



STRATEGIC PLAN: 2011–2015

Our mission To advance a sustainable Australia: our environment, water, heritage and communities.

Our approach



Living the APS Values

- We adhere to the APS values in all aspects of our work.

A positive working environment

- We are committed to maintaining a positive working environment, where all people are respected and valued.

Accepting personal responsibility

- We take personal responsibility for our own performance and for contributing to the overall success of our department.

A proactive attitude in all we do

- We adopt a proactive approach to our work, anticipating problems and finding ways to solve them.

Delivering to high standards

- Our success depends critically on planning, implementing and delivering our programs, functions and projects according to the very highest standards.

Rigorous and balanced policy advice

- Our policy advice is anchored by rigorous analysis and the best available evidence.

Flexibility to changing priorities

- We strive to be an agile organisation, valuing our capacity to adapt to changing priorities.

Openness to new ideas and approaches

- We actively explore innovative ideas in our policy advice and program implementation.

A commitment to learning

- We value opportunities for learning and actively build on our experiences to improve the way we work and deliver our programs.

What we do

This plan outlines our mission, strategic priorities and key areas of focus for 2011–15. The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is responsible for implementing the Australian Government's policies to protect the environment and promote a sustainable way of life.

The work we do over the next five years will be critical in shaping Australia's future and will directly affect households, communities, businesses, industries and the natural environment. We will need to meet a number of important challenges, including:

- helping to protect Australia's unique biodiversity
- improving how water resources are managed, particularly in the Murray-Darling Basin
- adapting to the impacts and challenges of climate change
- contributing to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage
- developing a national sustainable population strategy
- contributing to affordable housing access.

We are also committed to making deep and lasting improvements to the way we operate. This will involve addressing:

- our leadership capabilities and behaviours
- how we elicit the best from our people
- how we relate to our stakeholders
- our business systems and governance practices.

This high-level plan sets out the departmental outcomes consistent with the Portfolio Budget Statements and reflects the Government's priorities. It is supported by an annual operational plan detailing how we will achieve our outcomes and measure our performance. We will review our strategic plan annually and adjust it in response to any emerging priorities.

OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Outcome 1: Biodiversity and Ecosystems

The conservation and protection of Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems through supporting research, developing information, supporting natural resource management, and establishing and managing Commonwealth protected areas

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Develop a consistent national approach to reversing biodiversity decline in important ecosystems and ecologically significant communities.
- Manage Commonwealth reserves in accordance with internationally agreed principles.
- Develop a comprehensive environmental information base.
- Develop marine bioregional plans to guide ministerial and government decision-making and support the identification of the marine protected areas in Commonwealth waters.
- To continue our efforts to reform the International Whaling Commission into a truly 21st Century conservation-focused organisation while maintaining best practice cetacean management in Australian waters.

Outcome 2: Sustainable Population and Communities

Improved sustainability of Australia's population, communities and environment through coordination and development of sustainable population and communities policies; supporting affordable housing; and the reduction and regulation of waste, pollutants and hazardous substances

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Develop a clear national strategy for ensuring that Australia can effectively sustain changes in its population.
- Make sustainability considerations a central part of policy development and decision making by government.
- Monitor and better understand housing supply and affordability.
- Help to make rental accommodation and home ownership more affordable for people on low to medium incomes.
- Implement the National Waste Policy, in particular, the development of Product Stewardship legislation, and the TV and computer product stewardship scheme.

Outcome 3: Antarctica

Advancement of Australia's strategic, scientific, environmental and economic interests in the Antarctic by protecting, administering and researching the region

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Lead and collaborate with international programs that further Australia's research and policy interests.
- Enhance Australia's capability to deliver on Antarctic priorities, and deriving optimum benefit from our assets in the region.
- Gain recognition as an international leader in Antarctic science and environmental management.
- Maintain and reinforce Australian sovereignty in the Antarctic territory.

Outcome 4: Sustainable Water

Adaptation to climate change, wise water use, secure water supplies and improved health of rivers, waterways and freshwater ecosystems by supporting research, and reforming the management and use of water resources

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Help communities and industries, particularly in the Murray–Darling Basin (MDB), become more resilient and sustainable and better positioned to adapt to future water availability.
- Help make irrigation significantly more efficient and ensure that water savings are shared between irrigators and the environment.
- Implement reforms that deliver more efficient use of water resources.
- Develop an effective and transparent water market.
- Help urban communities and businesses use water resources more efficiently and better secure their water supply.
- Improve the health of rivers, wetlands and freshwater ecosystems.
- Implement the government's 'bridging the gap' commitment for the MDB, by recovering water for environmental use through water purchase and infrastructure initiatives.
- Support key bilateral country partners to also improve their water management.

Outcome 5: Environment Protection and Heritage Conservation

Increased protection, awareness and appreciation of Australia's environment and heritage through regulating matters of national environmental significance and the identification, conservation and celebration of natural, indigenous and historic places of national and World Heritage significance

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Ensure efficient and effective environmental regulation, especially in relation to matters of national environmental significance.
- Promote a partnership approach to environmental protection and management.
- Assist in the cooperative implementation of Australia's international environmental responsibilities.
- Contribute to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Continue to make world-leading law and policy reforms in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection.
- Encourage governments, businesses and communities to value biodiversity and ecosystems and comply with government legislation.
- Protect and increase awareness and enjoyment of our heritage assets.
- Protect the places and stories that make Australia special.

Corporate Outcome: Organisational effectiveness

Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our department

PRIORITIES FOR 2011–2015

- Develop and maintain strong systems, policies and processes to support the work of the department.
- Continuously improve our ICT business systems and tools and information management frameworks.

- Facilitate sound financial results and good budget outcomes for the department.
- Reinforce a strong client focus to support staff in doing our business better.

- Advise and support the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary and department in their stakeholder and communication activities.

- Encourage a culture of professionalism underpinned by effective performance management.
- Ensure that our governance and risk management frameworks support sound decision making.

OUR ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

We are accountable for achieving the annual outcomes prescribed in the Portfolio Budget Statements and reflected in this strategic plan.

We are collectively and individually responsible for achieving these outcomes through our planning and performance framework.

The **Secretary** has responsibility for managing the department and is advised by the:

- **Departmental Management Board (DMB)** which assists the Secretary in the overall management of the department. The following committees report to the DMB:
 - **Workforce Management Committee** provides oversight of the department's workforce management and makes recommendations on workforce policy issues and risks.
 - **Information Management Committee** provides oversight of the department's information management and makes recommendations on information management issues and risks.
 - **Finance and Operations Committee** provides oversight of the department's financial management and operations and makes recommendations on finance and operations issues and risks.
- **Departmental Audit Committee** provides independent assurance to the Secretary in relation to the Secretary's accountabilities and responsibilities.

