers across Australia throughout 2026.

## Social security debt waiver laws and people experiencing vulnerability.

Changes to social security debt waiver laws are improving outcomes for people experiencing vulnerability. In November 2025, the government passed reforms that expanded Services Australia's ability to waive debts in special circumstances and increased the threshold for waiving small debts for the first time in 30 years.

The special circumstance changes took effect from 5 December 2025. In 2025–26, a total of 14,624 debts were waived, an increase of almost 2,450 from 2024–25.

The small debt waiver increase took effect from 20 March 2026. On 25 March, a one-off waiver of potential debts with a value less than $250 resulted in more than 970,000 potential debts being removed from the backlog. In total, 1,205,567 small debts were waived in 2025–26.

The reforms enable Services Australia to better respond to people in complex situations when considering if a debt should be waived. Such situations include family and domestic violence, coercive control, and financial abuse. Often these challenges co-occur with other barriers to service access such as mental ill-health, language barriers and social isolation. Reforms also extend to customers experiencing natural disasters and other serious life pressures.

This work was delivered through strong collaboration between Services Australia and its policy partner, the Department of Social Services. Teams from across both agencies contributed policy and legislative advice, frontline operational insight, technical expertise, quality assurance, customer insight, and communication support. Together, these agencies simplified guidance, improved decision-making pathways, updated operational materials, and introduced clearer communication for customers. This coordinated approach helped staff apply the new provisions consistently while better supporting people in vulnerable situations.

To support consistent decision-making and provide the right support to staff and customers, delivery was rolled out in 2 stages. For the first 6 months, requests under the new legislation were triaged to a specialist multidisciplinary team comprising skilled and trained staff, including social workers. Staff received targeted family and domestic violence training. The team worked closely with Indigenous and Remote Servicing areas to consider the needs of First Nations and remote customers.

The staged approach provided early insight into real customer experiences and allowed feedback from cases to shape practical improvements to the final process. It also enabled close monitoring of implementation, the capture of lessons learned, and refinement of processes before broader rollout.

These reforms ensure that people experiencing hardship and serious vulnerability are treated with fairness, dignity and care. They also strengthen trust in government by demonstrating that the agency responds to individual circumstances in a practical and compassionate way.

## Safer interactions while supporting customers with complex needs

Services Australia tailors service delivery to individual circumstances while maintaining staff safety and service integrity.

Personalised Services is a specialised management stream within Services Australia. Its contact officers provide intensive phone-based support to customers with complex needs, challenging behaviours or extreme vulnerability. Customers may have limited access to support if they are experiencing:

- banking barriers
- family and domestic violence
- homelessness
- incarceration
- lack of identification
- mental health concerns
- or other circumstances.

Specialised contact officers use a combination of risk management, trauma-informed engagement, tailored service planning and advocacy to improve outcomes for vulnerable Australians. This work supports access to income support and identifies systemic barriers affecting customers with complex needs.

Collaboration is key. Officers partner closely with multiple entities to address housing instability, financial exclusion, welfare concerns and access to health care. This includes partnerships with social workers, allied health professionals, specialist teams and external partners, including banks, community organisations, health services, legal advocates, police, correctional services, NDIS providers and other government agencies.

A recent shift in practice for officers has been the adoption of a strengths-based approach, supported by tailored training from a psychologist. The introduction of vicarious resilience is recognising the positive impacts of seeing people respond to and recover from life's challenges. It has helped officers acknowledge customer strengths, resilience and capability, rather than focusing solely on trauma and vulnerability. It has also strengthened staff wellbeing.

Beyond resolving enquiries, officers help protect access to income, housing stability, safety and government support. By coordinating tailored assistance and advocating across services, officers reduce risk, improve outcomes and contribute to safer interactions. The approach builds trust, strengthens accessibility and provides valuable insight into the challenges faced by some of Australia's most vulnerable customers

## See also in this report

Serving the community, Making tax and superannuation systems more accessible for people experiencing vulnerability, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 129.

## Find out more

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# Serving the community

Across Australia and around the world, APS teams deliver services, implement programs and support communities. Although their work differs across locations and agencies, they are united by a common purpose: improving outcomes for Australians.

The Serving the Community stories show what that looks like in practice. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how APS agencies are using evidence, technology, community engagement and collaboration to deliver better services and outcomes for Australians.

The Department of Education's First Five Years project brought together information on early childhood education and care, service quality and children's development outcomes. For the first time in Australia, this information was linked with family, social, economic and health data, providing a better understanding of the factors that influence children's early learning and development.

At Services Australia, an Indigenous Service Officer in Western Australia identified a need for simpler and more culturally appropriate information to help families prepare for the birth of a child. Working with Aboriginal Medical Services, parent groups and family support organisations in regional and remote communities, the Services Australia team developed the Having a Baby Checklist. The resource turns frontline insight into practical support for First Nations families.

The Australian Taxation Office took a similar people-centred approach through its Vulnerability Framework, launched in October 2025. The framework helps ensure people using tax and superannuation services receive support that is accessible, inclusive and responsive to their circumstances. It reflects a broader focus across the APS on understanding the different barriers people can face when interacting with government.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) demonstrated the importance of listening directly to communities. Following the release of a discussion paper in February 2026, staff visited almost 100 towns, held more than 320 engagement sessions and spoke with nearly 2,900 people. By travelling more than 150,000 kilometres, MDBA brought together communities, industry, governments and First Nations peoples to help shape the future of water management in the Basin.

Collaboration is also supporting improvements beyond Australia. The Vehicle Standards team at the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts led the development of a United Nations regulation for Emergency Lane Keeping Systems. The new international standard supports technology designed to reduce serious road crashes, including run-off-road and head-on collisions.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs *Understanding the Veteran Experience Knowledge Translation Project* used insights from more than 500 workshop participants to better understand veterans' experiences, wellbeing, transition and access to support services. The department also developed CLIKChat, an artificial intelligence tool that helps staff quickly find and interpret complex policy information. Routine queries are resolved up to 91% faster, complex queries up to 11 times faster, and staff report saving up to 70 minutes each day.

The Australian War Memorial continued to create new ways for Australians to connect with their history. The opening of the Anzac Atrium and Anzac Hall expanded opportunities for visitors to engage

with Australia's military story, while improvements in collection management and technical capability helped protect and display nationally significant objects and keep exhibitions, education programs and commemorative spaces accessible to the public.

# Using integrated data to improve outcomes for Australian children




Left to right: Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen AO, with Education's Chief Data Officer, Dr Susie Kluth, and: Caroline Christenson, Lewis Cowie, Dr Hua Xia, Brendan Price and Dr Nicki Norris from the Integrated Data Analytics team. Image: Education

Led by Education's Integrated Data Analytics team, the First Five Years project used integrated data to identify the factors that shape child development and early learning outcomes.

For the first time in Australia, this flagship project brought together data on children's participation in early childhood education and care, the quality of those services, and children's development outcomes. It also linked this data to family, social, economic and health information, creating a unique evidence base to better understand the factors that influence child development.

Developed under the Data Integration Partnership for Australia, the First Five Years project brought together government and university partners. The Australian Bureau of Statistics assembled the data asset through the Person Linked Integrated Data Asset.

The project has contributed to the global evidence base on child development through academic publications and Education's final report. Its findings are helping inform policy and investment decisions in early childhood education and care, supporting efforts to improve quality and deliver better outcomes for Australian children. For example, the government's introduction of the 3 Day Guarantee for childcare this year was supported by evidence from the project.

The First Five Years project delivers significant public benefit by making high-quality child development research accessible to Australian families and communities. The public value of the research was further highlighted through prominent media coverage, including national television news, front-page coverage in a major newspaper, and online media.

Beyond its research findings, the project established enduring data-sharing partnerships and analytical capability across government and the research sector. These partnerships support ongoing access to

integrated datasets for secure research projects and future child-focused data initiatives that deliver public benefit.

The APS Data Awards recognised the project's impact by giving it the People's Choice Award. The project was also named a finalist in the Data Sharing and Partnerships category.

By strengthening the evidence base for early childhood policy and fostering collaboration across government and academia, the First Five Years project is helping improve decision-making and deliver better outcomes for Australia's children now and into the future.

## See also in this report

AI and digital innovation, Delivering better services through data-driven decisions, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 151.

Supporting Australia's economic future, Illuminating Australia's invisible industries, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 70.

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# Supporting first-time mothers in regional and remote communities




Having a baby checklist developed to support families in regional and remote communities.

Image: Services Australia

Having a baby can be daunting for any first-time mother. Young Indigenous women living in regional and remote communities face additional challenges that make it harder to access necessary government services when they most need them.

An Indigenous Service Officer from a Services Australia office in Western Australia noted that many first-time mothers did not have important and clear information on what they needed to do before and after their baby was born. For example, they lacked key identity documents, a Tax File Number and other details. This can delay access to essential payments and services such as Family Tax Benefit, Parenting Payment, Child Care Subsidy and Medicare.

Using frontline insights and data, the service officer took the initiative to develop a culturally appropriate resource to support community conversations. This confirmed the need for a simpler, culturally appropriate way to explain what families need to do before and after a baby is born.

The Having a Baby Checklist was subsequently developed. It involved engagement with Aboriginal Medical Services, parent groups and family support services in regional and remote communities. This collaboration reduced the risk of developing a resource that was accurate in policy terms but not practical for families or staff. Indigenous Service Officers brought to the initiative frontline experience and community insights. Leaders and program staff helped test and progress the proposal. Program areas checked the accuracy of payment and service information. The Indigenous Communications team supported clear, practical content suitable for broader use.

The result is a stronger, more relevant and accessible product that is easier to use in real service settings. The Having a Baby Checklist brings important Centrelink and Medicare information into one simple resource, including identity documents, birth registration, myGov and Medicare setup, and access to family payments and subsidies. It also helps staff and community workers have clearer, more consistent conversations with families at this important life stage.

For families in regional and remote communities where service access can be more complex, early support makes a practical difference. Families experience fewer delays, less confusion and earlier access to financial support and services. The initiative also shows how individuals can catalyse collaborations that bring operational experience, cultural understanding and program expertise together into a practical tool. In this case, the tool is one that supports staff, families and communities to work through important steps early.

## See also in this report

A healthy and safe Australia, 1800MEDICARE – 24/7 Health support with a call or click, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 106.

Supporting Australia's economic future, Creating jobs and economic opportunities in remote communities, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 84.

## Find out more

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# Making tax and superannuation systems more accessible for people experiencing vulnerability



Launch of the ATO Vulnerability Framework

Front row, from left: Helen Eade, Michelle Mathews, Commissioner Rob Heferen, AC Robert Thomson, Katie Abela, Chanara Fraser. Back row, from left: DC Karen Foat, DC Anna Longley, DC Rowan Fox, Josh Haugh, Sara Darmenia, Dalisay Krege, Verity Langer.

Image: ATO

People experiencing vulnerability can face additional barriers when interacting with government services. In October 2025, the ATO launched a Vulnerability Framework. This initiative is designed to help ensure people engaging with the tax and superannuation systems receive support that is accessible, inclusive and responsive to their circumstances.

The Framework reflects a broader shift across the APS towards people-centred service delivery that prioritises equity and inclusion. It supports a more consistent approach to recognising and responding to vulnerability across the organisation. This helps to reduce barriers and improve people's experiences when engaging with tax and superannuation services.

The ATO is embedding vulnerability considerations into service design, processes and workforce capability. This strengthens the ATO's ability to tailor its engagement with taxpayers where appropriate and respond to evolving community expectations.

Development of the Framework has been shaped through collaboration with advocates, financial counsellors, community organisations, government partners and people with lived experience. These partnerships have deepened understanding of the challenges experienced by people in vulnerable circumstances. They have also informed practical improvements to services, guidance and support. This collaboration demonstrates how government agencies and community organisations can work together to strengthen services and achieve better outcomes for Australians.

Investments in staff training, guidance, tailored support tools and the application of Safety by Design principles supports this approach. Together, these investments help staff recognise vulnerability, understand how personal circumstances can affect interactions with government, and respond appropriately.

During 2025–26, this capability-building included reshaping the Frontline Operations Tailored Support Hub. The Hub brings together the Specialised Client Support Team, Advocates Help Desk, Indigenous Helpline and hardship-related services. Joining forces enables more coordinated and responsive assistance for people who need additional care or tailored support.

By lowering barriers and improving service experiences for people experiencing vulnerability, the ATO is contributing to increased confidence and trust in government services. At the same time, the ATO is supporting more inclusive public service delivery for all Australians.

## Delivering tax entitlements to Australians in remote communities




The ATO's Zone Offset Team with Jonathan Garrett, Sara Darmenia, AC Robert Thomson, Tim McIntyre and Patrick Healy. Image: Australian Taxation Office

Following outreach activities with First Nations communities in August 2024, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) identified many people in eligible remote and isolated areas who had not claimed the Remote Zone Tax Offset despite being entitled to it. Insights from these communities and partners involved in the ATO's Vulnerability Capability confirmed the issue and highlighted an opportunity to improve tax outcomes for people facing barriers to engagement.

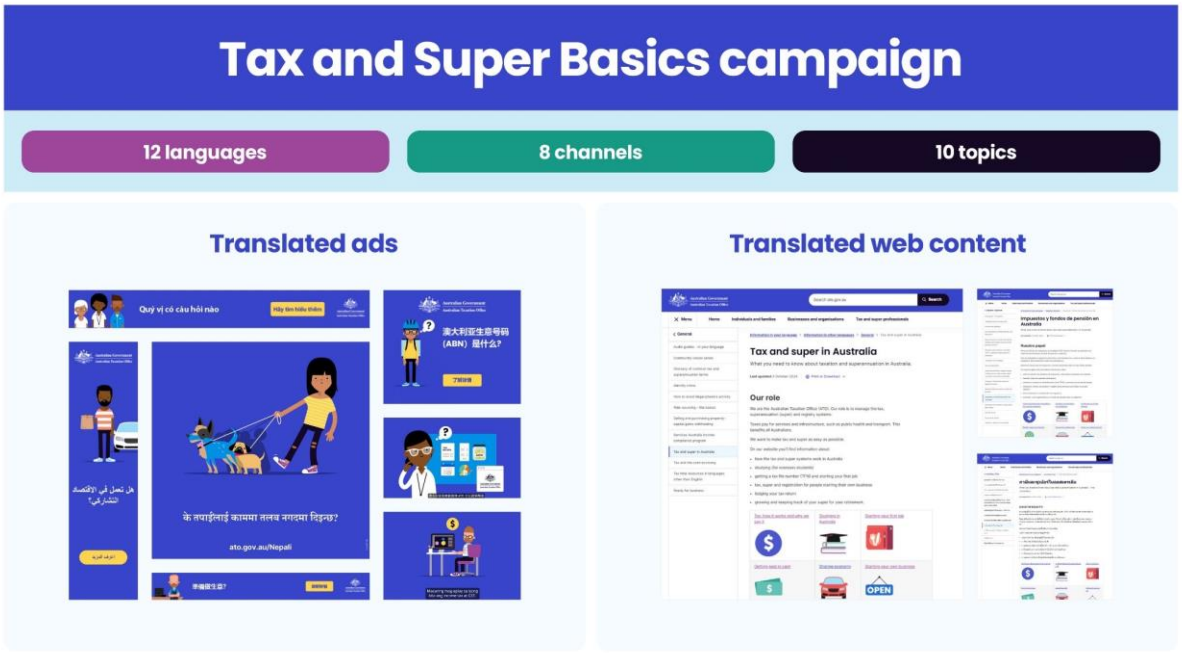
Within six months, the team worked across the ATO to develop a solution that identified eligible taxpayers, calculated entitlements and amended returns to deliver the offset. Through testing, sampling and assurance activities, it established a robust methodology that provided confidence in the accuracy and lawful application of the amendments.

The team also tailored its engagement approach to build trust and support understanding in affected communities. Working with government and community partners, including financial counsellors, the First Nations Foundation and the ATO Moondani Network, it developed culturally appropriate communications and shared information with local support services. This helped taxpayers understand the amendments and reduced opportunities for scammers to imitate ATO communications.

In January 2025, the program delivered benefits to around 60,000 taxpayers. Tax return amendments generated approximately $27 million in refunds and reduced existing taxpayer debt by around $7 million.

The initiative shows how community insight, trusted partnerships and data analytics can be combined to ensure that Australians are paying the right amount of tax. It improved outcomes for First Nations people and other Australians living in remote areas while strengthening participation in the tax system. In recognition of its impact, the project was named a Best of the Best finalist in the People's Choice category of the ATO Internal Awards. Following the amendment program, and drawing on insights from stakeholders, Tax Time 2026 saw the launch of a redesigned zone tax offset to make it easier for taxpayers to calculate their offset when lodging their tax return.

## Tax and Super Basics campaign for culturally and linguistically diverse communities




Tax and Super Basics campaign: Connecting multicultural communities with trusted tax and super information.
Image: ATO

More than one-fifth of Australians speak a language other than English at home, and more than 1.6 million people speak English 'not well' or 'not at all'. ATO research found that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities can face barriers to understanding their tax and superannuation rights and obligations. These barriers include language differences, limited familiarity with Australia's tax and super systems, cultural differences in financial practices, and reluctance to engage directly with government agencies.

In response, the ATO delivered the Tax and Super Basics campaign to improve access to tax and superannuation information for CALD communities. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the ATO's role, increase use of in-language resources, and support more confident participation in the tax and superannuation system.

Using research, community insights and operational data, the ATO identified 12 target language communities and developed tailored content across digital, social media, video and radio channels. Advertising directed audiences to translated online content and audio resources. Campaign activity

aligned with key events, including tax time and common milestones such as starting work or establishing a business.

The campaign delivered strong results during 2025–26. Advertising generated more than 27 million impressions, helping to raise awareness of the ATO and key tax and superannuation topics among target communities. The campaign also successfully drove audiences to in-language information, generating more than 154,000 visits to campaign resources. While advertising was active, campaign pages received nearly 600 views a day on average, compared with 60 views a day when advertising was not running.

Community feedback and social media sentiment were overwhelmingly positive. Audiences expressed appreciation for information being available in their preferred language. Feedback also indicated increased confidence in accessing tax and superannuation information and engaging with the ATO.

The campaign strengthened the ATO's approach to communicating with CALD communities. Insights from audience research, tailored content and ongoing evaluation informed future communication activities. Insights also reinforced the value of culturally inclusive communication in supporting participation in Australia's tax and superannuation systems.

## See also in this report

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A healthy and safe Australia, Social security debt waiver laws and people experiencing vulnerability, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 120.

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# Community engagement shapes the future of the Murray-Darling Basin



The Coomealla engagement session undertaken as part of the Basin Plan Review.

Image: Murray-Darling Basin Authority

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) delivered one of its largest consultation programs to help shape water management across the Basin for the next decade. The consultation brought together government, local communities, industry and First Nations people to ensure the Basin Plan continues to reflect community priorities and the challenges of a changing climate.

The authority spans 4 states and the Australian Capital Territory, supporting:

- nationally significant environmental assets
- Australia's food and fibre production
- regional communities and the economy.

Following the release of the consultation's discussion paper in February 2026, Murray-Darling Basin Authority staff got to work. They visited almost 100 towns, held more than 320 engagement sessions and connected with nearly 2,900 participants. Staff travelled more than 150,000 kilometres across the basin, meeting people where they live and work through workshops, roundtables, 3 leadership summits and online discussions.

A dedicated-On Country Support Team created culturally appropriate pathways for participation. This led to more than 500 First Nations participants and groups engaging through meetings on Country and through supported audio and video submissions.

The authority's Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property policy was integrated into the online submissions platform, ensuring First Nations knowledge was gathered respectfully. This approach strengthened relationships and created meaningful opportunities for First Nations people to influence water management decisions.

Feedback gathered through the review's consultation activities generated nearly 2,500 submissions and provided valuable insights into community experiences, local priorities and context for future

reform. It identified areas of broad agreement, including improving environmental water outcomes, strengthening governance and supporting healthier rivers, while highlighting differing perspectives and the trade-offs that will need to be considered.

In June 2026, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority published its *What we heard* report, summarising key themes from the consultation. The report supported transparency and provided public insight into how feedback was being considered in the 2026 Basin Plan Review.

This work demonstrates how APS employees bring together evidence, expertise and community perspectives to help shape the future of a nationally significant resource. The initiative is delivering lasting environmental, economic and community benefits.

## See also in this report

Protecting the nation and the region, Australia's complex environmental, climate and resource management challenges, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 92.

Working in the APS, First Nations Water Branch creating sense of community in dispersed team, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 204.

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# Australian expertise improving vehicle safety



A passenger car driving along a rural road with lane markings detectable by Emergency Lane Keeping Systems.
Image: Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Run-off-road and head-on crashes are a major cause of road trauma in Australia. The Vehicle Standards team at Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts led the development of a new international standard to help prevent this. The result is United Nations Regulation No. 178 for Emergency Lane Keeping Systems.

In parallel with this international work, the Vehicle Standards team also introduced a corresponding Australian standard. The Australian Design Rule 107/00 further shortens timeframes for mandating this lifesaving technology. Monash University research estimates that fitting Emergency Lane Keeping Systems to all light vehicles could save more than 70 lives each year in Australia, compared to no fitment.

Building on this achievement, the Vehicle Standards team is leading the development of international standards for technologies that detect children unintentionally left in vehicles, helping to prevent tragic loss of life. It is also leading the development of improved international standards for driver drowsiness and distraction warning systems.

The Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE) is supporting this work. It provides nationally consistent road safety and vehicle data that helps governments, industry and communities better understand road safety risks, identify emerging trends and target safety improvements.

Through the National Road Safety Data Hub, the bureau makes key road safety data publicly available through interactive dashboards, maps and downloadable datasets. By making road safety information accessible and easy to interpret, the Hub supports transparency, independent analysis and evidence-based action to improve road safety outcomes.

BITRE also provides data on Australia’s vehicle fleet to support planning, policy and investment decisions. Its annual Road Vehicles Australia publication helps industry and government understand growth in vehicle numbers and the uptake of electric and hybrid vehicles.

BITRE has enhanced its monthly Road Vehicle Entry and Recall Statistics publication to provide detailed information about new vehicles entering the Australian market. This gives government, industry and consumers early insights into Australia's changing vehicle fleet and supports informed decisions about road safety, regulation and future transport needs.

Together, these initiatives help ensure that road safety policies, vehicle standards and transport decisions are informed by robust evidence. They demonstrate how Australian public servants use innovation, data and international collaboration to improve vehicle safety, reduce road trauma and save lives on the nation's roads.

## See also in this report

AI and digital innovation, Delivering better services through data-driven decisions, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 151.

AI and digital innovation, Innovations in data and digital capability, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 159.

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# Supporting veterans and their families

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) delivers support, compensation, healthcare and commemorative services to current and former Australian Defence Force members and their families. Through these services, DVA supports the wellbeing, transition and quality of life of veterans and their families. By combining evidence, lived experience and innovation, the department continues to improve how services are designed and delivered. This work helps ensure veterans and their families receive timely, effective and responsive support, while maintaining public confidence in government services and stewardship of public resources.

## Using lived experience insights to support veterans




A workshop on 'Understanding the Veteran Experience', Holsworthy Barracks, New South Wales.
Image: Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Understanding the Veteran Experience program is designed to bridge the gap between policy creators and the reality of military personnel. Workshops give serving and former Australian Defence members a direct channel to share their experiences of service and transition with DVA staff.

The cross-branch Knowledge Translation Project built DVA's evidence base by analysing several years of veteran workshop insights to develop a richer understanding of their perspectives and experiences. The project brought together complementary expertise from across DVA to make better use of this information.

The Knowledge Translation Project analysed de-identified insights from 531 participants who took part in the workshops between 2018 and the end of 2025. Drawing on perspectives gathered on and off base, the work strengthened DVA's understanding of transition experiences, wellbeing, support needs and service access.

DVA's Engagement Section consolidated workshop data collected over several years. The Organisational Learning Section, which now sits within the Veteran and Family Wellbeing Agency, contributed research and knowledge translation expertise. It did so to analyse the information, identify recurring themes and opportunities to inform policy and programs, and produce a report on wellbeing

and transition. While participants were self-selected and may not represent the broader veteran population, the analysis was valuable. It demonstrated how lived experience can complement other evidence sources and deepen understanding of veteran experiences.

The initiative strengthened connections between DVA's engagement, research and policy functions. This created a clearer pathway from frontline engagement to organisational learning and evidence-informed decision-making.

The Engagement Section and Organisational Learning Section continues to collaborate on an annual Understanding the Veteran Experience Lived Experience Report. So far in 2026, 68 participants have taken part in the workshops. Continuing them supports continuous improvement in the design and delivery of services for veterans and their families

## CLIKChat improves policy navigation and service delivery for veterans

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) developed CLIKChat, a chatbot powered by artificial intelligence (AI). CLIKChat helps staff quickly find and interpret complex policy information to support veterans and their families. The initiative was nominated in the APS Data Awards under the Data Systems and Innovation category.

Launched in October 2025, following a successful pilot and stakeholder consultation, CLIKChat has improved operational efficiency and strengthened policy interpretation across the Client Benefits Division. Staff can now access policy information in seconds. This reduces manual searches and supports faster, more consistent decision-making. Routine queries are resolved up to 91% faster. Complex queries are completed up to 11 times faster. Staff also report saving up to 70 minutes each day, directly increasing operational capacity without additional resources.

Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI), DVA's Tiger Team built CLIKChat in-house on secure government infrastructure. The chatbot draws on trusted information sources to help staff quickly locate and interpret relevant policy information, supporting efficient and consistent service delivery. Staff can frame questions from the perspectives of veterans, providers or delegates. Users are encouraged to verify information against source documents.

Strong governance and privacy protections are embedded in the system. CLIKChat refuses queries containing personal or protected information. It does not make decisions about client eligibility, liability or entitlements. Mandatory AI training, audit logging, version control, incident reporting and cyber security assessments support transparency and accountability. These safeguards align with the APS Code of Conduct and the Australian Government's AI Policy for the responsible use of AI and supporting action plan.

CLIKChat also helps staff draft and refine briefs, articles and correspondence. Early feedback and usage data indicate fewer rework requests and stronger policy compliance. This contributes to fewer delays and more consistent support for veterans and their families.

Developed in collaboration with GovAI, CLIKChat demonstrates how policy expertise, digital capability and strong governance can be brought together to support the responsible use of AI. The project highlights opportunities to improve access to information and strengthen consistency in decision-making across government services.

By helping staff navigate complex policy information more efficiently, CLIKChat supports service delivery for veterans and their families.

## See also in this report

Serving the Community, Conserving and sharing Australia's service history, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 140.

Working in the APS, Elevating lived experience to improve services, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 205.

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# Conserving and sharing Australia’s service history

The Australian War Memorial combines a shrine, a world-class museum and an extensive archive. Its purpose is to commemorate the sacrifice of Australians who have died in war or on operational service, and those who have served the nation in times of conflict. Through its collections, exhibitions and commemorative spaces, the Memorial helps Australians connect with and understand the nation's wartime experience. Continued investment in its facilities and specialist capabilities is improving access to nationally significant stories and objects, helping preserve Australia’s military heritage and share it with current and future generations.

## Anzac Atrium and Anzac Hall transform the Australian War Memorial



Official opening of Anzac Hall and the Anzac Atrium.
Image: Australian War Memorial

In 2025–26, the Australian War Memorial reached a major milestone with the opening of the Anzac Atrium and Anzac Hall. The milestone strengthens the Memorial’s ability to fulfil its role as a shrine, museum and archive. It also creates new opportunities for visitors to engage with Australia’s military history.

The new facilities expand exhibition and visitor spaces, enabling the Memorial to share contemporary stories of service. This includes stories from Afghanistan, peacekeeping operations and the Middle East. Expanded galleries and reimagined displays increase public access to the National Collection. Visitors can now see more nationally significant objects, including many not previously shown to the public.

The project demonstrates the successful delivery of a complex national infrastructure program while maintaining public access and services. Throughout construction, the Memorial remained open and continued to welcome more than one million visitors each year.

The development received industry recognition in 2025. It won Australian Interior Design Awards for Public Design and Best in State Commercial Design. The new main entrance was also recognised at

the ACT Architecture Awards, receiving awards for Interior Architecture, Heritage and Light in Architecture, as well as an acknowledgement for Public Architecture.

Almost 2,000 workers contributed to the project, including 250 apprentices and more than 100 veterans. The development integrates contemporary architecture with the heritage building. Sandstone sourced from the Memorial's original quarry and a copper-clad roof inspired by the Rising Sun badge create a strong connection between the existing and new structures.

Collection logistics teams relocated and installed more than 3,700 items in the new Anzac Hall. These included aircraft, military vehicles and personal artefacts. This work increased the Memorial's capacity to preserve, display and interpret nationally significant collection items.

The development also supports new ways of sharing stories of Australian service. The first temporary exhibition in Anzac Hall, *Operation Kudu: Supporting Ukraine*, explored the training mission involving Australians and Ukrainians in England through imagery, personal objects and firsthand accounts.

Veterans and stakeholder groups were involved throughout the project. Their input helped shape exhibition content and ensured balanced representation of service experiences. The Memorial also expanded its audience engagement through refreshed communications and contemporary storytelling, including the SBS documentary series *A New Anzac*.

The Anzac Atrium and Anzac Hall are key components of the Memorial's broader development program. The program will strengthen the Memorial's ability to share the stories of Australian service personnel with future generations. Additional gallery and learning spaces are scheduled for completion in 2028.

## Australian War Memorial strengthens collection logistics capability

In 2025–26, the Australian War Memorial strengthened its collection logistics, object installation and technical project delivery capability. This supported the safe movement, installation and display of nationally significant collection items as part of the Memorial's Development Project. It also maintained public access to exhibitions, education programs and commemorative spaces.

The capability enables the Memorial to preserve, transport and display large, complex and fragile objects safely for current and future generations. The Memorial coordinated complex collection moves and installations during major construction activities. This was supported by detailed planning, risk management and collaboration with curators, conservators, engineers, contractors and industry specialists. The result was improved public access to the National Collection.

Manager of Collection Logistics and Projects, Kassandra Hobbs PSM, delivered complex installations including the Lancaster bomber, Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters and armoured vehicles. Her contribution strengthened safety and technical standards across the Memorial's collection logistics operations. The work was recognised with a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to the Australian War Memorial's National Collection.




Lancaster bomber, G for George, returns to the Australian War Memorial.
Image: Australian War Memorial

## See also in this report

Protecting the nation and the region, Resilience in the face of global uncertainty and disruption, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 88.

Serving the Community, Supporting veterans and their families, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 137.

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# AI and digital innovation

The APS is increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technology to improve services, support better decision-making and work more efficiently. AI is becoming part of everyday government work, helping agencies process information faster, make better use of data and provide services that are easier for people and businesses to access.

As the use of AI grows, the APS is focused on using it safely, responsibly and securely. Strong governance, clear accountability, ethical decision-making and robust security controls are essential to maintaining public trust. The Australian Government's 8 Artificial Intelligence Ethics Principles continue to guide agencies in developing and using AI in ways that are fair, transparent, reliable and focused on delivering benefits for Australians.

The release of the AI Plan for the APS in November 2025 marked an important step in expanding the use of AI across government. The plan provides a roadmap for how agencies can use AI to improve services, inform policy decisions and increase productivity.

Building digital capability across the APS also remains a priority. The *APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025–2030* supports agencies to attract skilled employees, build expertise and prepare their workforces for the future. The Digital Transformation Agency's Digital Governance Program is strengthening the leadership capability needed to oversee major digital and technology projects. By July 2026, more than 120 senior leaders had completed the program.

Good data is critical to successfully using AI and digital technology. Agencies are continuing to invest in data capability and shared data assets to support better decisions and outcomes. As the Australian Taxation Office has highlighted, trusted AI depends on trusted data. High-quality, well-managed data helps agencies realise the benefits of AI while maintaining public confidence.

The APS is also creating opportunities for agencies to test new technologies and learn from one another. Initiatives such as the AI CoLab Alliance allow agencies to trial AI tools, share lessons and identify good practice before broader adoption. In June 2026, guidance on Agentic AI was released to help agencies explore emerging AI capabilities while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

Together, these efforts are helping the APS use technology in ways that improve services, support better decisions and increase productivity, while ensuring AI is used safely, responsibly and in the public interest.

# A data, digital and artificial intelligence-enabled APS

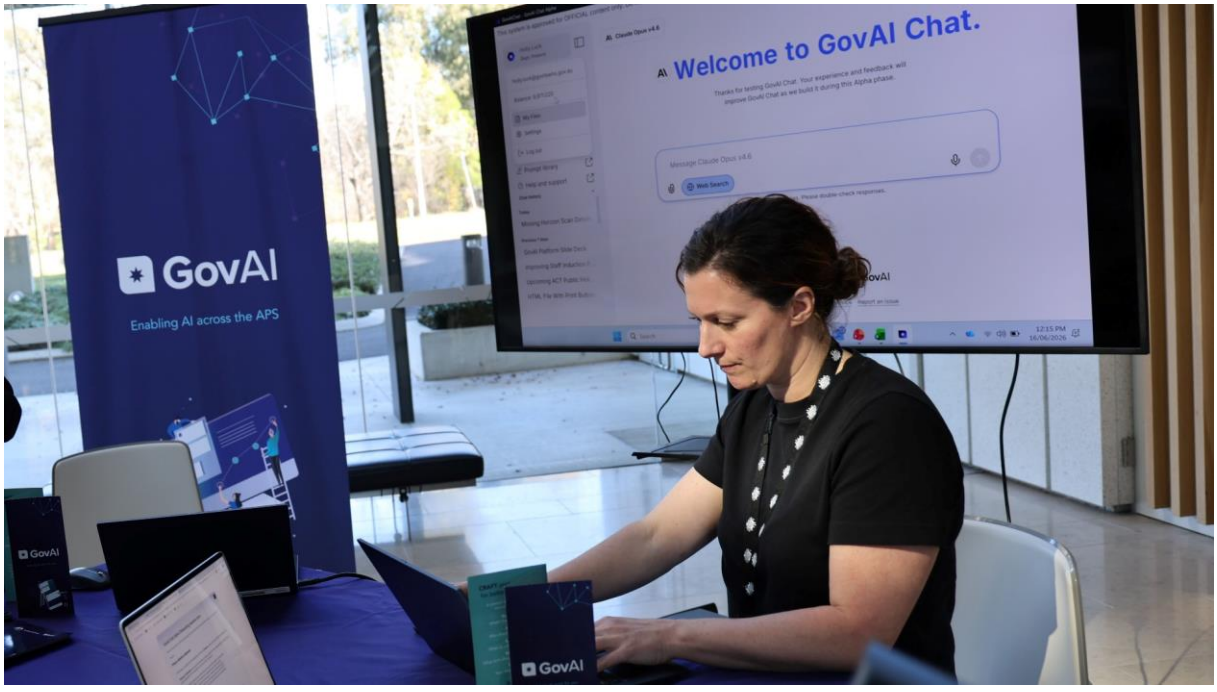
Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the nature of public service work. Generative AI is increasingly accessible, highly capable and embedded in the tools, systems and services that APS employees and the public use every day.

The pace and scale of technological change make AI a core issue for the APS. This includes capturing opportunities to deliver better outcomes for Australians, while preparing for changes to work, capability and risk, and maintaining Australians' trust in public services.

The AI Plan for the APS 2025 provides the framework for this response. Its 3 pillars – Trust, People and Tools – reflect the practical conditions needed to adopt AI safely, responsibly and at scale.

The implementation for safe and responsible AI adoption includes stronger guidance, workforce capability, senior leadership support, assurance arrangements and evidence from practical use cases.

## Artificial Intelligence Plan for the APS and GovAI




APS staff working on GovAI.

Image: Finance

The AI Plan for the Australian Public Service (APS AI Plan), launched in November 2025, positions artificial intelligence (AI) adoption as a service-wide reform.  The plan aims to improve service delivery, policy outcomes, efficiency and productivity by supporting the safe and responsible use of AI across government.

The plan recognises that effective AI adoption depends on more than technology. Public servants need training, guidance, appropriate tools and leadership support to use AI safely and effectively. As such, the plan is designed to adapt as AI develops, recognising that generative AI is becoming embedded in digital infrastructure, enterprise tools and everyday services.

The APS AI Plan 2025 brings this work together through 3 mutually reinforcing pillars – Trust, People, Tools.

This approach treats AI as a whole-of-service capability, supported by strong governance, evidence, leadership, consultation and shared learning.

The 2025–26 reporting period marked a shift from establishing foundations to coordinated implementation. Agencies are testing and applying AI use cases, while whole-of-service work focuses on scaling approved tools, embedding responsible AI practices and addressing common barriers to adoption.

Key developments to 30 June 2026 included:

- release and implementation of the AI Plan for the APS 2025
- continued development of Government AI
- April 2026 alpha release of GovAI Chat
- appointment of Chief AI Officers across agencies
- strengthened responsible AI policy, including new AI impact assessment requirements
- APS consultation to create GovAI Exchange
- 37 onshore AI models available through the Model Brokerage Service
- new and updated procurement and information-handling guidance
- updated the AI technical standard for the secure and governed use of agentic AI
- common resources to reduce duplication and share good practice.

AI adoption is moving beyond isolated use cases, but coordinated implementation remains at an early stage. The APS is building the conditions needed to adopt AI responsibly and at scale. This includes common platforms and tools, workforce capability and confidence, clear governance and assurance, data readiness, implementation support, evidence of what works and measurable benefits.

### Central coordination and shared platforms

Central coordination provides a common foundation for security, assurance approaches, information handling, procurement, capability development and shared learning. Agencies remain accountable for local implementation. This approach can reduce duplication and support more consistent approaches to risk.

The AI Delivery and Enablement function within Finance supports agencies to identify high-impact opportunities, share implementation lessons and apply a ‘prove once, reuse where appropriate’ approach. In 2025–26, its work included:

- supporting Chief AI Officers in agencies
- helping agencies test and validate AI patterns before wider deployment
- building evidence about implementation
- identifying policy, legal, procurement, privacy, security, data and workforce barriers.

GovAI, a secure, whole-of-APS AI platform, moved from concept to operation by designing and launching AI products across the service. By providing shared AI infrastructure and capability, GovAI enables agencies to adopt AI safely and responsibly. It does so while reducing duplication, accelerating innovation and building the digital skills the APS needs for the future. In 2025–26, GovAI delivered a generative AI chat app, designed an information sharing platform, managed a sandbox environment, and provided access to assessed AI models.

In April 2026, GovAI launched a 9-week alpha trial for GovAI Chat, a secure generative AI chat app for APS staff. More than 1,700 participants from 34 agencies took part, with 86% indicating they would

like to continue using the app and 79% rating the app's accuracy as good or excellent. Participants used GovAI Chat to ask questions, draft, summarise and analyse within a government-managed environment.

To design and build the GovAI Exchange prototype, GovAI completed extensive consultation and codesign with more than 300 APS staff from 53 agencies. GovAI Exchange aims to reduce agencies independently solving the same AI adoption challenges by providing reusable, government-tested resources. It also provides the opportunity to help agencies build on what others have already proven rather than starting from scratch.

The GovAI Hosting sandbox provided 14 agencies (19 business area customers) access to a secure, shared cloud environment to develop and deploy AI applications aligned to government security and sovereignty requirements. Agencies are building more than 28 documented use cases at proof-of-concept and pilot stage, including AI-assisted law interpretation, semantic search, and risk foresight applications. The sandbox reduces duplication of infrastructure procurement while enabling agencies to retain responsibility for their own deployments.

The Model Brokerage Service gave 10 agencies access to 37 onshore AI models and 23 global AI models. The service centrally manages access to assessed AI models, removing the need for agencies to establish separate commercial and technical arrangements. Agencies are using the services to support use cases spanning law interpretation, search capabilities, and regulatory analysis.

The policy for the responsible use of AI in government, combined with the AI impact assessment tool and accompanying AI technical standard, helps agencies adopt AI consistently and manage risks across its lifecycle. This framework continues to evolve alongside advances in the technology, including through the recently released Agentic AI Addendum to the AI Technical Standard for Australian Government.

## Building capability for an AI-enabled workforce

Artificial intelligence (AI) readiness depends on skills, confidence, leadership, consultation and work design, not just access to technology. The People pillar of the AI Plan for the APS 2025 supports staff through change while building capability across the service.

The Australian Public Service Commission has a lead role in implementing the APS AI Plan, alongside Finance and the Digital Transformation Agency. The aim is to translate its strategic blueprint into practical capability uplift. Governance, accountability and decision-making are key learning outcomes.

The updated policy for the responsible use of AI in government established mandatory training expectations for all APS employees to ensure responsible and ethical AI use. The Digital Transformation Agency's AI Fundamentals training is supported and facilitated through APSLearn. It complements GovAI's learning resources.

Programs support staff to use generative AI responsibly in everyday work. They also help Senior Executive Service leaders guide adoption, build a safe culture and lead organisational change. More than 100,000 APS employees have completed foundational AI training. More than 13,000 have registered for the Australian Public Service Commission's AI-related practical webinar series. This is establishing a baseline of AI capability across the service

# APS Digital, Data and Cyber Workforce Plan – Horizon 1

The APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025–30 provides a coordinated, cross-agency approach to building the capabilities needed to deliver government priorities. Developed by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), the plan sets out a 5-year roadmap. Delivery is sequenced across 3 implementation horizons:

- Horizon 1 focuses on strengthening foundations
- Horizon 2 focuses on initiatives with greatest impact on outcomes
- Horizon 3 focuses on longer term, systemic reforms.

The plan addresses common workforce challenges across 4 action areas, attracting talent, developing capability, deploying specialists and improving workforce planning. By working collectively, agencies can share tools, programs and insights, leverage investment and build capability at scale. This supports a capable, sustainable and future-ready APS workforce.

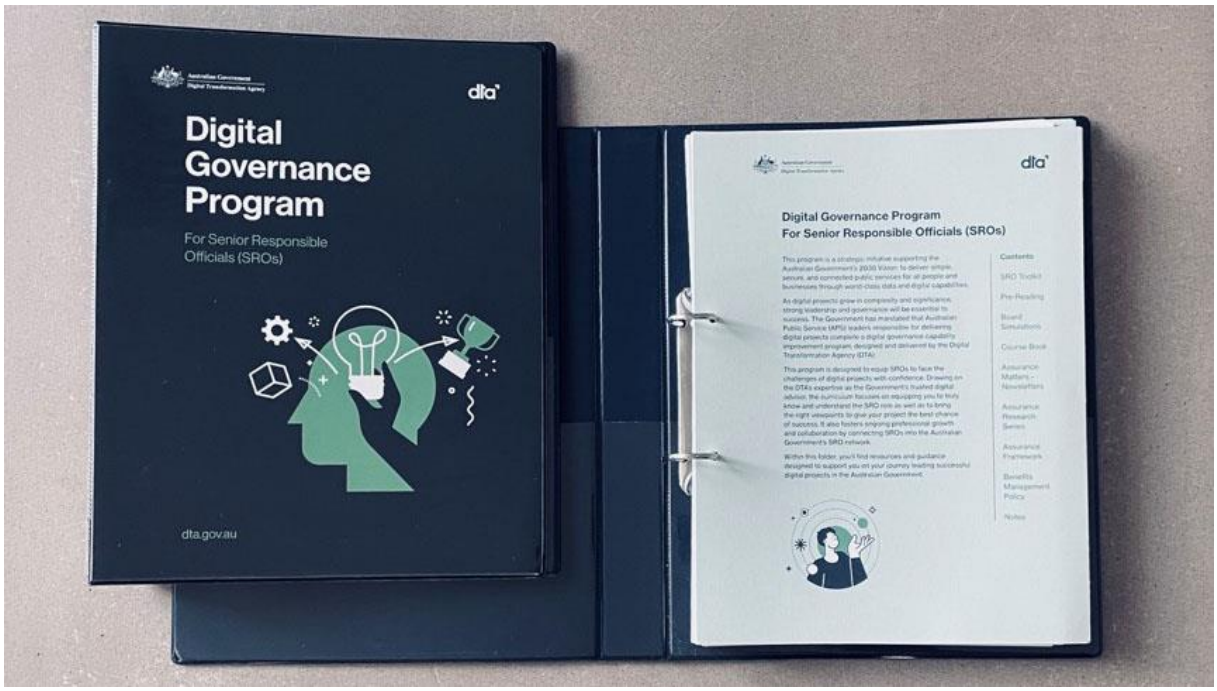
In 2025–26, APSC and DTA focused on Horizon 1. Key achievements included:

- published the 2025 Digital Workforce Data Insights Report, strengthening the evidence base for workforce planning and decision-making
- delivered and expanded the Senior Responsible Officer Digital Governance Program, strengthening digital leadership and governance capability
- developed and published the Digital and Cyber Employee Value Proposition, supporting the attraction and retention of critical digital and cyber talent
- delivered the Executive Level 2 and Senior Executive Service (SES) Data Capability Uplift Initiative, strengthening data literacy and leadership capability among senior officials
- completed the APS Digital and Cyber Remuneration Benchmarking Report, providing insights to inform workforce and remuneration strategies
- developed and implemented SES Accountabilities for Data, strengthening leadership accountability and transitioning the initiative into ongoing delivery.

Horizon 1 has established momentum towards a workforce with the capabilities needed to support the government's data and digital priorities. The plan supports the Data and Digital Government Strategy and the 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy. These strategies aim to deliver simple, secure and connected public services for all people and businesses and make Australia a world leader in cyber security by 2030.

The plan provides a unified approach to attracting, developing and retaining data, digital and cyber talent across the APS.

# Digital Governance Program for Senior Responsible Officials




Digital Governance Program for Senior Responsible Officials learning material.

Image: Digital Transformation Agency

The Digital Governance Program strengthens the capabilities of Senior Responsible Officials (SRO) who lead major digital and information, communication and technology-enabled projects across the APS. It was designed and delivered by the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA).

The program, developed and launched in 2025, is now delivered on a regular basis. As of 30 June 2026, more than 100 executive leaders had completed it, increasing to more than 120 by July 2026. Participant feedback has continued to be strongly positive, with 100% satisfaction across participating cohorts.

Key to the Digital Governance Program is addressing a critical risk for government. Even well-funded and technically advanced digital investments can fail without capable leadership and governance that provide the right structure, capability, culture and flow of information. Rather than responding after projects fail, the program strengthens governance capability featuring a curated curriculum of topics and governance board simulations.

The Digital Governance Program directly supports senior executives overseeing more than 100 strategically important digital projects valued at $9.6 billion across 43 Commonwealth agencies. It was developed in partnership with several government agencies to reflect different delivery environments, organisational contexts and governance challenges faced by digital projects.

Participants focus on leadership topics and engage in simulations that follow a complex digital initiative through its full lifecycle, from initiation to delivery and closure. A practical toolkit of concepts and resources help participants make real-time governance decisions and understand their broader effects on business risk, delivery confidence, supplier performance and public trust. The program is also building a trusted cross-government SRO network. This gives alumni opportunities to develop peer connections and professional relationships that continue beyond the program.

The DTA identified the need to strengthen SRO capability through its digital investment assurance oversight. It then proposed the program as a reform initiative for government consideration. The

importance of strong leadership in successful digital delivery is well understood. Despite this, SROs can be appointed to major Australian Government digital projects without specialist training or previous experience in complex digital delivery.

Starting at the 2024–25 Budget, the government mandated the Digital Governance Program for APS leaders appointed as SROs with accountability for successfully delivering the government's future digital projects.

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# Delivering better services through data-driven decisions



The Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen AO, Head of the Data Profession.

Image: Australian Bureau of Statistics

The APS is strengthening its ability to use data to improve policy, services and outcomes. Two developments are driving this work: building data capability across the APS and expanding integrated data assets. Together, they are supporting better evidence-based decisions and research that improves lives.

## APS Data Profession

Since its launch in 2020, the APS Data Profession has focused on 4 areas: recruitment, learning, community building and shared tools.

The Data Graduate Program provides a pathway for graduates with data skills to join the APS. The first intake in 2021 placed 65 graduates. In 2026, 270 graduates were placed across 38 agencies. More than 1,100 data graduates have taken up data roles across the APS over the 6 years of the program.

Retention is also strong. After 4 years, 83% of employees in the data and research job family remain in the APS, compared with 67% of graduates in information and communications technology and digital roles and 74% of all APS graduates.

The Data Profession has also expanded learning opportunities. To date, more than 1,000 people have accessed the Introduction to Data in Government modules on APS Learn, released in mid-2025. This self-paced course provides foundational information about how government uses data and the frameworks that support its use.

Community building is another focus. The Data Professions Members' Community Platform now has more than 17,000 members, including around 2,500 from state and territory governments. The ATO,

Services Australia, Defence, Health, Disability and Ageing, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) have the largest memberships.

The platform supports 10 Communities of Practice, including Innovation, AI and Machine Learning, and Women in Data and Digital, the latter jointly hosted with the Digital Profession. These communities support collaboration, knowledge sharing and career opportunities across agencies. The In Conversation series has also recorded 21 episodes with data experts, making specialist practice visible and showing how leaders use data to inform decisions and outcomes.

In the past year, the Data Profession has also released a new Data Capability Framework, which identifies 22 essential data competencies. The framework supports skills assessment, professional development and recruitment. Its recently launched Data Profession Employee Value Proposition helps attract data talent by explaining what data professionals can expect from working in the APS and the contribution their work makes.

The Data Profession works with other professions where skills overlap. The Evaluation Profession, for example, partnered with the Data Profession to introduce an Evaluation Stream in the Data Graduate Program. It is also contributing to the redevelopment of the Data for SES Leaders course to strengthen its focus on evaluation.

## Integrating data for better insights

Australia has also made significant progress integrating data. Integrated data assets link records from different datasets so analysts can better understand different aspects of people's lives or businesses while protecting privacy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) hosts Australia's 2 largest integrated data assets: the Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) and the Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE).

Launched in 2015, both data assets have grown substantially. PLIDA's core datasets cover 2006 to 2025 and contain records for nearly 40 million people. It integrates 37 datasets, including Census, tax, social security, migrant, health, education, and disability data.

BLADE's core datasets cover 2001 to 2025 and include records for about 12.5 million active businesses. It integrates 41 datasets covering areas including business characteristics, income and tax, trade, insolvency and employment.

All individual records are de-identified to protect privacy. Researchers must also sign an undertaking not to attempt to re-identify anyone in the datasets.

As at January 2026, 354 active research projects were accessing ABS-hosted integrated data assets. About half used PLIDA, around one-third used both PLIDA and BLADE, and the remainder used BLADE alone. About half were university projects, one-third were government projects, and most remaining projects were undertaken by the ABS and Australian think tanks such as e61 and the Grattan Institute. Nearly 2,100 analysts were working on these projects after completing privacy and data access training.

The quality and breadth of PLIDA and BLADE have placed Australia at the forefront of international data integration. Researchers from many institutions are now using the assets. This includes:

- Harvard
- London School of Economics
- MIT
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

- University of California Berkeley
- University of Chicago
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

The research is informing policy and evaluation. Australian National University researchers using PLIDA found that the introduction of the NDIS was associated with a nearly one-third increase in reported autism prevalence and accounted for nearly half of new autism diagnoses since the scheme began.[4]

## National Agreement on Closing the Gap – Priority Reform Four

Data is also central to Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The reform aims to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access to locally relevant data and the capability to use it to set priorities, monitor progress and drive their own development.

The Data Policy Partnership was established in 2025 to advance this work. It is co-chaired by Sharif Deen of the New South Wales Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations and Dr Phillip Gould, Deputy Australian Statistician. The partnership brings together representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and state and territory governments.

Its priorities include:

- Indigenous data governance consistent with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles
- advice on a possible Bureau of Indigenous Data
- better measurement of Closing the Gap progress
- improved data sharing, access and capability for the community-controlled sector.

Together, these initiatives are strengthening APS ability to analyse data, translate evidence into policy and evaluate what works. They are also expanding access to high-quality data for researchers and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to use data to advance their priorities. This work is helping turn data into better decisions and better outcomes for Australians.

This thought leadership article is adapted from the Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2026 Australian Government Data Forum: Keynote address, Power of Data – How Data-driven Decision Making is Improving the Lives of Everyday Australians.

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[4] https://crawford.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/Complete%20WP%20Ranjan%20Breunig%20Apr%202025.pdf

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# Responsible, ethical AI adoption

Artificial intelligence (AI) must be used in ways that are lawful, transparent, accountable, secure and consistent with the APS Values. This reflects the Trust pillar of the AI Plan for the APS 2025, which focuses on transparency, ethical use and strong governance. Responsible use requires progress to be supported by reliable and verifiable evidence.

The APS approach is that AI should not be used to make automated decisions affecting a person's rights or obligations without human accountability and appropriate safeguards. AI should not replace or override human judgement in complex or values-based decisions. Nor should it support unfair or unlawful activities or be deployed where known residual risk is not tolerable.

As AI becomes embedded in business processes, governance needs to be part of ordinary investment, risk, legal, data and assurance processes. It should not be treated as a separate technology overlay.

## Implementing Australia's Artificial Intelligence Ethics Principles in government

Australia's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics Principles guide businesses and governments to use AI responsibly. They form part of the government's commitment to making Australia a global leader in responsible and inclusive AI. The principles were developed by Department of Industry, Science and Resources through consultation and piloting with the public and key stakeholders.

The 8 principles promote safe, secure and reliable AI, while reducing the risk of harm and supporting fair outcomes for Australians. They also encourage businesses and governments to apply high ethical standards throughout the design, development and implementation of AI.

### Australia's 8 AI Ethics Principles

1. Human, societal and environmental wellbeing: Throughout their lifecycle, AI systems should benefit individuals, society and the environment.
2. Human-centred values: AI systems should respect human rights, diversity, and the autonomy of individuals.
3. Fairness: AI systems should be inclusive and accessible and should not involve or result in unfair discrimination against individuals, communities or groups.
4. Privacy protection and security: AI systems should respect and uphold privacy rights of individuals and ensure the protection of data.
5. Reliability and safety: Throughout their lifecycle, AI systems should reliably operate in accordance with their intended purpose.
6. Transparency and explainability: There should be transparency and responsible disclosure so people can understand when they are being significantly impacted by AI and can find out when an AI system is engaging with them.
7. Contestability: When an AI system significantly impacts a person, community, group or environment, there should be a timely process to allow people to challenge the use or outcomes of the AI system.
8. Accountability: Those responsible for the different phases of the AI system lifecycle should be identifiable and accountable for the outcomes of the AI systems, and human oversight of AI systems should be enabled.

## Agentic Artificial Intelligence Addendum

Agentic artificial intelligence (AI) systems can autonomously plan tasks, coordinate work and perform actions to achieve defined outcomes, working across connected tools, applications and systems. They operate within guardrails set and overseen by humans, with clear controls over how these actions are considered.

The Agentic AI Addendum to the Australian Government AI Technical Standard was published 4 June 2026. The addendum provides practical guidance for technical specialists and business owners, enabling agencies to confidently experiment with and develop agentic AI use cases.

AI has advanced quickly, leading to increased interest in agentic AI systems that autonomously pursue specified goals. Feedback sessions with APS agencies have highlighted a growing demand for the inclusion of agentic AI within the government's AI technical standard.

This demand reflects not just the expanding application of agentic systems in the public sector, but also the need for clear governance, risk mitigation, and responsible innovation. To ensure that the AI technical standard remains effective, it is essential to meet the growing need for agentic AI.

This standard provides a clear and consistent technical foundation for agencies to adopt agentic AI systems safely. It strengthens how agencies can use agentic AI with appropriate governance, safeguards, and technical controls. This ensures systems operate with robust oversight and accountability and in line with community expectations.

An agentic AI standard was developed as an addendum to the AI technical standard, to provide timely and targeted guidance as new AI capabilities emerge.

## How the ATO is industrialising AI responsibly

Before generative artificial intelligence (AI) became widely available, the ATO was already using machine learning to help administer the country's tax and superannuation systems. These tools were not pilots or experiments. They were part of everyday operations, supporting decisions, and always with human oversight.

The ATO's approach is built on a simple idea – if AI is the engine, data is the fuel. Trusted AI depends on trusted data. The ATO manages one of the country's largest data holdings, held in trust for the Australian community. This data helps deliver better services, improve decision-making, and protect the integrity of the tax system.

Strong governance ensures data is accurate, secure and used ethically. This includes clear oversight of how data is collected, managed and applied in AI systems. These safeguards are essential because poor-quality data leads to poor-quality AI outcomes, which risks inconsistent and unfair results, and erodes public trust and confidence.

Only approved tools may be used for approved purposes, human oversight is always required, and responsibility for decisions remains with ATO staff. AI can support decision-making, but it never replaces human judgement and empathy, particularly when working with vulnerable people or complex cases.



Andrew Watson, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Data Officer, Australian Taxation Office.
Image: Australian Taxation Office

Rather than engaging in broad unfocused experimentation, the ATO has prioritised a set of enterprise AI use cases.

Decision and case support:

- case profiling assistants bring together facts, map to legislation and policy, and prepare material for review
- support triaging taxpayer requests that arrive in large volumes and in various unstructured formats, helping assess complexity, identify related matters and suggest next steps.

Drafting and reasoning support:

- position papers
- structured correspondence
- clear, referenced reasoning documents.

Specialised operational support:

- assistants that help assemble evidence and map against policy criteria, and finance-focused Copilot capabilities to support repetitive reconciliation and analysis tasks.

Internal productivity and capability uplift:

- an ‘AskHR’ chatbot to make human resources information easier to access for staff and assist with routine processing tasks
- coding and reverse coding assistants to help interpret and draft code in ATO systems. The ATO has a rich history of creating its own code. Gaps in the documentation supporting a code can sometimes appear when the person who created and maintained that code over several years leaves the ATO. The ATO wants to test the opportunity for AI to draft support materials and suggest what the original requirements for the code were.

Focusing on these priority use cases will equip the ATO to identify future high-value opportunities early, scale successful pilots into everyday processes, and embed governance and risk management.

The next stage will explore different types of AI agents. This will be informed by lessons from earlier automation efforts such as robotic process automation. A guiding principle will be that AI can only scale when trust scales with it.

ATO staff remain central, and it is their judgement, empathy and values that sustain trust in the tax system. Australia's tax system is globally recognised for its high level of voluntary compliance, underpinned by trust and sophisticated use of data. Good data supports strong models, strong governance builds trust, and trust remains the most important value to protect as the ATO continues its AI journey.

Credit: This thought leadership article is adapted from Andrew Watson, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Data Officer, ATO, From Models to Co-pilots: How the ATO Is Industrialising AI, Responsibly, Australian Government Data Summit 2026.

## See also in this report

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# Innovations in data and digital capability

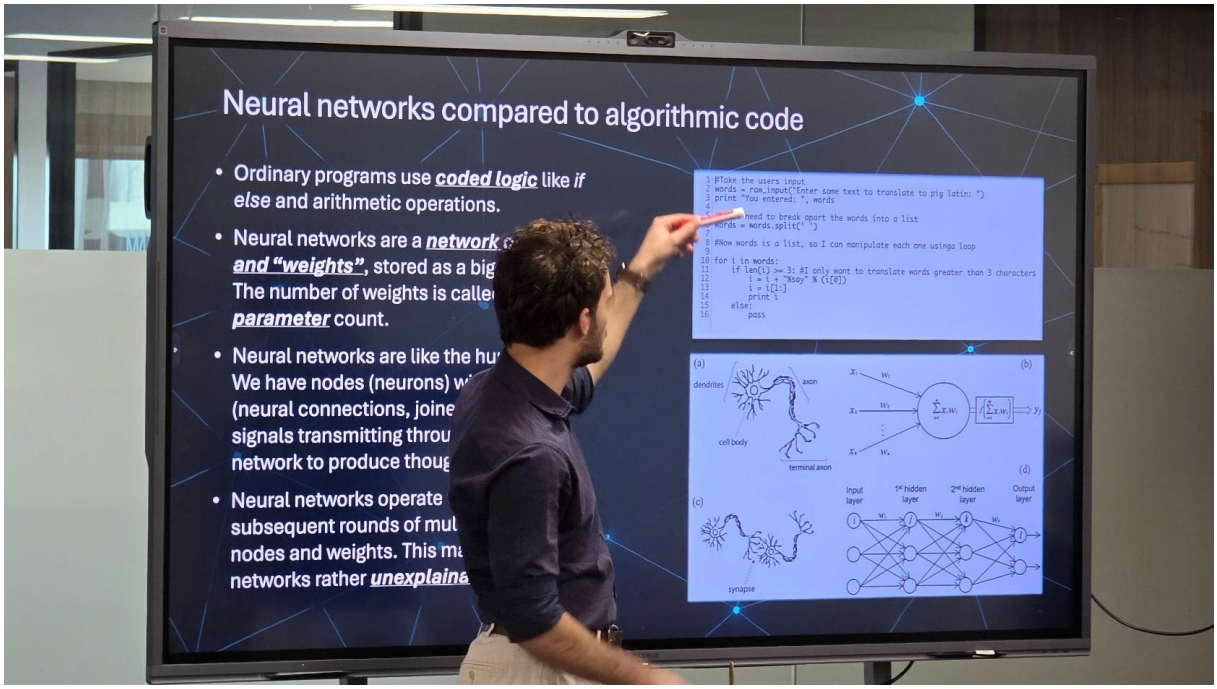
Australia's investment in data and digital capability is helping the APS deliver better services and solve complex problems. This sustained investment has helped Australia rank second among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries for digital government.[5]

Strategic frameworks and governance arrangements help maintain data and digital capabilities and embed them across the service. Frameworks also support agencies to share approaches and apply consistent standards.

The impact of this is increasingly visible in how agencies use data and digital tools to improve outcomes. Examples across the APS show how new capabilities are being translated into practical solutions, from improving services and decision-making to supporting more effective policy and program delivery.

The APS can better harness the data assets it holds to deliver public benefit and solve problems. This includes making better use of data across agencies, strengthening the skills needed to work with data and ensuring data is accessible, trusted and used responsibly.

## AI CoLab Alliance




AI CoLab staff during a practical AI for policy people workshop.

Image: Finance

The Artificial Intelligence CoLab Alliance (AI CoLab) shows how agencies can test AI safely, learn together and explore reusable approaches before broader implementation. This shared environment supports practical experimentation, comparison of methods and exchange of lessons across agencies. It reflects the APS AI Plan's emphasis on common tools, shared capability and responsible scaling, while recognising that wider adoption depends on evidence, assurance and agency context.

[5] https://www.dta.gov.au/articles/australia-rises-second-globally-oecd-digital-government-index

The AI CoLab provides APS, community, industry, and academia a practical ‘third space’. This space is used to build AI literacy, confidence, and judgement through hands-on experimentation and peer learning in a low-stakes, creatively open environment. It helps participants move beyond abstract AI principles by testing and learning about tools, surfacing risks and opportunities, and discussing broader impacts and ethics. Participants can also share what responsible and effective use of AI looks like in real-world contexts.

The AI CoLab has over 2,000 subscribers. In 2025–26 it ran 86 events, with more than 800 check-ins from participants from across government (more than 50 agencies), academia, industry, and community. Attendance included more than 200 staff at the CoLab’s flagship recurring workshops: Practical AI for Policy People; and Making Information Work for Everyone with NotebookLM.

Bringing together participants across sectors and disciplines supports mutual capability uplift. It also helps the APS understand the multifaceted issues and opportunities created by generative AI, supporting more responsive, adaptive, and community-informed policy development.

The open, collaborative, and tangible approach to AI learning and adoption exemplified by the AI CoLab inspires experimentation. It also motivates participants to take learnings back into their work context to deploy AI tools responsibly and effectively.

Many staff have reported that the AI CoLab has motivated and equipped them to pursue responsible and effective AI adoption:

> *I didn’t realise I could do all this until AI CoLab gave me the confidence, the skills and the network.* — Risk Officer, Finance

> *The AI CoLab has been a genuinely refreshing space for me to explore AI in a way that feels both psychologically safe and creatively open.* — AI CoLab participant from the ACT Government

AI CoLab is delivered through open workshops, working sessions, talks and showcases, and working in small groups called pods, to rapidly iterate and prototype using AI. Activities are primarily run in person at the Canberra Innovation Network.

The AI CoLab was supported through the APS Capability Reinvestment Fund 2024–25. The fund supports it to facilitate co-designing and testing of safe and responsible AI tools to support integrated and inclusive policy across the APS.

## Using artificial intelligence tools to support government evaluation in the Australian Government

Evaluation is a critical input to evidence-informed policy. It helps government understand what works, why and for whom, supporting more effective, efficient and equitable policies. Used safely and ethically, artificial intelligence (AI) tools can support work across the government’s evaluation process from planning and delivery to reporting findings and ensuring evidence is used.

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE), in The Treasury, released an e-learning suite in October 2025. The suite provided practical tips and examples of how AI tools can support individual evaluation tasks. Combined with guidance on the ACE website, the suite provides strong foundations for building evaluation capability across the public service.

The suite was developed through a partnership between the ACE, AI CoLab, Australian Public Service Commission, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Digital Transformation Agency, and Services Australia. Its video format was informed by a rapid, mixed-methods evaluation, which included a randomised

trial. The evaluation found that short videos are an effective format for delivering online training to Australian public servants.

Resources were shaped through extensive cross-agency consultation. Bringing together AI and evaluation experts and future users to critique and enhance the content helped ensure the suite was useful and fit-for-purpose.

Evaluation Profession members took part in an online AI Challenge, using AI tools to present findings from selected, published evaluation reports in different impactful ways. Members demonstrated the potential of AI tools to tailor findings for various audiences through format, language and level of detail.

Networking events gave members opportunities to:

- share learnings from the AI Challenge
- develop practical tips and examples for translating evaluation findings into formats such as podcasts
- discuss cultural competency considerations when using AI
- exchange innovative approaches from across agencies.

The Evaluation Profession, which brings together almost 8,000 members from across government continues to build on this initiative by championing different ways AI can support evaluation.

## IP Australia First Response




IP First Response campaign material.
Image: IP Australia

IP First Response is an experimental digital service that helps Australian small businesses, creators and innovators understand their options when they face intellectual property (IP) protection or enforcement issues. It extends IP Australia's traditional role of administering IP rights. The service achieves this by providing free, plain English guidance, practical pathways and digital tools at a point when users may be uncertain about what to do next.

The service combines human-centred design and multidisciplinary expertise across policy, legal, customer experience, content, communications, digital and technology. It includes structured guidance, a navigation tool and a generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot that helps users find government information.

IP First Response content is structured for both people and AI systems. It is helping trusted government information remain accessible and discoverable as Australians increasingly use search, self-service and AI tools to find information.

IP Australia worked with Australian Government partners, including the Attorney-General's Department, to align copyright information with broader government guidance. Universities and external experts helped extend the service beyond IP Australia's traditional remit. This included Swinburne University's foundational Infringement 101 content and expert contributions from academics and practitioners. Patent and trademark attorneys, industry representatives, small businesses and innovators also contributed through discovery, testing and refinement.

IP Australia launched a minimum viable product early. It then used customer research, analytics and feedback to test assumptions and improve the service through real-world use. This approach allows the agency to trial AI-enabled capabilities while managing delivery risk and maintaining appropriate governance and confidence in the information provided.

By providing accessible, guidance and AI-assisted navigation, IP First Response lowers barriers to understanding a complex legal and regulatory environment. It helps Australians identify appropriate pathways, make more informed decisions earlier and engage professional advice more effectively when needed.

The service is also generating capability beyond the immediate product. As a testbed for AI-enabled service delivery, IP First Response is helping IP Australia in multiple ways. This includes developing expertise in AI-assisted customer support, developing AI-ready content, discoverability through large language models and AI-assisted content maintenance. These lessons can inform how the APS designs and maintains trusted digital services as customer behaviour and technology continue to change.

## Innovative approaches to data in the Australian Antarctic Data Centre

The Australian Antarctic Data Centre (AADC) is pioneering new technologies to enhance data collection in Antarctica. Key innovations include advanced sensor kits on drones and helicopters, upgraded ground control systems for satellite accuracy, and machine-learning tools for metadata creation.

These advancements help support safe and effective operations within Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. By providing highly accurate maps, the AADC directly contributes to the safety of aviation, shipping, and scientific field activities.

Globally, improved data accuracy supports critical earth observation products. Information managed by the AADC feeds into major international research efforts, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Map products developed by the AADC have also been used to support the extension of the Heard Island and Macdonald Islands Marine Reserve.



Australian Antarctic Division expeditioners undertaking drone flights at Atlas Cove, Heard Island (Voyage 1, 2025) – staff members Natalie Williams (right) and Melissa Fedrigo.
Image: Australian Antarctic Division

The AADC deploys these capabilities through cutting-edge platforms, including the icebreaker RSV Nuyina. They also integrate new laser scanning devices at stations and are expanding the data collection capabilities of the Australian Antarctic Division's helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.

To share this vast amount of information, the AADC relies on advanced cloud services capable of handling terabyte-scale data. Users can readily access this information via online data notebooks and freely available web services. During the past year, nearly 44 million data objects were accessed by Australian users, demonstrating the massive scale and reliability of this delivery system.

The AADC fulfils Australia's Antarctic Treaty obligations by ensuring scientific data remains accessible and usable. It is recognised globally as a certified trustworthy data repository under the international CoreTrustSeal program.

# Unlocking data to inform homelessness services for children




2026 APS Data Awards, Diversity and Inclusion in Data category.

Image: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

National data did not previously identify how many children aged 12 to 17 years accessed specialist homelessness services without a parent or guardian. The Unaccompanied Children Project addressed that gap, finding that around 13,300 unaccompanied children received homelessness support in 2023–24. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has since embedded the analysis approach into routine annual reporting. In 2025–26, just over 11,300 unaccompanied children received support.

The Unaccompanied Children Project shows how stronger data capability can translate into better public outcomes. Unaccompanied children were often grouped with young adults or excluded from routine reporting. This made it difficult for policymakers and service providers to understand the scale of need or whether services were meeting children's specific needs. The new approach makes this group of children visible in national reporting and supports more targeted policies and services.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare worked with academics, advocates and state and territory data partners to identify the reporting gap and co-design a solution. This team of partners developed a robust and repeatable method to identify children aged 12 to 17 years who presented to homelessness services alone or with other children. The method was applied across multiple years of data, validated and clearly documented.

Importantly, the approach uses existing administrative data rather than requiring new data collection or additional funding. It was first used in a national report titled *Unaccompanied children receiving specialist homelessness services*. Now, the method is now embedded in routine reporting in the specialist homelessness services annual report, allowing the cohort to be tracked over time.

This work demonstrates how APS data capability can turn existing data into practical evidence for better decision-making. By making previously hidden groups visible, it strengthens the evidence base for policy and service design. It also helps ensure children experiencing homelessness are counted and supported according to their needs.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Expanding census participation through myGov, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 64.

AI and digital innovation, Delivering better services through data-driven decisions, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 151.

Supporting Australia's economic future, Illuminating Australia's invisible industries, State of Service Report 2026, page 70.

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# A trusted and accountable APS

Trust is essential for government to work well. When people trust government institutions, they are more likely to use services, follow advice and believe decisions are being made fairly and in the public interest. Without trust, even well-designed policies and programs are less effective.

Globally, the last decade has seen public trust in government and, to a lesser extent public institutions, weaken. However, trust in the Australian public institutions is rising and above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average. According to the most recent OECD Trust Survey (OECD, 2026), trust in the Australian Government grew from 38% in 2021 to 46% in 2023, reaching 51% in 2025 compared to the OECD average of 40%.

The Trust in Australian public services: 2026 Annual Report was released by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in October 2026. In 2025–26, trust in Australian public services remained at 62%, matching the record high reached in 2024–25. Satisfaction with public services increased to 70%, up one percentage point from the previous year.

While Australia continues to perform well compared with many OECD countries, trust in institutions cannot be taken for granted. Agencies are working together to make government services easier to use. For example, collaboration between Services Australia and the Australian Passport Office has improved the clarity, accessibility and design of communications and services, helping people better understand requirements and get support when they need it.

The APS is also strengthening efforts to prevent fraud and protect public money. Integrity initiatives delivered by the National Disability Insurance Agency and the Fraud Fusion Taskforce are estimated to generate more than $4.1 billion in benefits by June 2029. By June 2026, these efforts had already prevented $1.2 billion in non-compliant payments and $0.9 billion in redirected payments. Stronger payment checks help ensure that more NDIS funding reaches the people it is intended for. The Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre has further strengthened counter-fraud capability, with 87% of entities reporting that the Centre has been essential to their efforts.

The APS has strengthened governance and merit-based decision-making. The Australian Government Appointments Framework, introduced in February 2026, established a principles-based approach to appointments across Commonwealth public offices. The Australian Public Service Commission supported the reform with new guidance, including the Senior Executive Service Recruitment Guide, the Guide on Merit and the Principles for the Use of AI in Recruitment. These measures support greater consistency, transparency and accountability in recruitment and appointments.

Launched in December 2025, the Commonwealth Integrity Strategy helps agencies understand their role in building pro-integrity cultures, systems and accountability. Independent integrity bodies continue to play an important role in maintaining public confidence. During 2025–26, the National Anti-Corruption Commission assessed more than 2,600 referrals and continued investigations, oversight and education activities aimed at preventing corruption. Operation Protego also showed how APS agencies can work together quickly and effectively to respond to a major fraud event affecting the tax system.

Together, these results show that the APS continues to earn public trust while improving services, strengthening integrity and protecting public resources. As community expectations continue to change, maintaining trust will require ongoing attention to ethical conduct, transparency, privacy and services that are designed around people's needs.

# Public trust in the APS

Public trust is essential to a healthy democracy and to an effective APS. People need confidence that government institutions act with integrity, use public resources responsibly and make decisions in the public interest. Trust also shapes whether people engage with government, use public services and act on information and advice.

Trust is built through everyday experiences. Every interaction with government can influence how Australians view public institutions, from accessing a service to receiving information or understanding a policy decision. Clear, timely and accessible communication helps people understand what is happening, what is expected of them and where they can find support. It reduces confusion and gives people confidence that government is listening and responding to their needs.

Measuring trust and satisfaction gives Australians a voice in assessing how government is performing. It also helps the APS understand where confidence is strong, where it is changing and where more work is needed. Surveys such as the OECD Trust Survey provide insights into how people experience public institutions and how they view government's ability to respond to complex challenges (OECD, 2025b; 2026).

The APS uses this evidence to strengthen the way it communicates and delivers services. Building trust is not a one-off task. It requires consistent action, transparency and a focus on people's experiences. By listening to Australians, communicating clearly and acting with integrity, the APS can strengthen confidence in public institutions and support a democracy that works effectively for everyone.

## Measuring satisfaction with democracy

Public satisfaction with democracy provides an important indicator of how Australians perceive the performance and legitimacy of democratic institutions and processes. Satisfaction is also an important indicator of the extent to which these institutions are meeting community expectations.

Australians engage with democracy through formal processes, such as elections, and through everyday interactions with government, public services, and their communities. These experiences influence how Australians assess the performance of democratic institutions and processes, and their views on opportunities for improvement.

Results from June 2026 indicate that a majority of Australians (55.1%) were satisfied with democracy.

Satisfaction with democracy varied across different groups of Australians. People aged 18 to 34 years reported the highest level of satisfaction (61.9%), followed by those aged 65 years and over (56.0%) and people aged 35 to 64 years (50.6%). Men were more likely to report being satisfied with democracy (61.4%) than women (49.2%). Satisfaction was higher among people living in metropolitan areas (58.8%) compared with those living in regional areas (44.7%).

These findings highlight that experiences and perceptions of democracy differ across the community. They underscore the importance of designing policies and services that reflect the diverse needs, expectations and experiences of Australians. By ensuring public services are accessible, responsive and inclusive, governments can help strengthen confidence in democratic institutions and support positive civic outcomes.

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## Trust and satisfaction in Australian public services

Trust is shaped by people's experiences of public services. Services that are accessible, reliable, and responsive help build confidence that government can deliver on its commitments and meet community expectations. Australians have more trust in public services when they have positive personal experiences with public servants and services. Faster services, easier-to-use online services and greater transparency also lead to more trust in those services. People who used the services for the first time and found them better than expected also reported higher levels of trust.

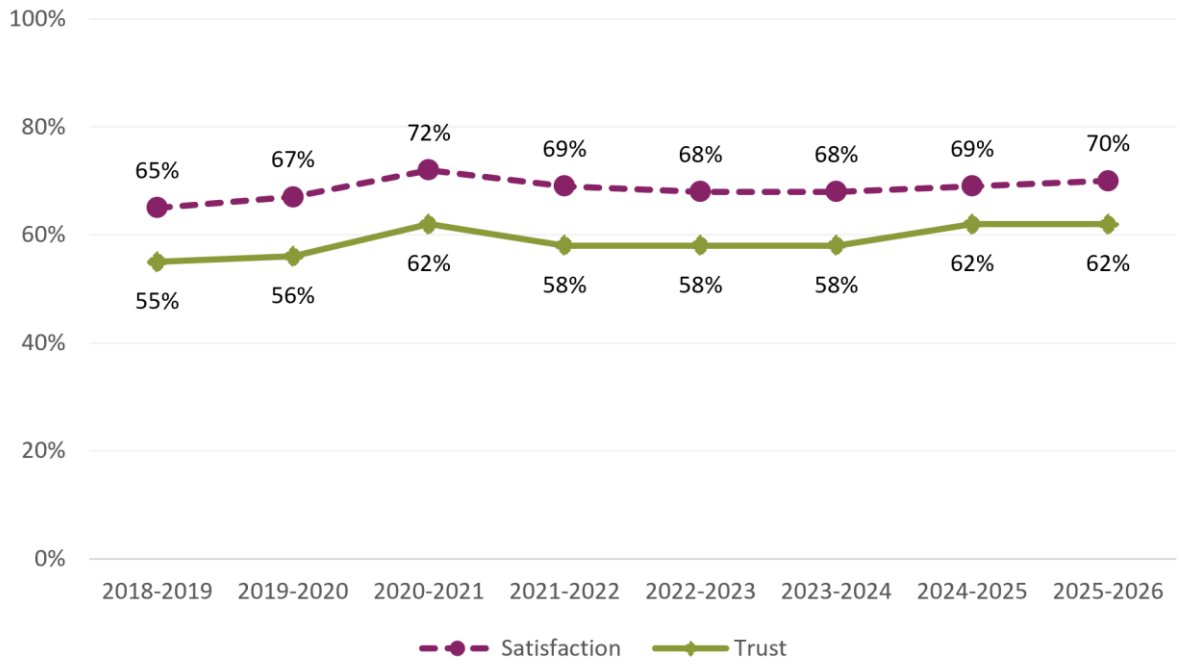
The Trust in Australian public services: *2026 Annual Report* was released by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in October 2026. The report captured community feedback from more than 1,000 people surveyed monthly on trust and satisfaction with Australian public services in the period July 2025 to June 2026.

Measuring trust and satisfaction in public services is important. It allows the public to have a voice in evaluating the effectiveness of services and helps prioritise areas most in need of improvement.

In 2025–26, trust in Australian public services remained at its historical high of 62%, the same level it was in 2024–25 and equal to its peak in 2020–21 (Figure 7).

Satisfaction with Australian public services increased to 70% in 2025–26, one percentage point higher than in 2024–25.

**Figure 7: Trust and satisfaction with Australian public services (2018–19 to 2025–26)**




While the overall level of trust in Australian public services has increased, gaps between groups remain:

- men (66%) display greater trust in public services than women (58%)
- trust is higher for those aged 18 to 34 years (68%) than those aged 35 to 64 (58%) and 65 and over (62%)
- those living in metro areas are more trusting than people who live in regional areas (65% and 56% respectively).

When asked why their trust had increased, respondents most often talked about:

- positive personal experiences, based on interactions with APS employees who were helpful, respectful, and resolved their issues
- services that were faster, easier to use online, and more transparent
- accessing a service for the first time and finding it better than expected.

## Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Trust Survey

Trust in the Australian Government is rising and above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.

According to the most recent OECD Trust Survey (OECD, 2026), high or moderately high trust in the Australian Government grew from 38% in 2021 to 46% in 2023. It reached 51% in 2025 compared to the OECD average of 40%.

Australia also scores above the OECD average on:

- trust in public institutions across armed forces, law-and-order institutions (such as the police and judiciary), public services, news media, and political parties
- perceptions of day-to-day dealings with public institutions, with better results across 13 service interaction indicators compared to the OECD average, including how easy it was for people to access services, get information, and have issues resolved
- decision-making on complex policy issues, with better results on 14 out of 15 indicators related to complex government decision-making, particularly confidence in government providing adequate support in an economic crisis and being ready to protect lives in an emergency
- artificial intelligence (AI) use in government indicators, with Australia scoring higher on 5 dimensions of confidence in potential AI use by government: to reduce costs; maintain human oversight; ensure fairness; ensure transparent AI use; and protect information.

The OECD Trust Survey explores people's perceptions of different public institutions in their country and the degree to which they trust their government. These perceptions range from day-to-day interactions with public institutions to decision-making on complex policy issues. The survey showcases evidence of people's experiences with and expectations of government reliability, responsiveness, fairness, integrity, and openness.

The 2025 survey, which followed earlier rounds in 2021 and 2023, includes 33 OECD countries and 5 OECD accession countries. It covers a representative sample of the adult population of each participating country. Carried out between 10 September and 5 November in Australia, the survey aligned with data collection in most participating countries.

# Building public trust through clear government communication




Examples of Services Australia letters and forms.

Image: Services Australia

Clear communication helps Australians understand what government is asking them to do. It reduces confusion, improves service delivery and strengthens trust. That trust is essential for an effective public service, particularly when people need to make important decisions or access government services.

The Correspondence Design and Delivery team at Services Australia works with APS agencies to improve the design of letters and forms. Drawing on experience managing high volumes of government correspondence, the team shares practical methods, templates and advice. This helps agencies produce clear, consistent and easy-to-use communications.

In 2025–26, the team partnered with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to strengthen its approach to correspondence. Working closely with commission staff, the team reviewed existing letters, simplified language and structure, and developed clearer templates and governance arrangements. The result is a more consistent approach to communicating with older Australians and aged care providers in complex and often sensitive situations.

The team also worked with the Australian Passport Office to share practical approaches to forms design. Through workshops and discussions, both agencies exchanged ideas on standards, usability, accessibility and consistent design. The partnership enabled both organisations to learn from each other's experience and improve their own practices.

The focus was not on delivering one-off products but on improving efficiency and effectiveness. By establishing reusable templates, practical guidance and stronger processes, the work will continue to support better communication.

Australians benefit when government communication is easier to read and understand. Clear letters help people know what they need to do and reduce the need for follow-up enquiries. Well-designed forms make it easier to provide accurate information, reducing errors and delays.

By sharing practical knowledge across agencies, the APS is creating a more consistent experience for Australians accessing government services. Clear, reliable communication helps members of the public understand what they need to do. It also supports better service delivery and strengthens public trust in government.

## See also in this report

A trusted and accountable APS, A culture of integrity and stewardship, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 174.

A trusted and accountable APS, Guardrails and protections, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 181.

Serving the community, Making tax and superannuation systems more accessible for people experiencing vulnerability, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 129.

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# A culture of integrity and stewardship

Integrity is vital to democracy and effective public administration. Nurturing organisational cultures that centre values, ethics and stewardship to care for what is entrusted to the APS by government and the Australian community is a core priority.

The *Public Service Act 1999* sets the expectations for public servants' actions and behaviour through the APS Values, APS Employment Principles, and the Code of Conduct. Culture, however, lays the foundations for ethical behaviour.

A culture of integrity requires more than a compliance-driven approach focused exclusively on the avoidance of wrongdoing. In the APS, acting with integrity means doing the right thing. This means being transparent and accountable, upholding high standards of professionalism, and ensuring that actions and decisions are fair, lawful, honest and impartial. In 2026, 79% of APS Employee Census respondents indicated that the culture in their agency supported people to act with integrity.

A positive integrity culture is one where leaders and employees work together to foster psychologically safe workplaces that encourage collaboration, discussion and speaking up about integrity issues. In these cultures, reporting integrity concerns is encouraged and taken seriously. Failings, such as bullying and harassment, are called out, acknowledged and proactively addressed.

In 2026, the APS Employee Census introduced a Speak Up Culture Index. This validated and evidence-based measure assesses the extent to which employees believe they can ask questions or speak about ideas, concerns, and mistakes within their workplace. The overall index score was 74 (out of 100), with most Census respondents indicating that their workgroup:

- was comfortable checking when they had questions about the right way to do things (88%)
- valued others' individual skills and talents (82%).

A slightly lower proportion felt people in their workgroup could bring up problems and tough issues (79%).

Fundamental to a culture of integrity are responsive leaders. These are leaders who respond to integrity concerns and foster psychologically safe environments where every worker can play their part in caring for and nurturing group culture. This shared commitment to upholding integrity is key. It ensures that as stewards of public resources, public trust and the national interest, public servants continue to deliver for Australians to the highest standards of professionalism.

## Maturing regulatory and cost recovery for vocational education and training

Stewardship and public value underpin the Australian Skills Quality Authority's (ASQA) approach to strengthening regulation of Australia's vocational education and training sector. ASQA has introduced an updated regulatory approach and cost-recovery model to support more transparent, efficient and risk-based regulation.

ASQA redesigned its regulatory activities to make them simpler, more consistent and better targeted, while supporting government priorities and the broader productivity agenda. Provider feedback informed the reforms, particularly calls for greater transparency about regulatory processes and costs.

Policy, regulation, finance, legal, communications, technology and corporate teams worked together to design and implement the new model. ASQA also worked with Employment and Workplace Relations, Finance, and state and territory governments. A hybrid model brought together workstream leads,

change champions and operational readiness activities, to create shared ownership of risks, clear responsibilities and consistent communication.

The project team demonstrated the APS Secretaries Charter of Leadership Behaviours by:

- Being dynamic – deploying resources in new ways to deliver complex outcomes within a compressed timeframe.
- Being respectful – consulting through multiple channels, so more than 3,800 regulated providers had opportunities to comment on proposed changes.
- Having integrity – working transparently with stakeholders to support robust and fair decisions.
- Valuing others – drawing on diverse perspectives and experience across the internal project team.
- Empowering others – giving registered training organisations clear information to meet their obligations, engage positively with the regulator and continuously improve.

These reforms strengthen stewardship of public resources. Clearer activities and charging arrangements reduce ambiguity, improve accountability and provide better information to monitor regulatory performance. Together, reforms reinforce APS Values through integrity, transparency, collaboration and long-term stewardship. They do so while supporting better outcomes for around 5 million vocational education and training students each year.

## Creating a safer NDIS through provider registration reforms



A NDIS provider assisting a participant using a laptop.

Image: NDIS Commission

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission continues to reform how it registers providers. This is to better protect participants, strengthen regulation and support the long-term sustainability of the NDIS.

Currently, 92% of NDIS providers are unregistered. Recent reforms, including mandatory registration for Supported Independent Living and NDIS Digital Platform providers, are increasing the number of registered providers and improving oversight across the sector.

Reforms have delivered significant improvements. Since 2024, the commission has reduced outstanding registration applications by 82% and cut application processing times by 78%. It has also introduced a purpose-based assessment model, streamlined systems and increased the use of registration conditions to better manage provider risks. These improvements allow staff to focus more resources on monitoring providers and protecting participants.

Ensuring quality, safety and integrity of the NDIS is critical. It protects the rights of participants and gives all Australians confidence in the integrity and long-term sustainability of the scheme.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission works closely with many agencies. This includes:

- the National Disability Insurance Agency
- Services Australia
- the Australian Federal Police
- the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
- states and territories
- other regulators, such as the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Through initiatives such as the Fraud Fusion Taskforce, agencies share intelligence and evidence to detect fraud, strengthen compliance and protect the integrity of the scheme.

## Fraud Fusion Taskforce

The Fraud Fusion Taskforce was established as a direct response to the growing threat of opportunists and criminals exploiting system weaknesses across the NDIS and other government payment programs.

The taskforce brings together 25 government agencies. These work to identify, investigate and prevent fraud and serious organised crime in the NDIS, other government payment programs and services such as Medicare or Child Care Subsidy.

Agencies include:

- departments such as Attorney-General’s and Health, Disability and Ageing
- independent regulators and oversight bodies, such as Fair Work Ombudsman, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission; NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
- law enforcement and Intelligence bodies, such as the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Australian Federal Police, and Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

The taskforce works to strengthen fraud detection and payment integrity. It does so by improving the ability to detect and disrupt fraud, serious and organised crime and other high-risk entities targeting the NDIS and other government programs. These measures help ensure services and payments reach those who are eligible.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Fraud Fusion Taskforce are delivering strong outcomes. Collectively, integrity initiatives delivered for the NDIS by June 2026 are estimated to deliver more than $4.1 billion in benefits between 1 November 2022 and 30 June 2029. Of these

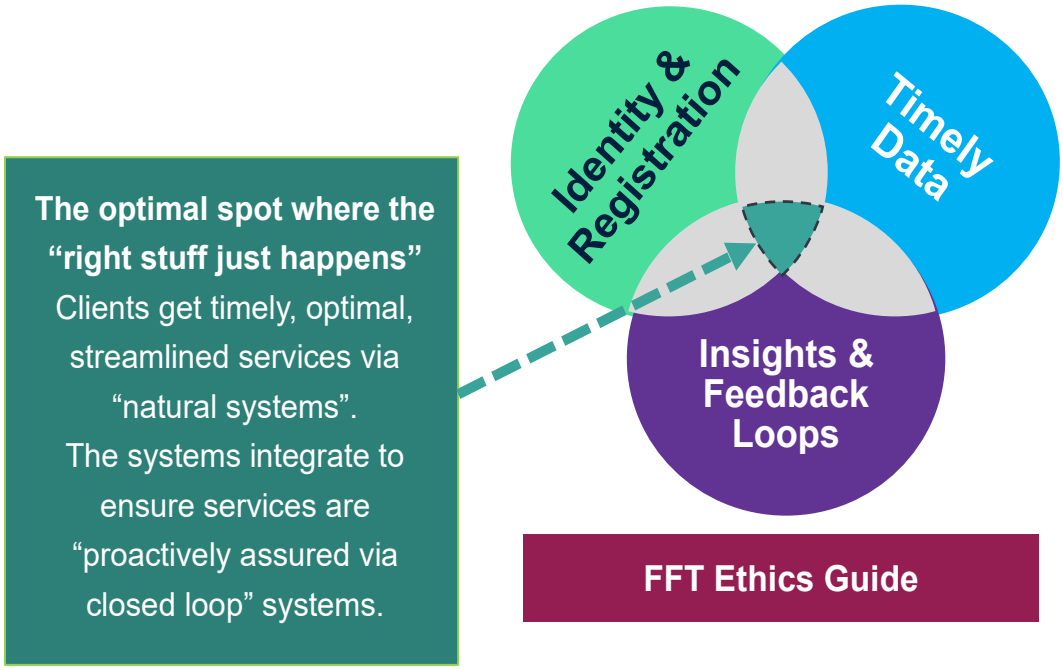
benefits, $1.2 billion in prevented non-compliant payments and $0.9 billion in redirected payments was already realised by 30 June 2026. Benefits are expected to increase as future interventions are implemented.

Prosecutions contributing to jail sentences in 17 of the 26 NDIS-related criminal convictions have been secured since December 2022. Other offenders received intensive correction orders, fines and orders to repay stolen funds.

More than 5,900 high-risk NDIS providers identified as responsible for incorrect or non-compliant claims have been disrupted. These providers had claimed around $1.1 billion in the 12 months before intervention and more than $6.5 billion since the start of the NDIS.

Fraud Fusion Taskforce insights have also informed system uplifts and technology design including NDIA's Crack Down on Fraud program. This program is strengthening NDIA's ability to combat fraud while improving the experience for NDIS participants and providers, making it easier to submit legitimate claims. Key initiatives delivered include:

- a new integrity management system
- strengthened identity authentication for participants and providers
- a new NDIS mobile app and online systems that enhance user experience while strengthening security protections.




Optimising the Ecosystem. A gentler world where "the right stuff just happens".
Image: National Disability Insurance Agency

### Whole-of-government strategic prevention

The Taskforce has developed Strategic Prevention Concepts that agencies can adopt to strengthen integrity across government systems.

Seven building blocks that government payment programs should embed to improve integrity have been identified by the taskforce:

1. identity is not optional

2. real-time suitability is needed
3. verify by default; trust by exception
4. share data to close loops
5. make supply chains transparent
6. deploy multiple layers of defence
7. vigilance is necessary to contain exposure.

The taskforce has demonstrated the extraordinary strategic and operational benefits and speed of innovation that can be realised when the full breadth of APS talent and experience focuses on tackling and resolving complex challenges.

## National Library of Australia Trove Metadata Manager Project




The National Library's Trove Metadata Manager Project won the Data Leadership and Capability Building category at the APS Data Awards (March 2026).
Image: National Library of Australia

The National Library of Australia's Trove Metadata Manager project has modernised the national infrastructure used to deliver Trove. Trove is a single point to a national collection of artefacts and stories from Australia's history and culture. It connects digital collections from contributing organisations, known as partners, from across Australia. This includes libraries, museums, galleries, community and government. Behind the scenes, the Trove Metadata Manager aggregates a rich data source describing millions of collection items, making discovery journeys possible.

The project has transformed how Australia's cultural sector manages and shares collection information. It has introduced a format-agnostic, linked data platform for the Australian National Bibliographic Database – Australia's largest bibliographic resource. In doing so, the project has laid a foundation for richer, more connected collection discovery through Trove. The result is greater visibility of collections and improved access for contributing organisations and the Australian public.

Around 900 organisations across the country now use the Trove Metadata Manager to describe, enrich and share their collections. The platform is strengthened by integration with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies thesauri in Trove partner search. It also enhances access and discovery of significant cultural materials, including First Nations collections.

The Trove Metadata Manager Project has demonstrated strong stewardship by ensuring Australia's cultural collections are managed responsibly and remain accessible to the public. Working collaboratively with collecting organisations, the National Library created a trusted national platform that supports transparent data sharing while preserving connections to source collections. This approach strengthens confidence in Australia's cultural record and ensures it can continue to deliver value for future generations.

Built on the Bibliographic Framework standard, the platform replaces a traditional flat data structure with a linked data framework. It positions Australia's cultural data for future innovation and interoperability. It also supports richer connections between collections and represents the first implementation of this scale and complexity for an English-language data store.

## Strong records, Strong APS

The Strong Records, Strong APS campaign was developed by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in consultation with the National Archives of Australia and Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. The campaign was part of a series responding to Recommendation 9 of the Louder Than Words: An APS Integrity Action Plan. This plan calls for reinforcing the importance of good record keeping for integrity and supporting its practice across the APS.

Promoted from January to August 2026, the Strong Records, Strong APS campaign strengthened awareness of good recordkeeping culture. It did so by promoting good records management and making it clear, practical and relevant to everyday work.

Good records and data management support integrity, transparency and stewardship. They help agencies make informed decisions, maintain accountability and preserve important information for current and future generations. Every APS employee plays a role in creating, managing and protecting records.

The campaign provided agencies with practical tools and resources to help staff understand the value of good recordkeeping and apply it in their daily work. It used a multi-channel approach to reach audiences through social media, the APSC website, and internal communication in agencies through APS communications teams and leaders. The campaign was championed by Chief Operating Officers and record management professionals. It was backed by learning opportunities available across the APS focusing on record keeping basics, privacy awareness, freedom of information and data management.

By working together, the APS continues to strengthen its recordkeeping practices, protect valuable information and deliver services with integrity.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Effective and inclusive leadership, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 43.

Agency Benchmarking, Supporting integrity, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 297.

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# Guardrails and protections

The APS has sets of laws, principles, standards and oversight mechanisms to support employees and agencies to act ethically, maintain public trust, and deliver services impartially, professionally and in the public interest.

One of those principles is merit. Merit is fundamental to the integrity of APS recruitment. It guards against nepotism, cronyism and unfair practices, building public confidence that public servants are employed because they have the right skills and are the best person for the job.

A role of the Merit Protection Commissioner (MPC) is to protect the principle of merit. The Merit Protection Commissioner can now review the application of merit across the entire eligible promotion and engagement processes. Introduced on 1 April 2025, this expanded function extends beyond the previous approach of comparing the successful candidate with the applicant seeking a review. In addition, a new 'own motion' review power means the MPC can also decide to conduct a review into a selection exercise without the need for a complaint or an application for review.

The APS has a strong conduct framework that sets out expectations for behaviour and consequences for misconduct. This framework supports integrity and accountability. The establishment of the Australian Government Appointments Framework provides additional guardrails to ensure merit-based appointment processes for a broad range of public offices.

Other guardrails and protections include:

- Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework, which helps Commonwealth entities prevent and respond to fraud and corruption risks in a systematic way.
- Office of the Australian Information Commissioner that promotes and protects Australians' privacy and information rights.

All Australians should have confidence in the public servants who are employed to deliver important services and make policies that impact all of us. This chapter introduces some of the important work being undertaken to achieve this goal.

## Australian Government Appointments Framework

The Australian Government Appointments Framework took effect on 2 February 2026, introducing a new, principles-based approach to appointments across Commonwealth public offices.

The framework was developed jointly by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was informed by the findings of the *Review of Public Sector Board Appointments Processes (No Favourites)*, led by Ms Lynelle Briggs AO.

The framework establishes Commonwealth-wide requirements for ministerial accountability and merit-based appointment processes for a broad range of public offices. This includes secretaries and agency heads, statutory office holders, and members of government boards and advisory bodies. Applying to more than 2,000 appointed positions, the framework represents a significantly broader scope than the Merit and Transparency Policy it replaces. It also extends beyond the recommendations of the Briggs Review.



Australian Government Appointments Framework project team members receiving a 2026 Australian Public Service Commission Team Award. From left: Michael Tonge, Avril Hughes, Jacqui Curtis PSM, Australian Public Service Commissioner, Nicholas Mortimer.
Image: Australian Public Service Commission

Built around 7 appointment principles, the framework reinforces that ministers are responsible for appointments and should seek to appoint the most suitable candidates in the public interest. It also clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of ministers and agencies throughout the appointment process. This promotes consistency while allowing flexibility to meet the requirements of different appointments.

The framework provides 3 appointment pathways: open competitive; closed competitive; and direct appointments. To support implementation, the APSC published accompanying guidance in May 2026, developed with Prime Minister and Cabinet and in consultation with agencies across the Commonwealth.

## Promoting APS Employment Principles in recruitment and selection

During 2025–26, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) expanded and strengthened its recruitment guidance, equipping APS agencies to apply the APS Employment Principles with greater confidence and efficiency. In turn, this supports high standards of integrity.

In December 2025, the APSC published the Senior Executive Service Recruitment Guide. This guide brings together the key legislative and policy requirements for conducting a Senior Executive Service recruitment process. In April 2026, the APSC published the Guide on Merit and the Principles for agency use of AI in Recruitment.

The Guide on Merit is a foundational document that describes each element of a merit-based selection process. The principles for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment builds on this foundation. They outline how AI can be used ethically, responsibly and transparently by APS agencies and candidates within merit-based recruitment processes. The principles align with the AI Plan for the APS 2025 and support the integrity of merit-based selection.

Together, these products respond to emerging workforce, technology and capability needs across the APS. They help agencies access the talent they need to deliver government priorities while maintaining public confidence in recruitment processes.

The application of the APS Employment Principles occurs within a context of changing workforce demands, evolving recruitment practices and the need for flexible and inclusive approaches. This guidance helps agencies apply principles consistently, supporting innovative recruitment practices while maintaining fairness and accountability. Application supports fair employment decisions for APS employees and those seeking to join the service. It also provides clarity of expectations for job applicants in the appropriate use of AI when applying for a role.

## Preventing fraud to protect public resources




Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre Canberra-based staff. The centre has staff working in multiple locations across Australia.

Image: Attorney-General's Department

Fraud is a large-scale, evolving, and often hidden threat that directly undermines government service delivery, diverts critical funding and erodes public trust. In Australia, estimates suggest that between 3% and 6% of government outlays are lost to fraud and error.[6]

Established initially as a pilot in July 2019, the Commonwealth Fraud Prevention Centre (CFPC) was created to strengthen counter-fraud capability across the Australian Government. Since its inception, it has delivered a coordinated, strategic, and prevention-led approach to addressing fraud and corruption across the Commonwealth public sector.

Key deliverables include:

- delivery of more than 200 events, presentations and webinars
- training of more than 300 counter-fraud practitioners through an award-winning program

[6] https://www.counterfraud.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-03/IPSFF-fraud-loss-measurement-framework.pdf (page 48)

- developing more than 50 leading-practice guides and innovative tools, with tens of thousands of product downloads a year
- significantly updating the Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework.

The centre’s work supports Australian Government entities to adopt best-practice approaches to fraud prevention, with 87% of entities reporting that the CFPC has been essential to improving their counter fraud capabilities. This, in turn, has led to stronger defences against fraud in mission-critical settings. It has also improved payment accuracy, which stakeholders have credited with achieving hundreds of millions of dollars in estimated financial savings.

The CFPC is part of the Attorney-General’s Department. It administers the Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework. It also supports the Australian Institute of Criminology to deliver the annual Fraud and Corruption Against the Commonwealth Census. With a team of about 14 staff, the CFPC provides practical tools and guidance to all Australian Government employees while fostering collaboration and sharing insights to proactively reduce fraud risk.

Beyond its domestic role, the CFPC leads Australia's engagement with the International Public Sector Fraud Forum and has a secondment exchange with the United Kingdom. Outcomes of this collaboration include the Fraud Loss Measurement Framework and Fraud Prevention Savings Framework. These tools provide guidance for a global audience on measuring fraud losses and quantifying savings from fraud prevention initiatives.

Demand for the CFPC’s services continue to grow. On average, training participation increased by 24% a year from 2021–22 to 2025–26. Product downloads increased by 58% a year over the same period.

## Delivering better systems for Privacy and Information Rights

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) promotes and protects Australians' privacy and information rights. Demand for its services has grown, driven by new technologies, greater community awareness and a more complex regulatory environment. This led the OAIC to transform how it manages complaints and reviews.

The 2026 Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey found that 87% of Australians are more concerned about privacy than they were 5 years ago. The 2025 Information Access Study found that 96% consider access to government-held information important. The study also found that while 86% government should publicly report on technologies used in freedom of information decision-making, including artificial intelligence and automated processes.

Over the past 2 years, the OAIC redesigned how it receives, triages and finalises matters. In doing so, it adopted a more proactive enforcement approach, set clearer expectations for regulated entities and strengthened staff capability. It introduced a single point of assessment, streamlined case management, early resolution pathways and cohort triage for similar matters. Staff also received training in investigation techniques and trauma support.

The OAIC has worked closely with Commonwealth agencies, regulated entities and external dispute resolution schemes to improve complaint handling and encourage earlier resolution of issues. It supported better freedom of information practice through updated guidance, webinars and stakeholder roundtables. The OAIC also created a central hub linking to the disclosure logs of more than 240 Australian Government agencies.

Together, these improvements are delivering faster outcomes for Australians while strengthening confidence in Australia's privacy and information access framework.

## See also in this report

Agency Benchmarking, Supporting integrity, *State of the Service Report 2026,* page 297.

Appendix 2, State of the Service additional data, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 335.

A trusted an accountable APS, National Anti-Corruption Commission, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 187.

A trusted an accountable APS, Operation Protego Integrity Taskforce, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 187.

A trusted and accountable APS, Public trust in the APS, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 169.

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# Accountability

Public trust depends on having confidence that staff uphold the APS Values. It also depends on suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct being reported, concerns examined fairly, and misconduct addressed appropriately.

A range of accountability mechanisms ensure that the behavioural standards set out in the APS Code of Conduct are more than aspirational. These mechanisms provide clear pathways for reporting concerns, investigating alleged misconduct, determining responsibility, and applying appropriate sanctions where standards have not been met.

Within agencies, APS employees are required to report suspected misconduct or unacceptable behaviour through their agency's internal processes. This covers the full range of potential Code of Conduct breaches. Behaviours include relatively minor misconduct to serious misconduct, such as misusing APS resources to conflicts of interest and improper recruitment practices. Agencies must account for their performance against this expectation and explain their actions and decisions to the people affected by them.

For serious or systemic corruption, independent mechanisms like the National Anti-Corruption Commission provide enhanced scrutiny and investigative powers.

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* is a statutory mechanism that allows current and former Commonwealth officials to report serious wrongdoing.

**Insights into APS misconduct reporting, investigations and sanctions**

Public servants are expected to report concerns or suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct. Agencies are responsible for assessing concerns, undertaking fair and impartial investigations, and applying sanctions where misconduct is established.

The annual APS Agency Survey reports on Code of Conduct breaches. During 2025–26, 623 employees were the subject of a finalised investigation into a suspected breach of the APS Code of Conduct. This is compared to 582 employees from 2024–25 (a 7% increase).

Those found in breach most commonly did not uphold the APS Values and APS Employment Principles, and the integrity and good reputation of their agency and the APS (413 employees). Breaches for 88 employees related to engaging in conduct involving corruption.

Investigations most often resulted from:

- a direct report made to an agency’s 2025 central ethics, conduct, or human resources unit (250)
- compliance activities (244).

Where breaches were substantiated, agencies applied a range of sanctions:

- reprimands (210)
- fines (117)
- employment termination (93)
- reduction in salary (67)
- re-assignment of duties (15)
- reduction in classification (14).

An increase in reporting, investigations and substantiated findings can reflect:

- a stronger integrity culture
- increased awareness of reporting obligations
- greater confidence in reporting mechanisms
- more robust agency responses to misconduct.

While misconduct remains uncommon across the APS workforce, continued reporting and enforcement activity demonstrates the importance of integrity, accountability and maintaining public trust in the APS.

## National Anti-Corruption Commission

Providing independent assurance to the Australian community that corrupt conduct involving Commonwealth public officials is prevented, detected, investigated and responded to appropriately is important to government. This is the key focus of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), an independent statutory agency established by the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022*. The commission was established in July 2023. During 2025–26, the commission's key achievements included:

- assessing 2,603 referrals
- starting 18 preliminary investigations to help decide whether or not a corruption issue exists, and if so, whether and how to deal with it
- concluding 34 preliminary investigations, with 8 of these progressing for further action under the NACC Act
- starting 16 corruption investigations under the NACC Act
- overseeing or monitoring 30 investigations by other agencies (of these, 6 were finalised following receipt of a mandatory completion report)
- securing 2 convictions
- holding more than 130 engagements with Commonwealth public officials and community members to boost awareness of its role and how to prevent corrupt conduct.

Each of the investigations that have resulted in a finding of serious corrupt conduct has been publicly reported. Between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026, 4 investigation reports were published about serious corrupt conduct in law enforcement agencies, nepotism in recruitment and dishonesty in senior executive decision-making. A further 17 corruption investigations were finalised,[7] including:

- 4 where prosecutions resulted in convictions or court action
- 13 where it became apparent that serious or systemic corrupt conduct would not be established and the investigation was discontinued.

## Operation Protego Integrity Taskforce

The most significant challenges facing the APS extend well beyond the remit of any one portfolio, department or agency. Whether it is integrity threats, fraud, emerging technologies or increasingly complex service delivery, these issues do not fit neatly within defined organisational boundaries. Addressing them effectively requires the APS to think and act as One APS.

A strong example of this in practice is the Operation Protego Integrity Taskforce (OPIT). The taskforce was established in response to a significant fraud event against the tax system involving individuals,

[7] Includes ACLEI legacy investigations finalised by the Commission after 1 July 2023.

including a small number of Commonwealth employees. OPIT brought together expertise from across government to respond quickly and effectively. It was co-led by the ATO and the Australian Public Service Commission and supported by agencies including The Treasury. OPIT connected policy, operational, integrity, legal, workforce, and law enforcement capabilities around a shared objective.

What stood out was not only the outcome, but the way agencies worked together to achieve it. Teams collaborated from the outset to identify risks early, work through legislative and operational barriers, and develop practical solutions in real time. Bringing together different perspectives allowed agencies to move faster, avoid unnecessary duplication and tackle issues that no single organisation could have addressed alone.

Without this collaboration, many of the issues OPIT confronted would have taken longer to identify and resolve. The complexity of the challenge demanded that people step beyond traditional boundaries, share expertise and work collectively towards a common outcome. By connecting policy, delivery and assurance expertise from the outset, agencies developed more practical solutions and achieved results that were greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

The stronger the connections across the APS, the better agencies can understand each other's pressures, priorities and challenges. These connections support collaboration, the sharing of insights, and the delivery of outcomes that are more effective, enduring and responsive to government and community needs.

OPIT demonstrates what is possible when strong accountability is combined with genuine collaboration. It is a practical example of a more connected APS, where policy, delivery and assurance functions work together to respond to complex challenges and achieve outcomes that are greater than the sum of their parts.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Effective and inclusive leadership, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 43.

Agency Benchmarking, Supporting integrity, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 297.

Appendix 2, State of the Service additional data, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 335.

A trusted an accountable APS, A culture of integrity and stewardship, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 174.

A trusted an accountable APS, Preventing fraud to protect public resources, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 183.

## Find out more

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# Working in the APS

The APS operates in a competitive labour market and an increasingly complex operating environment. Its ability to deliver high-quality advice, effective services and support to government depends on attracting, developing and retaining a capable and resilient workforce.

Many of the workforce challenges facing the APS are the same as those facing employers across Australia. While pay remains important, especially with ongoing cost-of-living pressures, employees are also looking for flexible working arrangements, opportunities to learn and grow, meaningful work, and workplaces where they feel valued and supported.

As Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Steven Kennedy PSM, reflected:

> *What will sustain us through change is more than evolving our structures. It's our people who embody trust, curiosity, commitment and innovation. When we're empowered to share ideas and engaged in our work, innovation follows. We can only meet change by being prepared to change ourselves. (Kennedy IPAA Speech Feb 2026)*

Building a strong public service is about more than recruiting talented people. It is also about creating workplaces where people can contribute their best, work effectively with others and feel confident to bring different perspectives to solving complex problems.

As demonstrated throughout this year's State of the Service Report, APS employees are using their diverse skills and expertise to tackle some of the trickiest public policy challenges and innovate new solutions to complex problems on behalf of the nation.

For many employees, the opportunity to make a difference through public service is a major reason for joining and staying in the APS. APS Employee Census results continue to show strong levels of engagement, commitment to public service and an understanding of how individual work contributes to outcomes for Australians.

This chapter looks at the factors that help the APS perform at its best. It explores how purpose, employee engagement, inclusion, flexibility and diversity help attract and retain talented people, support productive and innovative workplaces, and improve outcomes for Australians.

# Attracting and retaining talent

The attributes that attract people to an organisation, encourage them to stay and that drive strong organisational performance overlap: meaningful work, opportunities for growth and development, effective leadership, positive workplace cultures, and flexibility (Gallup, 2025). While these factors were once viewed mainly as aspects of employee wellbeing, they are now increasingly recognised as important drivers of how well organisations adapt, innovate, perform and achieve their goals (Kumar et al., 2026; Murphy, 2024).

To deliver for Australians, the APS needs to attract and retain people with diverse skills, experiences and perspectives, and provide workplaces where they can do their best work. Employees perform best when they understand the purpose of their work, have the tools and support they need, and work in environments that encourage learning, innovation and different perspectives.

The APS Employee Value Proposition (EVP), developed in 2023, articulates the unique benefits of a career in public service. This includes having meaningful work, opportunities to learn and develop, a sense of belonging, flexibility and balance, and supportive workplace conditions.

Each year, the APS Employee Census asks employees about their experiences in these areas. The results help agencies understand what's working well and where improvements are needed, so they can strengthen their workplaces and better achieve their goals.

## A workplace with purpose: Key findings from the 2026 APS Employee Census

The APS Employee Census provides an important evidence base for understanding the experiences of the APS workforce, identifying strengths and informing action at the agency and APS-wide levels.

Overall, the 2026 APS results are encouraging. They show a workforce that remains highly engaged, strongly committed to serving the Australian community and increasingly empowered to improve the way the APS works.

Most measures recorded modest declines from the particularly strong results achieved in 2025. The three largest declines were seen in satisfaction with remuneration, stability of jobs, and how change is managed:

- 61% of employees felt fairly remunerated for the work they do, compared with 66% in 2025 and 63% in 2024.
- People were less satisfied with the stability and security of their jobs in 2026. Satisfaction fell from 86% in 2025 to 82% in 2026.
- Fewer employees agreed that change was managed well within their agency (48% in 2025 to 44% in 2026).

The decline in satisfaction with job stability and security coincided with a period of financial constraint, as agencies worked to manage their workforces within budget. Lower satisfaction with remuneration is consistent with the historical pattern observed in the lead-up to enterprise bargaining.

In broad terms, however, employee sentiment has returned to levels seen in 2024 and earlier years, rather than indicating a significant shift in the overall workforce experience.

### Engagement and sense of purpose

Employee engagement shows how connected and committed employees feel to their agency and the work they do. It reflects whether employees understand and support their agency's goals, feel proud to work there, and are willing to put in extra effort when needed.

Employee engagement remains strong across the APS (see Table 24). Almost 9 in 10 employees (89%) say they are willing to go the extra mile when needed. A similar proportion believe in the purpose and goals of both the APS and their agency (87%). More than 9 in 10 employees (92%) understand how their work helps deliver outcomes for Australians, and most (84%) consider the impact of their work on the people and businesses they serve.

**Table 24: Employee engagement**

| | **2026** | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Employee Engagement Index score* | ***74*** | *75* | *74* |
| I am happy to go the 'extra mile' at work when required | **89%** | 91% | 91% |
| I believe strongly in the purpose and objectives of my agency | **87%** | 88% | 86% |
| I feel committed to my agency's goals | **86%** | 88% | 85% |
| I am proud to work in my agency | **79%** | 81% | 78% |
| I would recommend my agency as a good place to work | **74%** | 77% | 71% |
| My agency really inspires me to do my best work every day | **63%** | 67% | 60% |
| I feel a strong personal attachment to my agency | **63%** | 65% | 63% |

### Innovation

The APS Employee Census assesses an agency's innovation culture, including whether employees are encouraged to suggest improvements, whether innovative ideas are recognised, and whether agencies create an environment that supports experimentation, learning and continuous improvement.

Results in 2025 showed strong improvements in several areas related to innovation. More employees felt their agency accepted that trying new things can sometimes involve failure (+10 percentage points), inspires them to find better ways of doing things (+9 percentage points), and recognised innovative ideas and approaches (+6 percentage points) compared with 2024.

In 2026, results for these measures fell slightly by 1 to 2 percentage points. However, as Table 25 shows, most of the improvements achieved in 2025 were maintained.

**Table 25: Enabling innovation**

| | **2026** | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Enabling Innovation Index score* | ***67*** | *68* | *65* |
| I believe that one of my responsibilities is to continually look for new ways to improve the way we work | **83%** | 83% | 79% |
| My immediate supervisor encourages me to come up with new or better ways of doing things | **76%** | 76% | 73% |
| People are recognised for coming up with new and innovative ways of working | **63%** | 64% | 58% |
| My agency inspires me to come up with new or better ways of doing things | **57%** | 59% | 50% |
| My agency recognises and supports the notion that failure is a part of innovation | **50%** | 51% | 41% |

**Leadership**

Good leadership plays an important role in how employees experience their work. It influences whether people feel motivated, supported, trusted and engaged.

In 2026, employees continued to rate their immediate supervisors positively, with an overall Immediate Supervisor Index score of 77, consistent with 2025. More than 80% of employees said their supervisor helped the team deliver on priorities, encouraged different views and ideas, and supported a culture of continuous improvement. Ratings for SES managers were lower but remained broadly stable in 2026 with an SES Manager Index score of 69 (71 in 2025).

**Culture and workplace conditions**

APS agencies continue to work towards creating workplaces where people feel included, respected and valued. Most employees believe their agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture (82%), and 80% feel they are treated with respect by their colleagues.

Flexibility and balance are important elements of the APS employment experience. In 2026, 86% of employees said they were confident that a request for flexible working arrangements would be given reasonable consideration. This ongoing support for flexible ways of working helps employees balance their work and personal commitments.

Together, these results show that most APS employees feel connected to their work, supported by their workplace and able to contribute effectively. These are important foundations for strong organisational performance and delivering services for Australians.

## Strengthening the APS's ability to attract, retain and develop digital and cyber talent

Digital and cyber professionals play a critical role in helping the Australian Public Service (APS) deliver effective, efficient and trusted services to the public.

In 2025–26, the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), partnered with the APS Digital Profession to develop a tailored Digital Employee Value Proposition (EVP). The aim was to help the APS continue to attract, retain and develop critical digital and cyber talent. Chris Fechner is the Chief Executive Officer and Head of the Digital Profession DTA. In the announcement on Strengthening Australia’s digital capacity: New EVP, Chris notes:

> *Digital and cyber professionals are responsible for designing, delivering and securing systems that millions of Australians depend on every day... the [employee value] proposition recognises the scale of that responsibility and reinforces the opportunities that come with working on digital projects of national significance. (Fechner, 2026, 12 March)*

Published in March 2026, the Digital EVP is a key commitment under the first stage of the APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan to develop a capable and resilient digital workforce. It also contributes to the objectives of the Australian Government’s Data and Digital Government Strategy.

The Digital EVP presents a compelling and authentic value proposition by highlighting what makes a digital career in government unique. It is built around 4 key attributes:

- protect and uplift the nation's most critical systems
- solve complex problems through digital solutions
- shape Australia's digital future

- collaborate to build a simple, secure and connected public service.

These attributes were informed by a co-design process which found that digital professionals value:

- meaningful work with purpose and impact
- opportunities to solve complex problems
- supportive and inclusive workplaces
- flexible working arrangements
- opportunities for learning, community and belonging.

The Digital EVP strengthens recruitment efforts and reinforces the digital profession as a distinct workforce segment across the APS. This helps build a stronger professional identity for digital practitioners. It also enables agencies to collectively compete for the talent needed to deliver government priorities, modern digital services and future workforce capabilities. The Digital EVP demonstrates how the broader APS Employee Value Proposition can support agencies and workforce segments to develop their own tailored employee value propositions.

The Digital EVP was launched in March 2026 to coincide with the first anniversary of the APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Maturing the APS Professions model, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 51.

Agency Benchmarking, Employee engagement, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 236.

AI and digital innovation, APS Digital, Data and Cyber Workforce Plan – Horizon 1, *State of Service Report 2026*, page 147.

## Find out more

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# Driving innovation and productivity

The APS is committed to delivering better outcomes for Australians. In a complex and changing environment, productivity helps the APS make the most effective use of its people, resources and capabilities to deliver public value. Productivity is not an end in itself. It is about improving the way work is done so that services, policies and programs can be delivered more effectively and efficiently.

Across the APS, agencies are continuing efforts to simplify processes, modernise systems and reduce unnecessary administrative burden. Greater use of digital tools, data and automation, combined with more streamlined ways of working, is helping in many ways. This includes by reducing duplication, improving efficiency and maintaining the high standards of integrity, accountability and service expected of the APS.

These improvements create capacity for employees to focus on higher-value work. By spending less time on routine or manual tasks, APS employees can devote more effort to other important priorities. Such priorities include policy development, service improvement, stakeholder engagement, problem solving, and other activities that contribute directly to government priorities and community outcomes.

Productivity is also about improving how the different parts of the APS, and the services they deliver, work together to achieve shared outcomes. Better alignment across systems, processes and service delivery can reduce friction, minimise duplication and ensure effort is directed towards achieving outcomes more effectively. Where different parts of the system are not aligned, additional time and resources are often required to achieve the same result.

Reforms to commissioning practices, investment in internal capability, and new approaches to defining and funding outcomes all contribute to improved productivity. This is particularly so in community services and the care economy. Together, these changes support a more coordinated, efficient and outcomes-focused public sector that is better positioned to deliver value for Australians.

## Making regulation work better for people and business

Finance is progressing whole-of-government regulatory policy, practice and performance reforms. This is to improve productivity and government services, reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, and make it easier to invest, build, innovate, and do business in Australia.

In 2025–26, Finance led the development of the Regulatory Reform Agenda, following the Economic Reform Roundtable held in August 2025. Key areas of productivity uplift include:

- making regulation simpler, more effective, and better targeted
- establishing a single national market to create clear and consistent rules for Australian businesses, workers and consumers
- developing and implementing faster processes to get more projects off the ground more quickly
- modernising regulation to reduce compliance burden and enhance government service delivery
- ensuring regulatory stewardship to improve regulations and help regulators better embed productivity in their practice.

The Australian Government will strengthen regulatory systems and reduce gross regulatory burden by $10.2 billion each year. Strengthening includes progressing reforms to deliver a ‘tell-us-once approach’. This approach is:

- reducing the amount of time Australians spend providing the same information across different areas of government
- reducing administrative and financial burdens
- allowing Australians to get on with their lives and businesses.

This program of work, key changes and anticipated benefits are outlined in the Regulatory Reform Budget Fact Sheet published in 2025–26.

Delivering regulatory reform is a team effort. Finance worked with Commonwealth departments, agencies and regulators to identify opportunities for improvement, including through the Regulator Leadership Cohort (convened by Finance). This included working across government to lift the risk appetite of regulators. It also included supporting updated Statements of Expectations and Statements of Intent to reflect an approach that better balances risk mitigation with efficiency, growth and dynamism.

Finance consulted with businesses, industry groups, community organisations and other stakeholders to understand where unnecessary regulatory complexity or duplication creates barriers. Together they identified and developed practical, achievable regulatory reforms that focus on real-world outcomes.

Two Regulatory Reform Omnibus Bills were introduced to Parliament in 2025–26 to help make systems simpler, easier to use and more effective. Parliament has enacted or is considering more than 80 legislative reforms across these Bills.

The Office of Parliamentary Counsel drafted the legislation contained in the Regulatory Reform Omnibus Bills and provided guidance and support to Finance and departments through the process. Prime Minister and Cabinet supported approvals and coordination across the government's legislative program.

This collaborative approach enabled Finance and partners to identify issues early, reduce duplication, strengthen the quality of reforms and build support across government. It resulted in better-designed reform, a smoother legislative process, and better outcomes for Australians, businesses and government.

The impact of this work is already being seen. For example:

- the *Regulatory Reform Omnibus Act 2025* delivered 60 reforms to improve the operations of 13 government agencies and reduce regulatory burden across the economy
- reforms are supporting information sharing between Medicare and Centrelink, helping reconnect around 980,000 Australians with up to $270 million in unpaid Medicare benefits
- other reforms are making it easier for patients to access diagnostic imaging services by extending referral timeframes from 7 to 14 days.

Finance is also leading towards a national approach to worker screening in the care and support economy. This will achieve productivity benefits for care sector workers and providers while ensuring vital safety uplifts for vulnerable cohorts of Australians.

Good regulation often goes unnoticed but affects almost every part of daily life. Finance's work helps make it easier to access government services, saving time and reducing unnecessary complexity and burden. Better regulation supports productivity, helping create a stronger economy while maintaining safeguards to protect what matters.

# Achieving productivity gains through practical collaboration and agile delivery

**DCCEEW ICT Investment Strategy for the Parks uplift program**

The Parks Uplift Program is a strategic initiative within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to extend and align contemporary enterprise technology to Parks Australia.

The initiative bridges the unique operational demands of managing Commonwealth national parks, marine reserves, and remote field deployments with DCCEEW's broader whole-of-government digital strategies

The initiative involved building a modern IT environment alongside inherited legacy technology, including infrastructure and hardware more than 15 years old. By moving quickly, the Parks and ICT Divisions delivered steady, practical improvements to help Parks teams do their jobs and reduce reliance on outdated systems. Together they:

- stabilised and expanded internet connectivity across key and previously unconnected parks
- recovered around 15 hours of historically and culturally significant video
- delivered WHS improvements including vehicle rollover technology and mobile backpacks for search and rescue
- repaired or replaced more than 160 devices
- created savings by removing obsolete technology
- co-designed a sustainable technology operating model.

**Delivering the Default Market Offer review**

The Default Market Offer (DMO) sets a price cap on what energy retailers can charge consumers on default standing offer contracts, with prices determined annually by the independent Australian Energy Regulator. It safeguards consumers who haven't shopped around for a new electricity deal.

Consultation on reforms to the DMO was conducted between 18 June and 18 July 2025 to review and strengthen the framework governing regulated electricity prices for households and small businesses in NSW, South Australia and south-east Queensland.

A key outcome from the review was the introduction of the Solar Sharer Offer. The Solar Sharer Offer has been introduced as part of reforms to the DMO. It makes 3 hours of free power available in the middle of the day to households with smart meters in DMO regions. The free power is available to homes even if they don't have solar panels. It became available to both homeowners and renters on 1 July, 2026.

Implementing the outcome of the DMO review meant working across policy, legal, and regulatory teams in an environment where government objectives, industry views, consumer expectations, and regulatory responsibility did not always align.

By prioritising the issues that matter most and continuing to move forward even at times where every detail was not yet settled, the teams put in place high-impact reforms that let households benefit this year, while creating space to keep working on longer-term consumer protections. The proposed Solar Sharer Offer is one example: legislative and regulatory amendments shaped at pace to enable a defined period of zero-cost electricity for households, encouraging a shift to daytime solar generation while keeping the framework practical for retailers.

Extensive public consultation reflected a commitment to transparent policy design and a willingness to engage early and iterate. Legal colleagues showed strong judgement, identifying risks rather than avoiding them and helping manage them in a way that kept reform moving.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, Expanding Census participation through myGov, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 64.

Agency Benchmarking, Enabling innovation, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 246.

## Find out more

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# Removing barriers to talent and contribution

The APS has a legislative responsibility to reflect the community it serves. That community is diverse. Over half the Australian population was born overseas or have a parent born overseas and come from all over the world. Some 100 faiths are represented (ABS 2022a). Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism among the largest, but so too is having no religion (ABS 2022a). One in 5 live with disability, 15% of whom are working age (15-64 years) (ABS 2022b). And around 10% of people identify as neurodivergent (Amaze and Diversity Council 2026).

Ensuring equitable employment and career opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities, fostering inclusive workplaces, and building workplace cultures of belonging and respect remain core APS priorities. The APS also continues to strengthen First Nations representation, leadership and expertise to shape policy and service delivery and support more effective partnerships with First Nations communities.

A number of whole-of-APS strategies and programs are in place to guide agency approaches to improving recruitment processes, making work practices, tools and systems more accessible, and removing barriers to progression. These include the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Employment Strategy and Action Plan, the Disability Employment Strategy, the Gender Equality Strategy, and initiatives in First Nations workforce and leadership development.

In the wake of the Bondi Beach terror attack on 14 December 2025, it is more critical than ever to ensure the APS is doing all it can to foster cultures of safety, belonging and respect. The Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion established on 9 January 2026 is investigating antisemitism in Australia, how it affects Jewish Australians and broader society, whether existing institutions are responding effectively, and what governments can do to reduce antisemitism and strengthen social cohesion. APS agencies are supporting this Royal Commission in a range of ways. This includes providing policy advice, carrying out regulatory, intelligence and law enforcement functions, supporting the Royal Commission's operations, providing evidence and implementing government measures to address antisemitism and strengthen social cohesion.

These initiatives are being delivered alongside the APS’s broader program of efforts to promote inclusion and address racism, discrimination and intolerance in the workplace, including progressing work against recommendations by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2019 to 2023).

This State of the Service report examples demonstrate how the APS is:

- harnessing senior leadership cohorts and learning and capability development platforms to foster social cohesion across the service and address antisemitism
- stewarding whole-of-service workplace reforms to improve accessibility and inclusivity for people with disability
- implementing practical, high-value solutions at the agency level to remove barriers for staff with disability

## A culturally safe and socially cohesive APS

The APS has zero tolerance for any form of racism, intolerance and discrimination, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. At a time of increasing global unrest and heightened national attention, the APS has a responsibility to lead by example in fostering unity and demonstrating respect across the public service.

APS agencies have been working together, including with Special Envoys on antisemitism and Islamophobia, to deliver strategies, programs and training. Delivery supports inclusive, culturally safe workplaces, where all staff can feel a sense of connection and belonging.

Work has occurred over several years. Following the events of 7 October 2023, the Australian Government appointed Special Envoys to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia. The government responded to their recommendations through the release of *Eliminating Antisemitism* on 18 December 2025 and *Combatting Islamophobia* on 18 July 2026.

The December 2025 terrorist attack in Bondi and subsequent Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion sharpened the focus on addressing antisemitism across Australian society. This included within the APS. In response, the APS – led by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) – strengthened guidance, learning and capability-building initiatives to address antisemitism.

Between February and July 2026, a range of initiatives were progressed across the public service. In February, the APSC issued guidance to all agencies on Working Together to Combat Antisemitism in the APS. This outlined workplace expectations and requirements and highlighted work being undertaken with the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism to address antisemitism and strengthen social cohesion.

In March, the APSC developed a workplan to guide the delivery of antisemitism learning resources. This was presented to the Chief Operating Officers Committee and shared with other governance and leadership committees to raise awareness of resources under development. In May, the APS: Foundations Diversity and Inclusion eLearning module was updated, incorporating content on antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-racism.

In June, the APSC developed a standalone foundational learning module on antisemitism, co-designed with the Australian Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism and informed by contributions from multiple agencies. This included the Attorney-General's Department, Education, Foreign Affairs and Trade and Home Affairs. The module was piloted with APS agencies, including Jewish employees and members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, before rollout began on 31 July 2026.

This work responds to critical concerns highlighted by the Bondi attack and subsequent Royal Commission. It also reinforces a broader commitment to fostering a workplace where people of all faiths, cultures and backgrounds experience belonging, respect and inclusion. Lasting social cohesion happens when all employees feel valued and able to contribute fully.

Building cultural capability across the APS has been supported through learning resources developed under the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employment Strategy. This includes the MOSAIC 1 and 2 programs and Many Cultures, One APS, a video series sharing the lived experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse APS employees. Building on this foundation, the APS Academy continues to develop, new learning products focused on diversity and inclusion, antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Other initiatives, such as the 6R Relational Leadership Skills Lab, assists leaders to:

- navigate interpersonal complexity
- build psychologically safe and respectful workplace cultures
- respond effectively to challenging behaviours and conflict.

Recent resources released in February 2026 under the framework include factsheets. One factsheet – Building Trauma Aware Workplaces – helps organisations understand trauma and its impacts. Another factsheet – Connection and Social Cohesion – provides practical strategies to strengthen workplace relationships, belonging and wellbeing.

## Improving accessibility and disability inclusive workplaces through the Disability Royal Commission Taskforce

As both an employer and a public institution, the APS plays a critical role in modelling accessible and inclusive work practices for people with disability.

In 2025–26, the Australian Public Service Commission established a cross-APS Disability Royal Commission Implementation Taskforce. The taskforce is leading the implementation of recommendations relating to improved employment outcomes for people with disability in the APS. These recommendations emerged from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2019 to 2023).

The taskforce is working across 3 streams to establish the APS as an employer of choice for people with disability. It is also working to ensure that all APS employees can exercise their right to work on an equal basis with others.

Practical reforms being delivered by the taskforce including improving how inclusion is supported across recruitment, onboarding, workplace participation, career development, mobility and retention.

Improving workplace accessibility has been a key focus. The taskforce is coordinating a reform program to foster consistent, rights-based approaches to accessibility and support for employees with disability across the APS (Recommendation 7.21). Practical actions to achieve this include the development of adjustment frameworks, draft Workplace Adjustment Principles and Standards, and a prototype APS Workplace Adjustment Passport.

The taskforce is reviewing APS employment practices and outcomes to identify and remove barriers experienced by people with disability. The review is considering recruitment systems, policies and processes across the employee lifecycle focusing on the experience of people with disability.

Other taskforce work includes developing a centralised disability and neuroinclusion information hub, to address an identified need for accessible, sharable resources to build organisational capability. The Disability and Neuroinclusion Hub will be a central trusted source of information, guidance and resources for candidates, employees and managers. It will bring together practical guidance, workplace adjustment information, recruitment resources and leadership tools. The hub will also make it easier to find, navigate and use APS information on disability and neuroinclusion.

The taskforce provides an opportunity to embed gains made through the Disability Employment Strategy (2020–2025). This includes improved manager confidence and capability, greater workplace flexibility, and people with disability feeling supported by managers.

Together, this work is strengthening disability confidence. It is also driving more consistent practice across the APS, supporting greater mobility, stronger retention, and more equitable participation for people with disability.

# NDIA's Auslan interpreting team is helping to improve workplace inclusion




An Auslan Access interpreter supports inclusive communication at the NDIA, helping staff connect and collaborate.
Image: National Disability Insurance Agency

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) manages the NDIS. It does so to assist eligible people with disabilities access funding and supports to live more independently and participate in everyday life.

Being an employer of choice for people with disabilities is central to NDIA's purpose. The Disability Action Plan, developed in consultation with the Employee Disability Network, outlines actions the NDIA is implementing to improve workplace accessibility and inclusion.

A key initiative has been the creation of an internal Auslan interpreting team called Auslan Access, piloted in early 2025. Auslan Access was co-designed with Deaf and hard of hearing staff to address key barriers experienced in the previous use of Auslan interpreters in the APS. Following the trial and overwhelmingly positive feedback, Auslan Access became a permanent program in November 2025. Four Auslan interpreters, certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, now provide embedded Auslan interpreter capability within the agency.

More than 30 Deaf and hard of hearing NDIA staff are supported in everyday workplace interactions, including team meetings, participant interactions, training, and ad hoc communication. These staff can directly book Auslan Access interpreters, providing them with flexible access to interpreting services. This includes for team meetings to training and internal events delivered virtually or face-to-face. This internal service is supplemented by external providers to ensure interpreter availability when Auslan Access is operating at capacity.

As an embedded NDIA capability, Auslan Access interpreters bring a strong understanding of key agency and NDIS concepts, leading to more effective participant interactions when interpreting complex information. As a result, NDIA staff now have more consistent and timely access to high-

quality interpreting services. This includes for ad hoc or unplanned interactions that are critical to inclusion in everyday workplace activities.

Auslan Access also supports accessibility and inclusion across the NDIA and other agencies. It does so by providing feedback on key agency communications and learning and development programs, and by sharing lessons learned across APS departments. This includes collaboration with the Disability Reform Office within Health, Disability and Ageing to support critical ministerial communications.

The Auslan Access initiative demonstrates a scalable, cost-effective approach to improving accessibility for Deaf and hard of hearing employees across the APS. As an internal interpreting capability, it supports collaboration and knowledge sharing with other agencies. This helps to improve workforce accessibility and contributing to a more inclusive and effective public service.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Sponsorship Program Pilot, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 46.

A capable and future ready APS, Effective and inclusive leadership, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 43.

Agency Benchmarking, Employment of People with Disability, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 220.

## Find out more

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# Diversity for improved delivery

Diversity is a critical organisational capability. A workforce that represents the people it serves strengthens public trust, confidence in government institutions and improves policy and service delivery.

Different perspectives, cultural backgrounds and lived experience broaden the range of insights decision-makers can draw on, helping to identify blind spots, challenge assumptions and anticipate unintended consequences. Policy and service design success depends on understanding how decisions will affect people with different circumstances, experiences and needs.

These efforts signal a shift from seeing diversity as a workforce representation issue to being a dimension of organisational capability. An Australian Public Service (APS) that can draw on the widest possible range of talent and perspectives improves the quality of policy advice, service delivery and outcomes for Australians.

## Jobs and Skills Australia First Nations Workforce Strategy

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) engages, advises and assists the Australian Government and industry stakeholders on current, emerging and future skills and the workforce needs of the country's economy.

Understanding the diversity and composition of the Australian labour market is essential to informed, decision-ready analyses and insights that are more accurate, equitable and impactful. A workforce that reflects that diversity and a workplace culture that supports it are core enablers to JSA's work.

Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are acknowledged, heard and empowered is a key priority. In December 2025, JSA launched its inaugural First Nations Workforce Strategy. This is a 3-year pathway with clear targets and success measures, accountability and regular reporting. The pathway is designed to sustain transparency and momentum with the aim of increasing First Nations representation to 5% or more by 2028. Actions focus on cultural inclusion, safety, leadership accountability, talent attraction, retention, and career development and growth.

The strategy was developed with input from JSA's Murtu Yayngiliyn (Walking Together) team, colleagues from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), and the Australian Public Service Commission. JSA's approach was also guided by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' consultation principles.

Since its launch, JSA has partnered with First Nations stakeholders to co-design the First Nations Exit Yarn Guidelines and the forthcoming Statement of Commitment to First Nations Peoples. Stakeholders include the:

- Murtu Yayngiliyn team
- DEWR Diversity and Inclusion (First Nations) team
- Murtu Yayngiliyn Cultural Advisory Panel, which represents First Nations peak bodies across Australia.

The strategy helps JSA be an employer of choice for First Nations peoples. It also aligns with Priority Reform Three of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to transform:

- how government organisations work with Indigenous communities
- DEWR's reconciliation commitments
- the Australian Government's approach to improving employment outcomes for First Nations peoples.

# First Nations Water Branch creating sense of community in dispersed team




The First Nations Water Branch, Muru Mittigar Cultural Education Centre – building connection, cultural capability and community across a nationally dispersed team.
Image: Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water

The First Nations Water Branch supports staff around Australia to share knowledge and strengthen cultural capability. Staff do so while delivering water priorities in partnership with First Nations people and communities.

Work includes practical approaches that help staff stay connected, support wellbeing, and build respectful ways of working. Practical approaches include:

- a monthly newsletter shares work updates, cultural insights, staff achievements, and personal milestones
- a branch book club creates space to explore First Nations authors, perspectives, histories and contemporary experiences
- cultural competency sessions support staff to learn about First Nations cultures, histories, protocols and contemporary issues
- peer-to-peer mentoring and APS-level peer spaces help staff share knowledge, seek advice and learn from each other outside formal reporting lines
- buddying for new starters gives staff a point of contact to understand the branch, its programs, relationships and ways of working

- Staff travelling on Country are supported before, during and after engagement, including through check-ins, shared responsibilities and time to recover
- responsibility for cultural learning sits across the whole branch and First Nations staff can share their cultural knowledge where they choose to do so
- flexible and family-centred ways of working help staff manage work alongside family, community and cultural responsibilities
- regular branch connection sessions help nationally dispersed staff understand each other's work and how it contributes to the branch's broader purpose.

Together, these practices help staff share the load, recognise effort, prioritise wellbeing and build the relationships needed to deliver better outcomes for First Nations people, communities and Country.

## Elevating lived experience to improve services

Services Australia delivers payments and services that most Australians will access at some point in their lives. This includes Medicare, income support, the age pension, as well as family, disability and carer payments. Drawing on the lived experiences of people who use these services helps the agency better serve the community. This is particularly the case for those experiencing vulnerability, disadvantage and barriers to support.

In 2025, Services Australia established the Lived Experience Reference Group to progress and strengthen its approach to human-centred service design. This is a dedicated forum for engagement, bringing community perspectives directly into agency discussions on service delivery, design and improvement.

Participants include people with direct experience of Services Australia's payments and services. It also includes representatives from peak bodies and advocacy organisations to support members and enable inclusive participation. A multidisciplinary team, led by Services Australia's Research and Design Branch, supports the Reference Group. A social worker helps maintain psychological safety throughout discussions.

Sessions focus on key topics identified by participants or by agency business areas seeking input to inform service design, policy or service delivery improvements. Senior executive leaders provide strategic context and personal reflections. Meaningful discussion and practical insights are supported by participants receiving relevant background material in advance. Key themes are captured, synthesised and provided to relevant business areas to inform service improvements and future work.

The Lived Experience Reference Group generates insights that quantitative or operational data alone cannot provide, making service design and delivery more responsive to people's specific needs. Reference group participants have reported positive personal impacts, including feeling heard and feeling more confident that their experiences can contribute to meaningful change.

A dedicated lived experience group makes Services Australia better equipped to hear from the community and better able to apply those insights to service improvements. It also reflects the agency's commitment to embedding lessons from the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, including practical mechanisms that elevate lived experience in decision-making.

Examples of changes that have been influenced or suggested by the reference group include:

- support for frontline staff to enhance their skills in empathy
- improved communication around the agency's use of artificial intelligence
- investment in more accessible products, for example Easy Read documents

- more human-centred processes that put people first, ranging from notifying the death of a loved one, to reporting changes in circumstances
- placement of self-service terminals in service centres to better meet customer needs.

## See also in this report

A capable and future ready APS, APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Sponsorship Program Pilot, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 46.

Agency Benchmarking, Employment of People with Disability, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 220.

Agency Benchmarking, First Nations Employment, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 217.

Agency Benchmarking, Senior Executive Service Cultural and Linguistic Diversity, *State of Service Report 2026,* page 223.

Working in the APS, A culturally safe and socially cohesive APS, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 198.

Working in the APS, Improving accessibility and disability inclusive workplaces through the Disability Royal Commission Taskforce, *State of the Service Report 2026*, page 200.

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# APS agency benchmarking

This section draws on research and data from the Australian Public Service Employment Database (APSED) and the APS Employee Census.

It shows how APS agencies are performing in these areas:

- employment of First Nations people – in the context of the Australian Government's commitment to increase First Nations employment in the APS to 5% by 2030
- employment of people with disability – in the context of the Australian Government's commitment to increase the employment of people with disability across the APS
- employment of culturally and linguistically diverse Senior Executive Service (SES) employees – in the context of the Australian Government's introduction of a reportable benchmark of 24% for CALD representation in the SES
- employee perceptions of communication – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee engagement – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of the enabling of innovation – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of SES leaders – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of immediate supervisors - agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of bullying and harassment – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of wellbeing policies and support – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of support to act with integrity – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- employee perceptions of speak up culture - agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size
- working away from the office – agencies are shown with other APS agencies of like size.

| Explore APS agency benchmarking | |
|---|---|
| First Nations employment | Perceptions of immediate supervisors |
| Employment of people with disability | Bullying and harassment |
| Senior Executive Service Cultural and Linguistic Diversity | Perceptions of wellbeing policies and support |
| Communication | Supporting integrity |
| Employee engagement | Speak up culture |
| Enabling innovation | Working away from the office |
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# First Nations employment

The Boosting First Nations employment measure outlines the Australian Government's commitment to increase First Nations employment in the Australian Public Service to 5% by 2030.

APS agencies collect information on 'Indigenous status' from employees in their human resources information systems. They then report the information to the Australian Public Service Commission's central APS Employment Database (APSED).

Figure AB 1 and Table AB 1 show First Nations employees in selected agencies as of 30 June 2026.

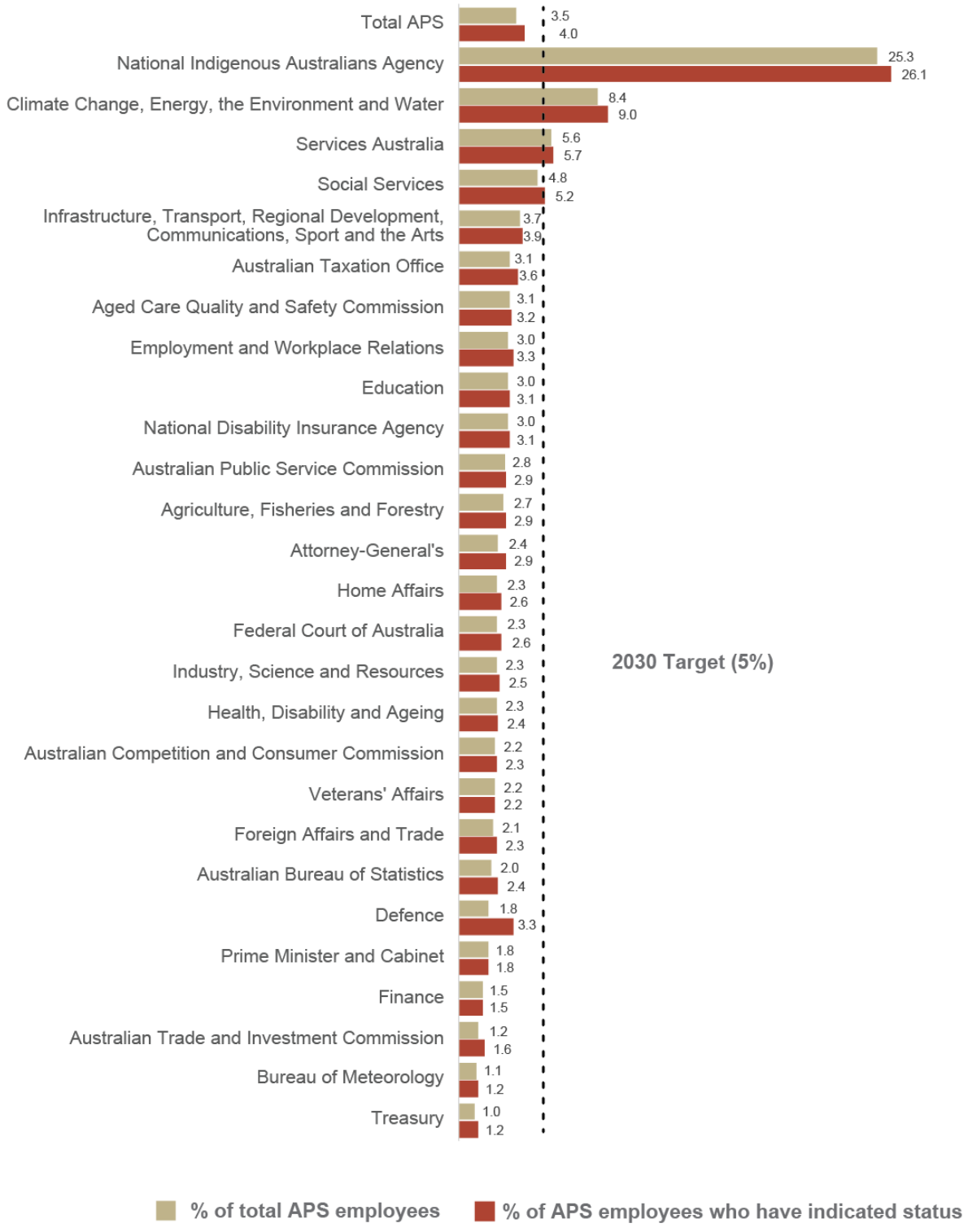
Proportions of First Nations people are reported in 2 ways. First, as a percentage of the total number of APS employees in an agency. Second, as a percentage of APS employees who have provided their status as Indigenous or Non-Indigenous (as opposed to 'choose not to give' or missing data). This latter method can be useful in determining an estimate of First Nations APS employment that is not influenced by missing data.

**Table AB 1: First Nations employees by agency (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency | First Nations | |
|---|---|---|
| | % of total APS employees | % of APS employees who have indicated status |
| **Total APS** | **3.5** | **4.0** |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 25.3 | 26.1 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 8.4 | 9.0 |
| Services Australia | 5.6 | 5.7 |
| Social Services | 4.8 | 5.2 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 3.7 | 3.9 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 3.0 | 3.3 |
| Education | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 2.8 | 2.9 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 2.7 | 2.9 |
| Attorney-General's | 2.4 | 2.9 |
| Home Affairs | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 2.1 | 2.3 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 2.0 | 2.4 |
| Defence | 1.8 | 3.3 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| Finance | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 1.2 | 1.6 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| Treasury | 1.0 | 1.2 |

Source: APSED

**Figure AB 1: First Nations employees by agency (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

# Employment of people with disability

APS agencies collect information on disability from employees in their human resources information systems, which they then report to the Australian Public Service Commission's central APS Employment Database (APSED).

Figure AB 2 and Table AB 2 show APS employees with disability in selected agencies as at 30 June 2026.

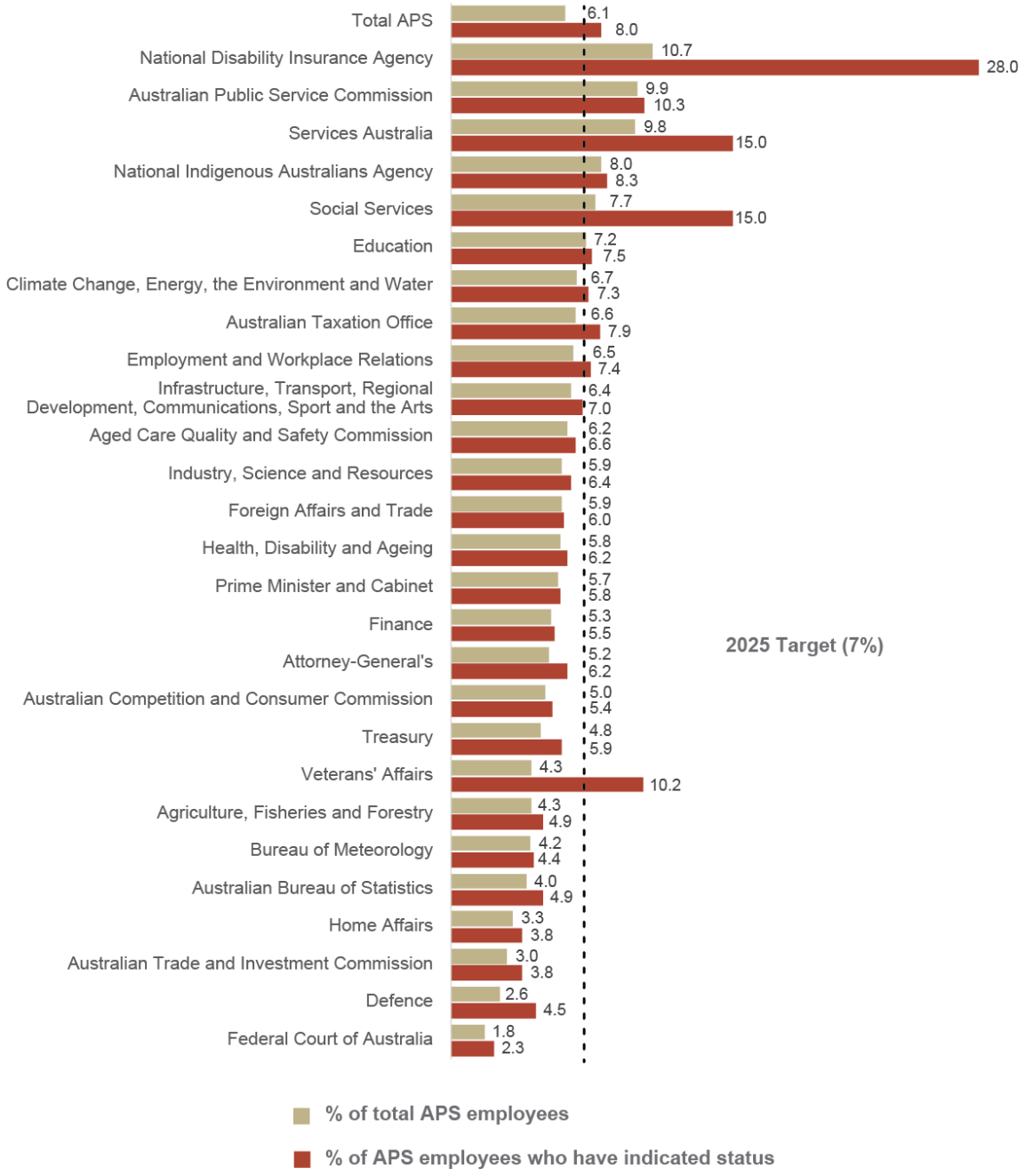
Proportions of people with disability are reported in 2 ways. First, as a percentage of the total number of APS employees in an agency. Second, as a percentage of APS employees who have provided their status as having disability or not having disability (as opposed to 'choose not to give' or missing data). This latter method can be useful in determining an estimate of people with disability that is not influenced by missing data.

**Table AB 2: Employees with disability, by agency (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency | Disability | |
|---|---|---|
| | % of total APS employees | % of APS employees who have indicated status |
| **Total APS** | **6.1** | **8.0** |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 10.7 | 28.0 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 9.9 | 10.3 |
| Services Australia | 9.8 | 15.0 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 8.0 | 8.3 |
| Social Services | 7.7 | 15.0 |
| Education | 7.2 | 7.5 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 6.7 | 7.3 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 6.6 | 7.9 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 6.5 | 7.4 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 6.4 | 7.0 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 6.2 | 6.6 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 5.9 | 6.4 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 5.9 | 6.0 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 5.8 | 6.2 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 5.7 | 5.8 |
| Finance | 5.3 | 5.5 |
| Attorney-General's | 5.2 | 6.2 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 5.0 | 5.4 |
| Treasury | 4.8 | 5.9 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 4.3 | 10.2 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 4.3 | 4.9 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 4.2 | 4.4 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 4.0 | 4.9 |
| Home Affairs | 3.3 | 3.8 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 3.0 | 3.8 |
| Defence | 2.6 | 4.5 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 1.8 | 2.3 |

Source: APSED

**Figure AB 2: Employees with disability, by agency (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

Note: The 7% target is currently attached to the APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020-2025, which agencies are still encouraged to work towards.

# Senior Executive Service Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Employment Strategy and Action Plan introduced a reportable benchmark of 24% for CALD representation in the Senior Executive Service (SES). This will lead to an Australian Public Service (APS) leadership cohort that reflects the Australian population and wider APS. While the strategy acknowledges that CALD is multi-dimensional in nature, the single metric of 'First language not exclusively English' has been selected for tracking against the reportable benchmark.

APS agencies collect information on first language from SES employees in their human resources information systems, which they then report to the Australian Public Service Commission's centralised APS Employment Database (APSED).

Figure AB 3 and Table AB 3 show members of the SES with a first language not exclusively English in selected agencies as at 30 June 2026. Missing data and 'chose not to give this information' responses are excluded from this calculation.

**Table AB 3: SES cultural and linguistic diversity, by agency (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency | CALD SES (% of APS SES employees) |
|---|---|
| **Total SES** | **11.8** |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 27.3 |
| Education | 20.8 |
| Finance | 20.0 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 19.6 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 18.8 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 17.2 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 15.4 |
| Services Australia | 15.1 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 14.4 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 13.6 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 13.6 |
| Defence | 11.4 |
| Home Affairs | 11.0 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 10.0 |
| Attorney-General's | 10.0 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 9.5 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 9.4 |
| Treasury | 8.9 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 8.7 |
| Social Services | 8.3 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 7.8 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 7.1 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 6.7 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 6.5 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 5.9 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 5.0 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 1.9 |

Source: APSED

**Figure AB 3: SES cultural and linguistic diversity, by agency (at 30 June 2026)**




Source: APSED

# Communication

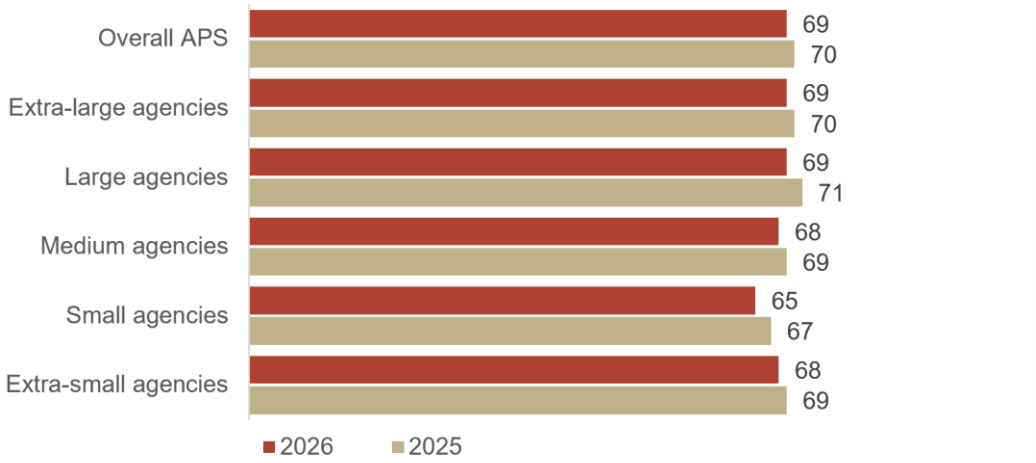
Effective communication is vital for a positive workplace. It fosters collaboration, networking and diverse thinking while improving outcomes. Effective communication can also prevent and buffer issues in the workplace.

The APS Employee Census Communication Index measures communication at individual, group and agency levels. APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Communication Index are:

- My supervisor communicates effectively.
- My SES manager communicates effectively.
- Internal communication within my agency is effective.

Figures AB 4 to AB 9 and tables AB 4 to AB 9 report on the index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 4: Communication Index, by agency size**



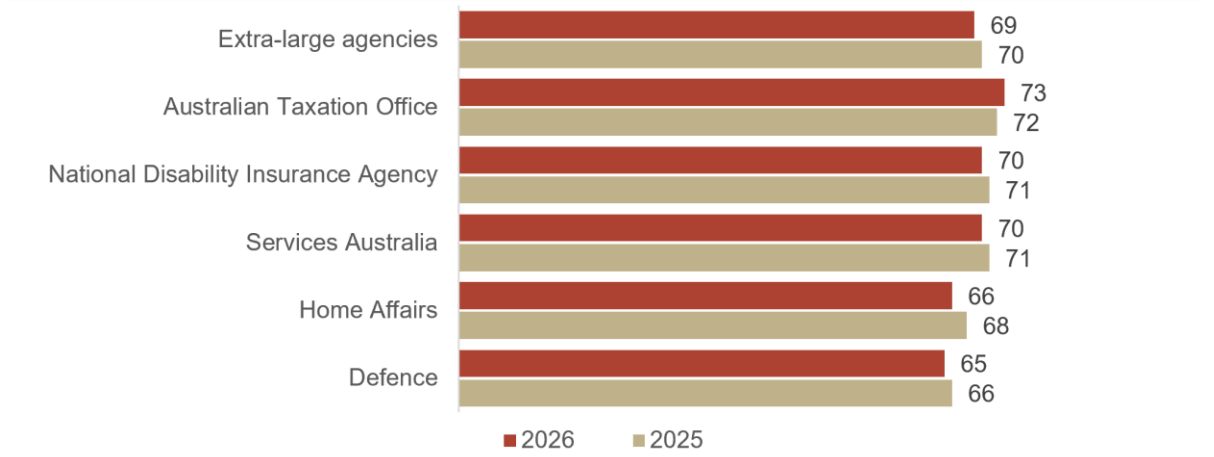

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 4: Communication Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **70** | **69** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 70 | 69 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 71 | 69 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 69 | 68 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 67 | 65 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 69 | 68 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 5: Communication Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



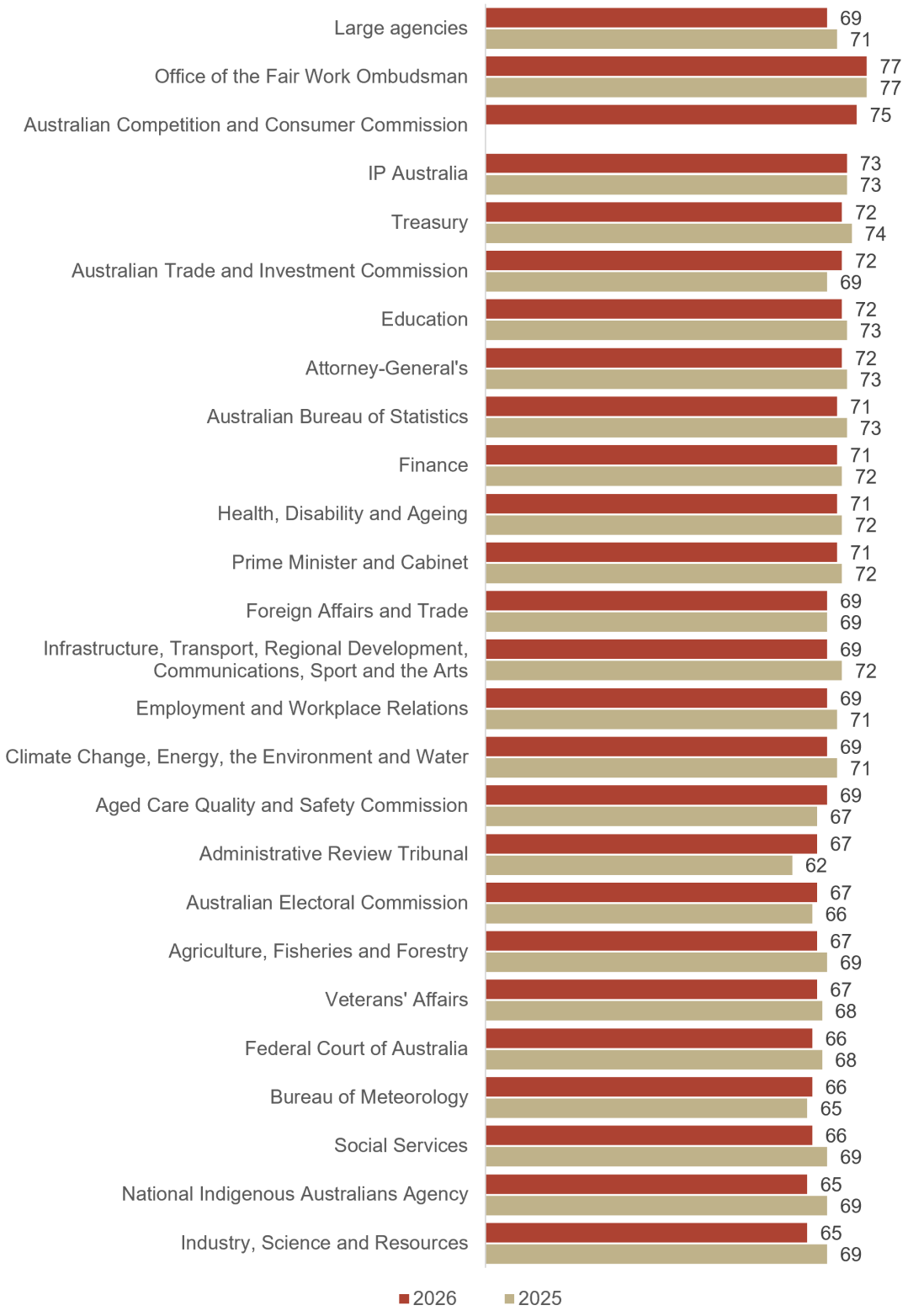

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 5: Communication Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **70** | **69** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 72 | 73 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 71 | 70 |
| Services Australia | 71 | 70 |
| Home Affairs | 68 | 66 |
| Defence | 66 | 65 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 6: Communication Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes in the entity structure.

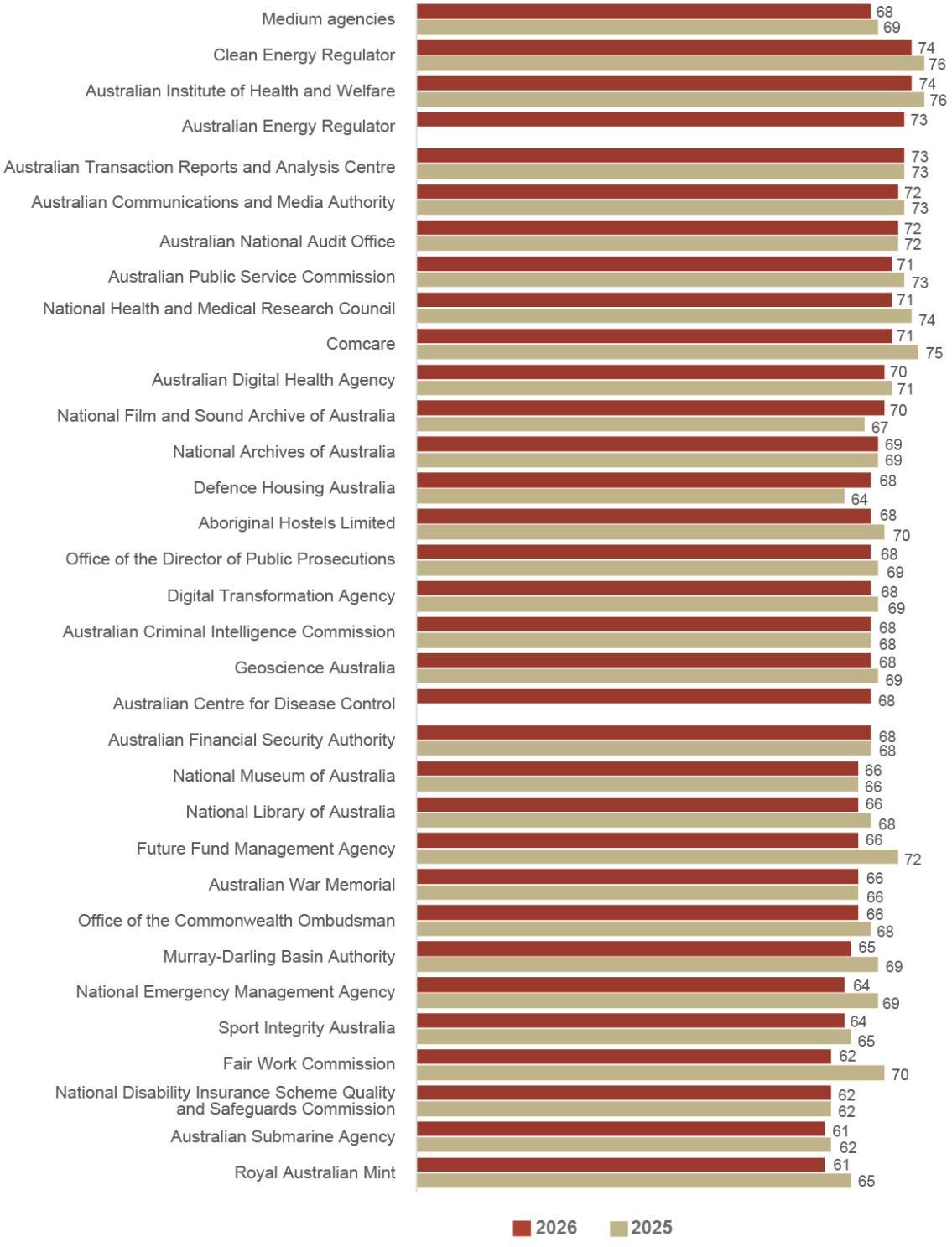
**Table AB 6: Communication Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **71** | **69** |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 77 | 77 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 75 |
| IP Australia | 73 | 73 |
| Treasury | 74 | 72 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 69 | 72 |
| Education | 73 | 72 |
| Attorney-General's | 73 | 72 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 73 | 71 |
| Finance | 72 | 71 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 72 | 71 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 72 | 71 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 69 | 69 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 72 | 69 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 71 | 69 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 71 | 69 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 67 | 69 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 62 | 67 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 66 | 67 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 69 | 67 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 68 | 67 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 68 | 66 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 65 | 66 |
| Social Services | 69 | 66 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 69 | 65 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 69 | 65 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes in the entity structure.

**Figure AB 7: Communication Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

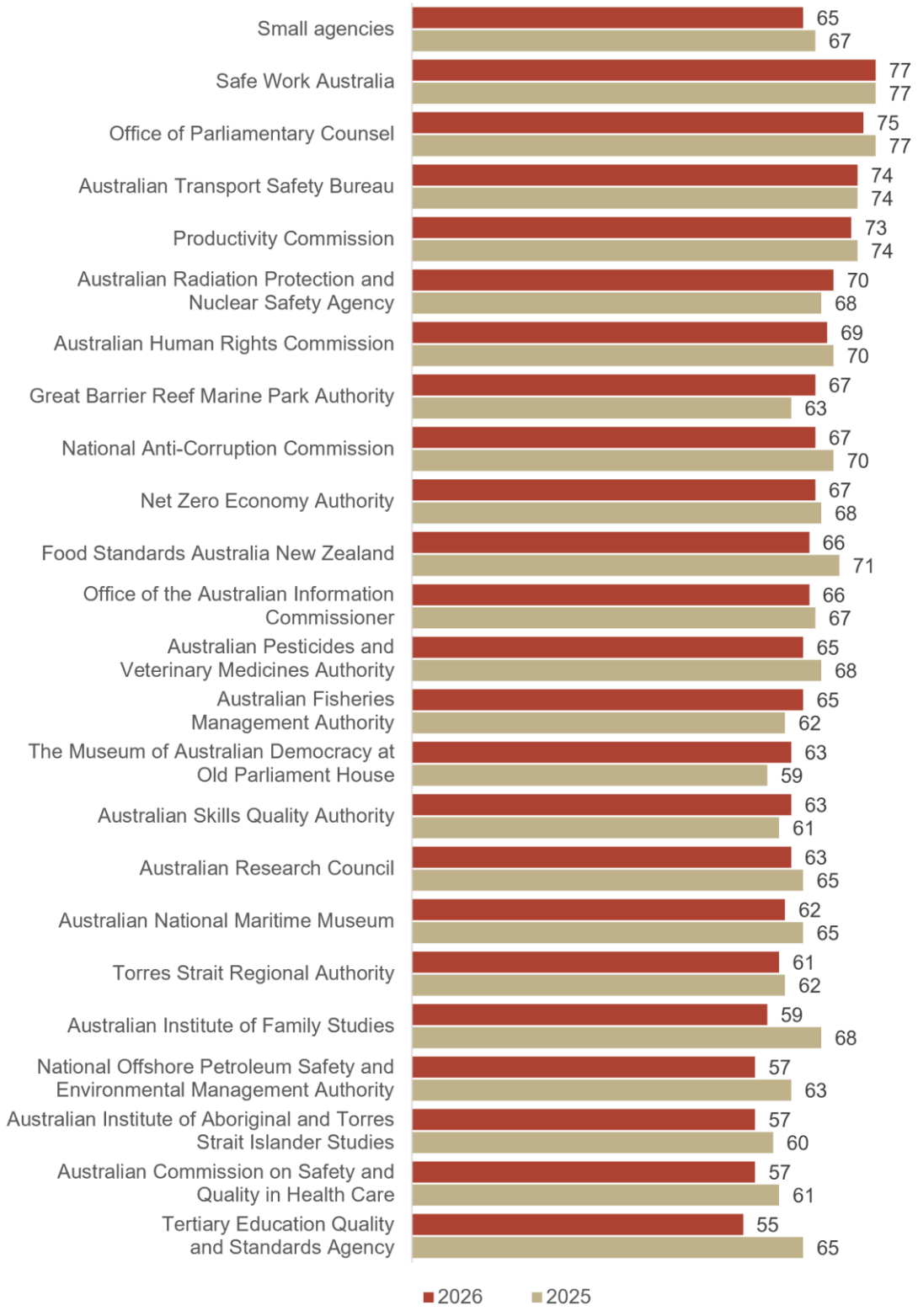
**Table AB 7: Communication Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **69** | **68** |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 76 | 74 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 76 | 74 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 73 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 73 | 73 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 73 | 72 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 72 | 72 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 73 | 71 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 74 | 71 |
| Comcare | 75 | 71 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 71 | 70 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 67 | 70 |
| National Archives of Australia | 69 | 69 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 64 | 68 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 70 | 68 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 69 | 68 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 69 | 68 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 68 | 68 |
| Geoscience Australia | 69 | 68 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 68 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 68 | 68 |
| National Museum of Australia | 66 | 66 |
| National Library of Australia | 68 | 66 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 72 | 66 |
| Australian War Memorial | 66 | 66 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 68 | 66 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 69 | 65 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 69 | 64 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 65 | 64 |
| Fair Work Commission | 70 | 62 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 62 | 62 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 62 | 61 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 65 | 61 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 8: Communication Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



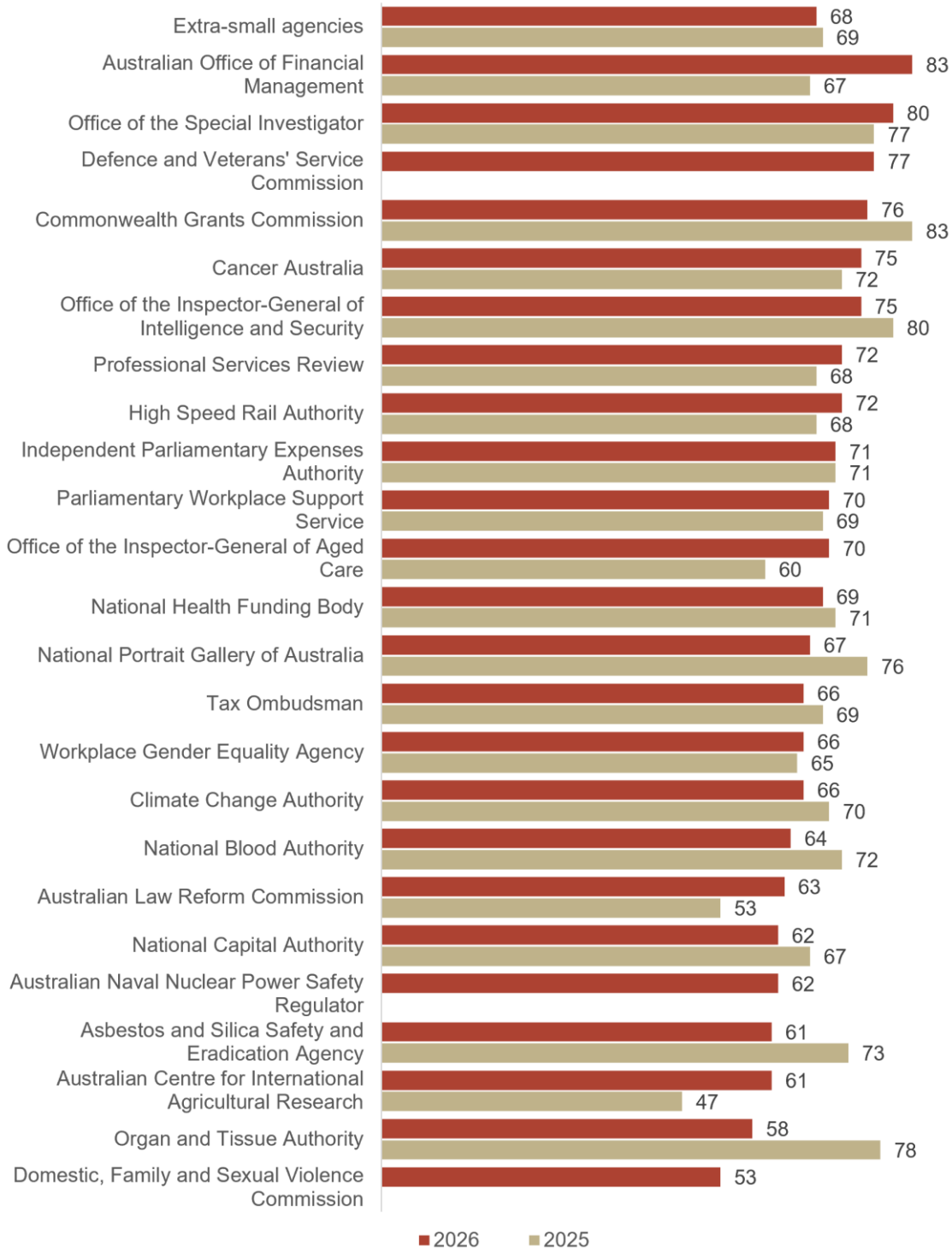

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 8: Communication Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **67** | **65** |
| Safe Work Australia | 77 | 77 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 77 | 75 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 74 | 74 |
| Productivity Commission | 74 | 73 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 68 | 70 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 70 | 69 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 63 | 67 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 70 | 67 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 68 | 67 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 71 | 66 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 67 | 66 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 68 | 65 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 62 | 65 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 59 | 63 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 61 | 63 |
| Australian Research Council | 65 | 63 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 65 | 62 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 62 | 61 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 68 | 59 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 63 | 57 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 60 | 57 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 61 | 57 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 65 | 55 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 9: Communication Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 9: Communication Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Communication Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **69** | **68** |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 67 | 83 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 77 | 80 |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 77 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 83 | 76 |
| Cancer Australia | 72 | 75 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 80 | 75 |
| Professional Services Review | 68 | 72 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 68 | 72 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 71 | 71 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 69 | 70 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 60 | 70 |
| National Health Funding Body | 71 | 69 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 76 | 67 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 69 | 66 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 65 | 66 |
| Climate Change Authority | 70 | 66 |
| National Blood Authority | 72 | 64 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 53 | 63 |
| National Capital Authority | 67 | 62 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 62 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 73 | 61 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 47 | 61 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 78 | 58 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 53 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Employee engagement

Employee engagement is vital to the working of government. The Australian Public Service Commission's model of employee engagement measures the emotional connection and commitment employees have to working for their organisation. In this model, an engaged employee will 'say', 'stay' and 'strive':

- Say ─ the employee is a positive advocate of the organisation.
- Stay ─ the employee is committed to the organisation and wants to stay as an employee.
- Strive ─ the employee is willing to put in discretionary effort to excel in their job and help their organisation succeed.

The APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Employee Engagement Index are:

**Say**

- I am proud to work in my agency.
- I would recommend my agency as a good place to work.
- Overall, I am satisfied with my job.
- I believe strongly in the purpose and objectives of my agency.

**Stay**

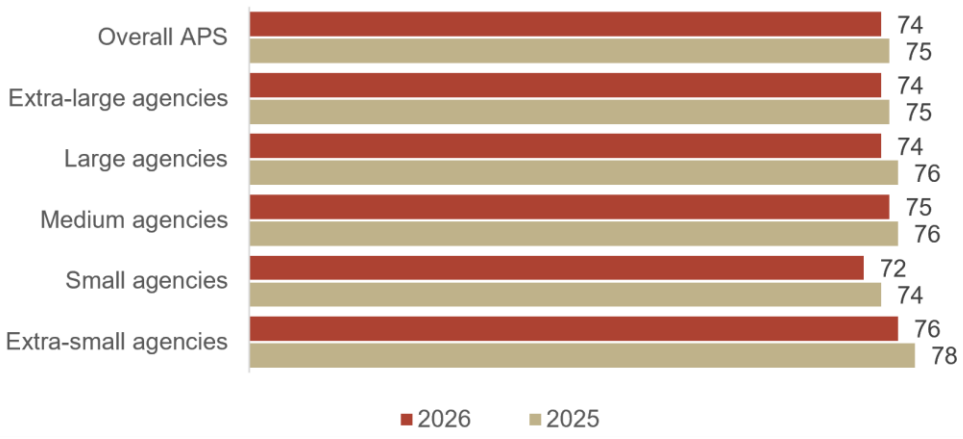
- I feel a strong personal attachment to my agency.
- I feel committed to my agency's goals.

**Strive**

- I suggest ideas to improve our way of doing things.
- I am happy to go the 'extra mile' at work when required.
- I work beyond what is required in my job to help my agency achieve its objectives.
- My agency really inspires me to do my best work every day.

Figures AB 10 to AB 15 and tables AB 10 to AB 15 report on the index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 10: Employee Engagement Index, by agency size**



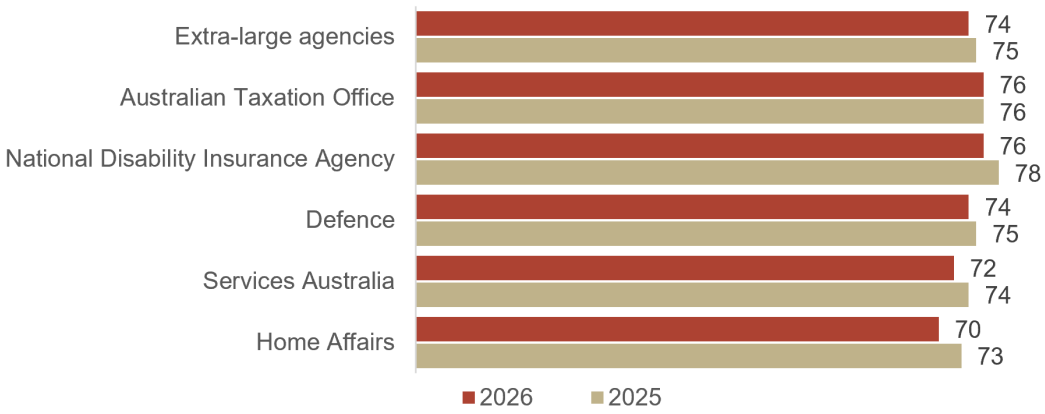

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 10: Employee Engagement Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **75** | **74** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 75 | 74 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 76 | 74 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 76 | 75 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 74 | 72 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 78 | 76 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 11: Employee Engagement Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



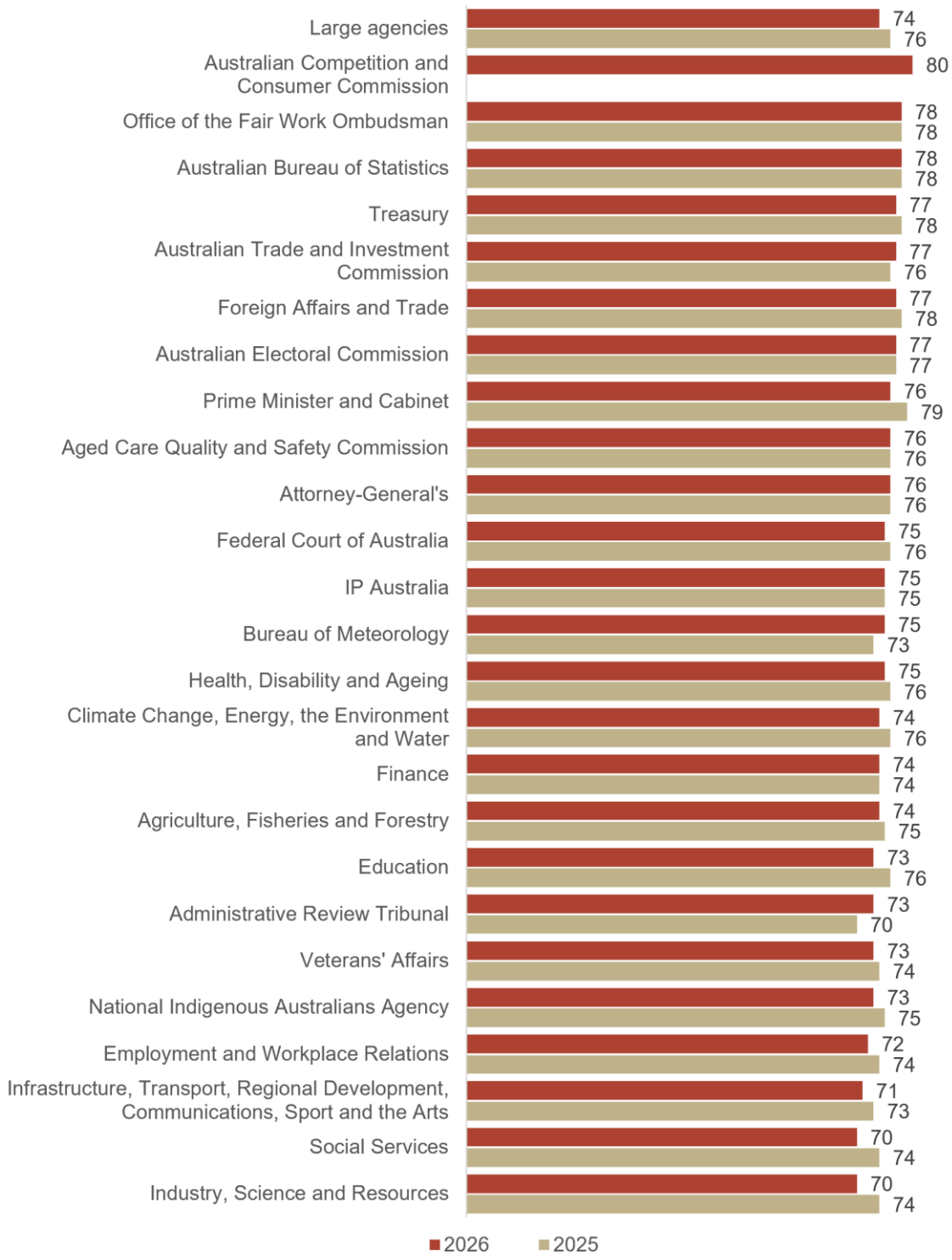

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 11: Employee Engagement Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **75** | **74** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 76 | 76 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 78 | 76 |
| Defence | 75 | 74 |
| Services Australia | 74 | 72 |
| Home Affairs | 73 | 70 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 12: Employee Engagement Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

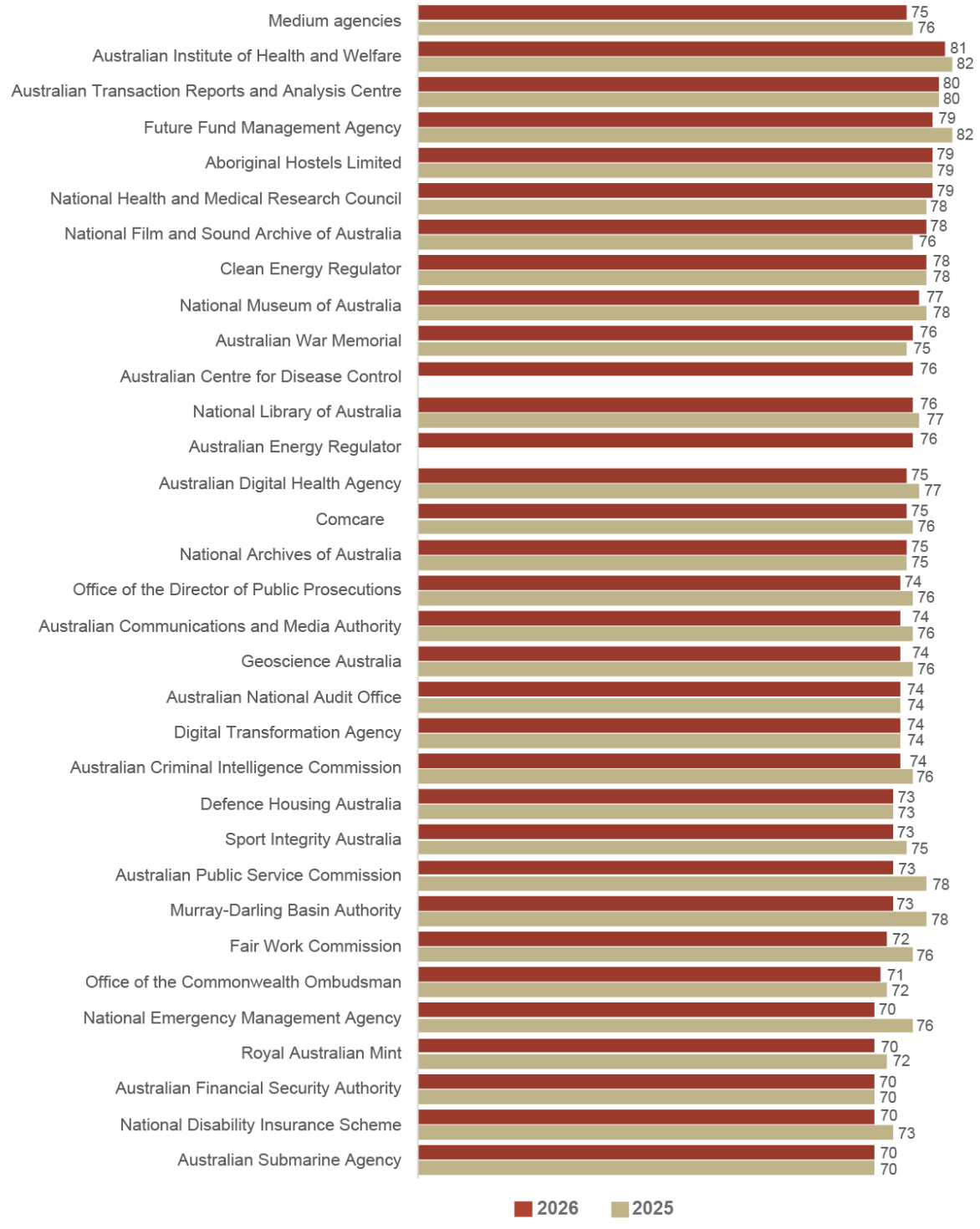
**Table AB 12: Employee Engagement Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **76** | **74** |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 80 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 78 | 78 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 78 | 78 |
| Treasury | 78 | 77 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 76 | 77 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 78 | 77 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 77 | 77 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 79 | 76 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 76 | 76 |
| Attorney-General's | 76 | 76 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 76 | 75 |
| IP Australia | 75 | 75 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 73 | 75 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 76 | 75 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 76 | 74 |
| Finance | 74 | 74 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 75 | 74 |
| Education | 76 | 73 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 70 | 73 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 74 | 73 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 75 | 73 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 74 | 72 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 73 | 71 |
| Social Services | 74 | 70 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 74 | 70 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

**Figure AB 13: Employee Engagement Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Energy Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

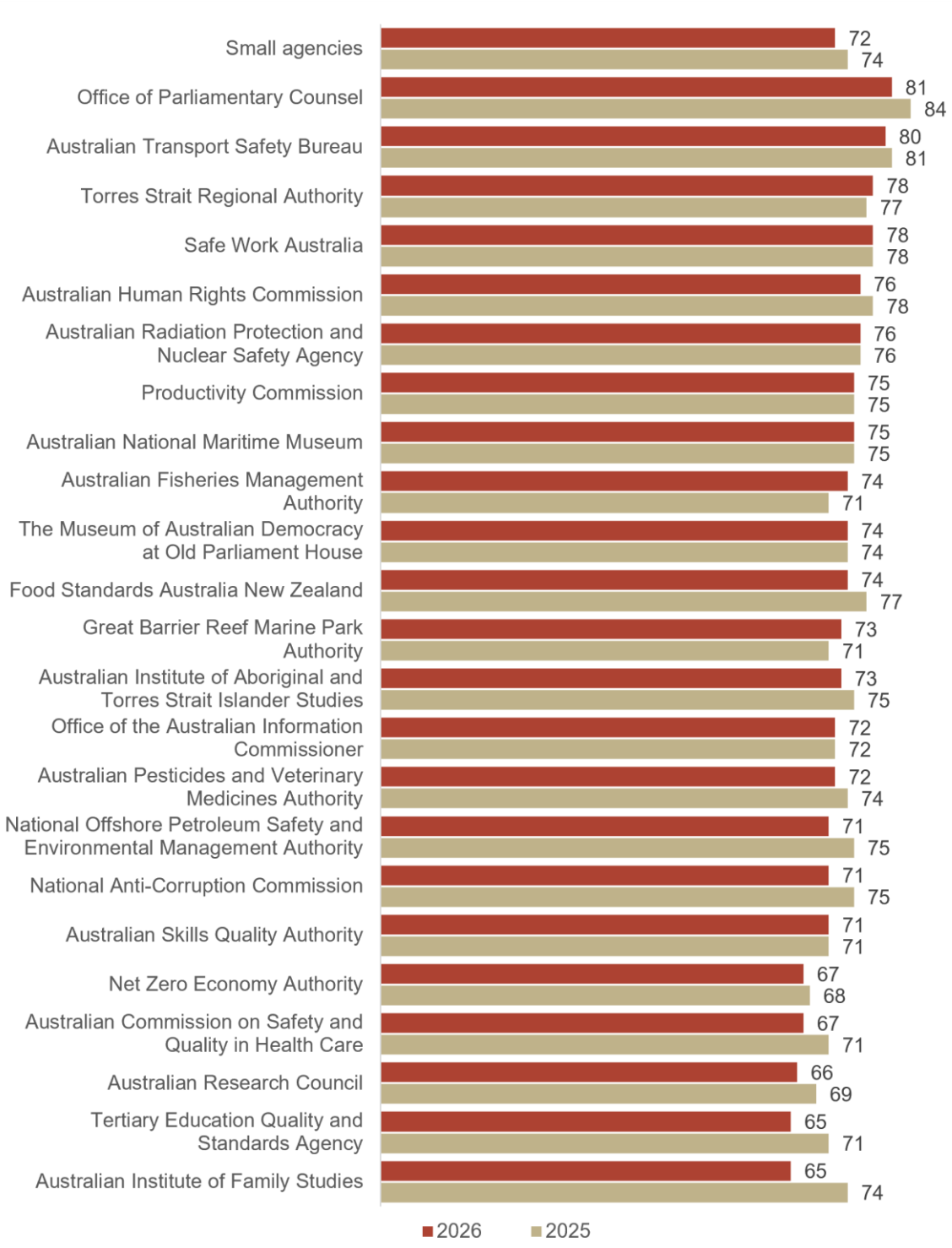
**Table AB 13: Employee Engagement Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **76** | **75** |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 82 | 81 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 80 | 80 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 82 | 79 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 79 | 79 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 78 | 79 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 76 | 78 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 78 | 78 |
| National Museum of Australia | 78 | 77 |
| Australian War Memorial | 75 | 76 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 76 |
| National Library of Australia | 77 | 76 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 76 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 77 | 75 |
| Comcare | 76 | 75 |
| National Archives of Australia | 75 | 75 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 76 | 74 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 76 | 74 |
| Geoscience Australia | 76 | 74 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 74 | 74 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 74 | 74 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 76 | 74 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 73 | 73 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 75 | 73 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 78 | 73 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 78 | 73 |
| Fair Work Commission | 76 | 72 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 72 | 71 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 76 | 70 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 72 | 70 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 70 | 70 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 73 | 70 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 70 | 70 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Energy Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 14: Employee Engagement Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



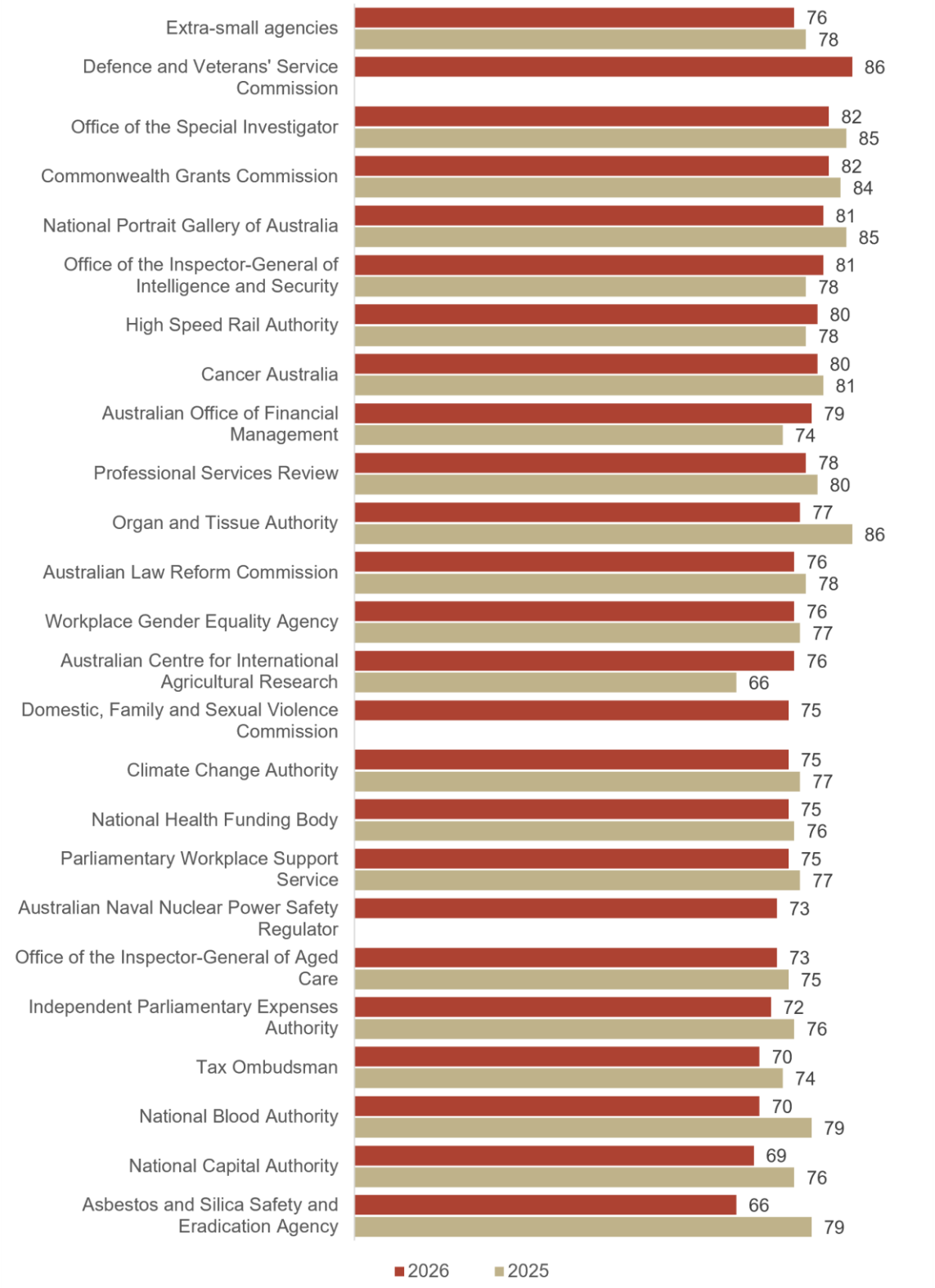

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 14: Employee Engagement Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **74** | **72** |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 84 | 81 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 81 | 80 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 77 | 78 |
| Safe Work Australia | 78 | 78 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 78 | 76 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 76 | 76 |
| Productivity Commission | 75 | 75 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 75 | 75 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 71 | 74 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 74 | 74 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 77 | 74 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 71 | 73 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 75 | 73 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 72 | 72 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 74 | 72 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 75 | 71 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 75 | 71 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 71 | 71 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 68 | 67 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 71 | 67 |
| Australian Research Council | 69 | 66 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 71 | 65 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 74 | 65 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 15: Employee Engagement Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 15: Employee Engagement Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Employee Engagement Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **78** | **76** |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 86 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 85 | 82 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 84 | 82 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 85 | 81 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 78 | 81 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 78 | 80 |
| Cancer Australia | 81 | 80 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 74 | 79 |
| Professional Services Review | 80 | 78 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 86 | 77 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 78 | 76 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 77 | 76 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 66 | 76 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 75 |
| Climate Change Authority | 77 | 75 |
| National Health Funding Body | 76 | 75 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 77 | 75 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 73 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 75 | 73 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 76 | 72 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 74 | 70 |
| National Blood Authority | 79 | 70 |
| National Capital Authority | 76 | 69 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 79 | 66 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Enabling innovation

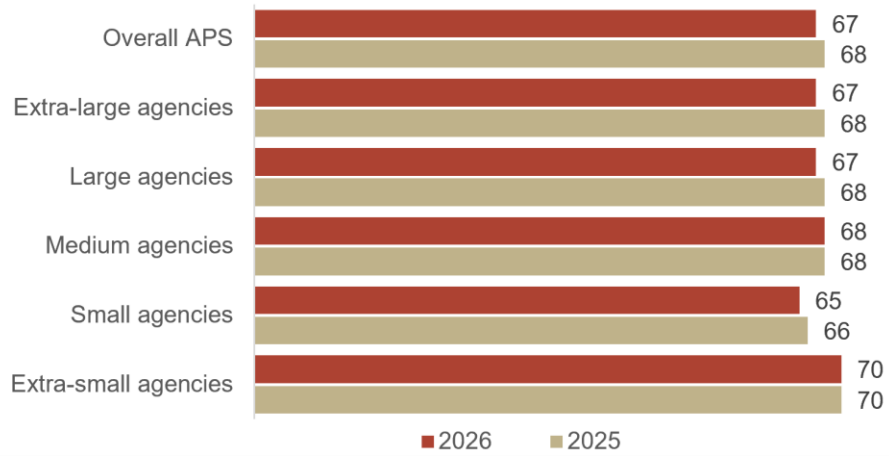
Innovation drives performance, productivity and work outcomes. The APS Employee Census Enabling Innovation Index measures both whether employees feel willing and able to be innovative, and whether their agency has a culture which enables them to be so.

APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Enabling Innovation Index are:

- I believe that one of my responsibilities is to continually look for new ways to improve the way we work.
- My immediate supervisor encourages me to come up with new or better ways of doing things.
- People are recognised for coming up with new and innovative ways of working.
- My agency inspires me to come up with new or better ways of doing things.
- My agency recognises and supports the notion that failure is a part of innovation.

Figures AB 16 to AB 21 and tables AB 16 to AB 21 report on the index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 16: Enabling Innovation Index, by agency size**



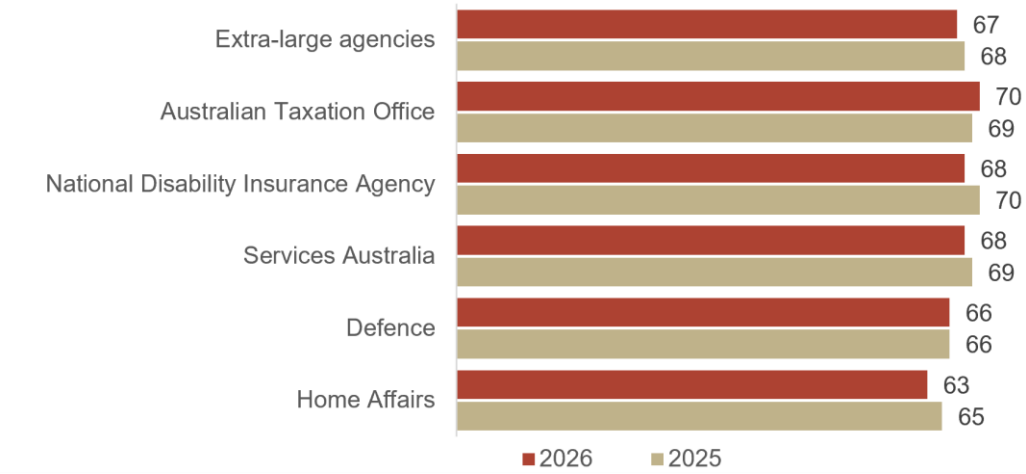

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 16: Enabling Innovation Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **68** | **67** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 68 | 67 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 68 | 67 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 68 | 68 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 66 | 65 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 70 | 70 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 17: Enabling Innovation Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



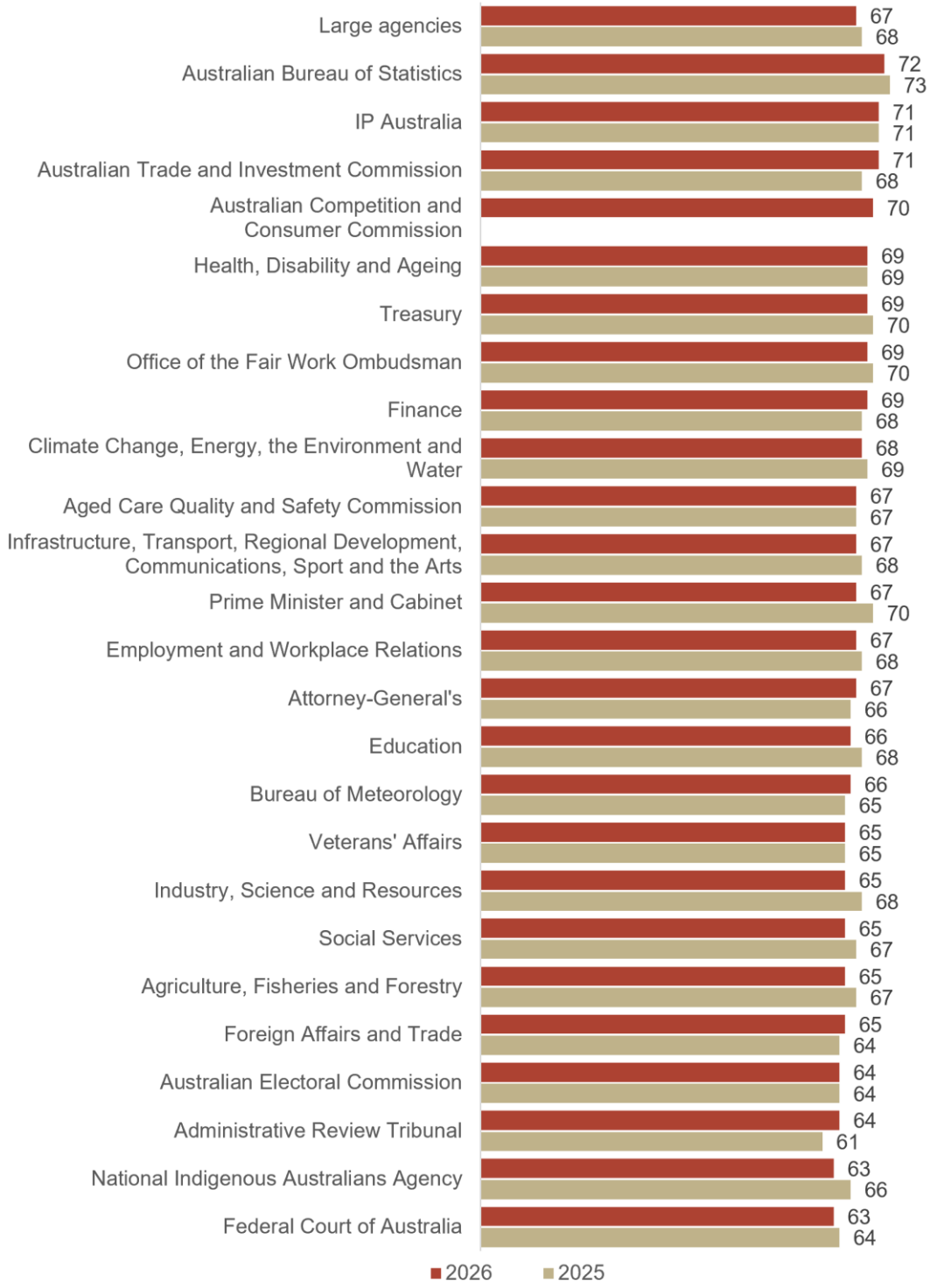

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 17: Enabling Innovation Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **68** | **67** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 69 | 70 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 70 | 68 |
| Services Australia | 69 | 68 |
| Defence | 66 | 66 |
| Home Affairs | 65 | 63 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 18: Enabling Innovation Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

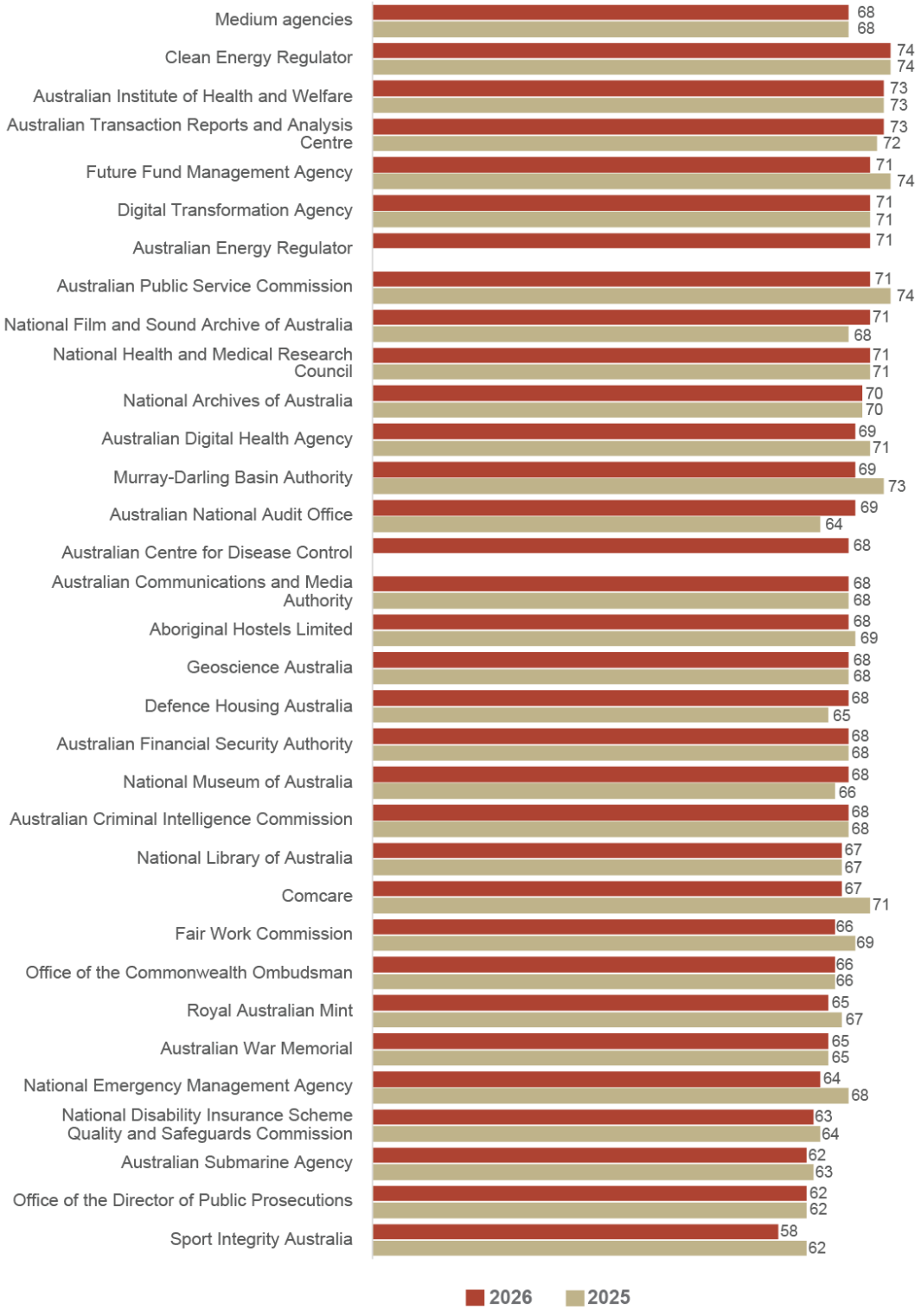
**Table AB 18: Enabling Innovation Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **68** | **67** |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 73 | 72 |
| IP Australia | 71 | 71 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 68 | 71 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 70 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 69 | 69 |
| Treasury | 70 | 69 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 70 | 69 |
| Finance | 68 | 69 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 69 | 68 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 67 | 67 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 68 | 67 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 70 | 67 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 68 | 67 |
| Attorney-General's | 66 | 67 |
| Education | 68 | 66 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 65 | 66 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 65 | 65 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 68 | 65 |
| Social Services | 67 | 65 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 67 | 65 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 64 | 65 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 64 | 64 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 61 | 64 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 66 | 63 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 64 | 63 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

**Figure AB 19: Enabling Innovation Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

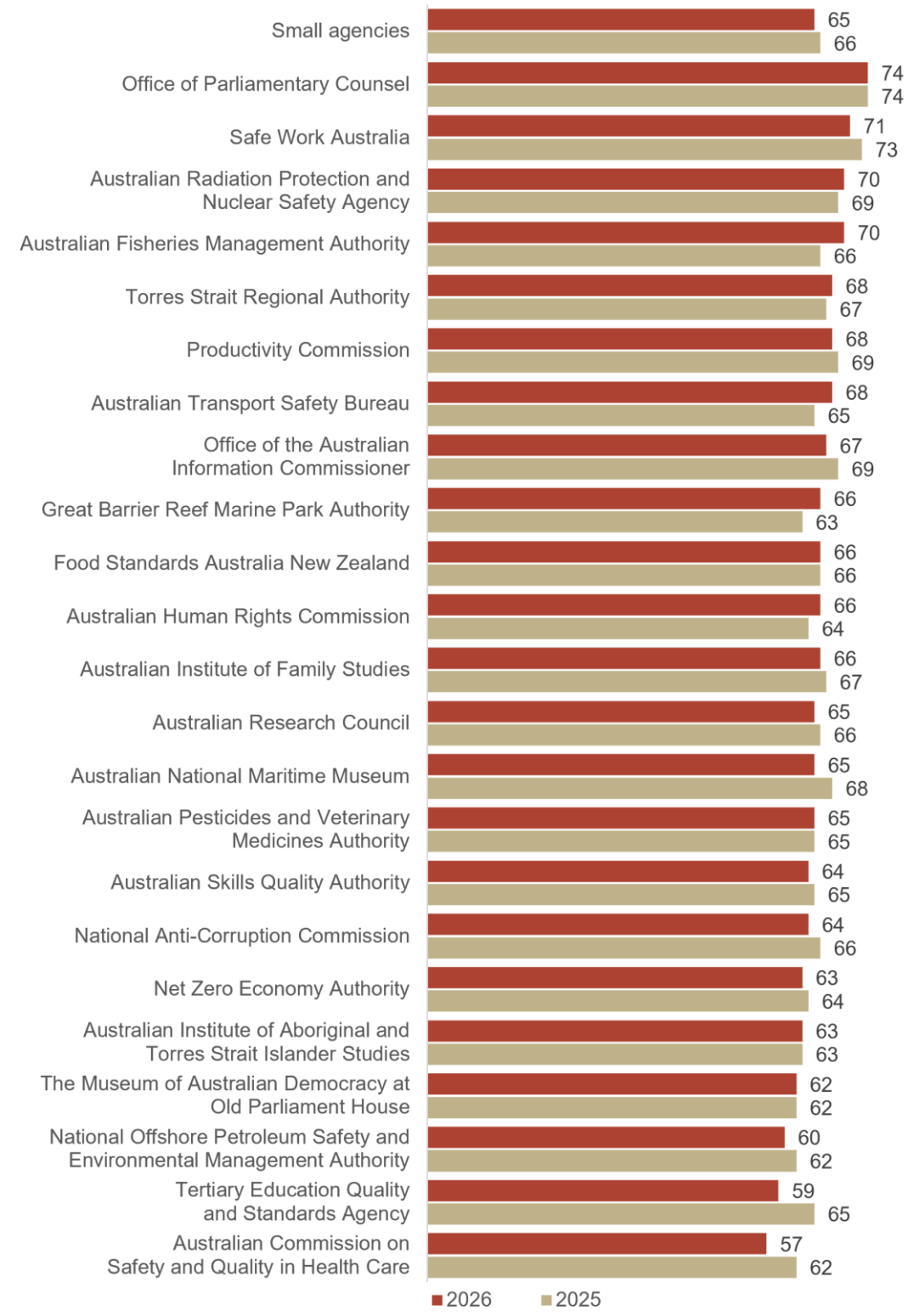
**Table AB 19: Enabling Innovation Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **68** | **68** |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 74 | 74 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 73 | 73 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 72 | 73 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 74 | 71 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 71 | 71 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 71 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 74 | 71 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 68 | 71 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 71 | 71 |
| National Archives of Australia | 70 | 70 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 71 | 69 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 73 | 69 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 64 | 69 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 68 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 68 | 68 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 69 | 68 |
| Geoscience Australia | 68 | 68 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 65 | 68 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 68 | 68 |
| National Museum of Australia | 66 | 68 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 68 | 68 |
| National Library of Australia | 67 | 67 |
| Comcare | 71 | 67 |
| Fair Work Commission | 69 | 66 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 66 | 66 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 67 | 65 |
| Australian War Memorial | 65 | 65 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 68 | 64 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 64 | 63 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 63 | 62 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 62 | 62 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 62 | 58 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 20: Enabling Innovation Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



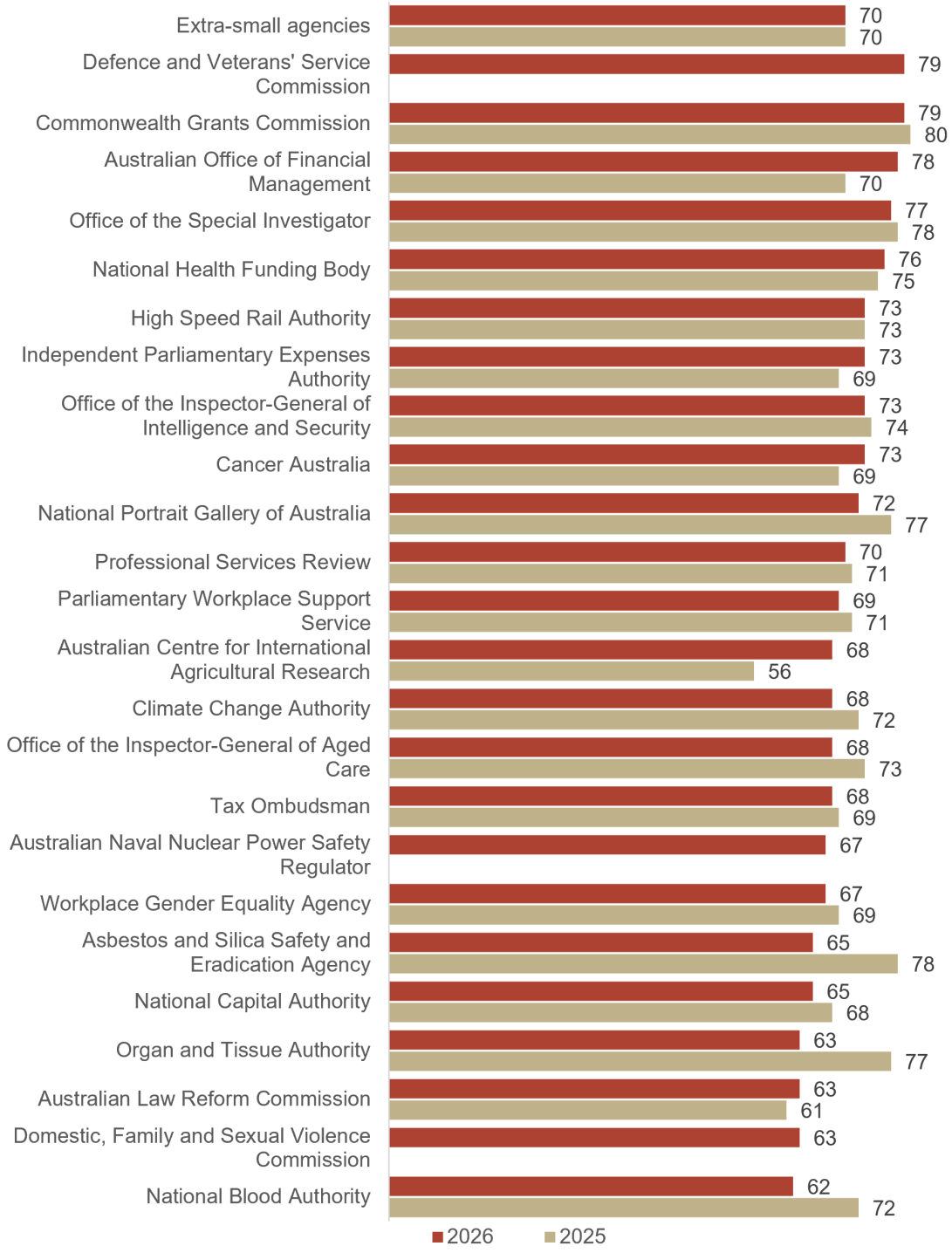

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 20: Enabling Innovation Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **66** | **65** |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 74 | 74 |
| Safe Work Australia | 73 | 71 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 69 | 70 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 66 | 70 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 67 | 68 |
| Productivity Commission | 69 | 68 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 65 | 68 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 69 | 67 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 63 | 66 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 66 | 66 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 64 | 66 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 67 | 66 |
| Australian Research Council | 66 | 65 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 68 | 65 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 65 | 65 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 65 | 64 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 66 | 64 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 64 | 63 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 63 | 63 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 62 | 62 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 62 | 60 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 65 | 59 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 62 | 57 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 21: Enabling Innovation Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 21: Enabling Innovation Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Enabling Innovation Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **70** | **70** |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 79 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 80 | 79 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 70 | 78 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 78 | 77 |
| National Health Funding Body | 75 | 76 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 73 | 73 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 69 | 73 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 74 | 73 |
| Cancer Australia | 69 | 73 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 77 | 72 |
| Professional Services Review | 71 | 70 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 71 | 69 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 56 | 68 |
| Climate Change Authority | 72 | 68 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 73 | 68 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 69 | 68 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 67 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 69 | 67 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 78 | 65 |
| National Capital Authority | 68 | 65 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 77 | 63 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 61 | 63 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 63 |
| National Blood Authority | 72 | 62 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Perceptions of Senior Executive Service leaders

The APS Employee Census Senior Executive Service (SES) Manager Leadership Index measures how employees view the leadership behaviours of their immediate SES manager.

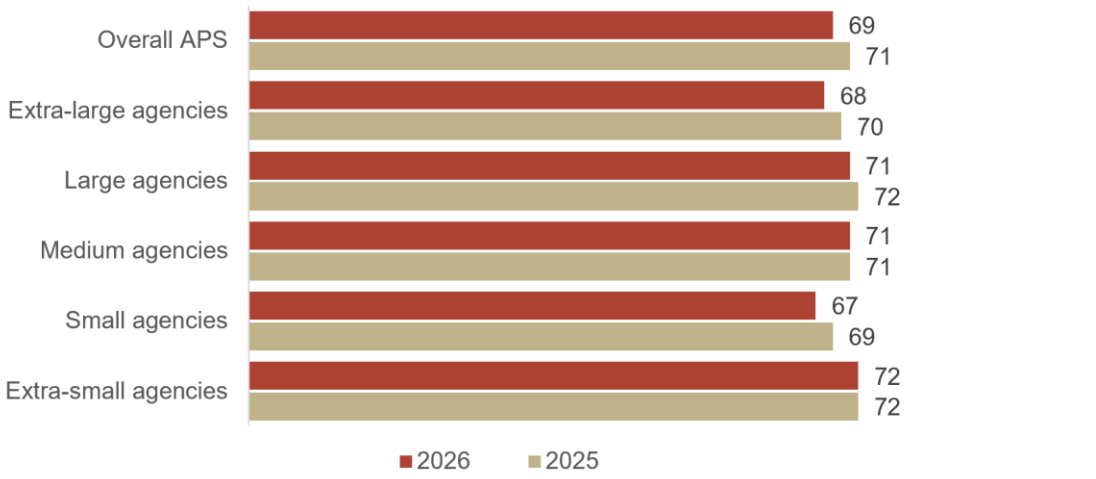
APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the SES Manager Leadership Index are:

- My SES manager clearly articulates the direction and priorities for our area.
- My SES manager presents convincing arguments and persuades others towards an outcome.
- My SES manager promotes cooperation within and between agencies.
- My SES manager encourages innovation and creativity.
- My SES manager creates an environment that enables us to deliver our best.
- My SES manager ensures that work effort contributes to the strategic direction of the agency and the APS.

Figures AB 22 to AB 27 and tables AB 22 to AB 27 report on SES Manager Leadership Index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

SES Manager Leadership Index scores are not presented for agencies with fewer than 2 SES officers as at 30 June 2025 or 30 June 2026.

**Figure AB 22: SES Manager Leadership Index, by agency size**



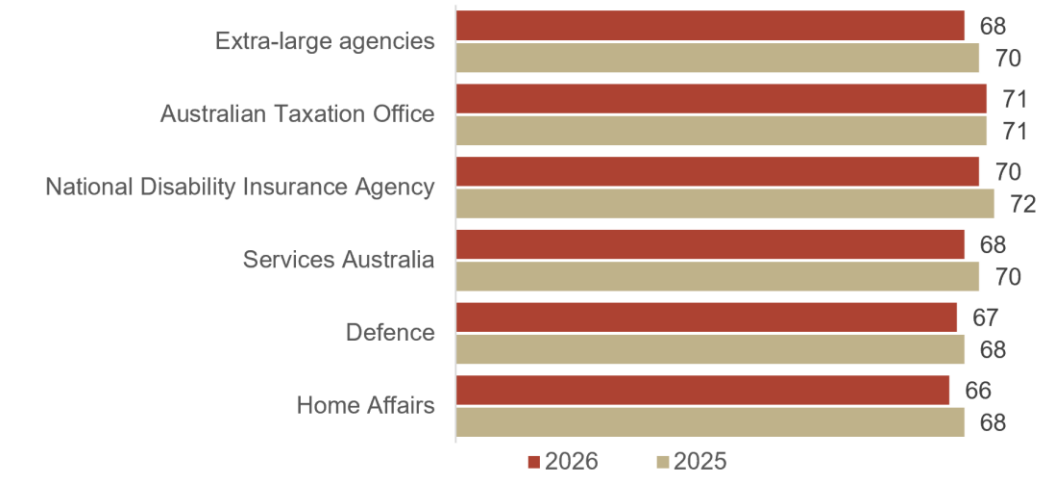

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 22: SES Manager Leadership Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **71** | **69** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 70 | 68 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 72 | 71 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 71 | 71 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 69 | 67 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 72 | 72 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 23: SES Manager Leadership Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



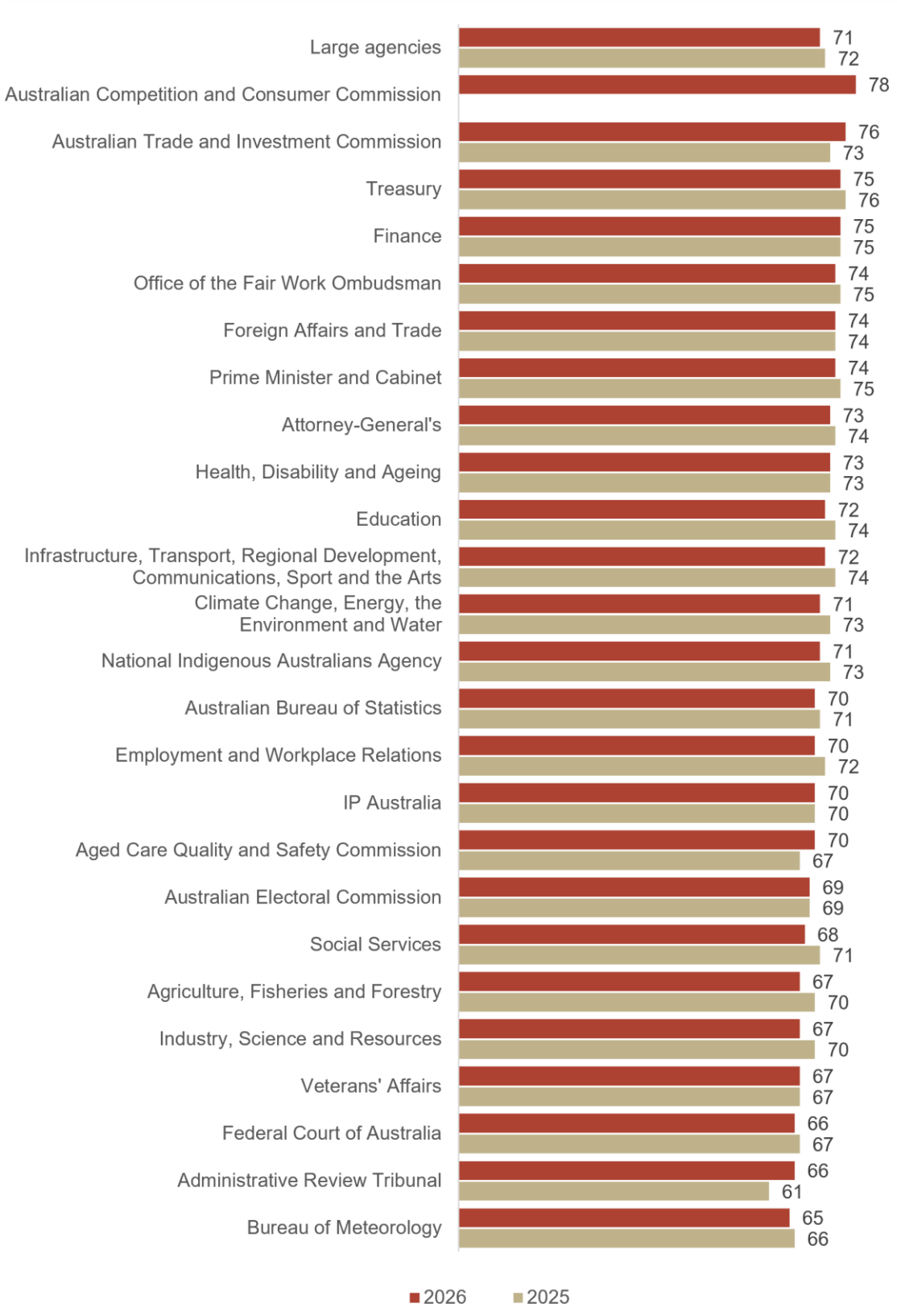

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 23: SES Manager Leadership Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **70** | **68** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 71 | 71 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 72 | 70 |
| Services Australia | 70 | 68 |
| Defence | 68 | 67 |
| Home Affairs | 68 | 66 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 24: SES Manager Leadership Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

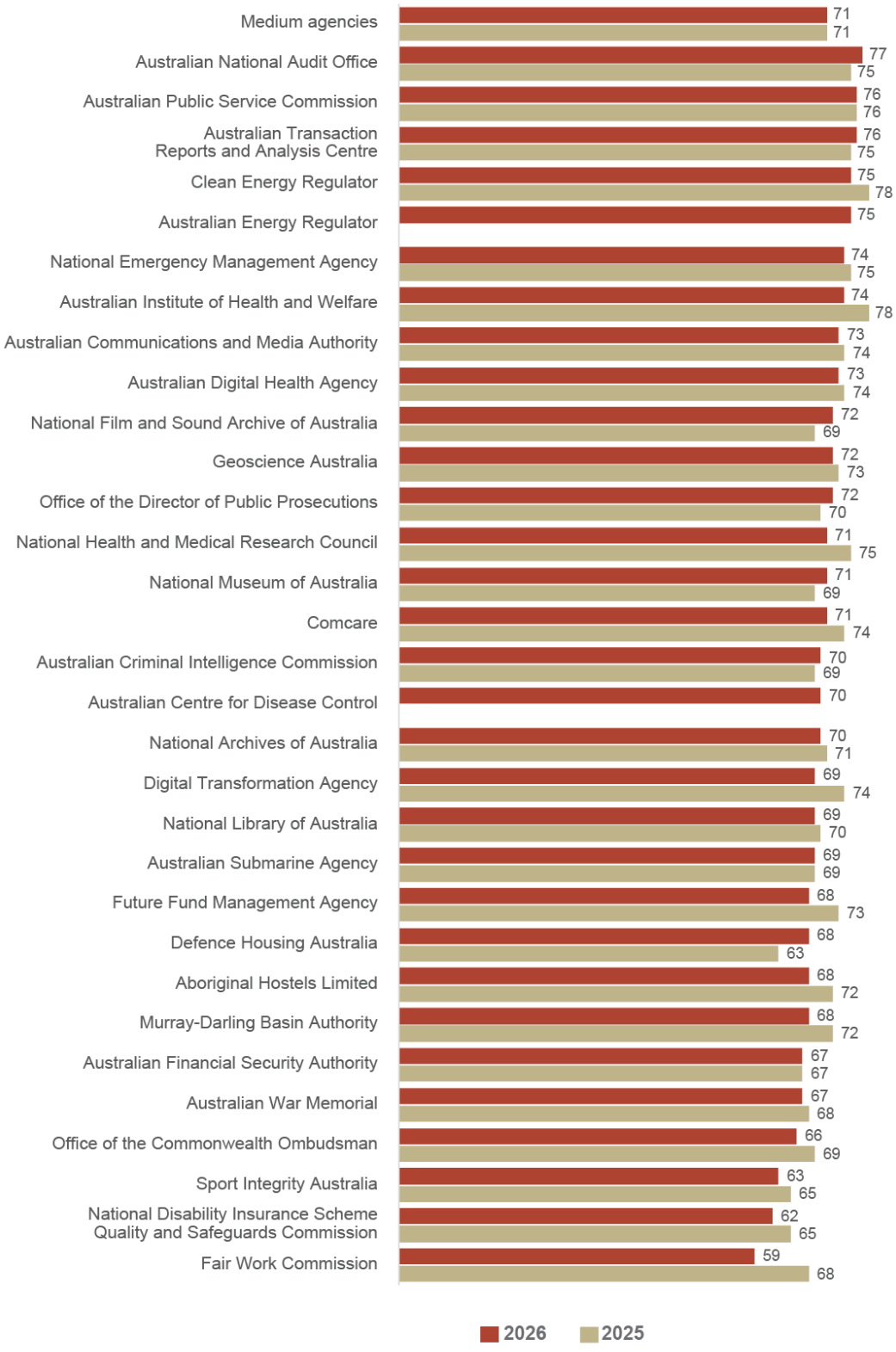
**Table AB 24: SES Manager Leadership Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **72** | **71** |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 78 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 73 | 76 |
| Treasury | 76 | 75 |
| Finance | 75 | 75 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 75 | 74 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 74 | 74 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 75 | 74 |
| Attorney-General's | 74 | 73 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 73 | 73 |
| Education | 74 | 72 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 74 | 72 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 73 | 71 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 73 | 71 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 71 | 70 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 72 | 70 |
| IP Australia | 70 | 70 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 67 | 70 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 69 | 69 |
| Social Services | 71 | 68 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 70 | 67 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 70 | 67 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 67 | 67 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 67 | 66 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 61 | 66 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 66 | 65 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

**Figure AB 25: SES Manager Leadership Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025.

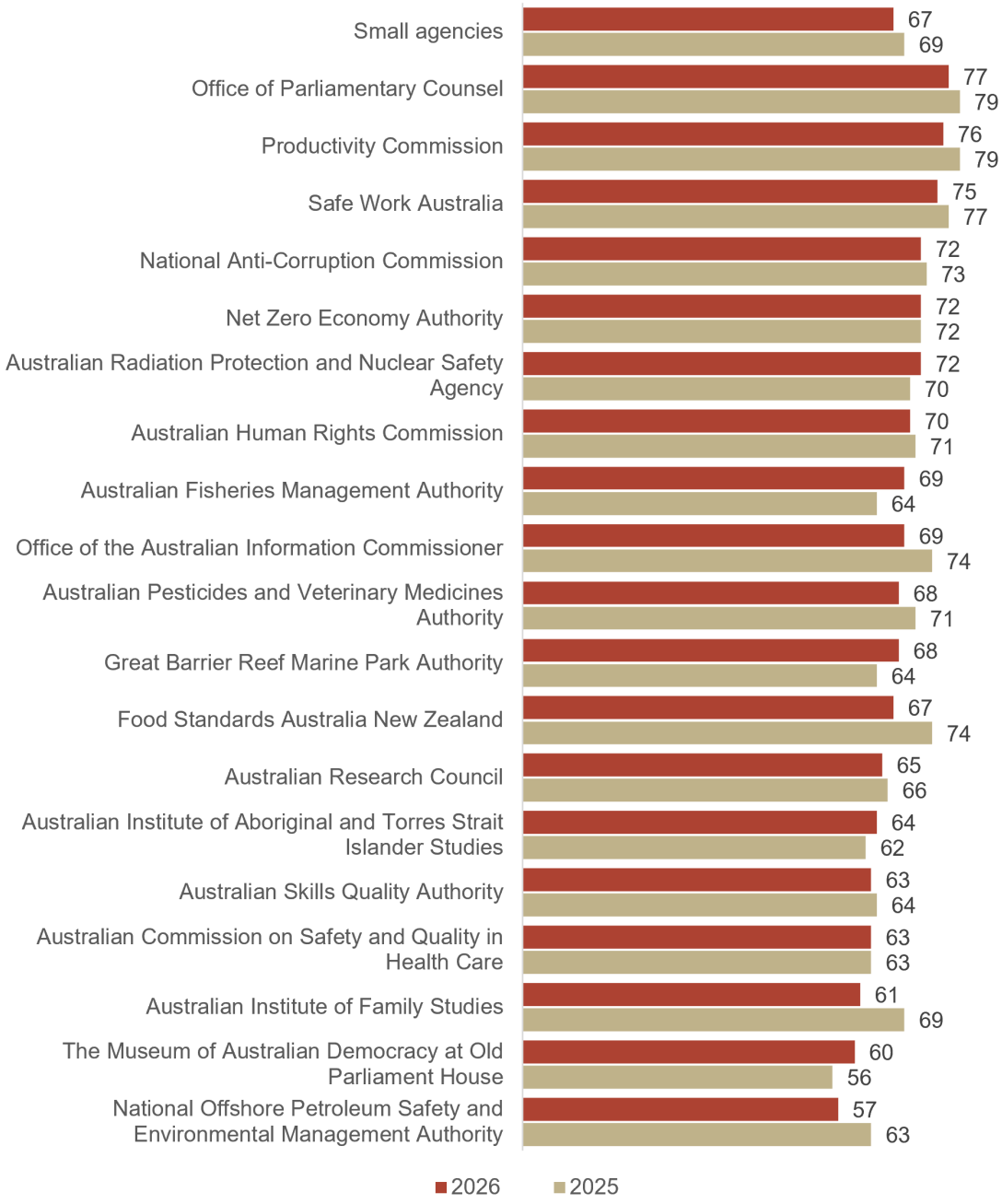
**Table AB 25: SES Manager Leadership Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **71** | **71** |
| Australian National Audit Office | 75 | 77 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 76 | 76 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 75 | 76 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 78 | 75 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 75 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 75 | 74 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 78 | 74 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 74 | 73 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 74 | 73 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 69 | 72 |
| Geoscience Australia | 73 | 72 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 70 | 72 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 75 | 71 |
| National Museum of Australia | 69 | 71 |
| Comcare | 74 | 71 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 69 | 70 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 70 |
| National Archives of Australia | 71 | 70 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 74 | 69 |
| National Library of Australia | 70 | 69 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 69 | 69 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 73 | 68 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 63 | 68 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 72 | 68 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 72 | 68 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 67 | 67 |
| Australian War Memorial | 68 | 67 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 69 | 66 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 65 | 63 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 65 | 62 |
| Fair Work Commission | 68 | 59 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Figure AB 26: SES Manager Leadership Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



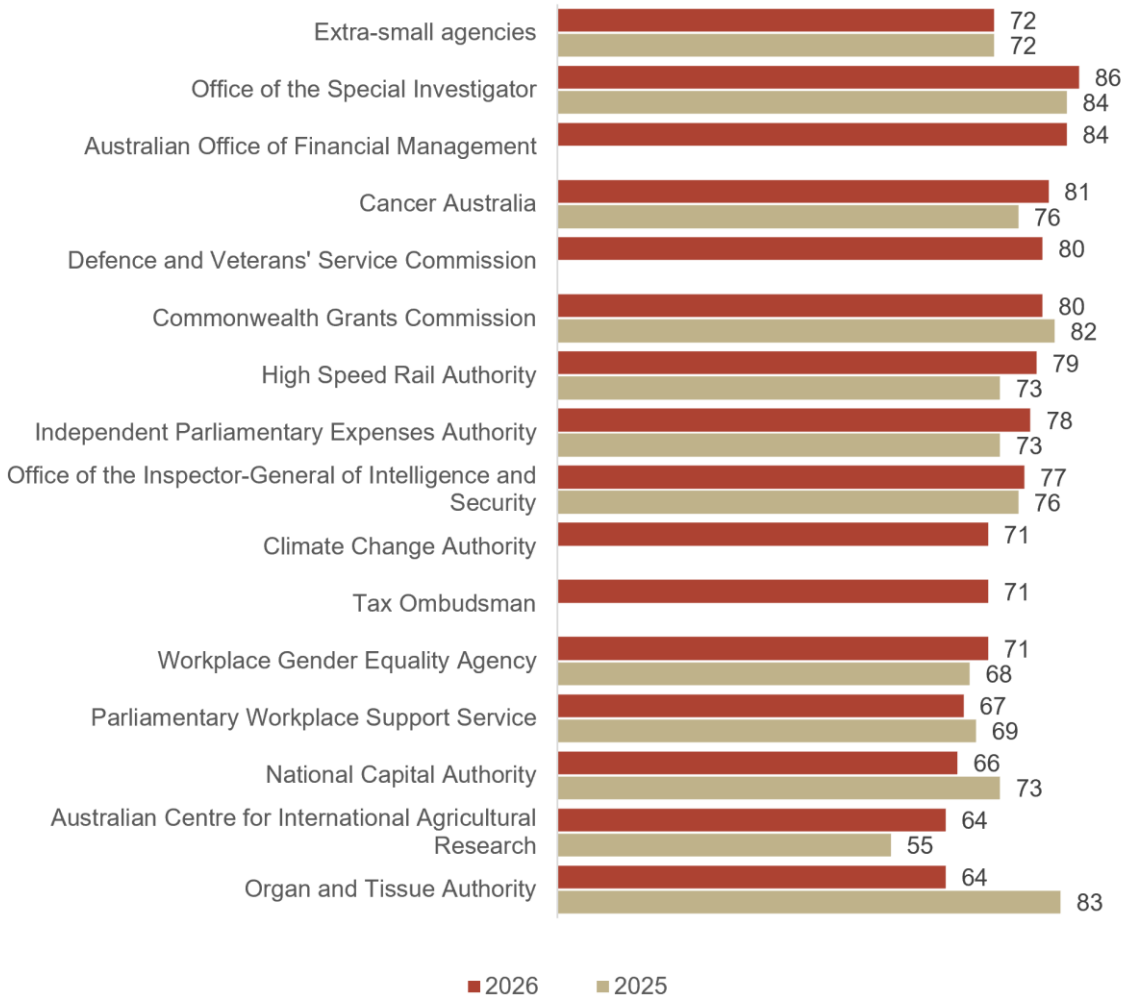

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 26: SES Manager Leadership Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **69** | **67** |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 79 | 77 |
| Productivity Commission | 79 | 76 |
| Safe Work Australia | 77 | 75 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 73 | 72 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 72 | 72 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 70 | 72 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 71 | 70 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 64 | 69 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 74 | 69 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 71 | 68 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 64 | 68 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 74 | 67 |
| Australian Research Council | 66 | 65 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 62 | 64 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 64 | 63 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 63 | 63 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 69 | 61 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 56 | 60 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 63 | 57 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 27: SES Manager Leadership Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Office of Financial Management, the Climate Change Authority and the Tax Ombudsman did not have reportable results in 2025. The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission was not an APS agency in 2025.

**Table AB 27: SES Manager Leadership Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | SES Manager Leadership Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **72** | **72** |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 84 | 86 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | - | 84 |
| Cancer Australia | 76 | 81 |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 80 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 82 | 80 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 73 | 79 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 73 | 78 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 76 | 77 |
| Climate Change Authority | - | 71 |
| Tax Ombudsman | - | 71 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 68 | 71 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 69 | 67 |
| National Capital Authority | 73 | 66 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 55 | 64 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 83 | 64 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Office of Financial Management, the Climate Change Authority and the Tax Ombudsman did not have reportable results in 2025. The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission was not an APS agency in 2025.

# Perceptions of immediate supervisors

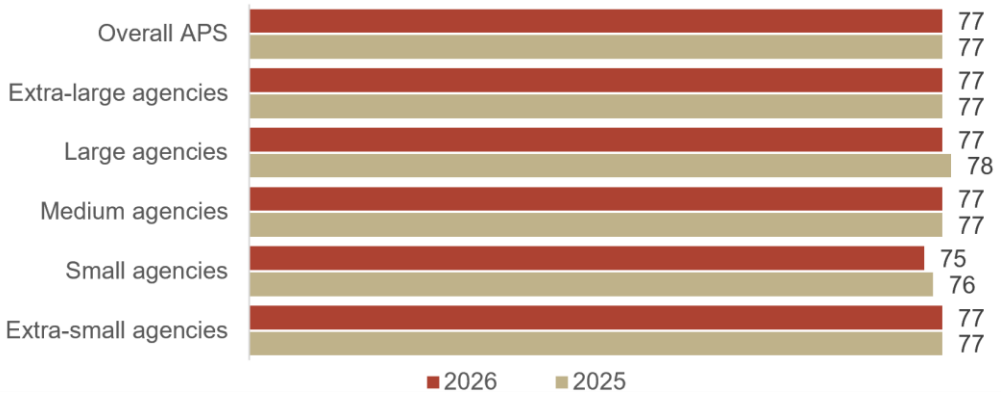
The APS Employee Census Immediate Supervisor Index measures how employees view the leadership behaviours of their immediate supervisor.

APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Immediate Supervisor Index are:

- My supervisor engages with staff on how to respond to future challenges.
- My supervisor can deliver difficult advice whilst maintaining relationships.
- My supervisor invites a range of views, including those different to their own.
- My supervisor encourages my team to regularly review and improve our work.
- My supervisor is invested in my development.
- My supervisor ensures that my workgroup delivers on what we are responsible for.

Figures AB 28 to AB 33 and tables AB 28 to AB 33 report on the index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 28: Immediate Supervisor Index, by agency size**



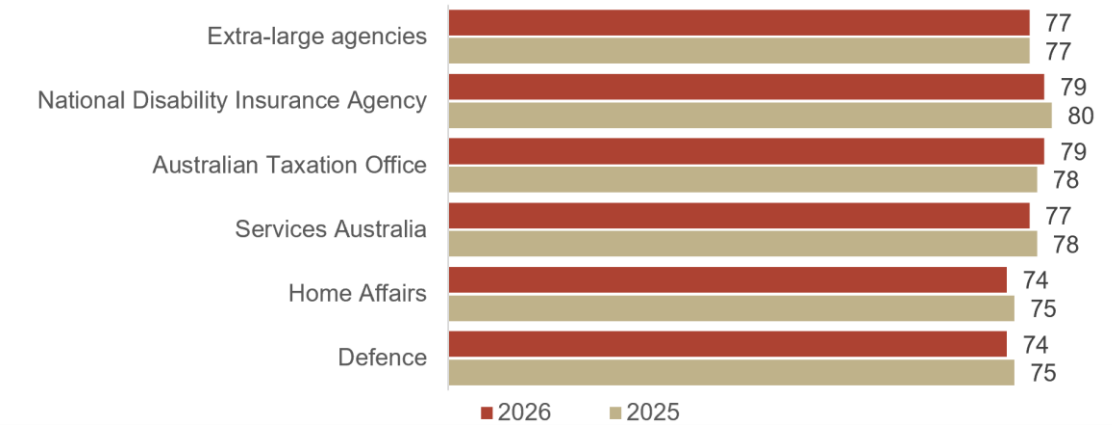

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 28: Immediate Supervisor Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **77** | **77** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 77 | 77 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 78 | 77 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 77 | 77 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 76 | 75 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 77 | 77 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 29: Immediate Supervisor Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



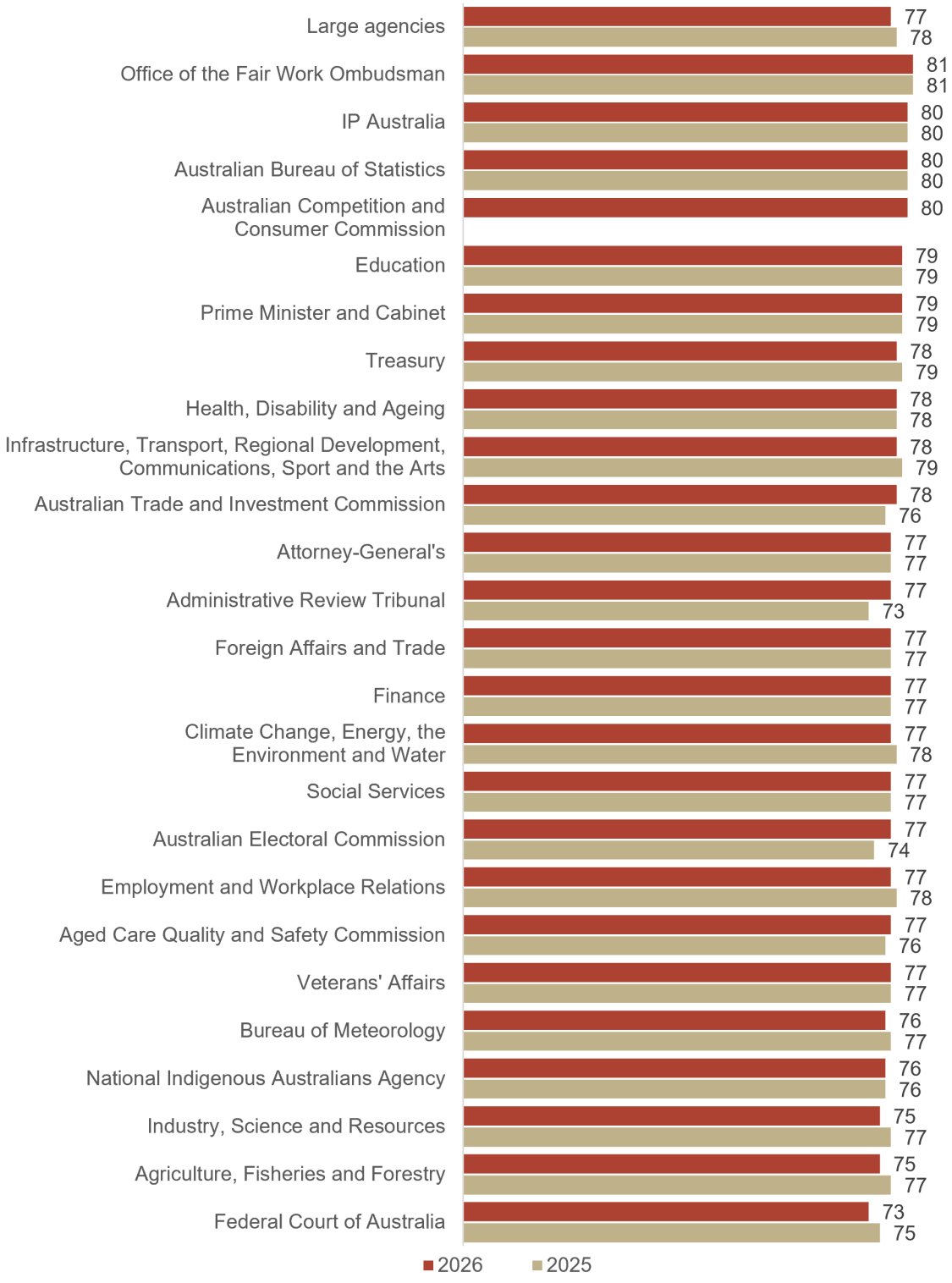

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 29: Immediate Supervisor Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **77** | **77** |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 80 | 79 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 78 | 79 |
| Services Australia | 78 | 77 |
| Home Affairs | 75 | 74 |
| Defence | 75 | 74 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 30: Immediate Supervisor Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

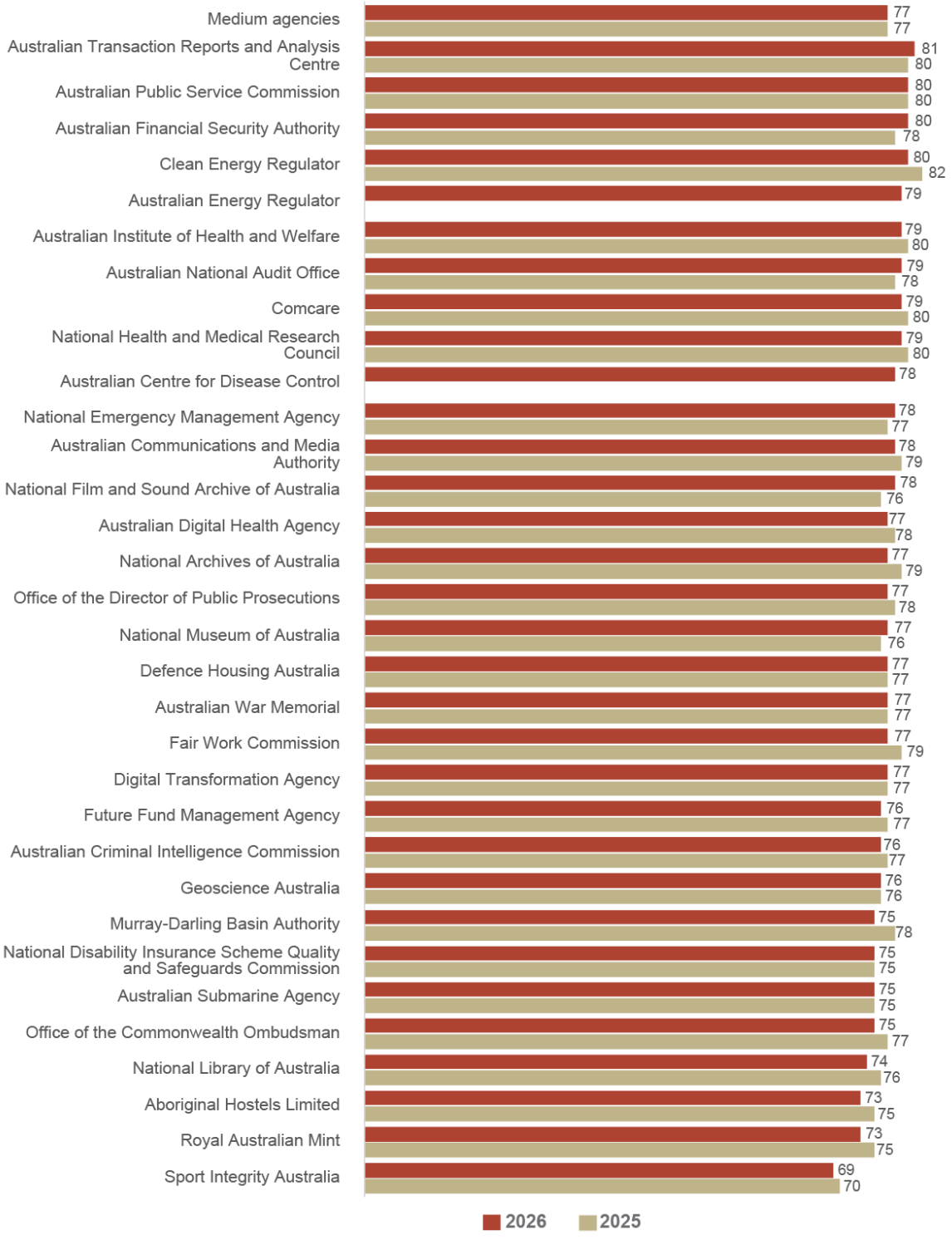
**Table AB 30: Immediate Supervisor Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **78** | **77** |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 81 | 81 |
| IP Australia | 80 | 80 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 80 | 80 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 80 |
| Education | 79 | 79 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 79 | 79 |
| Treasury | 79 | 78 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 78 | 78 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 79 | 78 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 76 | 78 |
| Attorney-General's | 77 | 77 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 73 | 77 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 77 | 77 |
| Finance | 77 | 77 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 78 | 77 |
| Social Services | 77 | 77 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 74 | 77 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 78 | 77 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 76 | 77 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 77 | 77 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 77 | 76 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 76 | 76 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 77 | 75 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 77 | 75 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 75 | 73 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

**Figure AB 31: Immediate Supervisor Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

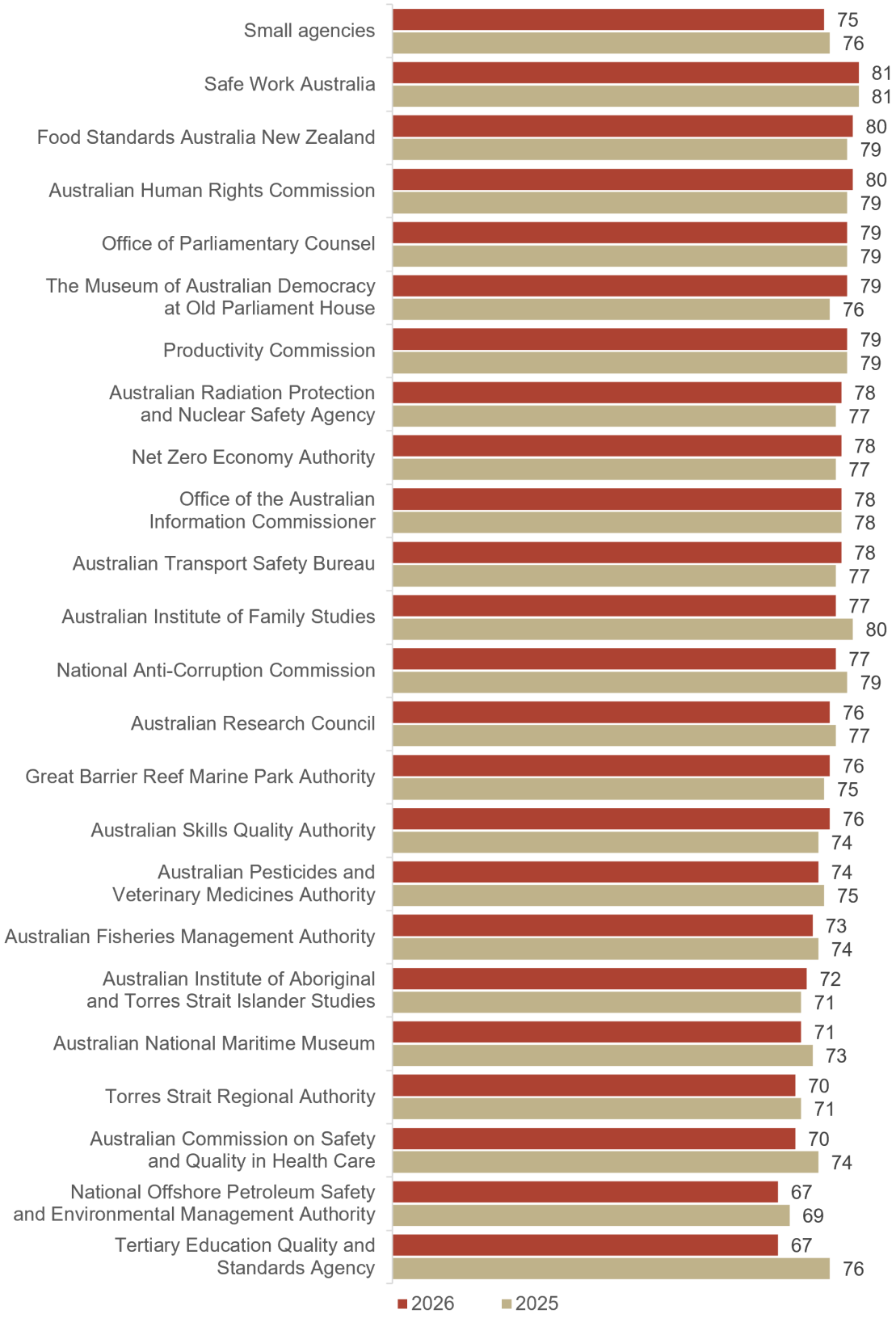
**Table AB 31: Immediate Supervisor Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **77** | **77** |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 80 | 81 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 80 | 80 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 78 | 80 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 82 | 80 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 79 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 80 | 79 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 78 | 79 |
| Comcare | 80 | 79 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 80 | 79 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 78 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 77 | 78 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 79 | 78 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 76 | 78 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 78 | 77 |
| National Archives of Australia | 79 | 77 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 78 | 77 |
| National Museum of Australia | 76 | 77 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 77 | 77 |
| Australian War Memorial | 77 | 77 |
| Fair Work Commission | 79 | 77 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 77 | 77 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 77 | 76 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 77 | 76 |
| Geoscience Australia | 76 | 76 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 78 | 75 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 75 | 75 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 75 | 75 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 77 | 75 |
| National Library of Australia | 76 | 74 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 75 | 73 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 75 | 73 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 70 | 69 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 32: Immediate Supervisor Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



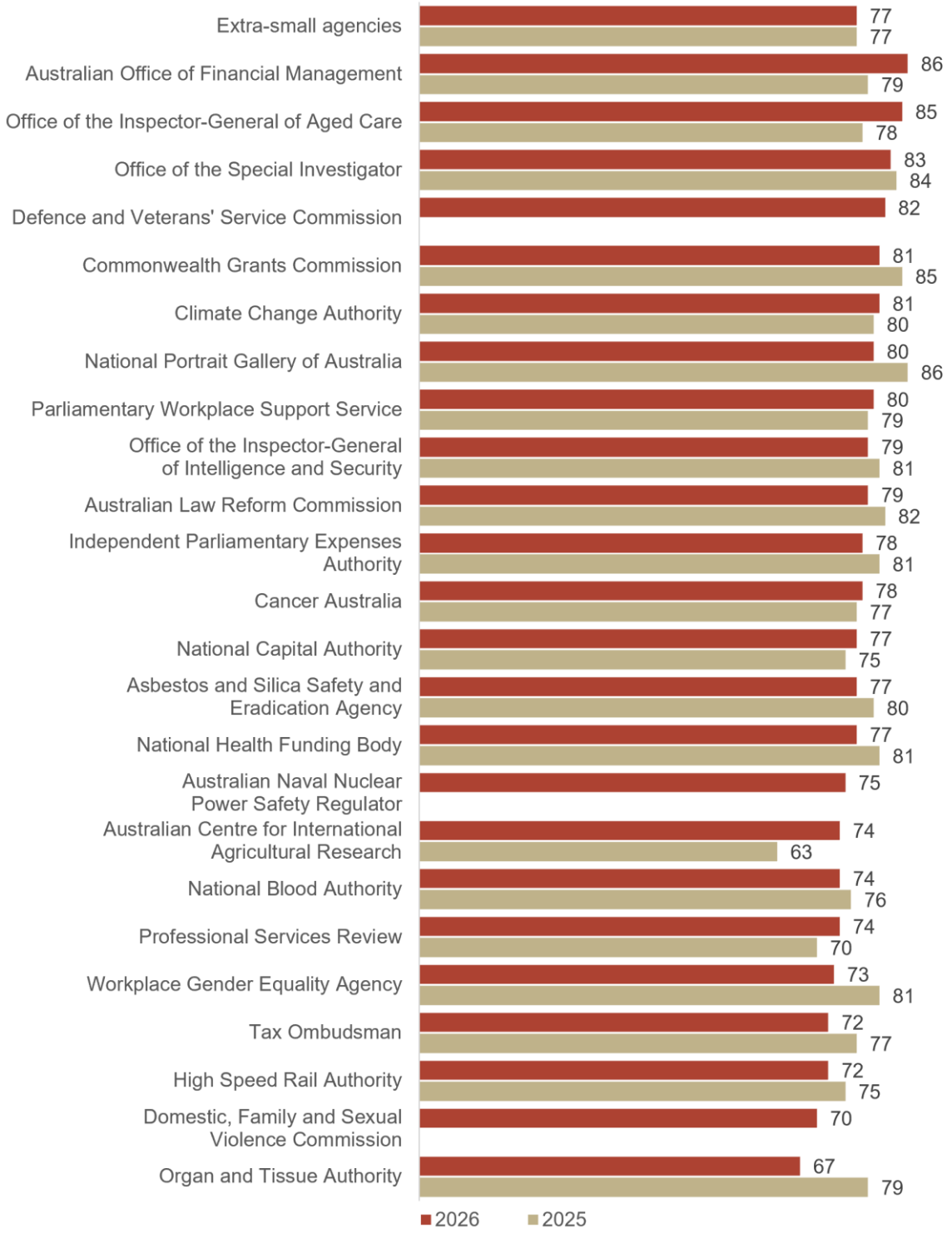

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 32: Immediate Supervisor Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **76** | **75** |
| Safe Work Australia | 81 | 81 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 79 | 80 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 79 | 80 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 79 | 79 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 76 | 79 |
| Productivity Commission | 79 | 79 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 77 | 78 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 77 | 78 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 78 | 78 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 77 | 78 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 80 | 77 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 79 | 77 |
| Australian Research Council | 77 | 76 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 75 | 76 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 74 | 76 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 75 | 74 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 74 | 73 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 71 | 72 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 73 | 71 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 71 | 70 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 74 | 70 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 69 | 67 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 76 | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 33: Immediate Supervisor Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 33: Immediate Supervisor Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Immediate Supervisor Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **77** | **77** |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 79 | 86 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 78 | 85 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 84 | 83 |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 82 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 85 | 81 |
| Climate Change Authority | 80 | 81 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 86 | 80 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 79 | 80 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 81 | 79 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 82 | 79 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 81 | 78 |
| Cancer Australia | 77 | 78 |
| National Capital Authority | 75 | 77 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 80 | 77 |
| National Health Funding Body | 81 | 77 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 75 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 63 | 74 |
| National Blood Authority | 76 | 74 |
| Professional Services Review | 70 | 74 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 81 | 73 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 77 | 72 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 75 | 72 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 70 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 79 | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Bullying and harassment

The APS Employee Census measures employee perceptions of bullying and harassment. Responses to the question ‘During the last 12 months, have you been subjected to bullying or harassment in your current workplace?’ are summarised here.

For the purposes of the APS Employee Census, these definitions were used:

- Bullying: A worker is bullied at work if, while at work, an individual or group of individuals repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards the worker, or group of workers of which the worker is a member, and that behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. To avoid doubt, this does not apply to reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable way.

- Harassment: Workplace harassment entails offensive, belittling or threatening behaviour directed at an individual or group. The behaviour is unwelcome, unsolicited, usually unreciprocated and usually, but not always, repeated. Reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable way is not workplace harassment.

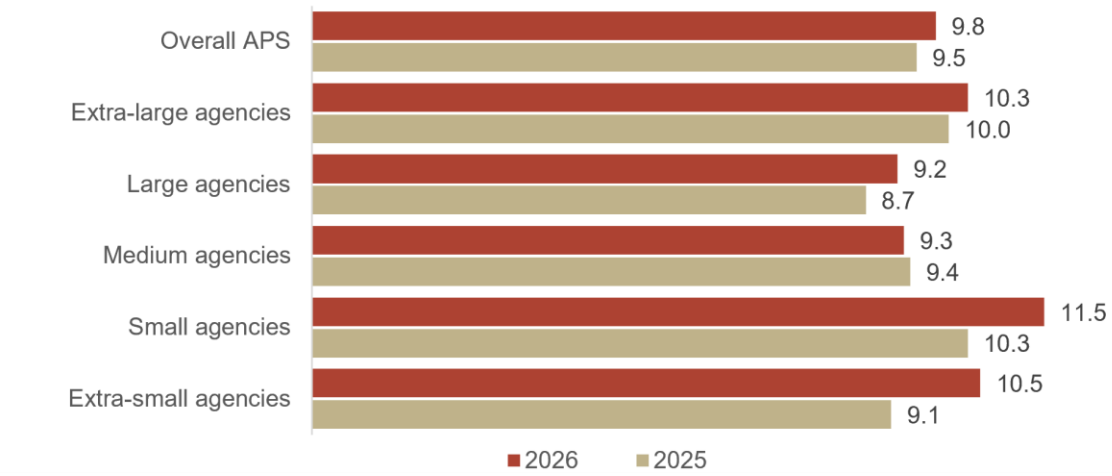
  Harassment also **includes sexual harassment** and can involve:

  - Unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing
  - Staring or leering
  - Suggestive comments or jokes
  - Sexually explicit pictures, screen savers or posters
  - Unwanted invitations to go out on dates or requests for sex
  - Intrusive questions about an employee’s private life or body
  - Unnecessary familiarity
  - Insults or taunts based on your sex
  - Sexually explicit emails or SMS messages
  - Accessing sexually explicit internet sites
  - Behaviour which would also be an offence under the criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

Figures AB 34 to AB 39 and tables AB 34 to AB 39 present Census results, broken down by agency size, for APS respondents.

This data represents the percentage of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace.

**Figure AB 34: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, by agency size**



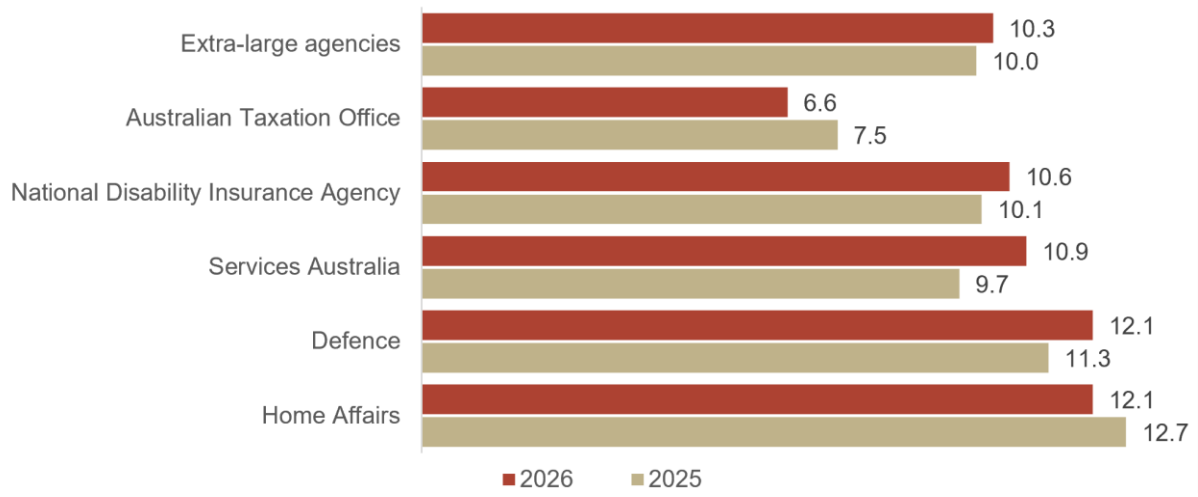

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 34: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, by agency size**

| Agency size | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **9.5** | **9.8** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 10.0 | 10.3 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 8.7 | 9.2 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 9.4 | 9.3 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 10.3 | 11.5 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 9.1 | 10.5 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 35: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



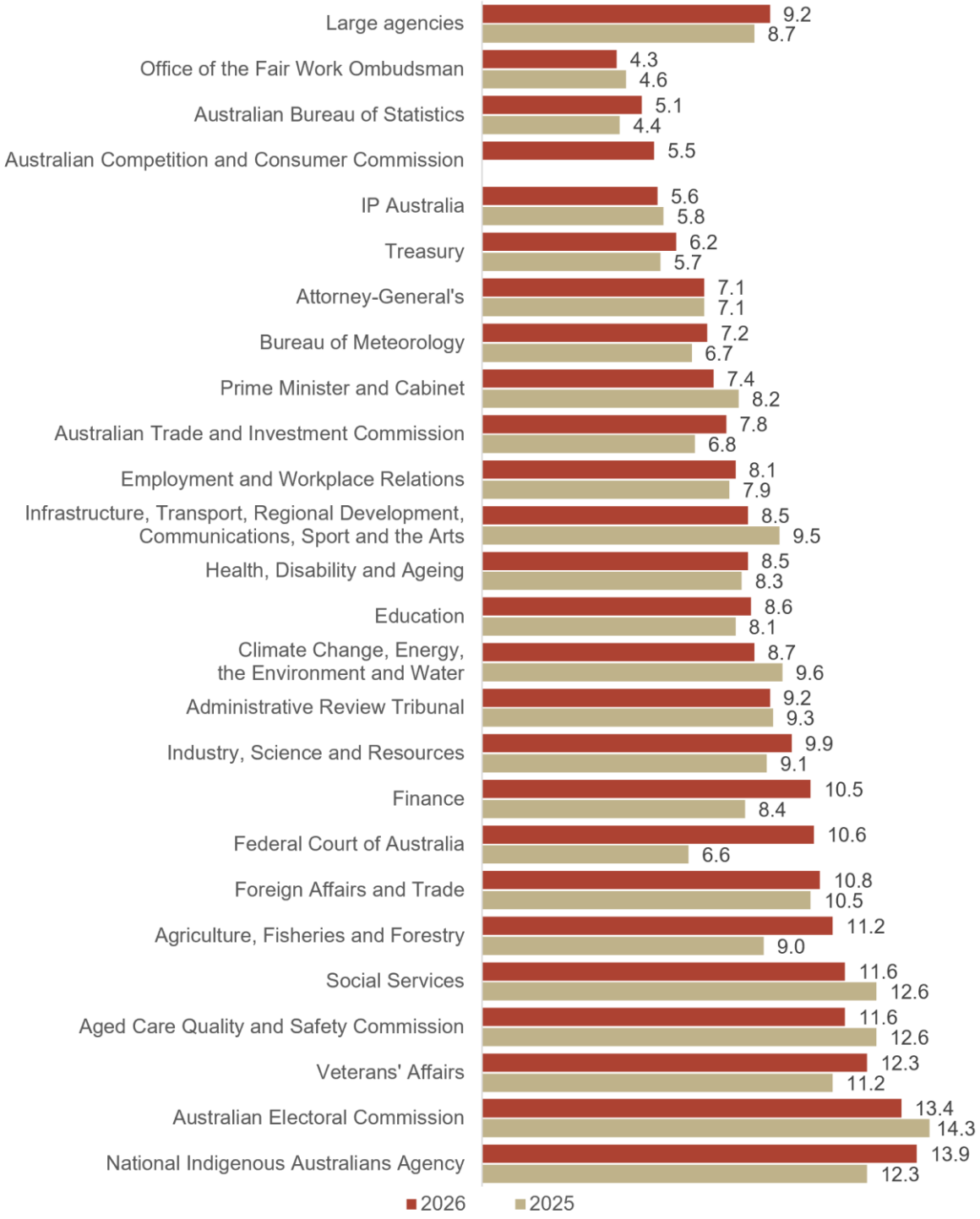

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 35: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **10.0** | **10.3** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 7.5 | 6.6 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 10.1 | 10.6 |
| Services Australia | 9.7 | 10.9 |
| Defence | 11.3 | 12.1 |
| Home Affairs | 12.7 | 12.1 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 36: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

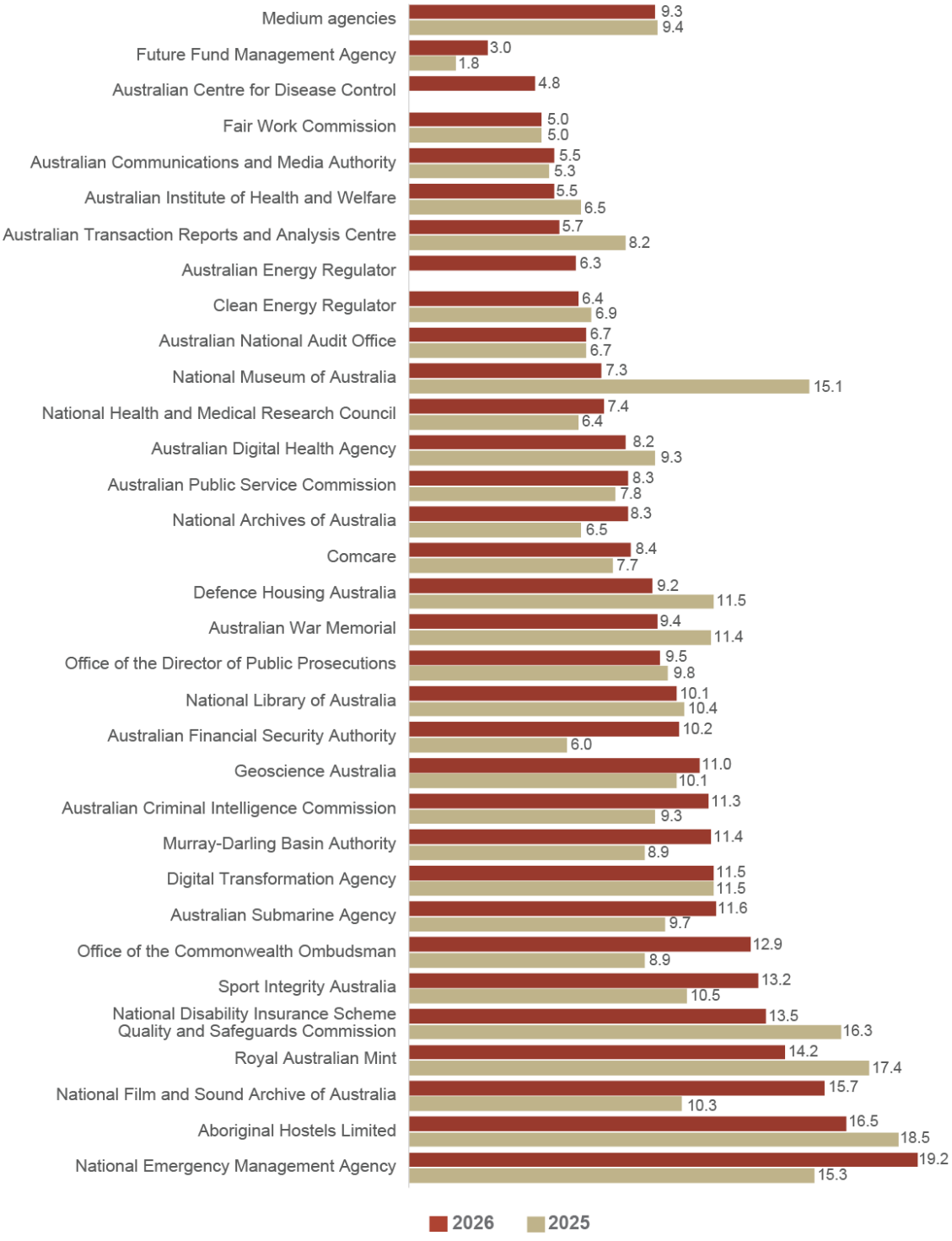
**Table AB 36: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **8.7** | **9.2** |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 4.6 | 4.3 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 4.4 | 5.1 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 5.5 |
| IP Australia | 5.8 | 5.6 |
| Treasury | 5.7 | 6.2 |
| Attorney-General's | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 6.7 | 7.2 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 8.2 | 7.4 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 6.8 | 7.8 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 7.9 | 8.1 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 9.5 | 8.5 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 8.3 | 8.5 |
| Education | 8.1 | 8.6 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 9.6 | 8.7 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 9.3 | 9.2 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 9.1 | 9.9 |
| Finance | 8.4 | 10.5 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 6.6 | 10.6 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 10.5 | 10.8 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 9.0 | 11.2 |
| Social Services | 12.6 | 11.6 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 12.6 | 11.6 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 11.2 | 12.3 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 14.3 | 13.4 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 12.3 | 13.9 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

**Figure AB 37: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Energy Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

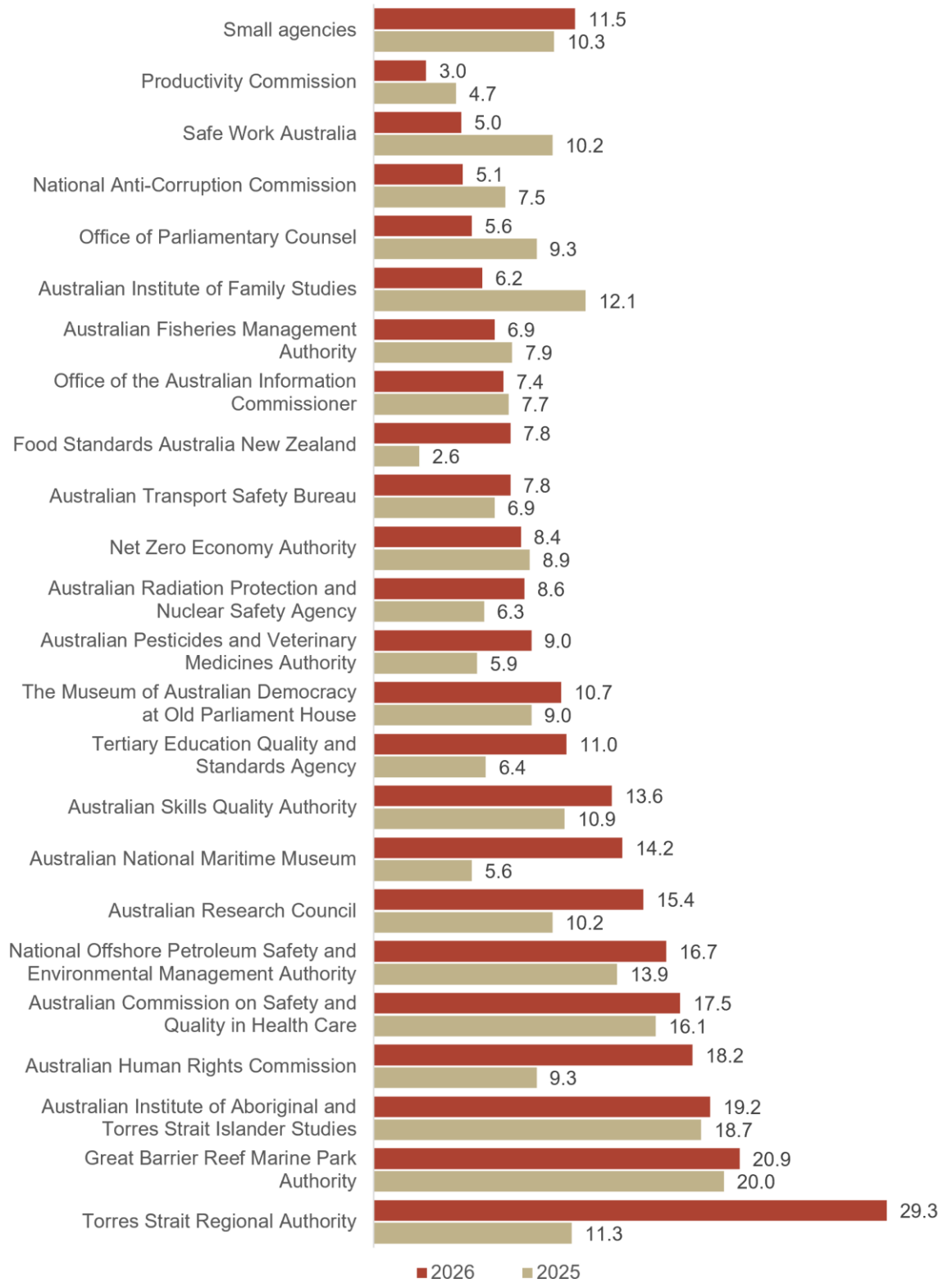
**Table AB 37: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **9.4** | **9.3** |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 1.8 | 3.0 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 4.8 |
| Fair Work Commission | 5.0 | 5.0 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 5.3 | 5.5 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 6.5 | 5.5 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 8.2 | 5.7 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 6.3 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 6.9 | 6.4 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| National Museum of Australia | 15.1 | 7.3 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 6.4 | 7.4 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 9.3 | 8.2 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 7.8 | 8.3 |
| National Archives of Australia | 6.5 | 8.3 |
| Comcare | 7.7 | 8.4 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 11.5 | 9.2 |
| Australian War Memorial | 11.4 | 9.4 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 9.8 | 9.5 |
| National Library of Australia | 10.4 | 10.1 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 6.0 | 10.2 |
| Geoscience Australia | 10.1 | 11.0 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 9.3 | 11.3 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 8.9 | 11.4 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 11.5 | 11.5 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 9.7 | 11.6 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 8.9 | 12.9 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 10.5 | 13.2 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 16.3 | 13.5 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 17.4 | 14.2 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 10.3 | 15.7 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 18.5 | 16.5 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 15.3 | 19.2 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Centre for Disease Control and the Australian Energy Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 38: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



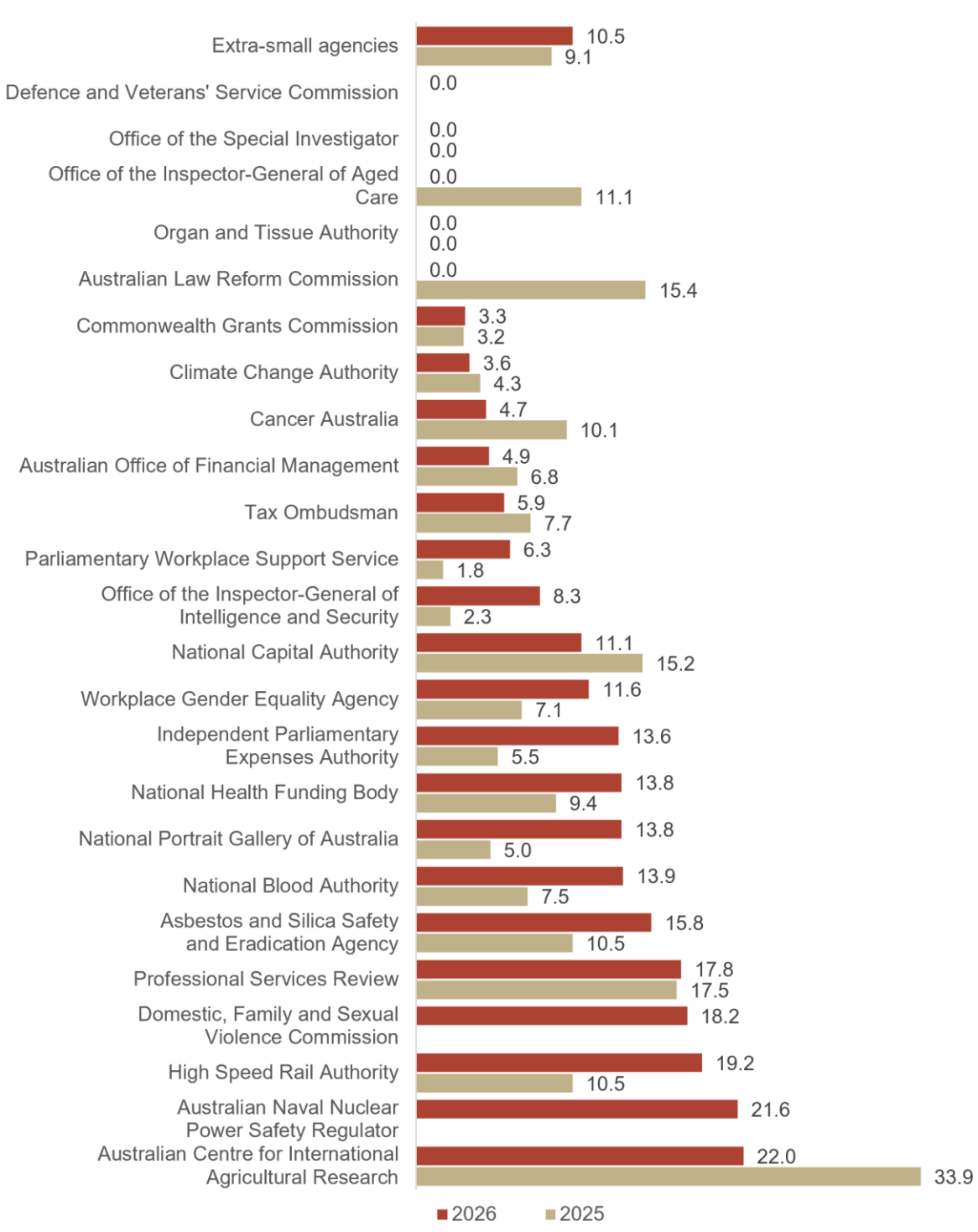

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 38: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **10.3** | **11.5** |
| Productivity Commission | 4.7 | 3.0 |
| Safe Work Australia | 10.2 | 5.0 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 7.5 | 5.1 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 9.3 | 5.6 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 12.1 | 6.2 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 7.9 | 6.9 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 7.7 | 7.4 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 2.6 | 7.8 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 6.9 | 7.8 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 8.9 | 8.4 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 6.3 | 8.6 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 5.9 | 9.0 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 9.0 | 10.7 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 6.4 | 11.0 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 10.9 | 13.6 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 5.6 | 14.2 |
| Australian Research Council | 10.2 | 15.4 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 13.9 | 16.7 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 16.1 | 17.5 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 9.3 | 18.2 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 18.7 | 19.2 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 20.0 | 20.9 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 11.3 | 29.3 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 39: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 39: Perceptions of bullying and harassment, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who perceived bullying or harassment in their current workplace | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **9.1** | **10.5** |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 0.0 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 11.1 | 0.0 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 15.4 | 0.0 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 3.2 | 3.3 |
| Climate Change Authority | 4.3 | 3.6 |
| Cancer Australia | 10.1 | 4.7 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 6.8 | 4.9 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 7.7 | 5.9 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 1.8 | 6.3 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 2.3 | 8.3 |
| National Capital Authority | 15.2 | 11.1 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 7.1 | 11.6 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 5.5 | 13.6 |
| National Health Funding Body | 9.4 | 13.8 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 5.0 | 13.8 |
| National Blood Authority | 7.5 | 13.9 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 10.5 | 15.8 |
| Professional Services Review | 17.5 | 17.8 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 18.2 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 10.5 | 19.2 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 21.6 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 33.9 | 22.0 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Perceptions of wellbeing policies and support

Wellbeing of employees has long been a focus of the Australian Public Service. As employers, APS agencies have obligations under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. Beyond these obligations, strong employee wellbeing drives engagement, collaboration and the high performance of individuals, teams and organisations.

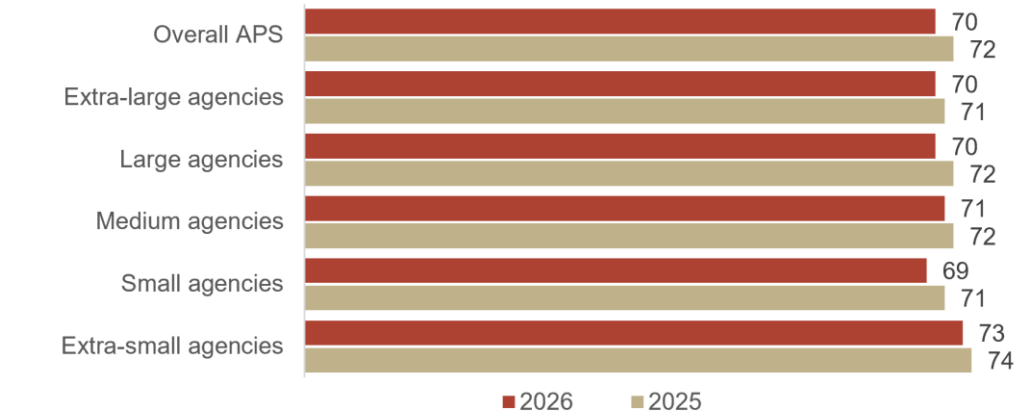
The APS Employee Census Wellbeing Policies and Support Index measures both the practical and cultural elements that support a sustainable and healthy working environment.

APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Wellbeing Policies and Support Index are:

- I am satisfied with the policies/practices in place to help me manage my health and wellbeing.
- My agency does a good job of communicating what it can offer me in terms of health and wellbeing.
- My agency does a good job of promoting health and wellbeing.
- I think my agency cares about my health and wellbeing.
- I believe my immediate supervisor cares about my health and wellbeing.

Figures AB 40 to AB 45 and tables AB 40 to AB 45 report on Wellbeing Policies and Support Index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 40: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, by agency size**



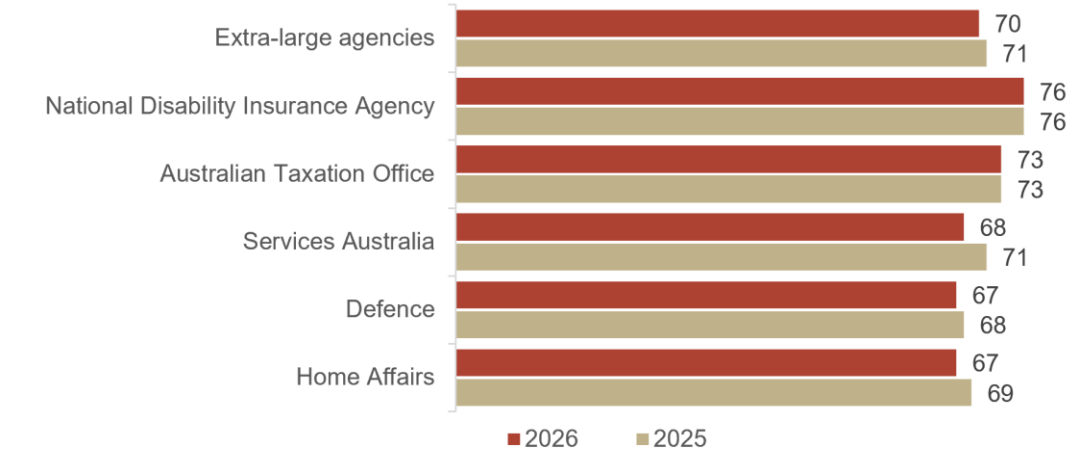

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 40: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **72** | **70** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 71 | 70 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 72 | 70 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 72 | 71 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 71 | 69 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 74 | 73 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 41: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



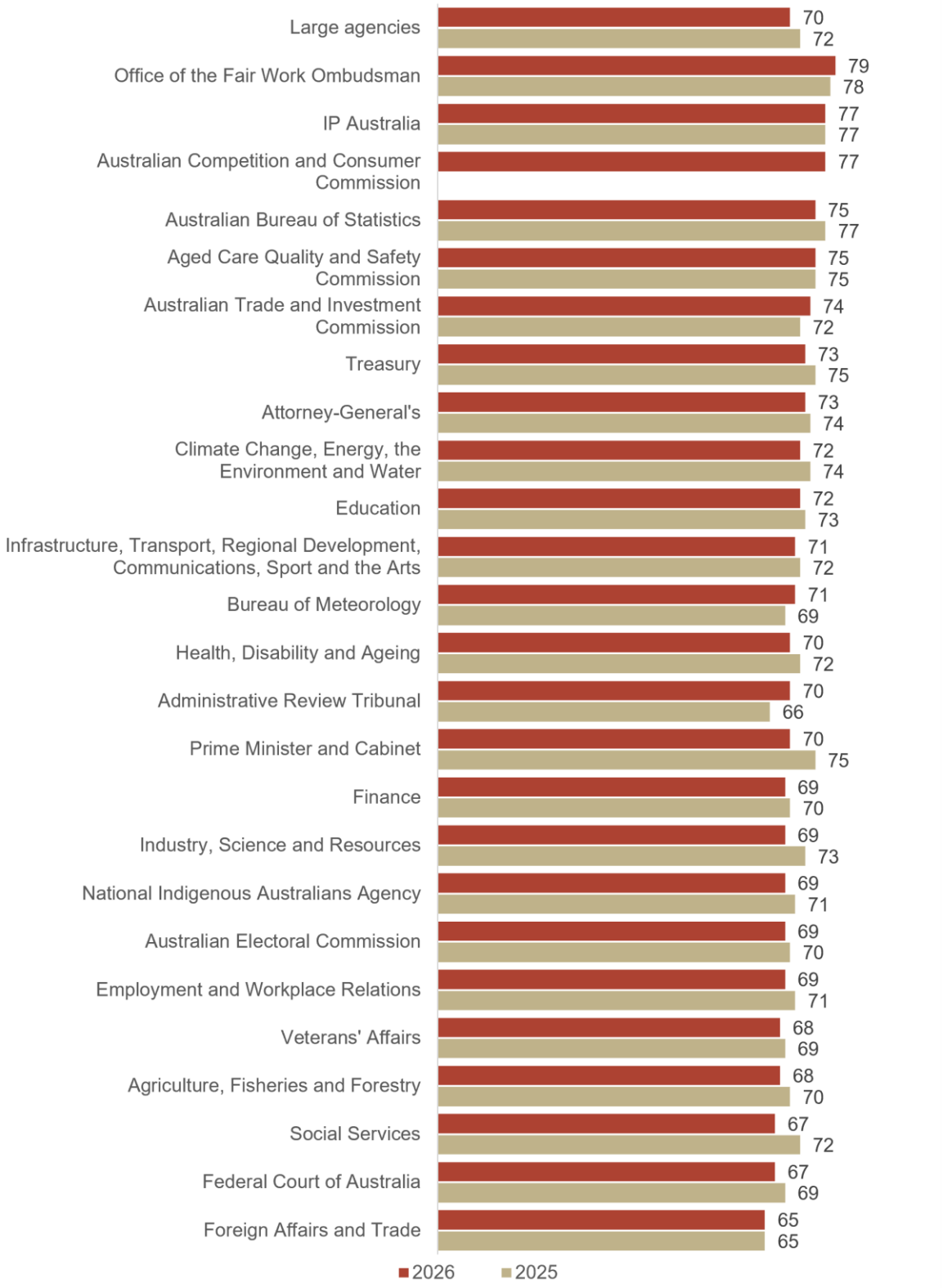

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 41: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **71** | **70** |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 76 | 76 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 73 | 73 |
| Services Australia | 71 | 68 |
| Defence | 68 | 67 |
| Home Affairs | 69 | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 42: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

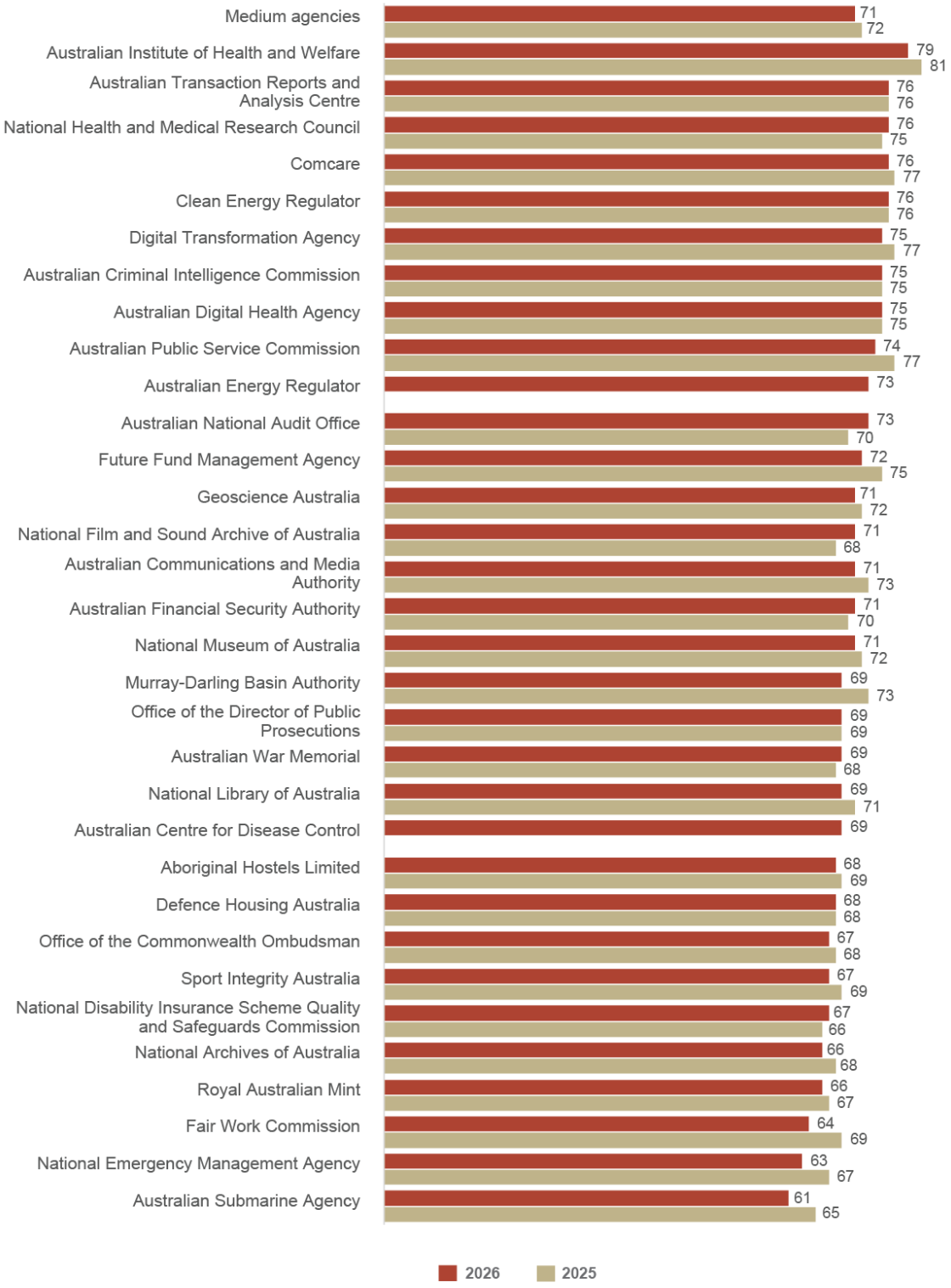
**Table AB 42: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **72** | **70** |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 78 | 79 |
| IP Australia | 77 | 77 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 77 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 77 | 75 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 75 | 75 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 72 | 74 |
| Treasury | 75 | 73 |
| Attorney-General's | 74 | 73 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 74 | 72 |
| Education | 73 | 72 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 72 | 71 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 69 | 71 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 72 | 70 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 66 | 70 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 75 | 70 |
| Finance | 70 | 69 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 73 | 69 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 71 | 69 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 70 | 69 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 71 | 69 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 69 | 68 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 70 | 68 |
| Social Services | 72 | 67 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 69 | 67 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 65 | 65 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Administrative Review Tribunal and the Australian Electoral Commission were medium agencies in 2025. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure.

**Figure AB 43: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

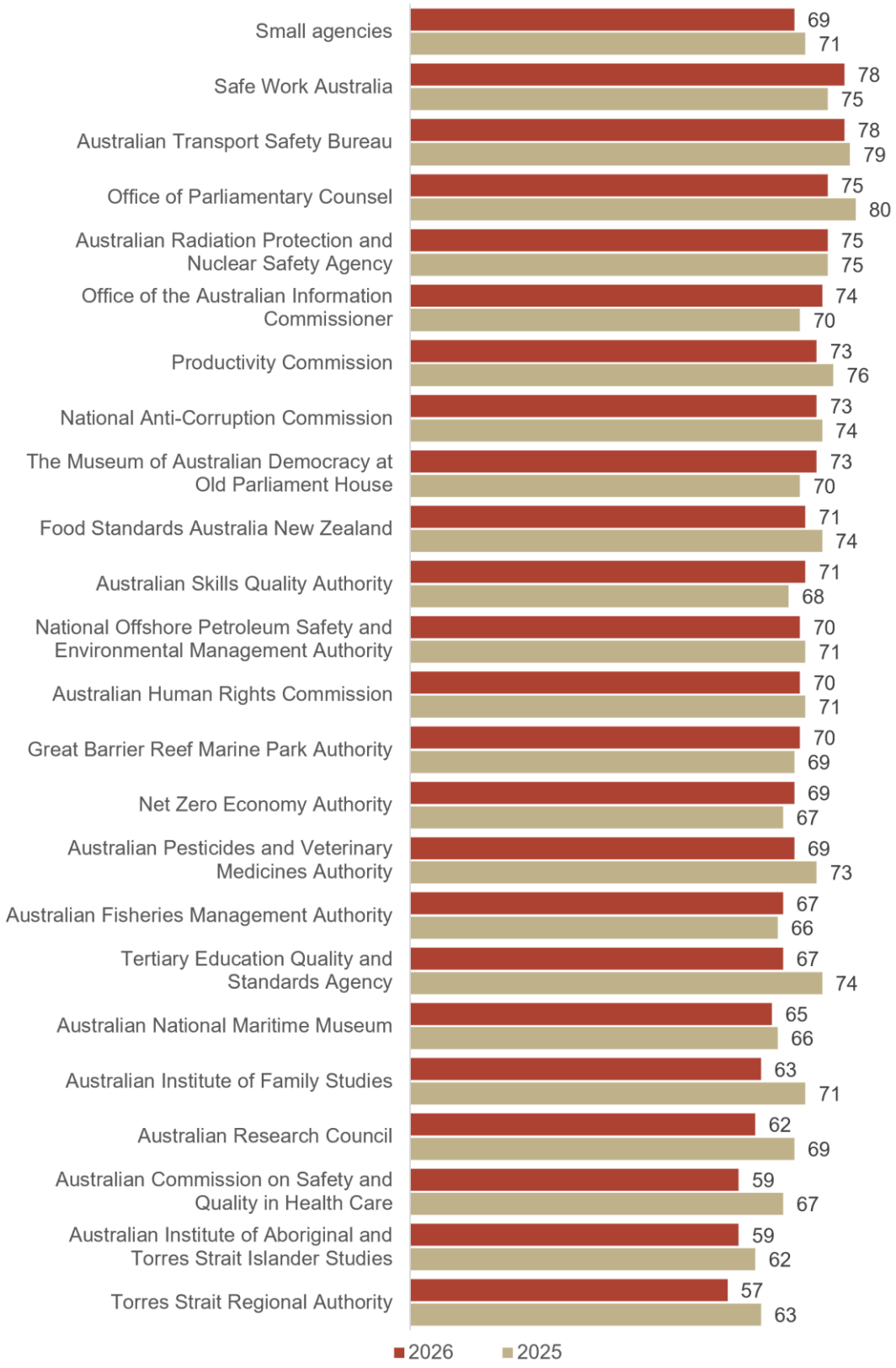
**Table AB 43: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **72** | **71** |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 81 | 79 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 76 | 76 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 75 | 76 |
| Comcare | 77 | 76 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 76 | 76 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 77 | 75 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 75 | 75 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 75 | 75 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 77 | 74 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 73 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 70 | 73 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 75 | 72 |
| Geoscience Australia | 72 | 71 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 68 | 71 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 73 | 71 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 70 | 71 |
| National Museum of Australia | 72 | 71 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 73 | 69 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 69 | 69 |
| Australian War Memorial | 68 | 69 |
| National Library of Australia | 71 | 69 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 69 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 69 | 68 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 68 | 68 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 68 | 67 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 69 | 67 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 66 | 67 |
| National Archives of Australia | 68 | 66 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 67 | 66 |
| Fair Work Commission | 69 | 64 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 67 | 63 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 65 | 61 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 44: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



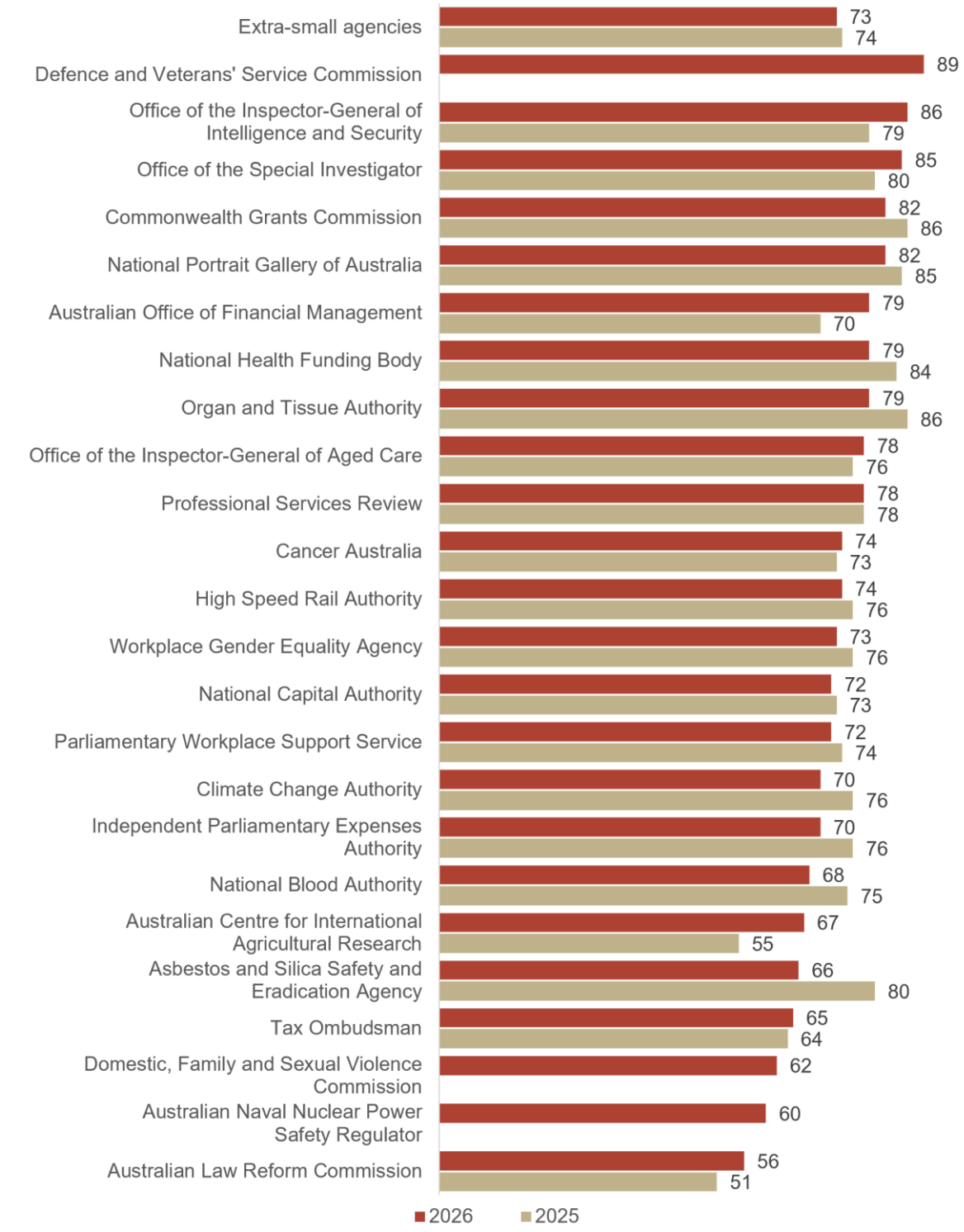

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 44: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **71** | **69** |
| Safe Work Australia | 75 | 78 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 79 | 78 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 80 | 75 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 75 | 75 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 70 | 74 |
| Productivity Commission | 76 | 73 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 74 | 73 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 70 | 73 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 74 | 71 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 68 | 71 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 71 | 70 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 71 | 70 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 69 | 70 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 67 | 69 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 73 | 69 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 66 | 67 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 74 | 67 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 66 | 65 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 71 | 63 |
| Australian Research Council | 69 | 62 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 67 | 59 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 62 | 59 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 63 | 57 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 45: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 45: Wellbeing Policies and Support Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Wellbeing Policies and Support Index score | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **74** | **73** |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 89 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 79 | 86 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 80 | 85 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 86 | 82 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 85 | 82 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 70 | 79 |
| National Health Funding Body | 84 | 79 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 86 | 79 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 76 | 78 |
| Professional Services Review | 78 | 78 |
| Cancer Australia | 73 | 74 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 76 | 74 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 76 | 73 |
| National Capital Authority | 73 | 72 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 74 | 72 |
| Climate Change Authority | 76 | 70 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 76 | 70 |
| National Blood Authority | 75 | 68 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 55 | 67 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 80 | 66 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 64 | 65 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 62 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 60 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 51 | 56 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

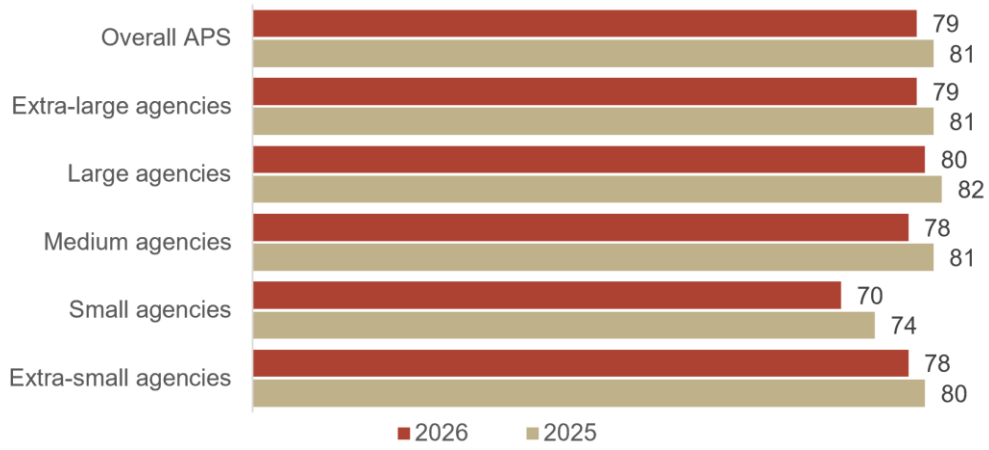
# Supporting integrity

The foundations of a strong integrity culture in the Australian Public Service are outlined in the APS Values, Code of Conduct and Employment Principles in the *Public Service Act 1999*. They provide a clear statement to APS employees, and the Australian people, of the conduct that is expected of public servants.

The APS Employee Census includes the question 'The culture in my agency supports people to act with integrity.' This data represents the proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement.

Figures AB 46 to AB 51 and tables AB 46 to AB 51 report on the question for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents.

**Figure AB 46: Supporting integrity, by agency size**



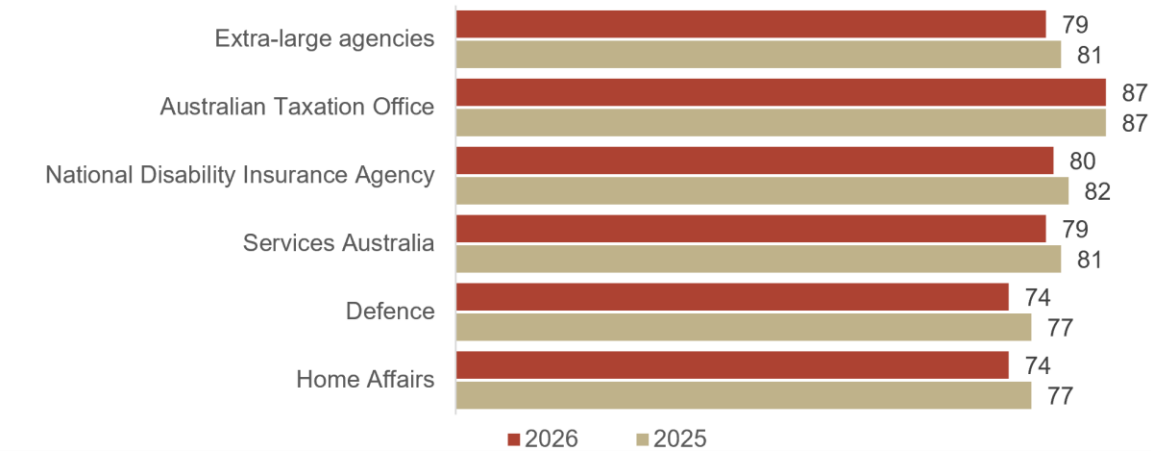

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 46: Supporting integrity, by agency size**

| Agency size | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **81** | **79** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 81 | 79 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 82 | 80 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 81 | 78 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 74 | 70 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 80 | 78 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 47: Supporting integrity, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



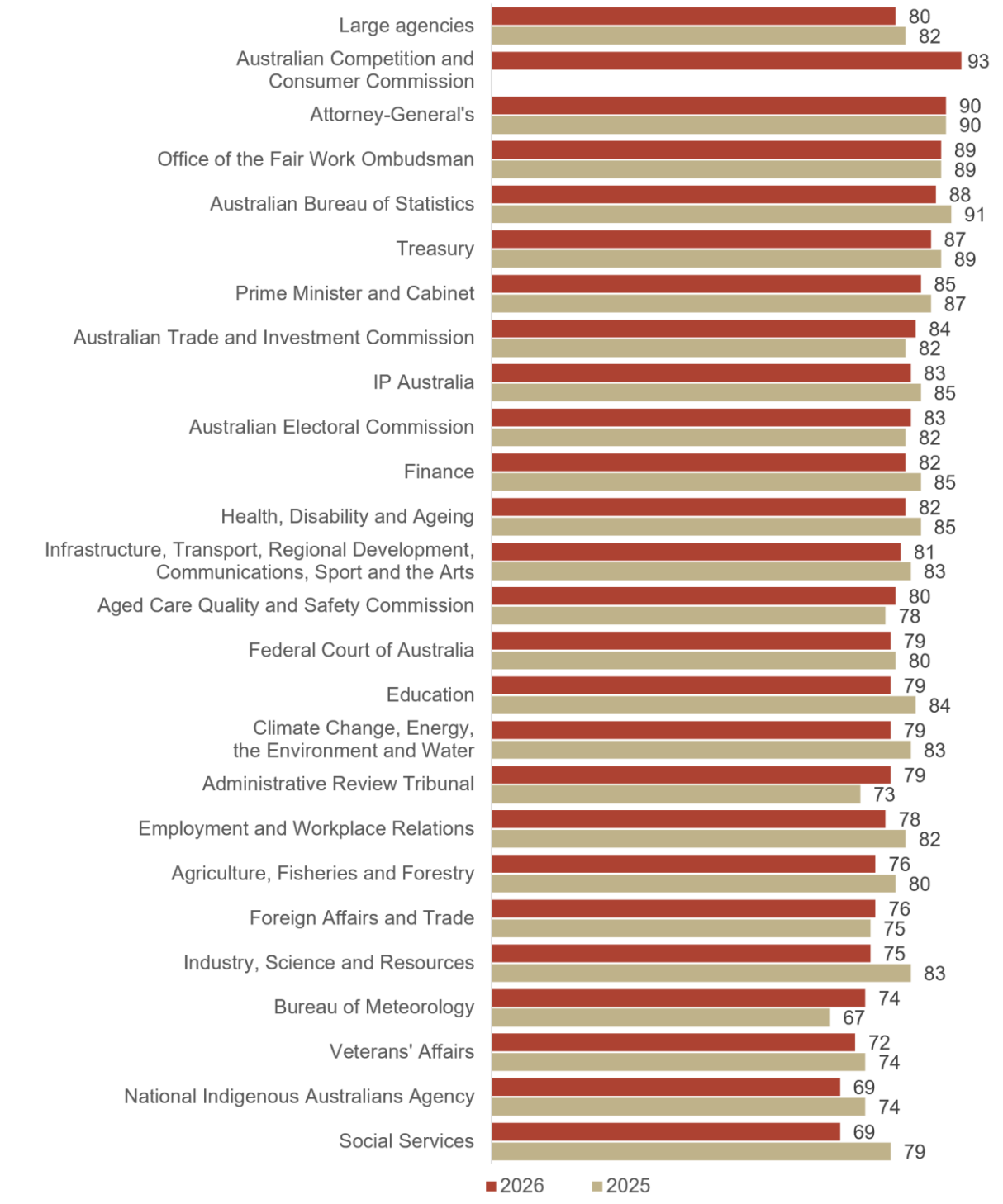

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 47: Supporting integrity, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **81** | **79** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 87 | 87 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 82 | 80 |
| Services Australia | 81 | 79 |
| Defence | 77 | 74 |
| Home Affairs | 77 | 74 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 48: Supporting integrity, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

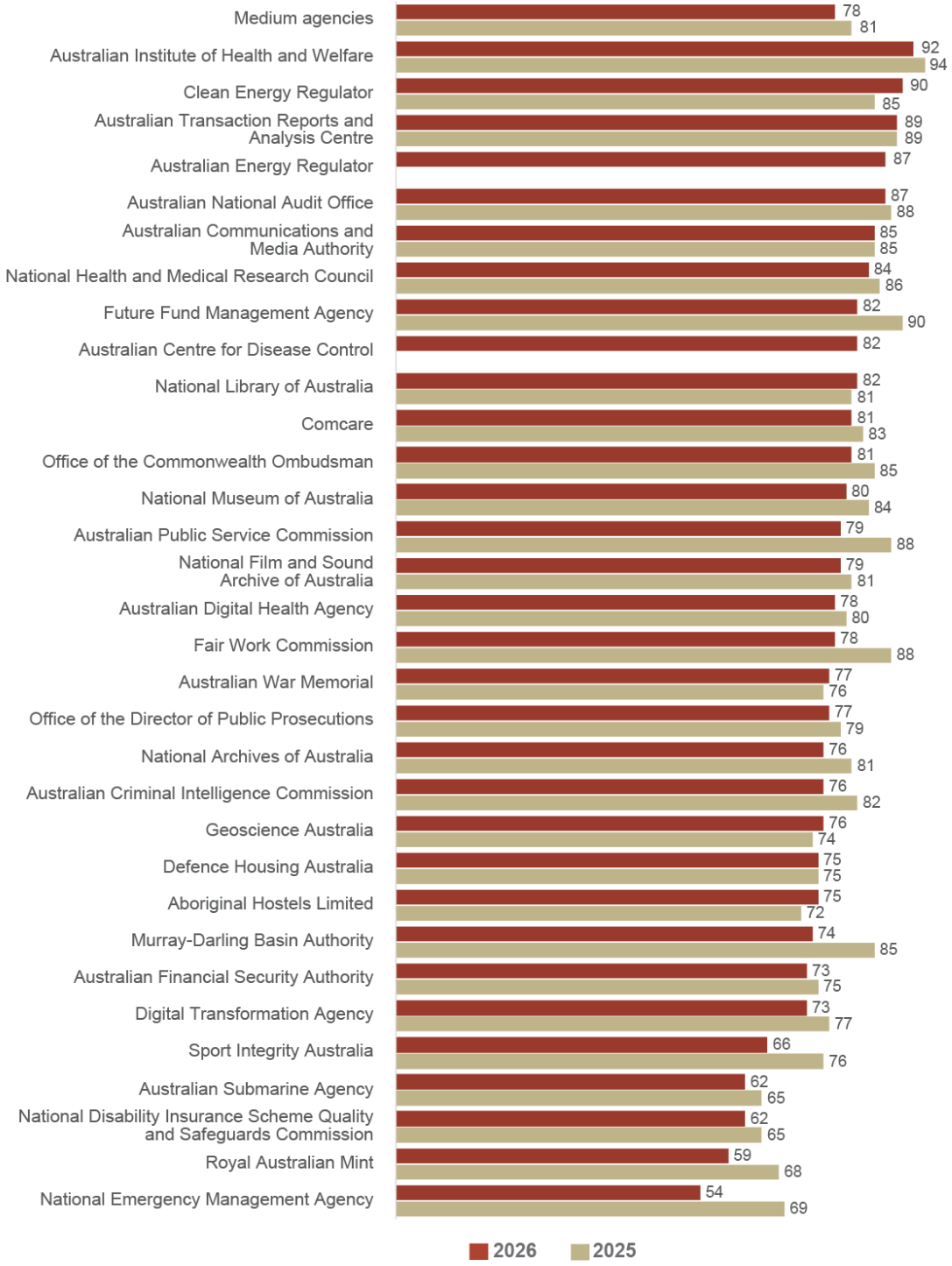
**Table AB 48: Supporting integrity, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **82** | **80** |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | - | 93 |
| Attorney-General's | 90 | 90 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 89 | 89 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 91 | 88 |
| Treasury | 89 | 87 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 87 | 85 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 82 | 84 |
| IP Australia | 85 | 83 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 82 | 83 |
| Finance | 85 | 82 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 85 | 82 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 83 | 81 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 78 | 80 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 80 | 79 |
| Education | 84 | 79 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 83 | 79 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 73 | 79 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 82 | 78 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 80 | 76 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 75 | 76 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 83 | 75 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 67 | 74 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 74 | 72 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 74 | 69 |
| Social Services | 79 | 69 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not have comparisons to 2025 available due to changes to the entity's structure. The Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Electoral Commission and the Administrative Review Tribunal were medium agencies in 2025.

**Figure AB 49: Supporting integrity, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

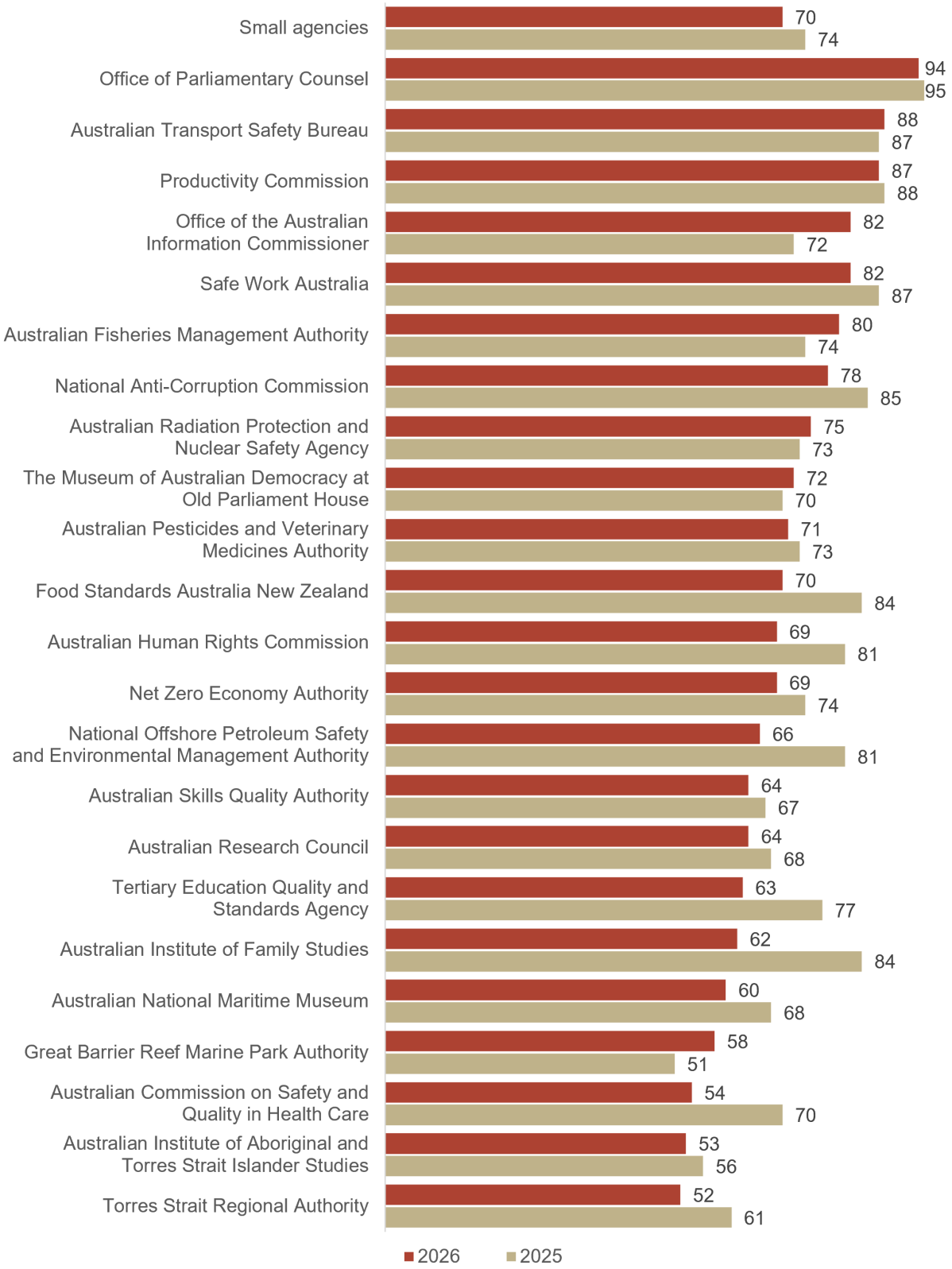
**Table AB 49: Supporting integrity, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **81** | **78** |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 94 | 92 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 85 | 90 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 89 | 89 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | - | 87 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 88 | 87 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 85 | 85 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 86 | 84 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 90 | 82 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | - | 82 |
| National Library of Australia | 81 | 82 |
| Comcare | 83 | 81 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 85 | 81 |
| National Museum of Australia | 84 | 80 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 88 | 79 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 81 | 79 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 80 | 78 |
| Fair Work Commission | 88 | 78 |
| Australian War Memorial | 76 | 77 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 79 | 77 |
| National Archives of Australia | 81 | 76 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 82 | 76 |
| Geoscience Australia | 74 | 76 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 75 | 75 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 72 | 75 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 85 | 74 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 75 | 73 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 77 | 73 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 76 | 66 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 65 | 62 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 65 | 62 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 68 | 59 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 69 | 54 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Centre for Disease Control were not APS agencies in 2025. The Royal Australian Mint was a small agency in 2025.

**Figure AB 50: Supporting integrity, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**



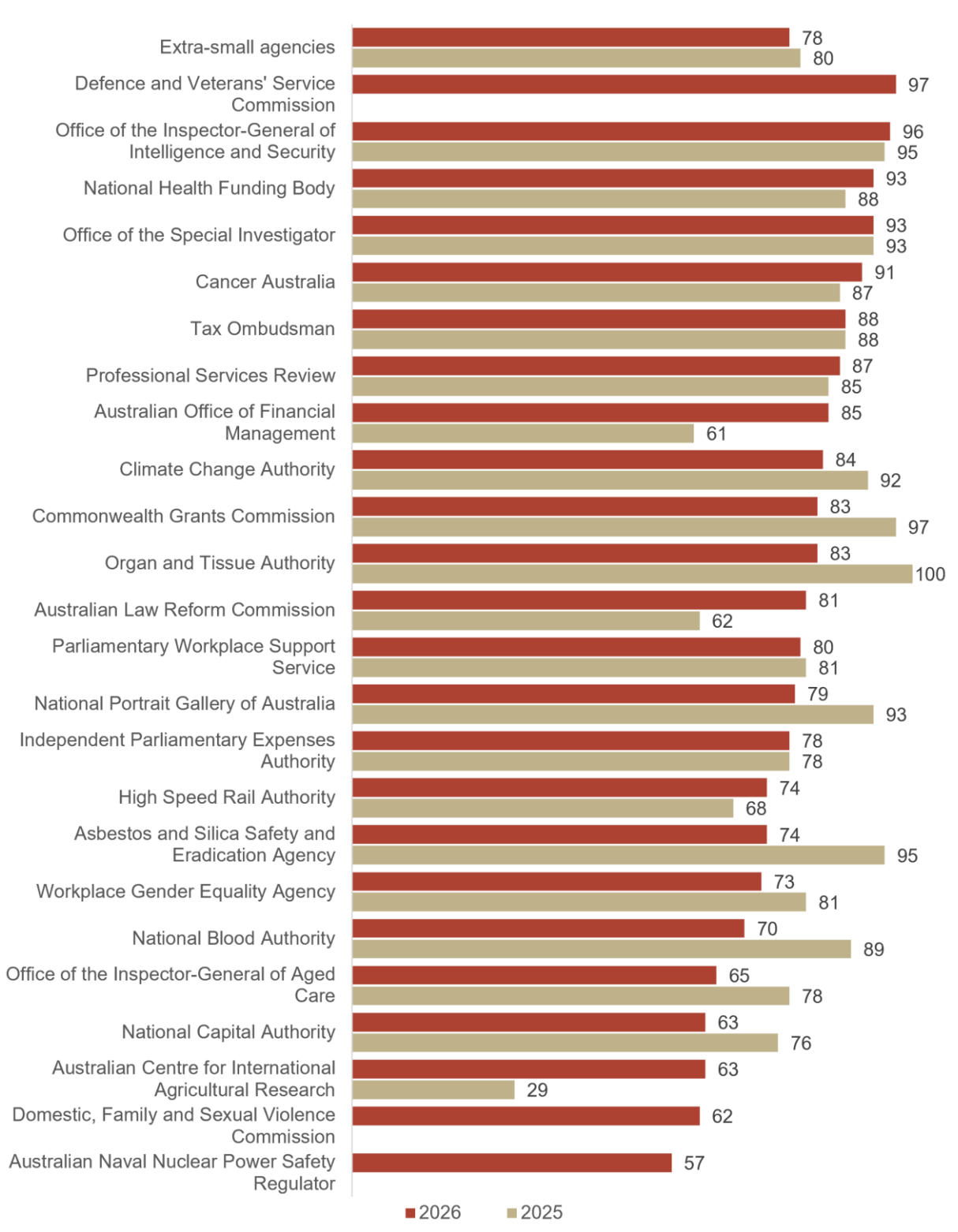

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 50: Supporting integrity, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **74** | **70** |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 95 | 94 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 87 | 88 |
| Productivity Commission | 88 | 87 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 72 | 82 |
| Safe Work Australia | 87 | 82 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 74 | 80 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 85 | 78 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 73 | 75 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 70 | 72 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 73 | 71 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 84 | 70 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 81 | 69 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 74 | 69 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 81 | 66 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 67 | 64 |
| Australian Research Council | 68 | 64 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 77 | 63 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 84 | 62 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 68 | 60 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 51 | 58 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 70 | 54 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 56 | 53 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 61 | 52 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 51: Supporting integrity, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

**Table AB 51: Supporting integrity, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents who agreed that the culture in their agency supports people to act with integrity | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2025 | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **80** | **78** |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | - | 97 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 95 | 96 |
| National Health Funding Body | 88 | 93 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 93 | 93 |
| Cancer Australia | 87 | 91 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 88 | 88 |
| Professional Services Review | 85 | 87 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 61 | 85 |
| Climate Change Authority | 92 | 84 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 97 | 83 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 100 | 83 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 62 | 81 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 81 | 80 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 93 | 79 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 78 | 78 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 68 | 74 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 95 | 74 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 81 | 73 |
| National Blood Authority | 89 | 70 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 78 | 65 |
| National Capital Authority | 76 | 63 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 29 | 63 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | - | 62 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | - | 57 |

Source: APS Employee Census

Note: The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator were not APS agencies in 2025.

# Speak up culture

Speak up culture refers to someone's perception that they can openly share ideas, ask questions, or admit mistakes without fear of embarrassment or punishment. It focuses on fostering trust, respect, and open communication within teams.

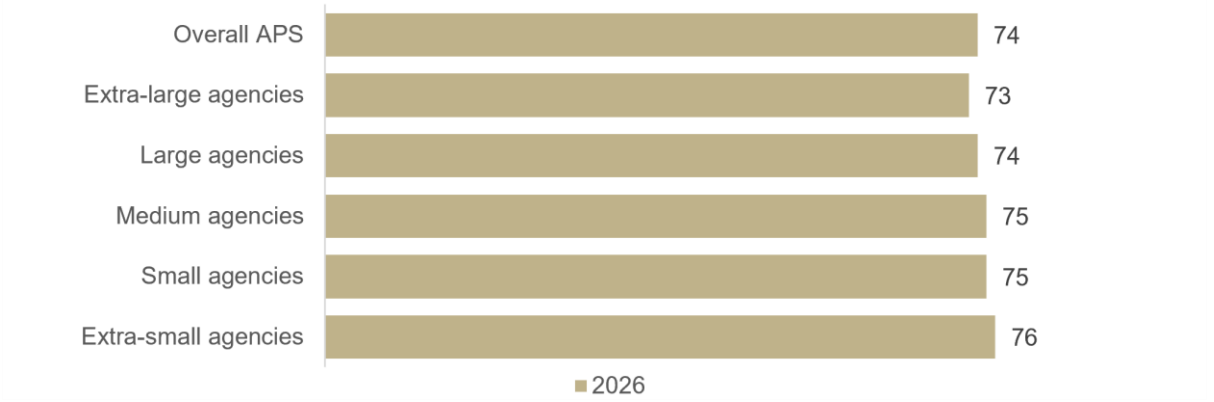
In workplaces, speak up culture might mean staff feel confident proposing new ideas in a meeting or speaking up if something isn't working. This is essential for encouraging innovation and collaboration, ultimately improving integrity culture.

The APS Employee Census questions that contribute to the Speak Up Culture Index are:

- The people in my workgroup value others' individual skills and talents.
- People in my workgroup are comfortable checking with each other if they have questions about the right way to do something.
- If you make a mistake in my workgroup, it tends to be held against you (reverse scored).
- The people in my workgroup are able to bring up problems and tough issues.

Figures AB 52 to AB 57 and tables AB 52 to AB 57 report on the index scores for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents. As this is the first year the APS Employee Census has reported this index, trend data is not yet available

**Figure AB 52: Speak Up Culture Index, by agency size**



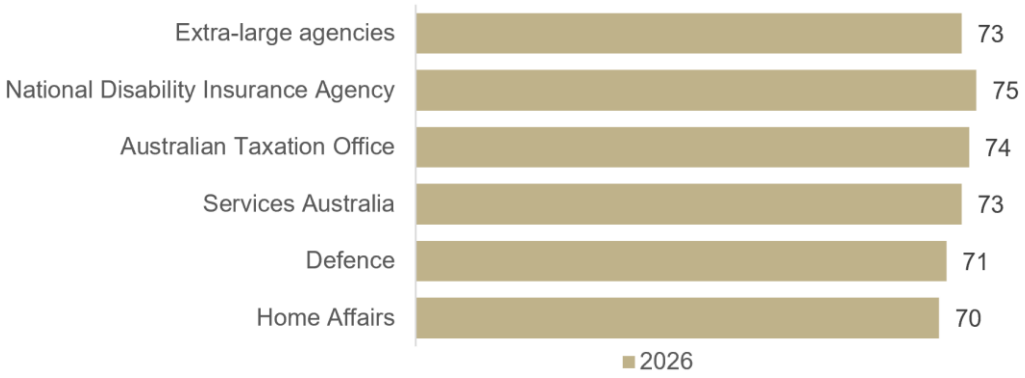

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 52: Speak Up Culture Index, by agency size**

| Agency size | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Overall APS** | **74** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 73 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 74 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 75 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 75 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 76 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 53: Speak Up Culture Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



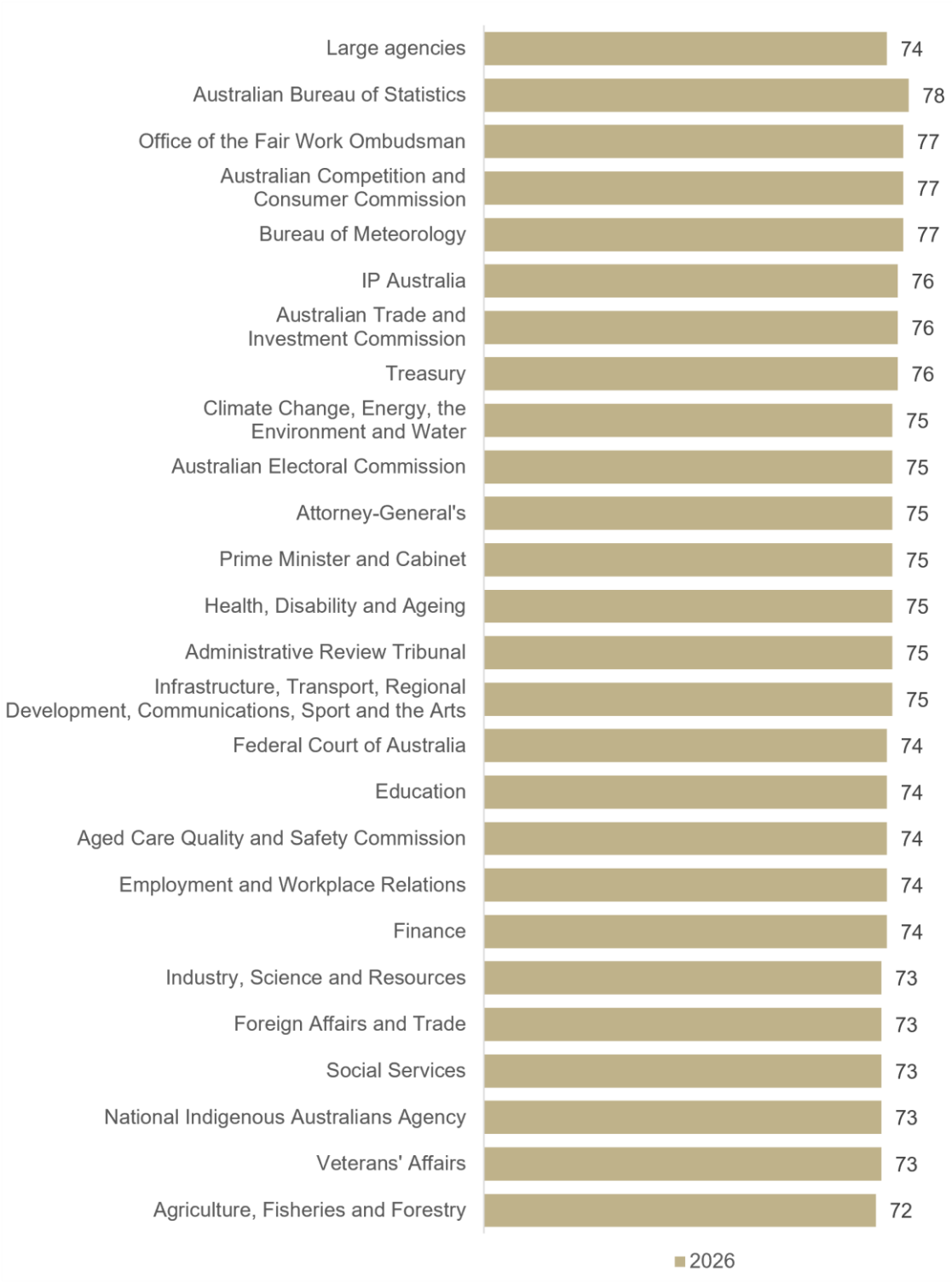

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 53: Speak Up Culture Index, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **73** |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 75 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 74 |
| Services Australia | 73 |
| Defence | 71 |
| Home Affairs | 70 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 54: Speak Up Culture Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**



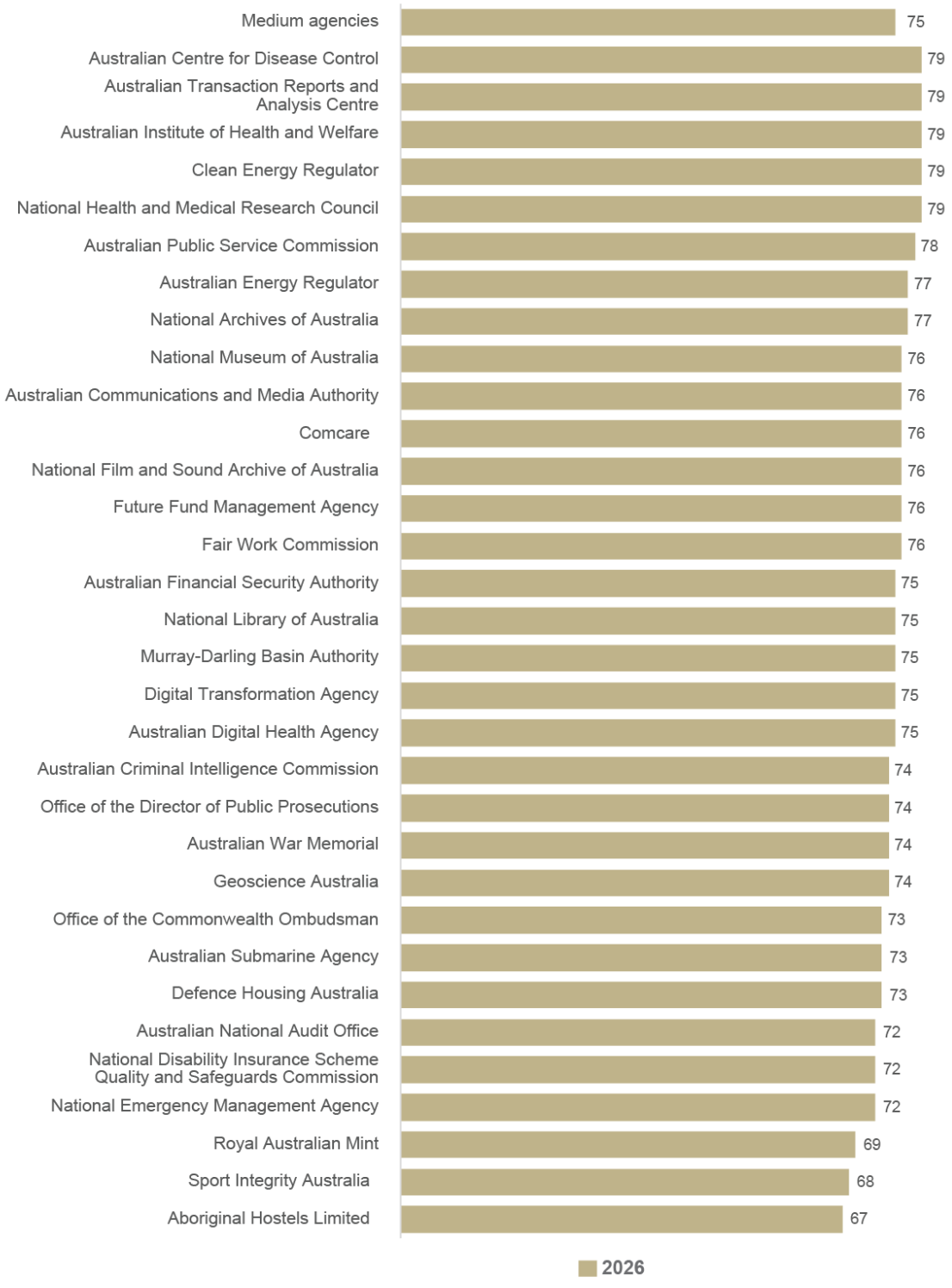

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 54: Speak Up Culture Index, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Large agencies** | **74** |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 78 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 77 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 77 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 77 |
| IP Australia | 76 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 76 |
| Treasury | 76 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 75 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 75 |
| Attorney-General's | 75 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 75 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 75 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 75 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 75 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 74 |
| Education | 74 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 74 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 74 |
| Finance | 74 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 73 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 73 |
| Social Services | 73 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 73 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 73 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 72 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 55: Speak Up Culture Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**



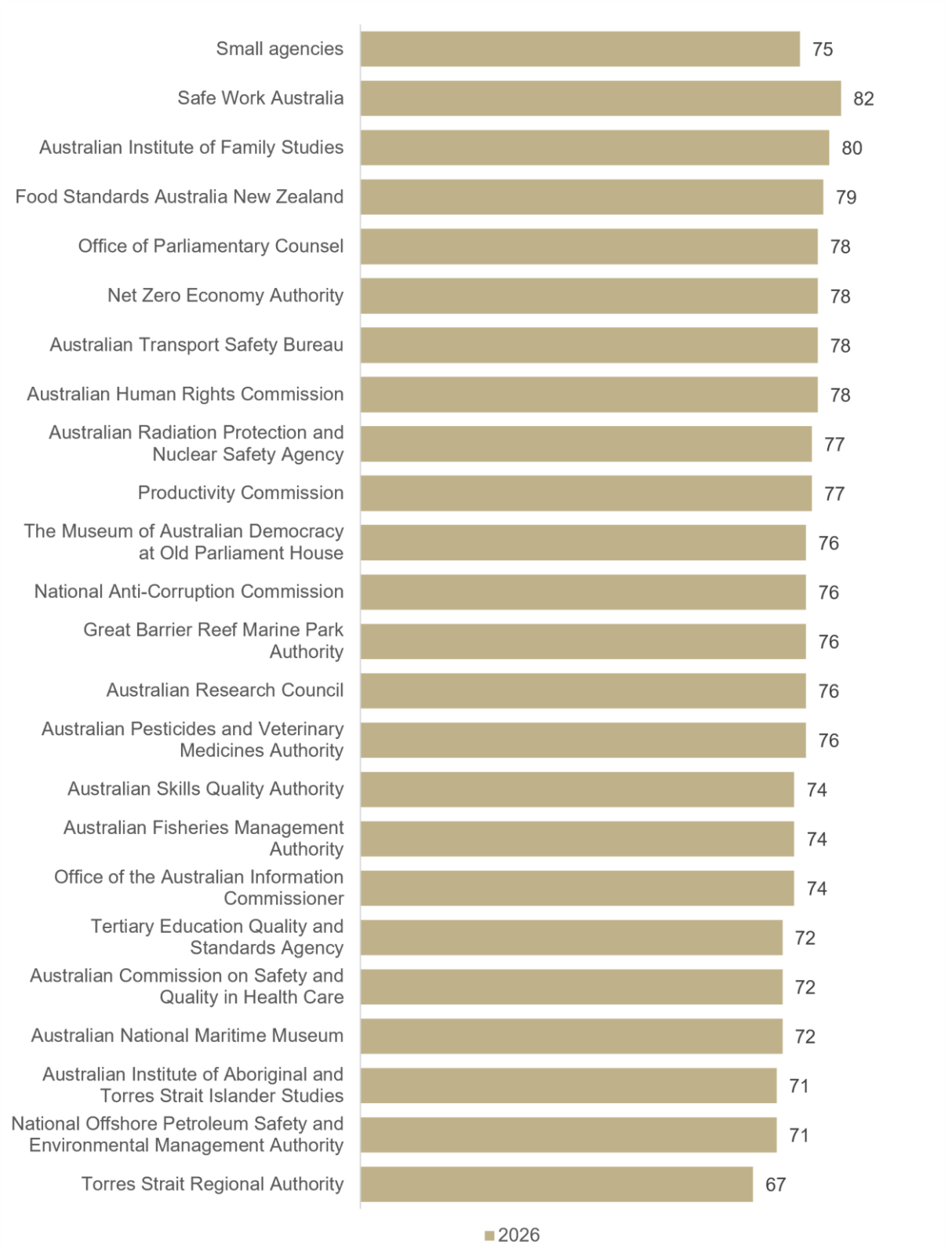

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 55: Speak Up Culture Index, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Medium agencies** | **75** |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | 79 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 79 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 79 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 79 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 79 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 78 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | 77 |
| National Archives of Australia | 77 |
| National Museum of Australia | 76 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 76 |
| Comcare | 76 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 76 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 76 |
| Fair Work Commission | 76 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 75 |
| National Library of Australia | 75 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 75 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 75 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 75 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 74 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 74 |
| Australian War Memorial | 74 |
| Geoscience Australia | 74 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 73 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 73 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 73 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 72 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 72 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 72 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 69 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 68 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 56: Speak Up Culture Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 56: Speak Up Culture Index, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Small agencies** | **75** |
| Safe Work Australia | 82 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 80 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 79 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 78 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 78 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 78 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 78 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 77 |
| Productivity Commission | 77 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 76 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 76 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 76 |
| Australian Research Council | 76 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 76 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 74 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 74 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 74 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 72 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 72 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 72 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 71 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 71 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 57: Speak Up Culture Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 57: Speak Up Culture Index, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | Speak Up Culture Index score |
|---|---|
| | 2026 |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **76** |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 88 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 86 |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | 84 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 82 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 81 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 81 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 80 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 79 |
| Cancer Australia | 79 |
| National Capital Authority | 78 |
| Climate Change Authority | 77 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 76 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 76 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 73 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 73 |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 73 |
| National Blood Authority | 73 |
| Professional Services Review | 73 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 72 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 72 |
| National Health Funding Body | 71 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | 71 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 70 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | 67 |

Source: APS Employee Census

# Working away from the office

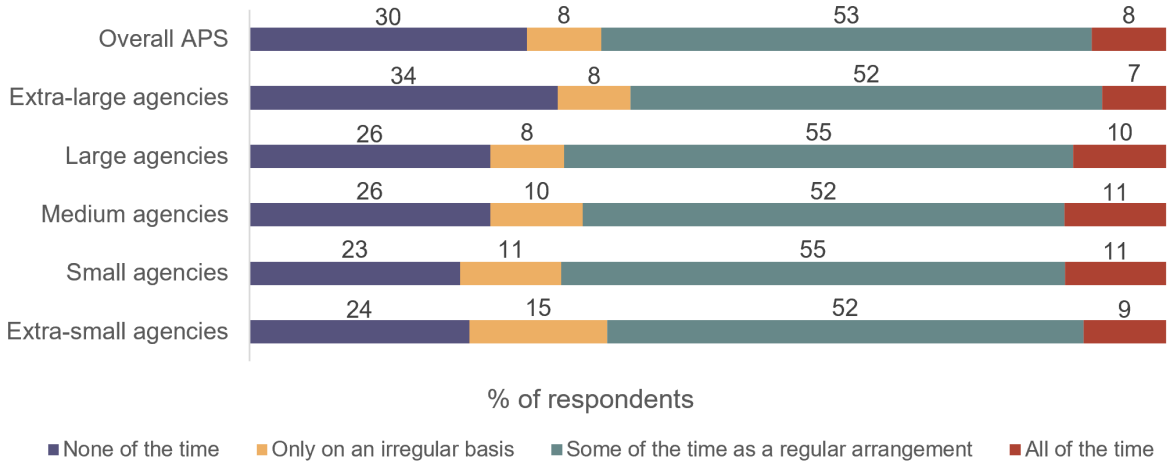
The APS Employee Census includes the question ‘Do you currently access any of the following working arrangements?’

Respondents who indicated they accessed working away from the office/working from home were asked the supplementary question, ‘During your usual working week, how often do you work away from the office/work from home?’

Data from these questions provides information about the proportions of employees who engage in ‘working away from the office’.

Figures AB 58 to AB 63 and tables AB 58 to AB 63 report on the proportions of employees who engage in ‘working away from the office’ for agencies, by agency size, for APS respondents. Due to small numbers, those who did not disclose their arrangement are excluded from AB 58 to AB 63.

**Figure AB 58: Percentage of employees working away from the office, by agency size**



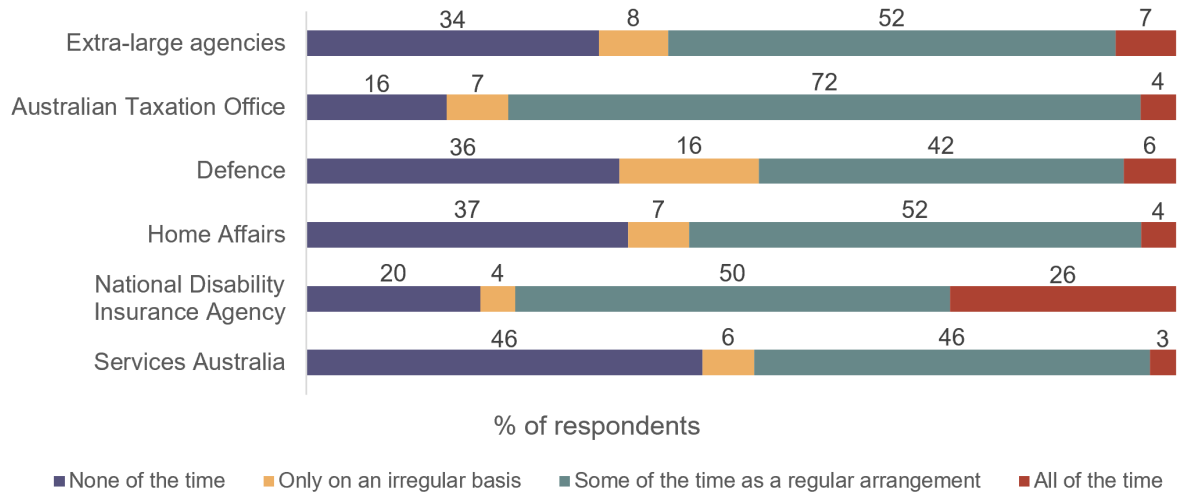

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 58: Percentage of employees working away from the office, by agency size**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Overall APS** | **30** | **8** | **53** | **8** | **<0.5** |
| Extra-large (10,000+ employees) | 34 | 8 | 52 | 7 | <0.5 |
| Large (1,001 to 10,000 employees) | 26 | 8 | 55 | 10 | <0.5 |
| Medium (251 to 1,000 employees) | 26 | 10 | 52 | 11 | <0.5 |
| Small (101 to 250 employees) | 23 | 11 | 55 | 11 | <0.5 |
| Extra-small (20 to 100 employees) | 24 | 15 | 52 | 9 | <0.5 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 59: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**



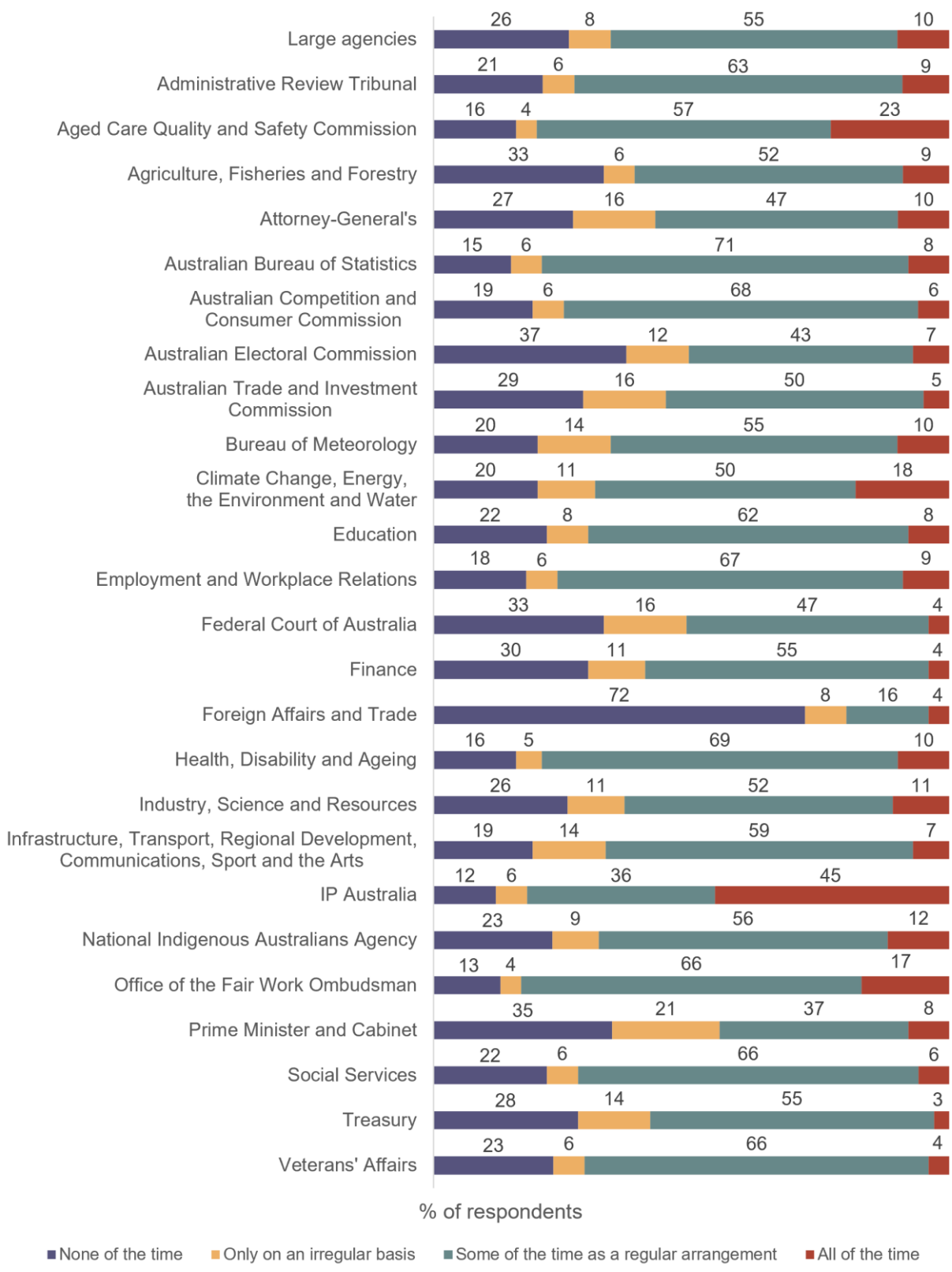

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 59: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for extra-large agencies (10,000+ employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Extra-large agencies** | **34** | **8** | **52** | **7** | **<0.5** |
| Australian Taxation Office | 16 | 7 | 72 | 4 | <0.5 |
| Defence | 36 | 16 | 42 | 6 | <0.5 |
| Home Affairs | 37 | 7 | 52 | 4 | <0.5 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 20 | 4 | 50 | 26 | <0.5 |
| Services Australia | 46 | 6 | 46 | 3 | <0.5 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 60: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**



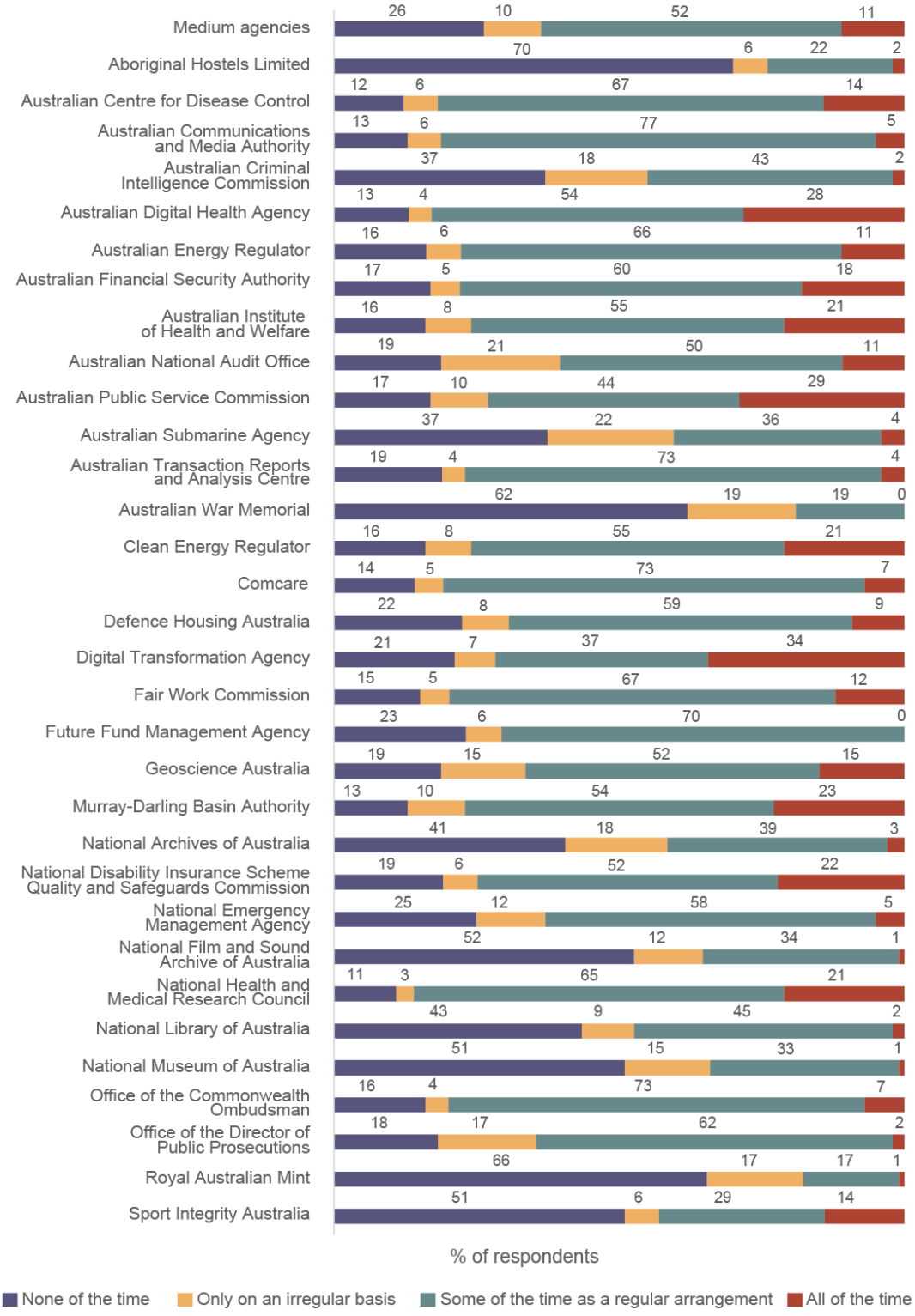

Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 60: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for large agencies (1,001 to 10,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Large agencies** | **26** | **8** | **55** | **10** | **<0.5** |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 21 | 6 | 63 | 9 | 1 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 16 | 4 | 57 | 23 | 1 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 33 | 6 | 52 | 9 | <0.5 |
| Attorney-General's | 27 | 16 | 47 | 10 | <0.5 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 15 | 6 | 71 | 8 | <0.5 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 19 | 6 | 68 | 6 | <0.5 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 37 | 12 | 43 | 7 | 1 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 29 | 16 | 50 | 5 | <0.5 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 20 | 14 | 55 | 10 | <0.5 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | 20 | 11 | 50 | 18 | <0.5 |
| Education | 22 | 8 | 62 | 8 | <0.5 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 18 | 6 | 67 | 9 | <0.5 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 33 | 16 | 47 | 4 | 0 |
| Finance | 30 | 11 | 55 | 4 | <0.5 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 72 | 8 | 16 | 4 | <0.5 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing | 16 | 5 | 69 | 10 | <0.5 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 26 | 11 | 52 | 11 | <0.5 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | 19 | 14 | 59 | 7 | <0.5 |
| IP Australia | 12 | 6 | 36 | 45 | <0.5 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 23 | 9 | 56 | 12 | <0.5 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 13 | 4 | 66 | 17 | <0.5 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 35 | 21 | 37 | 8 | <0.5 |
| Social Services | 22 | 6 | 66 | 6 | <0.5 |
| Treasury | 28 | 14 | 55 | 3 | <0.5 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 23 | 6 | 66 | 4 | <0.5 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 61: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

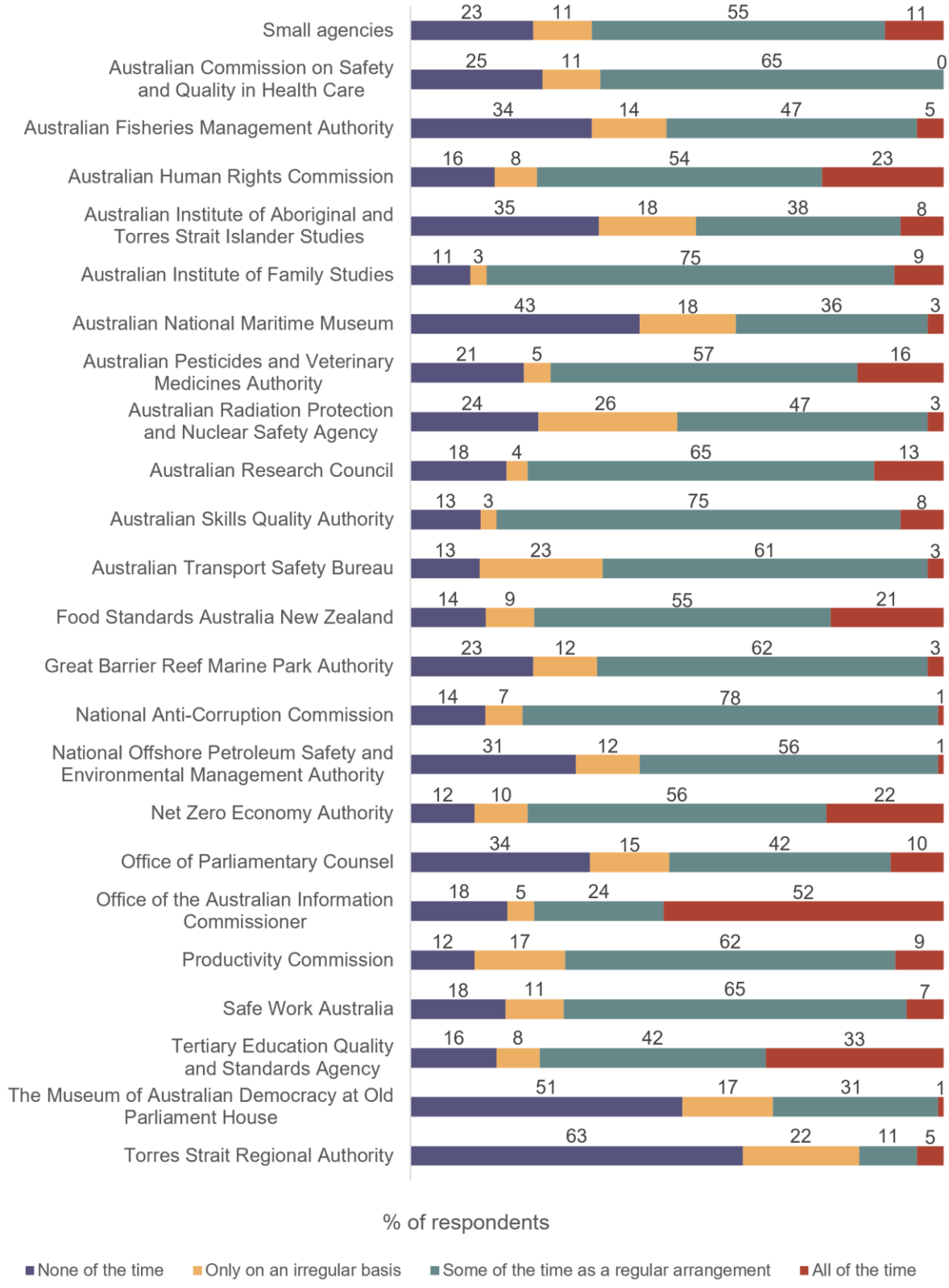
**Table AB 61: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for medium agencies (251 to 1,000 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Medium agencies** | **26** | **10** | **52** | **11** | **<0.5** |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 70 | 6 | 22 | 2 | 0 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | 12 | 6 | 67 | 14 | 0 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 13 | 6 | 77 | 5 | <0.5 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 37 | 18 | 43 | 2 | <0.5 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 13 | 4 | 54 | 28 | 1 |
| Australian Energy Regulator | 16 | 6 | 66 | 11 | 1 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 17 | 5 | 60 | 18 | 1 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 16 | 8 | 55 | 21 | 0 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 19 | 21 | 50 | 11 | 0 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 17 | 10 | 44 | 29 | 0 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 37 | 22 | 36 | 4 | <0.5 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 19 | 4 | 73 | 4 | 0 |
| Australian War Memorial | 62 | 19 | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 16 | 8 | 55 | 21 | <0.5 |
| Comcare | 14 | 5 | 73 | 7 | 1 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 22 | 8 | 59 | 9 | 1 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 21 | 7 | 37 | 34 | 1 |
| Fair Work Commission | 15 | 5 | 67 | 12 | 1 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 23 | 6 | 70 | 0 | 0 |
| Geoscience Australia | 19 | 15 | 52 | 15 | 0 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 13 | 10 | 54 | 23 | 1 |
| National Archives of Australia | 41 | 18 | 39 | 3 | 0 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 19 | 6 | 52 | 22 | 1 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 25 | 12 | 58 | 5 | 1 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 52 | 12 | 34 | 1 | <0.5 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 11 | 3 | 65 | 21 | <0.5 |
| National Library of Australia | 43 | 9 | 45 | 2 | 1 |
| National Museum of Australia | 51 | 15 | 33 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 16 | 4 | 73 | 7 | 0 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 18 | 17 | 62 | 2 | 1 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 66 | 17 | 17 | 1 | 0 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 51 | 6 | 29 | 14 | 0 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 62: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

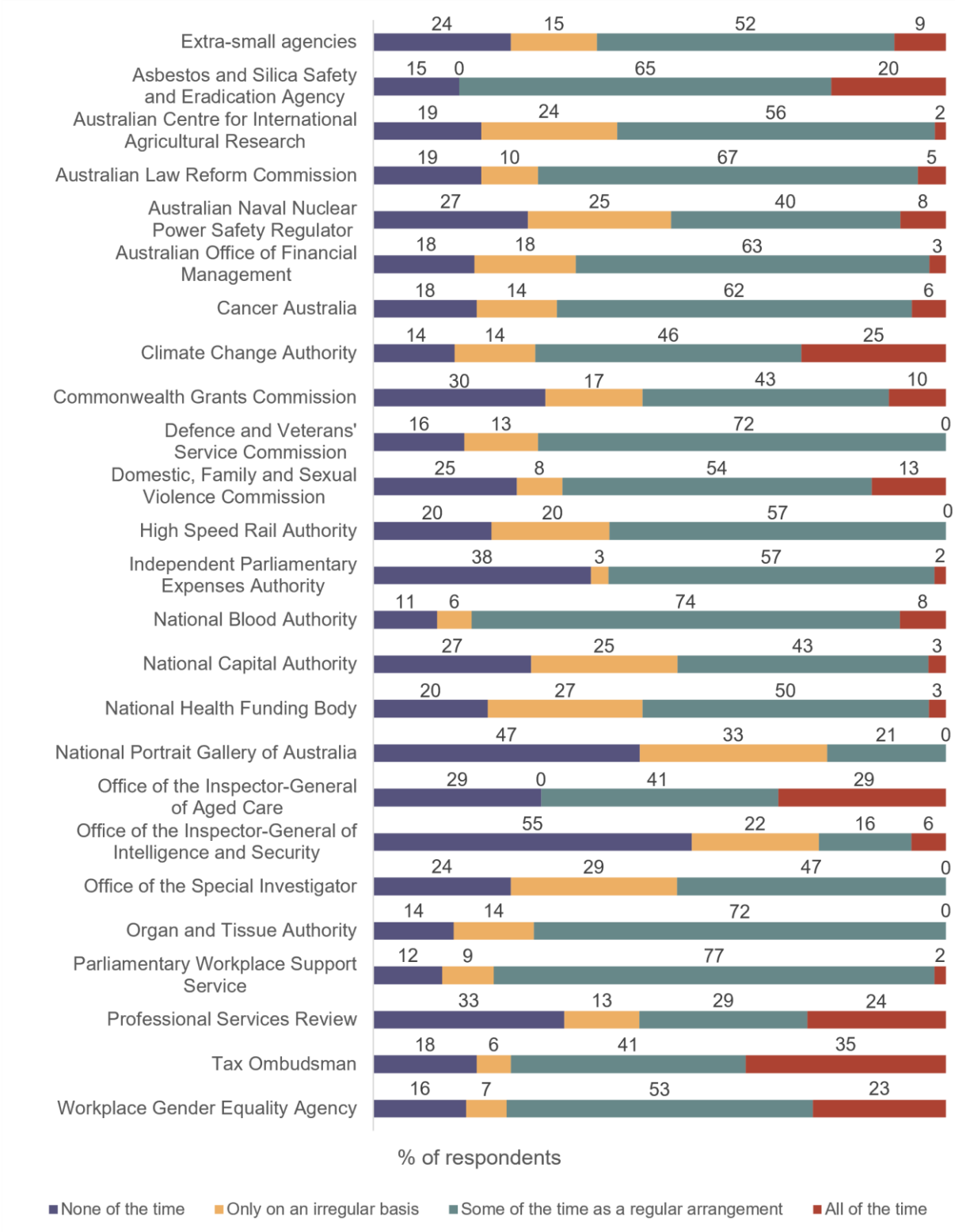
**Table AB 62: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for small agencies (101 to 250 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Small agencies** | **23** | **11** | **55** | **11** | **<0.5** |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 25 | 11 | 65 | 0 | 0 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 34 | 14 | 47 | 5 | 0 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 16 | 8 | 54 | 23 | 0 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 35 | 18 | 38 | 8 | 0 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 11 | 3 | 75 | 9 | 2 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 43 | 18 | 36 | 3 | 0 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 21 | 5 | 57 | 16 | <0.5 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 24 | 26 | 47 | 3 | 0 |
| Australian Research Council | 18 | 4 | 65 | 13 | 0 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 13 | 3 | 75 | 8 | <0.5 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 13 | 23 | 61 | 3 | 0 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 14 | 9 | 55 | 21 | 2 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 23 | 12 | 62 | 3 | 0 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 14 | 7 | 78 | 1 | <0.5 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 31 | 12 | 56 | 1 | 1 |
| Net Zero Economy Authority | 12 | 10 | 56 | 22 | 0 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 34 | 15 | 42 | 10 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 18 | 5 | 24 | 52 | 1 |
| Productivity Commission | 12 | 17 | 62 | 9 | 0 |
| Safe Work Australia | 18 | 11 | 65 | 7 | 0 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 16 | 8 | 42 | 33 | 1 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 51 | 17 | 31 | 1 | 0 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 63 | 22 | 11 | 5 | 0 |

Source: APS Employee Census

**Figure AB 63: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**




Source: APS Employee Census

**Table AB 63: Percentage of employees working away from the office, for extra-small agencies (20 to 100 employees)**

| Agency | % of respondents working away from the office | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None of the time | Only on an irregular basis | Some of the time as a regular arrangement | All of the time | Did not disclose their arrangement |
| **Extra-small agencies** | **24** | **15** | **52** | **9** | **<0.5** |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | 15 | 0 | 65 | 20 | 0 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 19 | 24 | 56 | 2 | 0 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 19 | 10 | 67 | 5 | 0 |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | 27 | 25 | 40 | 8 | 0 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 18 | 18 | 63 | 3 | 0 |
| Cancer Australia | 18 | 14 | 62 | 6 | 0 |
| Climate Change Authority | 14 | 14 | 46 | 25 | 0 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 30 | 17 | 43 | 10 | 0 |
| Defence and Veterans' Service Commission | 16 | 13 | 72 | 0 | 0 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | 25 | 8 | 54 | 13 | 0 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | 20 | 20 | 57 | 0 | 3 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 38 | 3 | 57 | 2 | 0 |
| National Blood Authority | 11 | 6 | 74 | 8 | 1 |
| National Capital Authority | 27 | 25 | 43 | 3 | 2 |
| National Health Funding Body | 20 | 27 | 50 | 3 | 0 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 47 | 33 | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 29 | 0 | 41 | 29 | 0 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 55 | 22 | 16 | 6 | 0 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | 24 | 29 | 47 | 0 | 0 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 14 | 14 | 72 | 0 | 0 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 12 | 9 | 77 | 2 | 0 |
| Professional Services Review | 33 | 13 | 29 | 24 | 0 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 18 | 6 | 41 | 35 | 0 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 16 | 7 | 53 | 23 | 0 |

Source: APS Employee Census

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# Appendix 1 – APS workforce information

## APS Employment Database

The Australian Public Service Employment Database (APSED) stores the employment data of all current and former Australian Public Service employees.

APSED is maintained by the Australian Public Service Commission, in support of the APS Commissioner's functions under Section 41 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, and data is supplied to APSED from the HR systems of APS agencies.

The data from APSED is made publicly available through the APS Data Release, which provides a statistical snapshot of the APS workforce at 31 December and 30 June each year, as well as trends over the past 20 years.

APS Data Releases consist of 95 data tables and an interactive dashboard with aggregated information about ongoing and non-ongoing employees including:

- engagements, transfers, promotions and separations
- base and paid classifications
- age, length of service
- highest educational qualification, field of study
- diversity groups
- job family
- agency
- location.

### Find out more

Australian Public Service Commission (2026) *APS Employment Data Release*, APSC website, accessed 30 September 2026. https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/workforce-information/workforce-data/aps-employment-data-release

Australian Public Service Commission (2025) *APS Employment Database*, APSC website, accessed 20 August 2026. https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/workforce-information/workforce-data/aps-employment-database-apsed

## Government employment statistics

In addition to the APS employee headcount data published by the APSC from APSED, Finance and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publish figures relating to the number of staff employed by the Commonwealth Government.

Finance publishes Average Staffing Level (ASL) estimates for each financial year through the Federal Budget process of allocating resources for the General Government Sector (GGS), which includes both APS and non-APS entities.

The ABS publishes government employee estimates via the Public Sector Employment and Earnings (PSEE) labour force data.

Table A 1 shows headcount data published using APSED as at the end of each financial year (at 30 June) aligned with the PSEE estimates where available, and the historical ASL estimates for the respective financial year.

**Table A 1: APS employee headcount by employment category, GGS historical estimates of ASL, and Commonwealth Public Sector employment estimates by financial year**

| Measure | | 2016–17 | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 | 2020–21 | 2021–22 | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025-26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employee headcount (APSED) as at 30 June | Ongoing | 137,293 | 136,217 | 132,249 | 132,267 | 133,988 | 140,868 | 151,094 | 170,145 | 184,412 | 186,259 |
| | Non-ongoing | 14,655 | 14,041 | 14,509 | 18,097 | 19,583 | 18,315 | 18,995 | 14,698 | 13,258 | 10,063 |
| | Total | 151,948 | 150,258 | 146,758 | 150,364 | 153,571 | 159,183 | 170,089 | 184,843 | 197,670 | 196,322 |
| Average Staffing Level, (Finance), Financial Year | ASL excluding military and reserves | 166,181 | 165,276 | 165,491 | 166,762 | 168,912 | 171,938 | 181,062 | 197,108 | 209,913 | 215,941 |
| | Total (incl. ADF) | 244,495 | 243,773 | 244,306 | 247,302 | 250,583 | 253,012 | 260,965 | 276,740 | 290,303 | 300,127 |
| Employment and Earnings (Commonwealth) - ABS | Public Sector Employment and Earnings | | | | | | 339,300 | 350,300 | 365,400 | 385,900 | Not yet available |
| | Survey of Employment and Earnings | 239,800 | 240,700 | 242,100 | 246,800 | 250,800 | 254,000 | | | | |

Sources:

1. APSED
2. Federal Budget 2026–27 Budget Paper No. 4, Historical Estimates of Average Staffing Levels of Agencies in the Australian Government Sector. Page 173, Staffing of Agencies, Budget Paper 4, Budget 2026–27.
3. ABS Public Sector Employment and Earnings, Commonwealth Government measure. Figures up to and including 2021–22 were collected via the Survey of Employment and Earnings (SEE), which used a different collection methodology (sample survey) to the current Public Sector Employment and Earnings (Single Touch Payroll). June 2026 PSEE figures not available at time of publishing.

APS headcount, Average Staffing Level, and ABS Public Sector Employment and Earnings are related, though not directly comparable, due to 3 important distinctions:

- employee population inclusions
- adjustment for work hours
- time period measured.

## Employee population inclusions

APSED employee headcount only includes staff employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act). ASL in the Federal Budget covers the wider General Government Sector (GGS). The Public Sector Employment and Earnings (PSEE) figures published by the ABS have a span beyond the GGS, covering public financial corporations and public non-financial corporations.

The GGS includes both APS and non-APS agencies. Examples of non-APS agencies within the GGS include Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Australian Federal Police. Non-APS agencies are not included in APS Employment Database reporting.

Population inclusions can differ within an agency. For some agencies it is possible to employ staff under both the PS Act and other enabling legislation. For example, the Australian Digital Health Agency may employ staff under the PS Act, or under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (establishing the Australian Digital Health Agency) Rule 16, section 64. In this case, ASL will cover staff covered by both Acts, while APSED headcount will only cover staff employed under the PS Act.

Examples of public financial corporations include the Reserve Bank of Australia, the Australia Reinsurance Pool Corporation, and Housing Australia. Public non-financial corporations include entities such as Australia Post, Snowy Hydro Limited, Airservices Australia, and NBN Co Limited. These are not included in APSED reporting, nor are they included in Federal Budget staffing estimates.

A full list of agencies and their enabling legislation is published by the Department of Finance at List of Commonwealth entities and companies.

This list provides the Economic Sector of government entities (e.g. General Government, Public Financial and Non-Financial Corporations).

## Adjustment for work hours

APSED figures are based on headcount, which is a count of the number of employees, with no adjustment for the hours worked. Each part-time and casual employee is counted as one employee, irrespective of the number of hours they work. ABS PSEE estimates count the number of employees without adjusting for work hours.

In contrast, Finance's ASL measure does adjust for hours worked, with part-time and casual employees counted using their working hours as a proportion of a standard work week. For example, 2 part-time employees who work half a week each would be counted as 0.5 ASL each and would total 1 ASL. This is in contrast to headcount, which would count each of these employees, totalling 2.

## Time period measured

Headcount is a point in time count of the number of employees, whereas ASL takes into account the staffing across the year.

For example, an organisation that had changing staff numbers over the year as per Table A 2 would have an ASL of 100 (average staffing level over the 12 months).

However, the headcount (at 30 June) would be zero, because the headcount only measures a point in time.

**Table A 2: Example staffing profile**

| Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 200 | 0 | 100 | 200 | 0 | 100 | 200 | 0 | 100 | 200 | 0 |

Table A 3 provides an outline of the count method and included population of these statistics.

**Table A 3: Summary of government employment measures ─ count method and population inclusions**

| Measure and source | Count method | Population inclusions | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | General Government Sector (GGS) | | PFC and NFC |
| | | APS GGS | Non-APS GGS | |
| APSED ─ APSC | Headcount | Yes | No | No |
| Average Staffing Level estimates ─ Department of Finance | ASL | Yes | Yes | No |
| Public Sector Employment Earnings ─ Australian Bureau of Statistics | Headcount | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Count methods:

- **Headcount:** staff could not be adjusted for work hours per person (2 x 0.5 part-time employees = 2). Count as at a point in time.
- **ASL:** staff count adjusted for part-time/casual work hours (2 x 0.5 part-time employees = 1). Average over reporting period.

Population inclusion abbreviations:

- **GGS:** General Government Sector (e.g. APS: Australian Taxation Office, Services Australia, Home Affairs and non-APS: Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian Federal Police).
- **PFC:** Public Financial Corporations (e.g. Reserve Bank of Australia, Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation, Housing Australia).
- **PNFC:** Public Non-Financial Corporations (e.g. Australia Post, Australian Rail Track Corporation Limited, Snowy Hydro Limited, Australian Naval Infrastructure Pty Ltd, Airservices Australia, NBN Co Limited).

# Appendix 2 – State of the Service additional data

This appendix presents additional data from the APS Employment Database, the APS Employee Census and the APS Agency Survey.

## Classification structures

At 30 June 2026, the most common classification in the APS was APS 6. This continues the trend of the last decade, during which this level has consistently been the most common classification (Table A 4).

**Table A 4: Number of APS employees by base classification at 30 June (2017 to 2026)**

| Classification | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trainee | 620 | 767 | 567 | 617 | 642 | 989 | 952 | 657 | 533 | 565 |
| Graduate | 1,688 | 1,525 | 1,453 | 1,607 | 1,627 | 1,962 | 2,028 | 2,025 | 1,922 | 1,753 |
| APS 1 | 2,900 | 2,673 | 2,838 | 2,201 | 1,545 | 2,949 | 2,720 | 2,696 | 3,158 | 1,476 |
| APS 2 | 4,604 | 4,700 | 4,414 | 6,234 | 4,675 | 4,061 | 4,068 | 4,309 | 4,219 | 4,050 |
| APS 3 | 18,420 | 17,209 | 15,322 | 15,719 | 16,813 | 14,748 | 15,987 | 13,711 | 13,099 | 11,591 |
| APS 4 | 29,490 | 29,443 | 28,091 | 27,307 | 28,222 | 27,374 | 28,416 | 33,498 | 36,779 | 35,885 |
| APS 5 | 21,238 | 20,854 | 20,592 | 21,150 | 21,702 | 22,368 | 24,283 | 27,077 | 28,677 | 29,424 |
| APS 6 | 33,123 | 32,974 | 32,974 | 33,982 | 34,325 | 36,139 | 39,015 | 43,265 | 47,085 | 48,280 |
| EL 1 | 25,542 | 25,656 | 26,013 | 26,942 | 28,496 | 31,615 | 34,341 | 37,882 | 41,117 | 42,114 |
| EL 2 | 11,665 | 11,754 | 11,726 | 11,815 | 12,675 | 13,949 | 15,086 | 16,300 | 17,505 | 17,636 |
| SES 1 | 1,979 | 2,024 | 2,049 | 2,061 | 2,088 | 2,231 | 2,357 | 2,539 | 2,673 | 2,642 |
| SES 2 | 558 | 553 | 579 | 595 | 623 | 655 | 677 | 722 | 741 | 737 |
| SES 3 | 121 | 126 | 140 | 134 | 138 | 143 | 159 | 162 | 162 | 169 |
| **Total** | **151,948** | **150,258** | **146,758** | **150,364** | **153,571** | **159,183** | **170,089** | **184,843** | **197,670** | **196,322** |

Source: APSED

## Age profile

At 30 June 2026, the average age of APS employees remained stable at 43. The proportion of APS employees under 30 years of age decreased slightly to 14.8%, down from 15.7% at 30 June 2025 (Table A 5).

**Table A 5: Number of APS employees by age group at 30 June (2017 to 2026)**

| Age group (years) | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under 20 | 406 | 456 | 430 | 570 | 580 | 670 | 841 | 891 | 836 | 541 |
| 20–24 | 5,508 | 5,526 | 5,315 | 6,293 | 6,735 | 7,381 | 8,555 | 9,543 | 9,840 | 8,569 |
| 25–29 | 13,650 | 12,947 | 12,587 | 13,129 | 13,686 | 14,700 | 16,638 | 18,731 | 20,317 | 19,859 |
| 30–34 | 19,178 | 18,433 | 17,214 | 17,050 | 17,117 | 17,657 | 18,967 | 20,828 | 22,679 | 22,835 |
| 35–39 | 21,261 | 21,129 | 20,681 | 20,985 | 21,366 | 21,485 | 22,587 | 24,341 | 25,585 | 25,205 |
| 40–44 | 21,278 | 20,849 | 20,747 | 20,965 | 21,578 | 22,459 | 24,100 | 26,474 | 28,780 | 29,080 |
| 45–49 | 21,790 | 21,905 | 21,708 | 22,006 | 21,877 | 22,041 | 22,953 | 24,891 | 26,515 | 27,226 |
| 50–54 | 21,260 | 20,634 | 19,977 | 20,150 | 20,824 | 21,885 | 23,123 | 24,544 | 26,051 | 25,652 |
| 55–59 | 16,362 | 16,698 | 16,402 | 16,757 | 16,805 | 16,979 | 17,415 | 18,493 | 19,724 | 20,299 |
| 60 and over | 11,255 | 11,681 | 11,697 | 12,459 | 13,003 | 13,926 | 14,910 | 16,107 | 17,343 | 17,056 |
| **Total** | **151,948** | **150,258** | **146,758** | **150,364** | **153,571** | **159,183** | **170,089** | **184,843** | **197,670** | **196,322** |

Source: APSED

## Service to Australians

Table A 6 presents perceptions relating to role and purpose held by APS Employee Census respondents in 2026.

**Table A 6: Employee perceptions related to role and purpose**

| Statement | Level of agreement | % |
|---|---|---|
| I understand how my role contributes to achieving an outcome for the Australian public | Agree | 92 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 6 |
| | Disagree | 2 |
| I believe strongly in the purpose and objectives of the APS | Agree | 87 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 11 |
| | Disagree | 2 |
| My workgroup considers the people and businesses affected by what we do | Agree | 84 |
| | Neither agree nor disagree | 11 |
| | Disagree | 5 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

## Code of conduct

In the 2026 APS Agency Survey, agencies reported that 623 employees were the subject of an investigation into a suspected breach of the APS Code of Conduct that was finalised in 2025—26. Of these, 548 employees were found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct.

Table A 7 presents the number of investigations conducted by agencies into suspected breaches of individual elements of the APS Code of Conduct and the number of breach findings in 2025—26. One employee can be investigated for multiple elements of the APS Code of Conduct.

**Table A 7: Number of investigations into and breaches against individual elements of the APS Code of Conduct (2025—26)**

| Element of Code of Conduct | Investigations | Breaches |
|---|---|---|
| Behave honestly and with integrity in connection with APS employment, s 13(1) | 307 | 263 |
| Act with care and diligence in connection with APS employment, s 13(2) | 136 | 112 |
| When acting in connection with APS employment, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment, s 13(3) | 171 | 132 |
| When acting in connection with APS employment comply with all applicable Australian laws, s 13(4) | 53 | 35 |
| Comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee's Agency who has authority to give the direction, s 13(5) | 168 | 148 |
| Maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any Minister or Minister's member of staff, s 13(6) | 1 | 1 |
| Take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest (real or apparent), and disclose details of any material personal interest of the employee, in connection with the employee's APS employment, s 13(7) | 110 | 96 |
| Use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner and for a proper purpose, s 13(8) | 110 | 96 |
| Not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's APS employment, s 13(9) | 51 | 38 |
| Not make improper use of: inside information, or the employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to: a) gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or any other person; or b) cause, or seek to cause, a detriment to the employee's Agency, the Commonwealth or any other person, s 13(10) | 55 | 38 |
| At all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and APS Employment Principles, and the integrity and good reputation of the employee's Agency and the APS, s 13(11) | 454 | 413 |
| While on duty overseas, at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia, s 13(12) | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations, s 13(13) | 5 | 2 |
| **Total number of elements of the APS Code of Conduct that were investigated and breached** | **1,622** | **1,375** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

Note: As individual employees can be investigated and found in breach of multiple elements of the APS Code of Conduct, the reported totals exceed the total number of individual employees investigated (623 employees) and found in breach (548 employees).

Table A 8 presents the types of reports which led to finalised APS Code of Conduct investigations (2025–26).

**Table A 8: Reports leading to finalised APS Code of Conduct investigations (2025–26)**

| Type of report | Number of reports |
|---|---|
| A report made to a central conduct or ethics unit or nominated person in a human resources area | 250 |
| A report generated by a compliance/monitoring system (e.g. audit) | 244 |
| A report made to an email reporting address | 59 |
| A report made to a fraud prevention and control unit or hotline | 26 |
| A report made to another hotline | 5 |
| A Public Interest Disclosure | 4 |
| A report made to an employee advice or counselling unit | 2 |
| Other | 40 |
| **Total number of reports leading to finalised APS Code of Conduct investigations** | **630** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

Note: As individual employees may have been reported through multiple avenues, the reported total exceeds the total number of individual employees investigated (623 employees).

Table A 9 presents the outcomes for the 623 APS employees who were investigated for suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct during 2025–26.

**Table A 9: Outcome of investigations into suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct (2025–26)**

| Outcome | Number of employees |
|---|---|
| Breach found and sanction applied | 355 |
| Breach found but no sanction applied - employee resigned prior to sanction decision | 142 |
| No breach found (for any element of the APS Code of Conduct) | 48 |
| Breach found but no sanction applied - other reason | 42 |
| Investigation discontinued - other reason | 15 |
| Investigation discontinued - employee resigned | 12 |
| Breach found, no sanction applied - other administrative action applied | 9 |
| Breach found but no sanction applied - employee transferred to another agency before sanction applied | 0 |
| **Total number of outcomes of finalised APS Code of Conduct investigations** | **623** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

Table A 10 presents the sanctions applied to 355 APS employees found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct during 2025–26.

**Table A 10: Sanctions imposed for breaches of the APS Code of Conduct (2025–26)**

| Sanction | Number of sanctions |
|---|---|
| Reprimand | 210 |
| Deductions from salary by way of a fine | 117 |
| Termination of employment | 93 |
| Reduction in salary | 67 |
| Re-assignment of duties | 15 |
| Reduction in classification | 14 |
| **Total sanctions imposed** | **516** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

Note: As individual employees may have received more than one sanction, the reported total exceeds the total number of employees who received sanctions (355 employees).

In the 2026 APS Employee Census, 9.8% of respondents indicated they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their workplace in the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census.

Table A 11 presents the types of behaviour perceived by respondents.

**Table A 11: Type of bullying or harassment perceived by respondents**

| Type of behaviour | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their workplace in the previous 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census |
|---|---|
| Interference with work tasks (e.g. withholding needed information, undermining or sabotage) | 47.1 |
| Verbal abuse (e.g. offensive language, derogatory remarks, shouting or screaming) | 39.9 |
| Inappropriate and unfair application of work policies or rules (e.g. performance management, access to leave, access to learning and development) | 32.8 |
| Deliberate exclusion from work-related activities | 29.0 |
| Cyberbullying (e.g. harassment via IT, or the spreading of gossip/materials intended to defame or humiliate) | 10.2 |
| Sexual harassment | 4.4 |
| Physical behaviour | 4.3 |
| Interference with your personal property or work equipment | 4.1 |
| 'Initiations' or pranks | 2.5 |
| Other | 20.0 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their current workplace. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

Table A 12 presents the perceived source of the bullying or harassment indicated by respondents in 2026.

**Table A 12: Perceived source of bullying or harassment**

| Perceived source | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their workplace in the previous 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census |
|---|---|
| Co-worker | 40.0 |
| Someone more senior (other than your supervisor) | 33.2 |
| A previous supervisor | 24.9 |
| Your current supervisor | 19.2 |
| Someone more junior than you | 11.0 |
| Client, customer or stakeholder | 4.4 |
| Contractor | 1.9 |
| Representative of another agency | 1.0 |
| Consultant/service provider | 0.7 |
| Minister or ministerial adviser | 0.2 |
| Unknown | 1.7 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their current workplace. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

Table A 13 presents the reporting behaviour of respondents who had perceived bullying or harassment in their workplace in the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census.

**Table A 13: Reporting behaviour of bullying or harassment**

| Reporting behaviour | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their workplace in the previous 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census |
|---|---|
| I reported the behaviour in accordance with my agency's policies and procedures | 39.1 |
| It was reported by someone else | 6.7 |
| I did not report the behaviour | 54.2 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their current workplace.

Table A 14 presents the reasons for not reporting bullying or harassment given by respondents who had perceived bullying or harassment in their workplace in the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and who did not report the behaviour.

**Table A 14: Reasons for not reporting bullying or harassment**

| Reason | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their workplace in the previous 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census and did not report the behaviour |
|---|---|
| I feared possible retaliation or reprisals | 53.6 |
| I did not think action would be taken | 52.4 |
| I did not want to upset relationships in the workplace | 46.2 |
| It could affect my career | 43.3 |
| I did not think it was worth the hassle of going through the reporting process | 37.3 |
| Managers accepted the behaviour | 35.6 |
| I did not think the bullying or harassment was serious enough | 18.5 |
| I did not have enough evidence | 18.3 |
| The matter was resolved informally | 8.8 |
| I did not know how to report it | 5.9 |
| Other | 8.6 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had been subjected to bullying or harassment in their current workplace and did not report the behaviour. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

In the 2026 APS Agency Survey, agencies reported that 3,021 employees made complaints about bullying or harassment during 2025–26.

Table A 15 presents the number of recorded complaints against each type of bullying and harassment behaviour made by APS employees within APS agencies during 2025–26.

**Table A 15: Complaints against each type of bullying and harassment behaviour made to agencies (2025–26)**

| Type of behaviour | Number |
|---|---|
| Inappropriate and unfair application of work policies or rules (e.g. performance management, access to leave, access to learning and development) | 619 |
| Verbal abuse (e.g. offensive language, derogatory remarks, shouting or screaming) | 506 |
| Sexual harassment | 285 |
| Interference with work tasks (i.e. withholding needed information, undermining or sabotage) | 142 |
| Cyberbullying (e.g. harassment via IT, or the spreading of gossip/materials intended to defame/humiliate) | 72 |
| Physical behaviour | 45 |
| Interference with personal property or work equipment | 25 |
| Initiations or pranks | 7 |
| Other | 1,146 |
| Number of complaints about bullying/harassment unable to be categorised | 312 |
| **Total number of individual harassment and bullying behaviours that were reported** | **3,159** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

Note: As individual employees may have reported a complaint about multiple types of bullying and harassment behaviour, the reported total exceeds the total number of employees who made complaints about bullying or harassment (3,021 employees).

Table A 16 presents the proportion of respondents who, during the previous 12 months, reported they had observed a public official engaging in conduct within their agency that they considered to be corruption.

**Table A 16: APS employee perceptions of corruption**

| Potential corruption witnessed | % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 2.1 |
| No | 91.9 |
| Not sure | 4.3 |
| Would prefer not to answer | 1.6 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Of those who reported observing potential corruption, the types of corrupt conduct are presented in Table A 17.

**Table A 17: Type of potential corrupt conduct witnessed**

| Type of potential corrupt conduct witnessed | % who had witnessed potential corrupt conduct |
|---|---|
| Abuse of office | 66.7 |
| Adversely affecting the honesty or impartiality of a public official | 38.0 |
| Misuse of information or documents | 25.9 |
| A breach of public trust | 23.9 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they observed potential corruption. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

In the 2026 APS Employee Census, 8.4% of respondents indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment.

Table A 18 presents the types of discrimination perceived by respondents.

**Table A 18: Type of discrimination perceived by respondents**

| Category | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment |
|---|---|
| Gender | 28.2 |
| Race | 24.1 |
| Age | 23.5 |
| Disability | 17.5 |
| Caring responsibilities | 17.2 |
| Religion | 7.3 |
| LGBTIQA+ | 4.6 |
| Identification as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person | 3.8 |
| Other | 26.3 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had perceived discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

Table A 19 presents the perceived source of the discrimination indicated by respondents in 2026.

**Table A 19: Perceived source of discrimination**

| Perceived source | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment |
|---|---|
| Within my agency | 93.0 |
| A customer, stakeholder or member of the public | 8.8 |
| Another agency | 3.6 |
| Other | 3.4 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had perceived discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

Table A 20 presents the reporting behaviour of respondents who indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment.

**Table A 20: Reporting behaviour of discrimination**

| Reporting behaviour | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment |
|---|---|
| I reported the discrimination in accordance with my agency's policies and procedures | 20.2 |
| It was reported by someone else | 4.3 |
| I did not report the discrimination | 75.5 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had perceived discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census and in the course of their employment.

Table A 21 presents the reasons for not reporting discrimination given by respondents who had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census in the course of their employment and who did not report the discrimination.

**Table A 21: Reasons for not reporting discrimination**

| Reason | % of those who indicated they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the 2026 APS Employee Census in the course of their employment and did not report the discrimination |
|---|---|
| I did not think action would be taken | 52.5 |
| I did not want to upset relationships in the workplace | 47.4 |
| It could affect my career | 44.0 |
| I feared possible retaliation or reprisals | 40.8 |
| I was concerned about adverse consequences beyond the effect on my career | 37.6 |
| I did not think it was worth the hassle of going through the reporting process | 36.7 |
| Managers accepted the behaviour | 29.7 |
| I did not have enough evidence | 26.2 |
| I did not think the discrimination was serious enough | 20.6 |
| I did not know how to report it | 5.8 |
| The matter was resolved informally | 5.6 |
| Other | 8.8 |

Source: 2026 APS Employee Census

Note: Percentages are based on respondents who said they had been subjected to discrimination during the 12 months preceding the APS Employee Census in the course of their employment and who did not report the discrimination. As respondents could select more than one option, total percentages may exceed 100%.

## Ethics Advisory Service

The APSC Ethics Advisory Service provides information, policy advice and guidance to APS employees and leaders on the application of the APS Values and the Code of Conduct, promoting ethical decision-making across the public service. In 2025–26, the Ethics Advisory Service received 632 enquiries – 254 from individual APS employees and 217 from agency human resources areas and managers. The remaining 161 enquiries were from contractors or former employees, or were anonymous or out of scope.

### Personal leave

APS agencies provide aggregated figures on paid and unpaid personal leave (that is, sick and carer's leave). These figures include instances of leave with or without a supporting medical certificate.

The personal leave measure incorporates the staffing size of agencies when calculating the absence rate. In practice, every agency's personal leave days and full-time equivalent (FTE) are summed, and

the personal leave rate is calculated by dividing the total number of personal leave days by the total FTE of the APS.

$$\text{APS personal leave rate} = \frac{\text{Total days of personal leave across the APS}}{\text{Total FTE of the APS}}$$

The APSC changed the personal leave data categories requested from agencies in 2025–26. The APSC now collects and reports personal and carer's leave, both paid and unpaid. These changes improve the transparency of personal leave utilisation across the APS.

Table A 22 provides personal leave use and rates by agency for 2024—25 and 2025—26 (expressed as an average number of days). Note that for small agencies, a small number of individuals with a large amount of leave taken can influence the personal leave rate substantially.

**Table A 22: Paid sick, unpaid sick, paid carer's, unpaid carer's and total personal leave rate by agency (2024—25 and 2025—26) (expressed as an average number of days)**

| Agency name | Paid sick leave 2025–26 | Unpaid sick leave 2025–26 | Paid carer's leave 2025–26 | Unpaid carer's leave 2025–26 | Total personal leave rate 2025–26 | Total personal leave rate 2024–25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 7.8 | 2.2 | 3.5 | 0.1 | 13.5 | 16.0 |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | 9.6 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 12.9 | 11.1 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 12.4 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 15.0 | 12.9 |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | 11.5 | 1.3 | 2.3 | 0.1 | 15.1 | 13.7 |
| Attorney-General's | 9.3 | 0.2 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 11.5 | 10.6 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 8.3 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 0.1 | 11.4 | 11.3 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 12.1 | 0.6 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 15.6 | 16.5 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 4.9 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 6.0 | 10.7 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 8.1 | 0.6 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 11.4 | 9.7 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | 7.6 | 0.4 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 9.8 | 9.5 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 8.5 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 12.1 | 11.1 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 11.5 | 0.1 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 12.4 | 9.3 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 3.7 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 5.7 | 10.4 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 8.9 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 11.5 | 11.1 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 11.6 | 0.1 | * | * | 11.7 | 10.2 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 6.9 | 0.1 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 8.2 | 7.9 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | 10.8 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 14.8 | 11.7 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 4.9 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 6.9 | 6.6 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 9.5 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 11.2 | 10.3 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | 2.3 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 2.9 | † |
| Australian National Audit Office | 8.9 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 11.9 | 10.7 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 7.2 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 9.3 | 8.3 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 5.1 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 8.5 | 9.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 8.9 | 0.1 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 10.8 | 11.8 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 9.3 | 0.7 | 1.6 | 0.0 | 11.5 | 10.6 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | 7.4 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 9.4 | 10.1 |
| Australian Research Council | 9.2 | 0.6 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 12.1 | 12.2 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 8.7 | 0.6 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 11.3 | 10.6 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | 7.8 | 0.2 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 9.3 | 9.3 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 9.4 | 1.0 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 12.5 | 11.2 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | 7.1 | 0.3 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 9.3 | 5.5 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 6.9 | 0.2 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 9.0 | 9.3 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 6.7 | 0 | 1.9 | 0 | 8.5 | 8.7 |
| Australian War Memorial | 9.5 | 1.0 | 2.7 | * | 13.2 | 10.6 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 8.0 | 0.2 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 10.9 | 9.3 |
| Cancer Australia | 8.0 | 4.2 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 13.5 | 9.2 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 10.5 | 0.3 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 13.1 | 12.5 |
| Climate Change Authority | 5.9 | 0.0 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 7.6 | 8.5 |
| Climate Change, Energy, the | 10.6 | 1.1 | * | * | 11.7 | 10.1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environment and Water | | | | | | |
| Comcare | 11.6 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 15.2 | 11.7 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 9.4 | 0.0 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 10.5 | 9.8 |
| Defence | 10.2 | 1.2 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 13.7 | 12.3 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 10.8 | 0.9 | * | * | 11.7 | 10.9 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | 8.7 | 0.2 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 10.6 | 10.6 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | 9.2 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 10.9 | † |
| Education | 9.4 | 0.4 | 2.2 | 0.1 | 12.2 | 11.2 |
| Employment and Workplace Relations | 9.7 | 0.5 | 2.3 | 0.1 | 12.6 | 11.0 |
| Fair Work Commission | 7.8 | 0.6 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 9.8 | 9.9 |
| Federal Court of Australia | 6.2 | ‡ | 1.5 | ‡ | 7.7 | 7.2 |
| Finance | 10.5 | 1.0 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 15.0 | 12.1 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 7.8 | 0.0 | 3.5 | 0.0 | 11.3 | 10.5 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 7.8 | 1.1 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 11.5 | 10.4 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 4.0 | 0.0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 5.9 | 5.0 |
| Geoscience Australia | 8.0 | 0.6 | 2.2 | 0.2 | 10.9 | 9.4[#] |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 7.7 | 1.1 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 11.8 | 16.4 |
| Health, Disability and Ageing§ | 11.8 | 0.3 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 13.6 | 12.3 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Speed Rail Authority | 2.2 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 4.1 | † |
| Home Affairs | 10.7 | 1.3 | 3.2 | 0.0 | 15.2 | 14.6 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 10.3 | 0.1 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 13.1 | 7.1 |
| Industry, Science and Resources | 10.4 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 13.3 | 12.7 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts§ | 10.3 | 0.8 | 2.4 | 0.4 | 13.9 | 12.1 |
| IP Australia | 9.2 | 0.9 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 13.0 | 3.3 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 6.3 | 0.2 | 3.2 | 0.0 | 9.7 | 8.2 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | 7.1 | 0.5 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 9.6 | 8.8 |
| National Archives of Australia | 11.8 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 16.0 | 12.0 |
| National Blood Authority | 12.4 | 1.1 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 15.4 | 10.2 |
| National Capital Authority | 8.6 | 0.5 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 10.0 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 13.4 | ‡ | 2.4 | 0.1 | 15.9 | 14.8 |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission | 10.2 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 14.5 | 14.2 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | 10.6 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 0.4 | 15.3 | 14.1 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | 9.9 | 0.3 | 1.7 | 0.1 | 11.9 | 11.9 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 9.5 | 0.8 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 12.5 | 10.1 |
| National Health Funding Body | 11.9 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 13.9 | 11.4 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 11.7 | 0.0 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 14.8 | 11.2 |
| National Library of Australia | 12.0 | 1.7 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 16.6 | 16.1 |
| National Museum of Australia | 10.7 | 1.4 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 14.4 | 13.3 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 10.3 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 12.6 | 8.8 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | 9.7 | 0.1 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 11.4 | 10.4 |
| Office of National Intelligence | 8.3 | 0.1 | 3.4 | 0.0 | 11.9 | 13.0 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 19.6 | 0.1 | 2.1 | 0.0 | 21.8 | 10.0 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 8.3 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 9.8 | 12.3 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | 12.9 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 0.0 | 17.5 | 16.1 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 7.7 | 0.3 | 1.6 | 0.0 | 9.6 | 9.2 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 11.0 | 0.2 | 2.3 | 0.1 | 13.7 | 12.9 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | 18.8 | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 20.7 | 5.4 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | 12.9 | 0.6 | 1.6 | 0.0 | 15.2 | 12.7 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 13.8 | 0.0 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 16.0 | 12.4 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | 10.9 | 0.6 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 13.5 | † |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 8.2 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 10.3 |
| Productivity Commission | 5.9 | 0.1 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 7.4 | 9.7 |
| Professional Services Review | 11.8 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 0.2 | 14.8 | 12.3 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 13.4 | 0.1 | * | * | 13.5 | 14.4 |
| Safe Work Australia | 8.8 | 3.9 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 14.0 | 14.9 |
| Services Australia | 11.7 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 0.2 | 17.5 | 17.1 |
| Social Services | 12.0 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 17.2 | 13.1 |
| Sport Integrity Australia | 9.5 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 10.2 | 9.8 |
| Tax Ombudsman | 7.6 | 0.0 | 2.8 | 0.0 | 10.4 | 9.3 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 9.4 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 13.0 | 12.7 |
| The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 9.6 | 0.3 | 1.2 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 11.4 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 9.7 | 0.5 | 3.4 | 0.1 | 13.8 | 13.1 |
| Treasury | 8.9 | 0.7 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 11.4 | 11.6 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 13.9 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 0.1 | 18.6 | 12.7 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 8.1 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 9.9 | 10.1 |
| **APS** | **10.5** | **1.3** | **2.2** | **0.1** | **14.1** | **12.9** |

Source: 2026 APS Agency Survey

* Carer's leave included in respective sick leave rate.

† Data not available for this period.

‡ Unpaid leave included in respective paid leave rate.

§ Health (2025) and Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (2025) had Machinery of Government (MoG) changes to Health, Disability and Ageing (2026) and Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (2026).

# Amount corrected by agency after publication of the 2025 State of the Service Report.

# Appendix 3 – List of APS agencies

Table A 23 lists APS agencies and employee numbers at 30 June 2026, based on data from the APS Employment Database (APSED). These are headcount numbers which include ongoing and non-ongoing APS employees.

**Table A 23: List of APS agencies by portfolio (at 30 June 2026)**

| Agency name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|---|---|---|
| **Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry** | **Larger Operational** | **7,036** |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | Regulatory | 166 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | Regulatory | 253 |
| **Attorney-General's** | **Policy** | **2,303** |
| Administrative Review Tribunal | Smaller Operational | 1,219 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | Specialist | 212 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | Specialist | 27 |
| Federal Court of Australia | Specialist | 1,847 |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission | Specialist | 242 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | Regulatory | 192 |
| Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman | Specialist | 340 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | Specialist | 517 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | Specialist | 57 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | Specialist | 152 |
| Office of the Special Investigator | Specialist | 4 |
| **Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water** | **Policy** | **5,783** |
| Bureau of Meteorology | Larger Operational | 1,981 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | Regulatory | 507 |
| Climate Change Authority | Specialist | 69 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | Specialist | 234 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | Policy | 376 |
| **Defence** | **Larger Operational** | **20,792** |
| Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator | Regulatory | 75 |
| Australian Submarine Agency | Specialist | 915 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Defence Housing Australia | Smaller Operational | 651 |
| **Education** | **Policy** | **1,775** |
| Australian Research Council | Specialist | 124 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | Regulatory | 118 |
| **Employment and Workplace Relations** | **Policy** | **4,201** |
| Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency | Specialist | 23 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | Regulatory | 247 |
| Comcare | Smaller Operational | 788 |
| Fair Work Commission | Smaller Operational | 377 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | Regulatory | 1,049 |
| Safe Work Australia | Policy | 136 |
| **Finance** | **Policy** | **2,285** |
| Australian Electoral Commission | Larger Operational | 1,738 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | Smaller Operational | 381 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | Specialist | 347 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | Specialist | 63 |
| Parliamentary Workplace Support Service | Specialist | 73 |
| Services Australia | Larger Operational | 33,465 |
| **Foreign Affairs and Trade** | **Policy** | **5,265** |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | Specialist | 57 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | Specialist | 732 |
| **Health, Disability and Ageing** | **Policy** | **7,333** |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | Regulatory | 2,047 |
| Australian Centre for Disease Control | Specialist | 272 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | Specialist | 156 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | Smaller Operational | 713 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | Specialist | 741 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | Specialist | 193 |
| Cancer Australia | Specialist | 80 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | Regulatory | 118 |
| National Blood Authority | Specialist | 93 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | Larger Operational | 10,951 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | Specialist | 283 |
| National Health Funding Body | Specialist | 34 |
| NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission | Regulatory | 976 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care | Specialist | 21 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | Specialist | 33 |
| Professional Services Review | Regulatory | 59 |
| **Home Affairs** | **Larger Operational** | **16,416** |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | Specialist | 1,002 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | Regulatory | 885 |
| National Emergency Management Agency | Specialist | 410 |
| **Industry, Science and Resources** | **Policy** | **5,529** |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | Regulatory | 189 |
| **Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts** | **Policy** | **2,320** |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | Regulatory | 740 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | National Cultural Institution | 137 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | Specialist | 123 |
| High Speed Rail Authority | Specialist | 29 |
| National Archives of Australia | National Cultural Institution | 444 |
| National Capital Authority | Specialist | 74 |
| National Film and Sound Archive of Australia | National Cultural Institution | 286 |
| National Library of Australia | National Cultural Institution | 420 |
| National Museum of Australia | National Cultural Institution | 317 |
| National Portrait Gallery of Australia | National Cultural Institution | 68 |
| Old Parliament House | National Cultural Institution | 164 |
| Screen Australia | Specialist | 3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sport Integrity Australia | Regulatory | 507 |
| **Prime Minister and Cabinet** | **Policy** | **1,345** |
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | Smaller Operational | 524 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | Specialist | 169 |
| Australian National Audit Office | Specialist | 436 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | Policy | 394 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | Policy | 1,491 |
| Office of National Intelligence | Specialist | 447 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | Specialist | 160 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | Specialist | 49 |
| **Social Services** | **Policy** | **2,456** |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | Specialist | 108 |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission | Specialist | 26 |
| National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People | Specialist | 14 |
| **Treasury** | **Policy** | **2,222** |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | Specialist | 4,128 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | Regulatory | 1,948 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | Regulatory | 474 |
| Australian Taxation Office | Larger Operational | 22,335 |
| Inspector-General of Taxation | Specialist | 37 |
| Productivity Commission | Specialist | 161 |
| **Veterans' Affairs** | **Larger Operational** | **3,653** |
| Australian War Memorial | National Cultural Institution | 385 |
| **All** | | **196,322** |

Source: APSED

## Find out more

Australian Public Service Commission (2026) *APS Agencies – size and function*, APSC website, https://www.apsc.gov.au/aps-agencies-size-and-function, accessed 24 August 2026.

# Appendix 4 – Secretaries Board

Section 64 of the *Public Service Act 1999* establishes the Secretaries Board.

Its functions are to:

- take responsibility for the stewardship of the APS and for developing and implementing strategies to improve the APS;
- identify strategic priorities for the APS and consider issues that affect the APS;
- set an annual work program;
- direct subcommittees to develop strategies to address APS-wide issues and make recommendations to the Secretaries Board;
- draw together advice from senior leaders in government, business and the community;
- work collaboratively and model leadership behaviours.

Members of the Secretaries Board keep their autonomy and statutory responsibilities as the heads of their respective departments or agencies.

The Secretaries Board Terms of Reference were updated and officially endorsed at the 17 September 2025 meeting.

To be transparent in its priorities and decisions, the Secretaries Board publishes communiques following meetings. These communiques are available on the PM&C website.

At 30 June 2026, the Secretaries Board has the following subcommittees:

- Capability and Workforce Committee
- Partnership Priorities Committee
- Secretaries Digital and Data Committee
- Secretaries Talent Council.

The Chief Operating Officers Committee plays an advisory role to the Secretaries Board.

Table A 24 lists the members of Secretaries Board for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

**Table A 24: Members of Secretaries Board 2025–26**

| Board Position | APS Title | Member |
|---|---|---|
| Chair | Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet | Dr Steven Kennedy PSM |
| Deputy Chair | Australian Public Service Commissioner | Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM (until 13 February 2026)<br>Dr Subho Banerjee (Acting Commissioner from 14 February to 8 June 2026)<br>Ms Jacqui Curtis PSM (from 9 June 2026) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | Mr Adam Fennessy PSM (until 26 September 2025)<br>Ms Justine Saunders APM (Acting Secretary from 27 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | September to 7 December 2025)<br>Ms Victoria Anderson (from 8 December 2025) |
| Member | Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department | Ms Katherine Jones PSM |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | Mr Simon Duggan (Acting Secretary until 13 July 2025)<br>Mr Mike Kaiser (from 14 July 2025) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Defence | Mr Greg Moriarty AO (until 1 April 2026)<br>Ms Cath Patterson (Acting Secretary from 2 April 2026 to 17 May 2026)<br>Ms Meghan Quinn PSM (from 18 May 2026) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Education | Mr Tony Cook PSM |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations | Ms Natalie James (until 18 January 2026)<br>Ms Tania Rishniw (Acting Secretary from 19 January to 15 February 2026)<br>Mr Simon Duggan PSM (from 16 Feb 2026) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Finance | Mr Richard Windeyer (Acting Secretary until 28 September 2025)<br>Mr Matt Yannopoulos PSM (from 29 September 2025) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | Ms Jan Adams AO PSM |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing | Mr Blair Comley PSM |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs | Ms Stephanie Foster PSM |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources | Ms Meghan Quinn PSM (until 17 May 2026)<br>Ms Julia Pickworth (Acting Secretary from 18 May 2026) |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts | Mr Jim Betts |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Social Services | Mr Michael Lye |
| Member | Secretary of the Department of the Treasury | Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Member | Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs | Ms Alison Frame |
| Other | Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australians Agency | Ms Jody Broun (until 29 August 2025)<br>Ms Julie-Ann Guivarra (from 30 August 2025) |

### Find out more

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (n.d.) *Secretaries Board*, PM&C website, https://www.pmc.gov.au/about-us/accountability-and-reporting/corporate-reporting/secretaries-board, accessed 24 August 2026.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (n.d.*) Secretary appointments to departments of state*, PM&C website, https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/administration/secretary-appointments, accessed 24 August 2026.

# Appendix 5 – Royal Commissions and inquiries

This appendix refers to Royal Commissions, parliamentary inquiries and public inquiries established by the Australian Government that were announced, conducted or have reported in the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. Royal Commissions, Senate Committee inquiries and Public inquiries of note for the Australian Public Service are described in more detail.

## Royal Commissions

A list of current and recent Royal commissions can be found at: Current Royal Commissions, https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/.

### Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

The Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion was established on 9 January 2026. The Commission is investigating the nature, drivers and impacts of antisemitism in Australia, including the role of extremism and radicalisation, and identifying opportunities to strengthen government responses, law enforcement capabilities and social cohesion. It is also examining the circumstances of the Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025, including agency preparedness, information sharing, security arrangements and emergency response, with a view to recommending policy, legislative, and administrative measures to strengthen social cohesion.

The Commission delivered its interim report on 30 April 2026 and is required to submit its final report by 14 December 2026.

More information can be found at: Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. Establishment of Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, https://www.pm.gov.au/media/establishment-royal-commission-antisemitism-and-social-cohesion

## Parliamentary inquiries

A list of current parliamentary inquiries can be found at Current inquiries. This includes Senate Committee inquiries, House of Representative Committee inquiries, and Joint Committee inquiries

Completed parliamentary inquiries and reports can be accessed through the relevant committee webpages. For example, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee publishes its completed inquiries and reports under the completed Inquiries by this committee section of its website.

More information can be found at:https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Current_Inquiries

## Senate inquiries

### National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill 2026

On 14 May 2026 the Senate referred the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill 2026 to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for inquiry and report.

On 29 June 2026, the committee agreed to accept submissions until 10 July 2026. A report was delivered on 14 August 2026.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/NDISFutureGenBill.

### Aged care – review of legislative instruments

The Aged Care Rules 2025 and the Aged Care (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Rules 2025 were tabled in the Senate on 27 October 2025 and 29 October 2025 respectively. On 24 November 2025, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee commenced a review of the relevant rules specified in Section 602 (12) of the *Aged Care Act 2024*.

Closing date for submissions was Friday 23 January 2026.

The committee will report on its findings once it is satisfied that it has completed its examination of the relevant provisions.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Review_of_legislative_instruments/Aged_care/Review_1.

### Fair Work Amendment (Right to Work from Home) Bill 2025

On 27 November 2025, the Senate referred the Fair Work Amendment (Right to Work from Home) Bill 2025 to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry and report.

The committee was initially due to report by 26 March 2026. On 10 September 2026, the committee was granted an extension of time to report until 18 November 2026.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/WFH2025.

### Artificial intelligence and data centres

On 13 May 2026, the Senate referred the Artificial intelligence (AI) and data centres to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by 16 November 2026.

The inquiry will make reference to the effectiveness of existing regulatory frameworks in managing the growth of data centres in Australia, including in relation to existing and future deals between the Government and global AI companies. It will look at the potential impacts of AI and data centres on Australian communities, industries and the environment, water and energy and any other related matters.

The time for making a submission to the inquiry was extended to 1 September 2026.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/AIdatacentres48P.

### National Cultural Policy

On 30 January 2023, the Australian Government released a new National Cultural Policy, Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place. This policy is a five-year plan that seeks to revive Australia's arts, entertainment and cultural sectors.

On 31 July 2025, the Senate agreed that the National Cultural Policy inquiry be re-adopted in the 48th Parliament and referred the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 March 2027.

The committee seeks submission on potential tax reform and ways to boost the productivity of Australia's arts and creative sectors; and any opportunities, risks and challenges for Australia's arts and creative sectors associated with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/NCP48P.

### Rural, regional and remote Medicare access and funding

On 27 November 2025, the Senate referred the Rural, regional and remote Medicare access and funding to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 24 November 2026.

The committee will inquire and report on related matters on the Government's changes to rural, regional and remote Medicare access and funding. This includes the impact of the 1 November 2025 Medicare changes on access to primary care, including telehealth, for rural, regional and remote Australians.

On 26 March 2026, the committee was granted an extension of time to report until 24 November 2026.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/Medicareaccess.

### Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity

On 4 November 2025, the Senate resolved that the Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity be established on 17 March 2026.

The committee will inquire and report on related matters on intergenerational housing inequity, including the extent, nature and causes of intergenerational housing inequity and the experience of intergenerational housing inequity on different population cohorts.

The committee presented a final report on 30 September 2026.

More information can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Intergenerational_Housing_Inequity/HousingInequity.

## Public inquiries

Public inquiries listed here are discrete and temporary bodies established by Executive Government. They draw membership from outside of Government and have public processes of review and reporting.

### Independent Review into the NDIS

On 18 October 2022, the Minister for the NDIS, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, announced an independent review into the NDIS. The review was conducted by an Independent Panel of two co-chairs and five panel members.

The NDIS Review investigated the design, operations and sustainability of the NDIS. It considered ways to make the market and workforce more responsive, supportive and sustainable. It looked at how to make sure the NDIS and the broader disability supports around it work well for the people with disability who depend on them.

The Government released the final report on 30 July 2025.

More information can be found at Release of the final report of the Independent Review into the NDIS, https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/, https://www.health.gov.au/news/release-of-the-final-report-of-the-independent-review-into-the-ndis?language=en

## Other reports

Under Australian Government reporting guidelines, the annual reports of all Government agencies must include particulars on any report on the agency made by:

- the Auditor-General, other than a report under section 43 of the Act (which deals with the Auditor-General's audit of the annual financial statements for Commonwealth entities)
- a Committee of either or both Houses of the Parliament
- the Commonwealth Ombudsman
- the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
- any capability reviews of the entity released during the reporting period.

Annual reports are found on the Transparency Portal, https://www.transparency.gov.au/

# Appendix 6 – Methodology

This appendix presents additional information that supports the content included in this report.

## APS Employment Database

The Australian Public Service Employment Database (APSED) contains employment, diversity and education details for people employed in the Australian Public Service under the authority of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Information on staffing, including trends in the size, structure and composition of the APS, contributes to research and evaluation work on the changing nature of the APS. This, in turn, assists agencies to formulate their people management policies and practices.

### APSED scope and collection methodology

APSED stores the employment data of all current and former APS employees. The database was established in 1999 but contains data on APS employees from 1966.

APSED is maintained by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). Data is supplied to APSED from the human resource systems of APS agencies.

Two types of data files are used to update and maintain APSED – movement files and snapshot files. In general, both file types contain the same data items, but they differ in purpose.

1. Movement files are provided to the APSC from each agency every month. They are used to document changes in employment history, e.g. engagements and promotions, for all people employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* on a monthly basis.

   Changes in employment characteristics every month are recorded using movement codes. Movement files contain a record for every movement, relevant to updating and maintaining employee records in APSED, that has been processed in an agency's HR system during the month. If an employee undertakes multiple movements within a reference period, the corresponding movement files will contain multiple records for that employee. If an employee has no movements during the reference period, they will not appear in the movement file.

2. Snapshot files are provided to the APSC from each agency on a 6-monthly basis. They are used to verify that all the information stored in APSED is correct and current at 31 December and 30 June each year. Snapshot files contain a single record for every APS employee employed by a particular agency on 31 December and 30 June.

### APSED items

Agency HR systems supply APSED with unit records containing this personal information:

- personal particulars – Australian Government staff number, name and date of birth
- diversity data – gender, Indigenous identification, country of birth, year of arrival, first and main languages spoken, parents' first languages, disability status
- employment data – classification, email address, date of engagement, employment status, standard hours, workplace postcode, any movement details and dates, operative status, previous employment, job role, current and previous agencies
- educational qualifications and main fields of study.

Under section 54(1) of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2022, an Agency Head must ensure measures are in place to collect information from each employee in the agency and give collected information to the APS Commissioner as required. While individuals do not explicitly consent to the collection of their movement and employment data, they can choose to supply or withhold all diversity data except gender data. An Agency Head must allow APS employees to provide a response of 'choose not to give this information.'

### Management and administration

Agency HR systems collect relevant data items and supply these to the APSC through secure means. Agencies are responsible for the collection, security, quality, storage, access, use, and disclosure of their HR data. They are also responsible for compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles. While agency HR systems capture detailed information on each APS employee's pay, leave history and entitlements, these are out of scope for APSED. Only data fields supplied to the APSC are in scope.

Once validated and transferred to the APSC, error checks on the new files are performed by the APSC against the extant data in APSED. The APSC and the agency work together to resolve these differences. Once resolved, cleaned data is incorporated into APSED.

APSED data is stored on a secure information technology system that is password protected and accessible only by a small number of authorised personnel in the APSC.

### Privacy and confidentiality

APSC's Privacy Policy, which includes specific information related to APSED collection, is available at Privacy | Australian Public Service Commission (apsc.gov.au). The APSC has undertaken a detailed privacy impact assessment in relation to APSED, confirming that it complies with all relevant Australian Privacy Principles.

## APS Employee Census

The APS Employee Census is an annual employee perception survey of the Australian Public Service workforce. All eligible personnel employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* are invited to participate. The APS Employee Census has been conducted since 2012 and collects APS employee opinions and perspectives on a range of topics, including employee engagement, leadership, communication, innovation, and wellbeing.

### APS Employee Census collection methodology

In 2026, the APS Employee Census was administered to eligible APS employees during 4 May to 5 June. This timing was consistent with all past APS Employee Census administrations apart from 2020.

Although participation is encouraged, the APS Employee Census is voluntary. If a respondent chooses to participate, only a limited number of demographic-type questions must be answered. The remaining questions do not require a response.

### APS Employee Census design

Core questions from previous years were used as the basis for the 2026 APS Employee Census questionnaire to maintain a reliable longitudinal dataset. The underlying survey framework initially applied in 2021 was maintained. This model, from the field of organisational psychology, continued to define core question sets and direct the interpretation and reporting of results. Alongside the

standardised questionnaire, agencies could ask their employees a limited number of additional questions.

### APS Employee Census development

The 2026 APS Employee Census questionnaire included 147 individual questions. These questions were grouped into 14 sections addressing key aspects of working for an APS agency.

Each year the content of the APS Employee Census is reviewed to ensure each question has value and meets a specific purpose. Every few years, the Australian Public Service Commission researches and consults more broadly to develop and select questions for inclusion. In 2026, the APSC:

- considered strategic-level priorities coming from the Secretaries Board and other senior-level committees to ensure the APS Employee Census would capture appropriate information to inform these priorities
- researched contemporary understanding of issues and options for questionnaire content
- provided participating agencies with an opportunity to give feedback and input to questionnaire design.

The resulting questionnaire covered numerous themes and measures.

### APS Employee Census delivery

The 2026 APS Employee Census was administered online through a unique link provided to each employee by email.

### Sampling and coverage

The population for the APS Employee Census is provided by participating agencies. It is up to individual agencies to set their eligibility criteria. For example, some agencies remove employees on long-term leave, while others contact employees on long-term leave to ask if they would like to participate.

The 2026 APS Employee Census covered eligible ongoing and non-ongoing employees from 113 agencies and entities that engage staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Invitations to participate in the 2026 APS Employee Census were sent to employees from 4 May 2026. The number of invitations was adjusted as new employees were added, separations processed, and incorrect email addresses corrected. The deadline for survey completion was 5 June 2026.

The final sample size for the 2026 APS Employee Census was 187,816. A total of 149,668 APS employees responded, giving a response rate of 80%.

### Management and administration

The APS Employee Census is managed and coordinated by the APSC's People Insights Branch. The APSC contracts an external service provider to support survey administration and reporting activities. Ipsos was the service provider in 2026.

### Public release

The public release of agency APS Employee Census data is aggregated and de-identified to protect individuals' privacy. The release complies with the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the principles and codes under the Act.

The *Public Service Act 1999* requires all participating APS agencies, except by formal exemption, to publish a report of their APS Employee Census results and a responding action plan. Agencies publish their report and action plan on their respective websites after this report is tabled. These results can also be centrally accessed on the APSC website.

### Privacy

The APSC employs specific rules around how results are reported. Such rules protect the privacy of respondents.

De-identification of data is undertaken in accordance with guidance provided by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

More information about how privacy is maintained can be found within the APSC Privacy Policy: https://www.apsc.gov.au/privacy.

### Communication Index

The 2026 APS Employee Census addressed communication through a set of dedicated questions that contribute to an index score. The Communication Index assesses communication at individual, group and agency levels.

### Employee Engagement Index

The APS Employee Census uses a model of employee engagement developed by the external service provider. This model addresses 3 attributes associated with employee engagement and measures the emotional connection and commitment employees have to working for their organisation. In this model, an engaged employee will:

- Say – the employee is a positive advocate of the organisation.
- Stay – the employee is committed to the organisation and wants to stay as an employee.
- Strive – the employee is willing to put in discretionary effort to excel in their job and help their organisation succeed.

First introduced in 2017, the Say, Stay, Strive employee engagement model is flexible and the APSC has tailored questions for the APS context.

### Enabling Innovation Index

The 2026 APS Employee Census addressed innovation through a set of dedicated questions that contribute to an index score. This Enabling Innovation Index assesses whether employees feel willing and able to be innovative, and whether their agency has a culture that enables them to be so.

### Senior Executive Service Manager Index

In 2022, the APS Employee Census introduced the SES Manager Index. This index assesses how employees view the leadership behaviours of their immediate SES manager in line with the APS Leadership Capability Framework.

### Immediate Supervisor Index

In 2022, the APS Employee Census introduced the Immediate Supervisor Index. Similar to the SES Manager Index, this index assesses employee views of the leadership behaviours of their immediate supervisor as described in the APS Leadership Capability Framework.

## Wellbeing Policies and Support Index

The Wellbeing Policies and Support Index in the APS Employee Census measures both the practical and cultural elements that allow for a sustainable and healthy working environment. The APS has long been focused on the wellbeing of its employees. As employers, APS agencies have obligations under work health and safety legislation. Beyond these obligations, strong employee wellbeing drives engagement, collaboration and the high performance of individuals, teams and organisations.

### Speak Up Culture Index

In 2026, the APS Employee Census introduced the Speak Up Culture Index. The Speak Up Culture Index accesses how confident employees feel that they can openly share ideas, ask questions, or admit mistakes without fear of embarrassment or punishment. Speak Up Culture focuses on fostering trust, respect, and open communication within teams.

## Calculating and interpreting index scores

The questions comprising all APS Employee Census indices were asked on a 5-point agreement scale (Table A 25). To calculate the index score, each respondent's answers to the set of questions were recoded to fall on a scale of between 0 and 100. Recoded responses were then averaged across the 3 or more index questions to provide the index score for that respondent. An individual only receives an index score if they have responded to all questions comprising that index.

**Table A 25: Example table used to calculate index scores (for one APS employees)**

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree or disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Weight | 100 | 75 | 50 | 25 | 0 | |
| Example question 1 | | ✓ | | | | 75 |
| Example question 2 | | ✓ | | | | 75 |
| Example question 3 | | | ✓ | | | 50 |
| Example question 4 | | | | ✓ | | 25 |
| Example question 5 | ✓ | | | | | 100 |
| Sum of question weights for this employee | | | | | | 325 |
| Index score for this example respondent (325/5) | | | | | | 65 |

Index scores for groups of respondents are calculated by averaging the respondent scores comprising that group.

## Treatment of responses of 'do not know' and 'not applicable'

Specific questions included within the 2026 APS Employee Census enabled respondents to provide responses of 'do not know', 'not applicable' or similar. Responses of this nature were typically excluded from the calculation of results for inclusion within this report. This was so that results reflected respondents who expressed an informed opinion to the relevant question.

Depending on intent, other products generated from the 2026 APS Employee Census may not apply these same rules. The method in analysis and reporting will be made clear within these products.

## APS Agency Survey

The APS Agency Survey is conducted annually and collects information on a range of workforce initiatives, strategies and compliance matters, including the number and type of APS Code of Conduct breaches. The information collected through the APS Agency Survey is used to inform workforce strategies and for other research and evaluation purposes.

Since 2002, the APS Agency Survey has been administered to APS agencies with at least 20 APS employees employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The survey assists the APS Commissioner to fulfil a range of duties as specified in the Act. These include, but are not limited to:

- informing the annual State of the Service Report
- strengthening the professionalism of the APS and facilitating continuous improvement in its workforce management
- monitoring, reviewing and reporting on APS strategies, initiatives and policies.

### APS Agency Survey collection methodology

In 2026, the APS Agency Survey was administered to 103 agencies from 15 June to 31 July 2026. The response rate for 2026 was 100%, which is typical for this survey.

Each year the APS Agency Survey is sent to the contact officers nominated for each agency. These contact officers are responsible for coordinating the input from relevant areas and uploading responses to the survey. The survey requires each Agency Head or a delegate to verify their agency's submission for completeness and accuracy of responses.

### APS Agency Survey management and administration

The People Insights Branch of the APSC manages and coordinates the APS Agency Survey. The APSC contracts an external service provider to support survey administration. Ipsos was the service provider in 2026.

### Privacy

The 2026 APS Agency Survey did not collect any personal information.

## Collection of diversity data

Concise demographic information enables the APS to produce accurate workforce descriptions to support the management of its workforce. The APSC collects personal data including diversity information concerning employees employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. On engagement to the APS, employees provide personal information to their employing agencies. This information is provided to the APSC to enable the execution of the APS Commissioner's functions.

With the exception of gender, the provision of diversity data is voluntary for APS employees. As a result, diversity rates represent the proportion of employees who identify as belonging to that diversity group, and actual diversity rates may be underestimated. The APS Employee Census, in which responses are de-identified, records higher rates for some diversity groups.

This difference is historically largest for the proportion of employees with ongoing disability. The APS Employee Census likely attracts higher disclosure rates as responses are not readily identifiable to

individual employees, unlike the more formal human resource system. Many people are likely to regard their diversity information as sensitive information and it has long been established that people avoid reporting details they regard as sensitive. Employees may decide to withhold information when they believe it does not affect their ability to carry out their role. Some may have concerns about possible impacts to their future employment or how it will affect them socially within the workplace. The APS takes pride in its ability to foster inclusive workplaces but also respects employees' rights to privacy regarding personal information.

## Collecting gender information

### APSED

Individuals may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth or during infancy, or as a gender which is not exclusively male or female. Therefore, where gender information is collected and recorded in a personal record, individuals should be given the option to select M (Male), F (Female) or X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified). This reporting approach is aligned with the Australian Government Guidelines (Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender | Attorney-General's Department).

### APS Employee Census

From 2014 to 2020, respondents to the APS Employee Census could identify their gender as X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified). From 2021, this question was aligned with the updated ABS standard (Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables 2020). This standard better provides all employees the opportunity to more accurately describe their gender as man or male, woman or female, non-binary or that they use a different term.

More information can be found at

https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/human-rights-and-anti-discrimination/australian-government-guidelines-recognition-sex-and-gender

https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release