



Australian Government



COMMONWEALTH  
**OMBUDSMAN**

# 2023-24 CORPORATE PLAN

Financial Years 2023-24 to 2026-27

## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



### WA BASED ARTIST – KEVIN BYNDER

#### Aboriginal Artist – Whadjuk Nyungar Badimia Yamatji

The centre of the artwork portrays and represents the colours of the Ombudsman. On the outside of the circle are the semi circles they represent the Women and Men that work and have worked, in the Ombudsman's Office. The coloured circles that surround the Ombudsman are the different sectors such as Overseas Students, VET Student Loans, Defence Force, Private Health Insurance, Postal Industry and Immigration. All these sectors are represented by the Ombudsman and in the artwork they are all connected to the centre. The blue features between each sector are the waterways and the Derbal Yerrigin (Swan River). These are created by the Waagyl (rainbow serpent). The red circles represent the business and people of the community we serve.

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Design: Typeyard Design

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# Commonwealth Ombudsman's foreword



As the accountable authority of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office), I am pleased to present the Office's 2023–24 Corporate Plan.

This plan covers the four-year period to 2026-27, as required under section 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth). It identifies the strategic and operating framework, and the actions we will take to achieve our purpose.

This corporate plan articulates how we will engage with people with grievances about government agencies and regulated entities. Through this, we will also seek to influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration in Australia and provide assurance that the Australian Government and private sector entities we oversee act with integrity and treat people fairly.

There are a range of factors influencing the broader Australian Public Service operating environment that we are engaged with, and planning for, this year. The APS is currently engaged in bargaining, and we will be engaging with our staff to introduce a new Enterprise Agreement in 2023-24. More broadly, integrity is a key pillar of the broader APS reform agenda.

We are acutely aware of our role as a Commonwealth integrity agency and the unique position we hold to influence the community's trust in the public service. Over the next four years, the Office will take purposeful action to strengthen the confidence of the public,

the entities we oversee and Parliament in our independence and credibility through robust investigations and oversight. We will continue to engage effectively with complainants and with the entities we regulate, and appropriately exercise our powers and resources to take a stand when it is necessary.

As an Office we have proactively engaged with the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, both as an agency within its remit, and as a fellow oversight body. We will continue to do so in 2023-24.

We have taken stock of the recent Report of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme and made some changes to our processes and procedures. We have reflected on what it means to be independent, robust and credible.

Complaints management is at the core of what we do. People who raise concerns with us expect clear and simple interactions. The Office will build internal capability and use and invest in technology innovations to meet these expectations and support our achievement

of delivering an effective service. We go into 2023-24 with a greater focus on the early resolution of complaints, using technology to assist the efficiency of our operations, where it is appropriate to do so.

In addition to resolving individual complaints, the Office addresses problems that may affect the broader community through our focus on systemic issues. We will continue to detect and monitor trends and undertake own motion and other investigations, where appropriate. We will seek to influence the entities we oversee and we will share learnings with the community, Parliament and entities we oversee through our published reports reflecting the outcomes of our investigations, assurance activities and insights.

We are committed to enhancing the value and efficiency of our statutory oversight functions, including through our focus on preventing inhumane treatment of people in detention under OPCAT and through our oversight of the use of covert and intrusive powers by law enforcement and integrity agencies. Our risk-based oversight approach to overseeing these activities supports the Office to focus resources on areas of greatest risk.

In the year ahead we will continue to employ professional curiosity and courage to enhance how the Office influences improvements in public administration. Some of our functions are new or evolving, while we are also focusing on the finalisation of some key schemes we currently administer. The Office will make the best use of its resources to develop our people and take effective action which supports the best outcomes for all Australians. Strengthening a robust performance culture within our agency will help to drive improved service outcomes. This plan includes our updated 2023-24 performance framework.

I look forward to meeting the challenges and opportunities over the life of this plan.



**Iain Anderson**

Commonwealth Ombudsman  
18 August 2023

# What we do



Independent, accessible, effective complaint handling



Visit detention facilities and inspect law enforcement agencies



Improving public administration by influencing entities to be accountable, lawful, transparent and responsive

## OUR OBJECTIVES

## OUR 2023-24 PRIORITIES



Early resolution of complaints where it is appropriate to do so



Investing in efficient, effective and accessible complaints management



Increasing outreach and community engagement



Enhancing the value and efficiency of statutory oversight



Enhancing how we influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration

# Purpose

The outcome of the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman is:

'Fair and accountable administrative action by Australian Government and prescribed private sector entities, by investigating complaints, reviewing administrative action and statutory compliance inspections and reporting.'

The Office delivers this outcome through its purpose to:

- provide assurance that the Australian Government and prescribed private sector entities that the Office oversees act with integrity and treat people fairly
- influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration in Australia.

In fulfilling our purpose, we strive to maintain the confidence of three main groups:

- the community
- Parliament
- Government agencies and private sector entities that we oversee.

We deliver on our purpose through complaint handling, conducting investigations, performing visits and inspections, encouraging good public administration practices, and administering specialist redress schemes.

To support us to achieve our purpose in 2023-24, we have implemented a number of changes to our performance framework. The changes include refining our objectives.

# Our objectives

## OBJECTIVE 1

Provide independent, effective, efficient, and accessible complaint handling services to ensure the entities we oversee act with fairness and integrity.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Provide assurance that detention facilities, law enforcement and integrity agencies we oversee comply with statutory and international obligations, through inspections, visits and reports.

## OBJECTIVE 3

Maintain the confidence of the community, Parliament and the entities we oversee.

## OBJECTIVE 4

Influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration, through formal and informal comments, suggestions and recommendations, strategic engagement, inspections, visits, education and investigations.



# Key activities

Our jurisdiction is broad, and we work across a diverse environment. We oversee Australian Government entities and their contracted service providers, subject to some specific statutory exclusions (such as intelligence agencies and the Australian Taxation Office). We have a range of formal powers to support the delivery of our oversight, in respect of government agencies and the private sector.

We oversee Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement and integrity agencies' use of certain intrusive and covert powers.

We proactively visit Commonwealth places of detention and coordinate the network of preventive monitoring bodies across states and territories, as part of Australia's implementation of the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

We also oversee a range of private sector entities, including:

- private health insurers
- some postal operators
- some providers of tertiary and vocational education and training services.

We have a role in administering the Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Scheme including investigating certain public interest disclosures and handling complaints about the management of public interest disclosures by Commonwealth government agencies.

We assess reports from current and former members of the Australian Defence Force regarding the Defence abuse reparation scheme and students regarding the VET FEE-HELP redress measures.

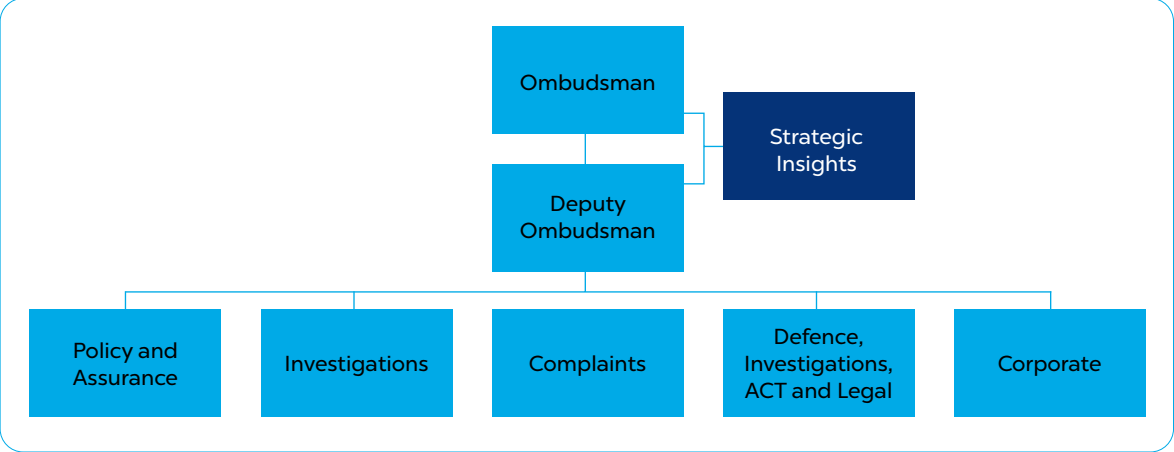
Our legislation provides the power to require the production of information or documents, to examine witnesses (including under oath or affirmation) and to enter premises for the purposes of our functions.

During 2023-24, and over the next four years, we will focus on maintaining the confidence of the community, Parliament and entities we oversee, through:

- Delivering and investing in effective, efficient and accessible complaints management as the central function of the Office, including an increase in outreach and community engagement and a greater focus on early resolution of complaints, where appropriate, to deliver the best possible service to complainants.
- Enhancing the value and efficiency of our statutory oversight functions to provide assurance over detention facilities, law enforcement agencies, and integrity agencies by introducing a more flexible and risk-based approach to assurance activities.
- Enhancing the ways the Office influences enduring systemic improvement in public administration.

# Corporate structure

The Office is currently organised into five branches, with a small Strategic Insights Team reporting directly to the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman.



# Performance and service delivery

## Performance

We reviewed our performance framework and implemented changes to our objectives and targets for 2023-24. These changes support the delivery of our outcome. We identified 4 essential objectives underpinning delivery of our purpose. These objectives are linked to our detailed performance criteria. This table outlines our purpose, objectives and performance criteria.

### OUR PURPOSE

Provide assurance that the Australian Government entities and prescribed private sector organisations that the Office oversees act with integrity and treat people fairly. Influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration in Australia and the region.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

Provide independent, effective, efficient, and accessible complaint handling services to ensure the entities we oversee act with fairness and integrity.

- Performance Criteria 1**
- We provide quality complaint handling services.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

Provide assurance that detention facilities, law enforcement and integrity agencies we oversee comply with statutory and international obligations, through inspections, visits and reports.

- Performance Criteria 2**
- We effectively deliver our assurance activities.

#### OBJECTIVE 3

Maintain the confidence of the community, Parliament and the entities we oversee.

- Performance Criteria 3**
- We maintain the confidence of community, Parliament and the entities we oversee.

#### OBJECTIVE 4

Influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration, through formal and informal comments, suggestions and recommendations, strategic engagement, inspections, visits, education and investigations.

- Performance Criteria 4**
- We influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration.

Our performance against the criteria will be demonstrated both qualitatively and quantitatively. For some criteria, setting a target of 100 per cent success is appropriate, especially those related to compliance (such as the target that 100 per cent of reports will be published within statutory timeframes). For other measures, our aim is to achieve performance results against a set percentage target (for example, measuring complaint handling performance).

#### 4-year projection

Our Key Performance Indicators will continue in the forward years. However, in the 4 years ahead we will review the changes made to our performance framework and ensure that our objectives and targets remain appropriate.

## Performance criteria and targets

This table outlines the performance criteria and the quantitative metrics applicable.

Performance Criterion	Applicable quantitative measures and targets	2023-24
<b>1</b> <b>We provide quality complaint handling services</b>	Percentage of complaint handling performance standards met	80%
	Percentage of complainants surveyed by the Office are satisfied (or better) with our service	65%
	Percentage of complainants surveyed found our service to be accessible	65%
<b>2</b> <b>We effectively deliver our assurance activities</b>	Number of inspections and visits undertaken	Annual count
	Percentage of planned risk-based inspections and visits undertaken	90%
	Percentage of number of targeted reports for long-term detainees provided to the Minister	80%
<b>3</b> <b>We maintain the confidence of community, Parliament and the entities we oversee</b>	Number of submissions and briefings made to, and appearances before, Parliamentary Committees	Annual Count
	Percentage of reports delivered within legislative timeframes	100%
	Percentage of surveyed entities give a rating of satisfied (or better) with our impartiality	65%
<b>4</b> <b>We influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration</b>	Number of publications	Annual Count
	Percentage of formal recommendations in reports accepted by agencies and entities	75%

# Service delivery

We are committed to continuing to provide high-quality and client-focused service to members of the public and providing outcomes for individuals and the broader community that are timely and easy to understand. In 2023–24 we have a particular focus on early resolution of complaints, where appropriate.

Delivering effective, efficient and accessible complaints management is central to our functions. This year we included a new performance target to monitor complainant satisfaction with our accessibility. Improving satisfaction with our service, and how accessible we are, is a key priority.

Investing in effective systems to support our service delivery is also a key focus. Extending on from the implementation of a new contact centre system in early 2023, we are considering ways to invest in our complaint management operations.

Part of our commitment to serving the public includes ensuring entities implement the recommendations we make in our investigations

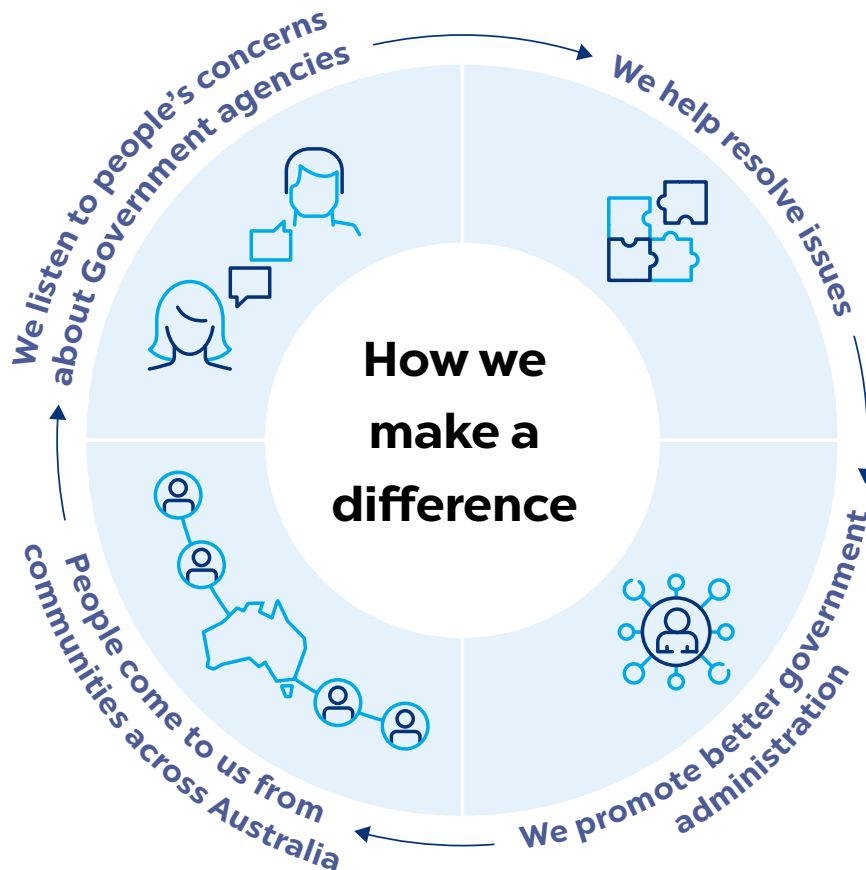
and reports. We report on the number of recommendations made, and accepted, in our Key Performance Indicators. Periodically the Office also takes action to follow up on the activities that agencies have taken to implement our recommendations. We publish these reports where it is appropriate to do so.

We also aim to increase outreach and education activities through targeted face-to-face and online engagements tailored to the broad range of stakeholders and entities we oversee.

## 4-year projection

To improve our complaint management operations, we are considering enhancements to the systems the public use to engage with us, alongside considering internal systems used by our staff to best support our activities.

We will increase our engagement with the community and stakeholders. We will also improve the timeliness of our contact with members of the public who make complaints, and consider mechanisms to improve how we update them on their matter, and how often.



# Our operating environment

Our Executive Committee, supported by input from across the Office, plays a key role in monitoring our operating environment for risks and opportunities both within, and outside of, our control.

As an independent statutory oversight agency, we have considerable discretion in setting priorities and activities, including having regard to the prevailing risks and opportunities around us. The Executive Committee regularly considers the Office's priorities and how best to use our resources to achieve our objectives.

## Environmental factors

We are aware of the evolving Australian Public Service (APS) landscape, and in 2023–24 we will proactively engage with changes across the APS to maximise our impact and influence. Equally, as an agency with complaint handling at its core, we are attuned to environmental factors such as community expectations in the services delivered by the Australian Government and other entities we oversee. These expectations are relevant to our operating environment, both as an independent statutory oversight agency within the APS, and in our role overseeing how the Australian Government, and other entity, provide services to the community.

## Australian Public Service Reform and Enterprise Bargaining

The APS Reform agenda reflects a commitment to *building a stronger public service that delivers a better outcome for the community, acts as a model employer and contributes to a fairer and more inclusive Australia*. Activities, including opportunities to engage in the reform agenda,

are likely to emerge in 2023–24 and continue in the forward years.

Sector-wide workplace bargaining negotiations began in 2023 and will continue in 2023–24. This work, led by the Workplace Relations Bargaining Taskforce, seeks to establish common conditions. We will commence a bargaining process to put in place a new Enterprise Agreement.

## Australian Government Data and Digital Strategy

The government's final Data and Digital Strategy is expected to be released by the end of 2023. The initial strategy outlines the government's 2030 vision for simple, secure and connected public services for all people and businesses, with people and businesses at the centre of the activities. We provide a range of services direct to the public utilising digital technology. A focus on people-centred services and accessibility will inform our 2023–24 activities and continue in the forward years.

The need for all organisations to have an appropriate cyber security posture also influences our operating environment and is reflected in the focus areas in our technology roadmap.

## Establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has been established as an independent agency to detect, investigate and report on serious or systemic corruption in the Commonwealth public sector, including our Office. We will deal with complaints about the administrative actions of the NACC and inspect the NACC's use of covert and intrusive powers, alongside the NACC Inspector.

## 1-year projection

As well as ensuring compliance with our obligations under the NACC legislation, we will prioritise establishing relationships with the NACC and Inspector of the NACC in 2023–24 given the potential for our jurisdictions to overlap. These relationships will be underpinned by the development of MOUs or similar protocols that would clarify our respective roles and responsibilities.

## Robodebt Report Recommendations

In July 2023 the Australian Government tabled the report by the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme ('Royal Commission'). Current and former officials of our Office – although not compellable by Royal Commissions – voluntarily provided statements and appeared as witnesses, to assist the Royal Commission. A number of recommendations touch directly upon our role and powers.

## 1-year projection

The Office is committed to working through the Royal Commission's recommendations, observations and comments with a view to actively engaging with the development of the government's response, led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Attorney-General's Department (AGD), and the Australian Public Service Commission.

# Factors associated with our activities

In 2023–24 we will be impacted by both the expansion of some of our internal functions, and current scheme administration activities drawing to a close. We are planning for those activities.

## VET FEE-HELP Student Redress Measures

The VET FEE-HELP Student Redress Measures (the measures) came into effect on 1 January 2019. Under the measures, people who believe that they incurred a VET FEE-HELP debt because of inappropriate conduct by an education provider can complain to us and seek redress. We assess whether a recommendation can be made to the Secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to recredit

the debt. Following the announcement of an extension, the measures will end on 31 December 2023.

The end of the measures means that to access the Student Redress Measures, potentially eligible complainants with a VET FEE-HELP debt need to make a complaint to the Office by 31 December 2023.

## 4-year projection

Based on current volumes and our funding for the administration of this scheme, we anticipate finalising all complaints by 30 June 2024. We will continue working closely with the Department for Employment and Workplace Relations and the Australian Taxation Office to consider options for VET FEE-HELP complainants once the student redress measures end.

## Defence abuse reparation scheme

In December 2017 we commenced administering the Defence abuse reparation scheme following amendments to the Defence Force Ombudsman's abuse reporting functions under the *Ombudsman Regulations 2017*. Eligibility to be assessed for a reparation payment under the scheme closed on 30 June 2023, which was the deadline for making a report to the Office. We will publish an interim report into our administration of the scheme in late 2023.

## 4-year projection

Once all eligible reports are assessed, the Office will collate relevant and de-identified data into a final report. We will finalise assessment of all eligible reports under the scheme within the 4-year reporting period.

## Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Scheme

In June 2023, the Parliament passed amendments to the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) to implement several recommendations of the 2016 Review of the PID Act (the Moss review). These included improved protections for disclosers and other persons assisting the investigation of a disclosure, removing personal work-related conduct from the scope of the PID Act, and providing our Office

and the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) with new powers to oversee the operation of the PID Scheme. The amendments took effect from 1 July 2023, to coincide with commencement of the National Anti-Corruption Commission. The government indicated it will consult on a second stage of reforms involving the redrafting of the PID Act to address the underlying complexity of the scheme and provide effective and accessible protections to public sector whistleblowers.

In 2023–24, we will focus on providing assistance to disclosers and agencies regarding the July 2023 changes to the PID Act, via guidance materials, training and forums. We will also implement our new reporting and oversight functions, including a risk-based approach to identifying agencies or issues that might warrant closer scrutiny. These activities will be delivered to the extent possible within existing funding, no new funding having been received for these new functions.

### 1-year projection

Into 2024–25, we will work with AGD and the IGIS to contribute to consultation on the second stage of reforms. Subject to our functions under the PID Act being maintained in the reforms, over coming years we will continue to assist disclosers and agencies to implement the updated scheme, while also maturing our reporting and oversight frameworks.

We remain well placed to take on further complementary activities with appropriate resourcing.

## Other factors

### Decisions by government and entities we oversee

Decisions made by the Australian and ACT Governments can impact our operating environment, including changes to our responsibilities and levels of resourcing.

A large part of our work involves engagement with public and private sector entities. While we seek to influence the entities we oversee, their decision-making is outside our control.

## Cooperation

We build robust working relationships with the agencies we oversee and strong working relationships with civil society to support our ability to influence systemic improvement in public administration.

This includes:

- responding to agencies' and industry providers' requests for comments on new initiatives or reforms
- participating in government and industry forums
- holding briefings with agencies and peak bodies on a regular or ad-hoc basis
- identifying opportunities to expand (and reduce) our engagement activities to match priorities.

Increasing community outreach and engagement is an area of focus in 2023–24. This focus includes considering how to improve awareness of our Office and the accessibility of our services and products and identify current issues and trends. Our engagement focus also extends to engaging with Australian Government agencies and other entities we oversee through targeted engagement in line with our objective to influence enduring systemic improvement in public administration in Australia.

## Extended functions

Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government legislation provides that the Commonwealth Ombudsman is also the ACT Ombudsman. As ACT Ombudsman we are also the Inspector of the ACT Integrity Commission, we administer the ACT Reportable Conduct scheme and we oversee the ACT FOI Act. We are accountable to the ACT Legislative Assembly for the performance of these functions.



# Capability

## People

Our people, infrastructure and technology are essential to achieving our purpose. We are committed to our Reconciliation Action Plan, inclusion and diversity.

We are focused on supporting our workforce to be adaptive, dynamic, innovative and engaged.

In 2023–24 we are focused on workforce planning and developing our Workforce Strategy with a focus on the following 4 key areas:

- **Effective leadership** – is a critical driver of organisational performance. We encourage leadership at all levels and support this by developing leadership skills in all our staff. This includes focused development for our Executive leaders and our emerging leaders to ensure effective organisational succession where possible.
- **Attraction, recruitment and retention** – recognises the critical skills needed across our Office and builds on recent improvements to our recruitment practices, including the implementation of an eRecruit system, the refresh of a Temporary Employment Register, and the development of an Employee Value Proposition in 2023.
- **Employee wellbeing** – in 2024 we will launch our new Wellbeing Strategy and continue to build on our performance management and recognition programs with the support provided by the Employee Assistance Program. Complementing our strategies to support all staff, we have a key focus on the wellbeing of our people in frontline service roles.
- **Capability enhancement** – we will review our centralised learning and development and performance development frameworks to embed core competencies and skills, and ensure our learning and development is aligned to APS-wide capability initiatives and strategies. Our focus will also address capability needs and gaps identified through APS Reform, APS Census results and the increase in hybrid ways of working.

## 4-year projection

The 4-year outlook will see our focus on strategic and operational workforce planning continue, ensuring that the Office has the right people, with the right skills in the right roles, at the right time to deliver our services with impact. We will continue our active focus on embracing and promoting an inclusive culture that focuses on the employee experience.

## Technology

We are seeking opportunities through technology to make engaging with our Office easier. We aim to respond to and resolve issues faster, using research on how we can most effectively communicate with the public.

Our technology roadmap has six key focus areas. These are:

- **Cloud adoption** – replace core systems with cloud services (Software-as-a-Service) to improve security, maintainability, inter-operability and future capability.
- **Digital transformation** – modernise services to provide an omni-channel experience based on customer needs.
- **Workforce mobility** – ensure our workforce can productively work anywhere and at any time across and beyond the Office, using fit-for-purpose technology solutions.
- **Security and reliability** – ensure we provide robust, reliable and resilient ICT services across our agency, as part of a whole-of-government response to increased security threats and cyber threats in particular.
- **Digital records** – ensure our digital record-keeping supports staff mobility and helps employees to work productively and innovatively.
- **Business intelligence** – invest in business systems that support inter-operability and on-demand, dynamic analytics.

## 4-year projection

In the coming years we expect all our core systems will be cloud-based, simplifying maintenance and improving security while providing the latest capabilities to meet our customers' needs. We will investigate opportunities to use artificial intelligence to assist in identifying systemic themes affecting our customers.

## Infrastructure

Our staff work across offices in Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Our office space in each of these locations facilitates our hybrid working arrangements. We are strongly connected across our geographic locations, with many staff working in geographically dispersed teams. ICT applications, such as video conferencing, are used to ensure continuity of purpose and collaboration between the various locations. Our remote working capability and video conferencing play of central role in our day-to-day operations. We continue to increase our flexibility by improving our remote working technology to maintain or improve our current productivity.

## 4-year projection

We will continue providing services across the country and improve the agility and connectivity of the offices through enhanced ICT capability. We will regularly review our property footprint to seek efficiencies while ensuring we have flexible, practical, sustainable and future-proof designs that support our strategic priorities.

## Diversity and inclusion

We continue our commitment to inclusivity through acknowledging days of importance across a variety of diversity domains. This includes all-staff events recognising NAIDOC Week, IDAHOBIT Day, International Day of People with Disability, and Refugee Week.

We value a workforce that reflects the diversity of our stakeholders, partners, and the community we serve. Our activities are driven by executive champions, networks and regular activities to support our inclusive culture. Many staff volunteer

to share both their time and experience to support our diversity networks, working alongside senior leaders. Our Senior Assistant Ombudsmen undertake the following roles:

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Champion
- LGBTIQ+ Champion
- Disability Champion
- Wellbeing Champion
- First Nations Champion.

## 4-year projection

Our 2023–2025 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will be launched in late 2023, reflecting our continued commitment to progressing the diversity and inclusiveness of the Office.

## Reconciliation Action Plan

Our vision for reconciliation is to provide open, transparent, fair and accessible complaint services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and service providers, cultivate culturally competent senior leaders and staff across all work functions and locations, and support career development opportunities for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

In 2023 we will launch our 2023–2025 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which is a vital part of our commitment to ensuring we deliver services to First Nations peoples that are equal, open and culturally sensitive. Our RAP provides a public commitment to continuing reconciliation. This includes practical steps to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, while increasing our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. The RAP is part of our work to make our services more accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Office has a dedicated Manager for Indigenous Coordination and a First Nations Employee Network, providing advice and support to staff handling complaints relating to First Nations peoples and communities. Our RAP Working Group also delivers on the actions within our RAP to raise staff awareness.

#### 4-year projection

We will continue to support and grow our First Nations workforce and deliver culturally sensitive complaint services. We will do this through implementing strategies to support and develop our First Nations staff.

We will carry out our commitments under the new RAP to support our staff to grow, learn and practice innovative reconciliation measures across the Office. We will increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning. We will improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander recruitment, retention and professional development.

# Risk oversight and management

We promote a risk-aware culture by embedding risk management in all levels of our operations. We strive to ensure our people understand how their work helps to identify and manage risk. This culture is supported by a defined governance structure.

The management of risk is led by the Executive Committee and is carried out in accordance with our Office’s Risk Management Policy and Framework. The Executive Committee is chaired by the Ombudsman. Membership of the Executive Committee is comprised of the Deputy Ombudsman, Senior Assistant Ombudsmen, and Executive Level 1 and 2 representatives on a rotational basis.

The Ombudsman is also supported by the Audit and Risk Committee, which provides independent, objective assurance through:

- the unbiased assessment of the operations of the Office
- advice about the Office’s financial and operational controls
- assistance with improving the agency’s business performance
- information to management on the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The Risk Management Policy and Framework ensures that management of risk is integrated into planning, decision making and activities under a single risk management structure and provides the Ombudsman with appropriate systems and internal controls for the oversight and management of risk.

The Office has identified five enterprise risks and the strategies we use to manage them.

Risk description	Risk type	Risk mitigation strategies
<b>Delivery of functions is not effective and does not meet the expectations, or maintain the confidence, of the community, Parliament or the entities we oversee</b>	Reputation	We: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor performance</li> <li>• review programs, practices, policies and procedures for continuous improvement</li> <li>• identify, and track progress on, emerging issues and continuous improvement activities</li> <li>• develop and implement plans and strategies for continuous improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Failure to influence and hold entities we oversee to account</b>	Reputation/ Relevance	We: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actively and strategically manage stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• identify emerging issues</li> <li>• deliver timely and fit-for-purpose investigations and reports</li> <li>• review programs practices, policies and procedures</li> <li>• develop fit-for-purpose education and outreach events.</li> </ul>

Risk description	Risk type	Risk mitigation strategies
<b>Inadequate operating model and systems reduce service effectiveness across all functions</b>	Reputation/ Service delivery	We: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop and implement plans and strategies</li> <li>review programs, practices, policies and procedures</li> <li>have internal and external audits to monitor delivery of services and plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Ineffective Corporate business systems and technology</b>	Resource	We: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have appropriate plans and strategies in place (including Security and ICT reviews)</li> <li>review programs, practices, policies and procedures</li> <li>have internal and external audits</li> <li>have fit-for-purpose corporate services</li> <li>have a Wellbeing program and Employee Assistance Program</li> <li>conduct workplace assessments</li> <li>identify emerging issues</li> <li>effectively manage our internal budget.</li> </ul>
<b>Inability to attract, support and retain staff</b>	Resource	We: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop and implement plans and strategies for continuous improvement</li> <li>review programs, practices, policies and procedures</li> <li>have internal and external audits</li> <li>have a Wellbeing program and Employee Assistance Program</li> <li>identify emerging issues</li> <li>have fit-for-purpose corporate services, including recruitment processes and systems.</li> </ul>

#### 4-year projection

Following the release of the updated Commonwealth Risk Management Framework in late 2022, we are currently undertaking a review of our Risk Management Policy and Framework. This is anticipated to be finalised in 2023-24. Our people will be provided information about the revised framework to enhance our risk-aware culture across the Office.



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