



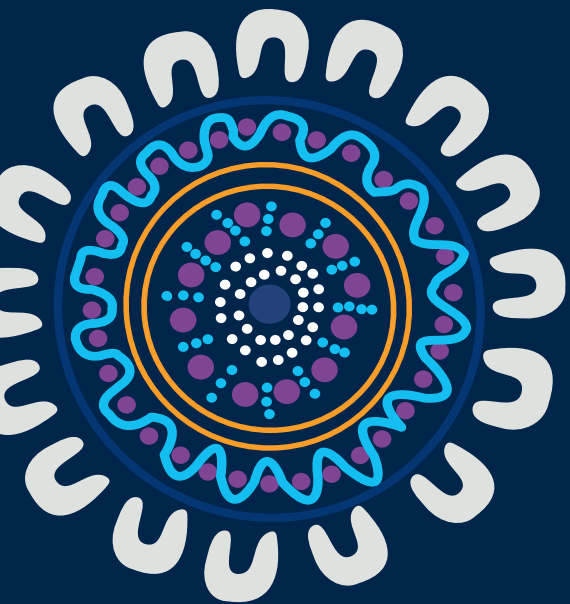
Australian Government
Department of Education

Capability Review

Action Plan

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SEPTEMBER 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Secretary's Foreword

Empowering our department for the future

On 25 July 2025, the Department of Education's Capability Review final report was published. This review highlighted our strengths and offered us valuable insights for ongoing growth and excellence.

I reiterate my thanks to the Senior Reviewers – Rachel Hunter AO PSM, Mike Mrdak AO, Kevin Brahim and Samantha Palmer – for delivering a fair and balanced assessment of the department as it stands and as it evolves.

It is gratifying to see the Senior Reviewers' recognition of our staff's dedication, resilience, strong ability to engage and maintain positive relationships with our stakeholders, and unwavering commitment to deliver equitable educational outcomes. I am proud to work alongside such passionate and skilled individuals – they are the strength of the department.

The Review has captured what we do well and areas for improvement. We are committed to addressing these areas, as outlined in the plan, including our role in delivering education for all, and our role in ensuring safety and quality for our learners.

This Review is one component of our broader vision. We are building a robust foundation—one that empowers our workforce and ensures Australians continue to benefit from the wellbeing and economic opportunities that quality education provides.

I am pleased to introduce the Department of Education Capability Review Action Plan to you.



Tony Cook PSM
Secretary

Australian Government
Department of Education

24 September 2025



The department plays an important role in the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds in Australia – from those taking the first tiny steps in their learning journey through to those transitioning to and through schooling and higher education; from the esteemed professionals solving the world's most challenging research problems to those adults who are changing careers or learning for pleasure. The department's policies, programs, funding and regulatory activity, combined with its capacity to monitor and report on learning outcomes, shape our nation and support opportunity especially for our most vulnerable.

Capability Review, Senior Reviewers





Introduction

**We are stewards of the education system,
and our work creates opportunities
for all Australians.**

The Capability Review Program is part of the government's enduring plan for Australian Public Service (APS) reform.

The Review is independent, forward-looking and aims to:

1. embed a culture of continuous improvement across the APS, and
2. ensure agencies can deliver government priorities and outcomes for Australians.

The Capability Review Program involves a Senior Review Team made up of independent reviewers and senior APS reviewers and uses a structured framework to compare agencies against comparable standards.

INSIGHTS AND RESPONSE

The Department of Education's Capability Review Final Report was released on 25 July 2025. The report celebrates the department's key strengths, including high workforce integrity, robust governance, a consistent record of delivery, and a genuine commitment to fostering a positive workplace culture.

The report also presents opportunities for further growth. It encourages the department to build on its strengths by further developing its role as a national leader and steward of the education system.

KEY INSIGHTS TO EMPOWER THE FUTURE OF OUR DEPARTMENT



Stewarding the system

Continue to develop a holistic strategy which is central to the department's role as steward of the education system as a whole.



Strong partnerships

Further enhance collaboration with external stakeholders by strengthening partnerships, harnessing their expertise and building trust, levers that are central to system performance.



Evidence informed

Monitor and influence the transparent sharing of data with the department's federated partners, integrating data analytics and information systems.



Future-ready workforce

Increase current workforce skills and knowledge in regulation, service and program delivery, and optimise existing skills in policy and public administration craft.



Our ideal future state

As stewards of Australia's education system, our focus is firmly fixed on the future.

Our department is committed to building the essential capabilities that will empower us to deliver outcomes and fulfill government priorities ensuring that, together with our users and stakeholders, we will create a lasting, positive impact—no matter what challenges and opportunities may arise.

We will build on our strengths by:

- providing stewardship, strategic direction and national leadership of Australia's education system through early years, school, higher education, international and research
- working in partnership with our stakeholders to improve education, access, equity and wellbeing outcomes for all learners
- delivering trusted advice to the Australian Government on education
- developing and implementing policy, programs and legislation, underpinned by evidence and data.

Our future state will be defined by the following characteristics:



Great working culture



Trusted advice



Global leader



Growth mindset



Strong partnerships



Strong cultural capability



Flexibility in the way we work



Well respected



Experts in education policy and systems

Our compass for action

To navigate to our ideal future state and meet tomorrow's challenges, we will draw strength from our strong foundations and our high-performing organisation by harnessing:



Evidence-based: guided by the best available information on what works to drive meaningful change



Existing work: harness and build on work already underway across the department and the broader APS



Incremental change: focus on the quality of change, not its magnitude, and embrace that change may occur unevenly



Opportunistic: actively monitor for new opportunities that can contribute to driving change, when and as they arise



People focus: take a staff and user-centred approach and prioritise sound change management principles and practices.



Actioning the Capability Review



FOCUS AREA 1: STEWARDING THE SYSTEM

Embedding a system-wide approach to drive better education outcomes for all.

OUR APPROACH

- Develop and implement our approach to addressing the department's longer-term priorities, including opportunities to strengthen our national stewardship role.
- Build staff capability to engage in strategic foresight and whole-of-system conversations, including through training, resources and initiatives.
- Embed our approach to strategic planning and prioritisation to ensure our department's resourcing is strategically aligned.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- A clear strategic approach to addressing longer-term priorities which helps to strengthen our national stewardship role.
- Our department enables and mobilises shared goals through effective planning and resourcing.



FOCUS AREA 2: STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Enhance our collaboration with stakeholders to strengthen our partnership efforts.

OUR APPROACH

- Embed the way we work in partnership across the department, including through the implementation of the First Nations Partnership Playbook.
- Build staff understanding and capability in engagement and partnerships through training and exposure, including through the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement.
- Continue to build trust with our stakeholders, including through formal partnerships with First Nations communities, joint projects with other agencies and stakeholder surveys to understand the needs of those we work with.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Staff use culturally appropriate engagement strategies to work in partnership and continue to actively implement and deliver against our Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.
- Staff engage in activities to build confidence and capability to engage with diverse perspectives to co-design and inform policy and program development at all stages.
- Our department actively participates in opportunities to co-design and collaborate with our stakeholders, contributing to making shared decisions a part of our everyday work practices.





FOCUS AREA 3: EVIDENCE INFORMED

Driving system improvement and culture of evidence-informed decision making through strategic data sharing.

OUR APPROACH

- Embed our Data Sharing Approach to ensure a unified and strategic approach to the sharing of data.
- Continue to progress initiatives that will build capability and confidence for all staff to use data and evidence, to promote an evidence-based culture.
- Grow our education evidence base by promoting data availability and sharing and enhancing our understanding of data sovereignty and cultural sensitivities.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Our department has a cohesive and strategic approach to the sharing of data, which helps us to build and maintain trust with our stakeholders.
- Staff engage in initiatives to build the skills and capability to use data effectively, contributing to building a departmental culture of evidence-based briefing and continuous improvement.
- Policies and programs are informed by reliable, relevant and holistic data, and we use data and evidence from stakeholders to develop practical policies which have positive impacts for our end users.



FOCUS AREA 4: **FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE**

Building workforce capability to lead change and deliver with impact.

OUR APPROACH

- Embed a forward-looking and adaptive work model that equips staff with the tools, training, and support needed to confidently deliver outcomes and meet our workforce capability needs.
- Strengthen awareness of our regulatory functions and expand collaboration, while building our regulatory workforce capability in line with Commonwealth guidelines and best practice.
- Continue to develop our workforce strategies to ensure our core and essential roles and capabilities are delivered in-house as a first consideration.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Staff have the knowledge, skills and capabilities to understand the broader context we work within and engage in strategic thinking, whole-of-government conversations and work to contribute to whole-of-system performance and outcomes for students.
- The department effectively performs its regulatory functions, and staff are appropriately equipped with the skills required to deliver on this work.



How we will get there

Our department is guided by a clear vision and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for Australians through education.

This plan outlines the steps we will take together, grounded in professionalism, collaboration, and a strong sense of purpose.

It sets out practical actions and strategies to help us meet current and future challenges, while fostering a workplace that values excellence, inclusivity, and continuous improvement. By working collectively and drawing on our strengths, we will move forward with confidence and clarity.

Enabling strategies and plans

THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Actions will be implemented over 4 years and will align with the Corporate Plan, leveraging its key enabling capabilities to ensure coordinated delivery.

We are supported by internal strategies and action plans, as well as external reform initiatives to progress towards our vision and ideal future state.

Our **Corporate Plan** is the department's primary planning document. It defines our purpose, long-term goals, and national stewardship role. It links the department's enabling capabilities and provides oversight on how we manage risks.

The **Capability Review Action Plan** identifies areas for capability uplift and actions to address them. It builds on and integrates the department's existing strategic frameworks to drive measurable, incremental improvements in organisational capability.



Several strategies and plans support us to achieve overarching direction and ensure that our key capability areas are embedded and reflected throughout our planning:

- The **People Strategy** sets the overarching direction and priorities for how the department will support and develop staff, and the **Enterprise Workforce Plan** outlines the critical roles, capabilities and key focus areas to support staff to deliver.
- The **Finance Strategy 2025-2028** outlines key resourcing priorities and how we meet financial and resource management requirements under Commonwealth finance law.
- The **Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Framework** provides staff with resources to proactively identify and manage risk in line with our governance arrangements.
- The **ICT Strategy 2023-2026** and **Data Strategy 2023-2026** underpin our approach to the use of technology and our ICT and data priorities for transforming the way we work.
- The **Census Action Plan** responds to staff sentiment and organisational culture. It informs workforce and strategic planning.
- The **National Agreement on Closing the Gap**, including the 4 Priority Reforms, underpins the department's focus on building our capability to improve First Nations outcomes and the **Reconciliation Action Plan** commits the department to implementing genuine actions that advance reconciliation within the organisation and broader communities.



How will we measure success?

We will measure success by:

- ✓ establishing a baseline of the department's current capabilities in our focus areas
- ✓ capturing feedback from stakeholders, partners, staff and the Executive
- ✓ tracking key Census results, including on data, innovation and skill needs
- ✓ tracking staff uptake of training and access of resources, including intranet pages and data sets
- ✓ regular reporting and monitoring by our Executive Board.





We have no doubt the department's leadership team can further expand the agency's organisational capability to successfully respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Capability Review, Senior Reviewers



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