Audit report of the 2024–25 annual performance statements

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT on the 2024–25 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

To the Minister for Finance

Conclusion

In my opinion, the 2024–25 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW):

- present fairly DCCEEW's performance in achieving its purpose for the year ended 30 June 2025; and
- are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act).

Audit criteria

To assess whether DCCEEW's annual performance statements complied with Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the PGPA Act, I applied the following criteria:

- whether the entity's key activities, performance measures and specified targets are appropriate to measure and assess the entity's performance in achieving its purposes.
- whether the performance statements are prepared based upon appropriate records that properly record and explain the entity's performance.
- whether the annual performance statements present fairly the entity's performance in achieving the entity's purposes in the reporting period.

Accountable Authority's responsibilities

As the Accountable Authority of DCCEEW, the Secretary is responsible under the PGPA Act for:

- the preparation of annual performance statements that accurately present DCCEEW's performance in the reporting period and comply with the requirements of the PGPA Act and any requirements prescribed by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (the Rule).
- keeping records about DCCEEW's performance as required by the PGPA Act, and
- establishing internal controls that the Accountable Authority determines are appropriate to enable the preparation of annual performance statements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statements

My responsibility is to conduct a reasonable assurance engagement to express an independent opinion on DCCEEW's annual performance statements.

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which include the relevant Standard on Assurance Engagements (ASAE) 3000 *Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information* issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

Procedures were planned and performed to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual performance statements of the entity present fairly the entity's performance in achieving its purposes and comply, in all material respects, with the PGPA Act and Rule.

The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures depend on my judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, in the annual performance statements. In making these risk assessments, I obtain an understanding of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the annual performance statements in order to design procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

Independence and quality control

I have complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, and applied Auditing Standard ASQM 1 *Quality Management for Firms that Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements* in undertaking this assurance engagement.

Inherent limitations

Because of the inherent limitations of an assurance engagement, it is possible that fraud, error or non-compliance may occur and not be detected. An assurance engagement is not designed to detect all instances of non-compliance of the annual performance statements with the PGPA Act and the Rule as it is not performed continuously throughout the period and the assurance procedures performed are undertaken on a test basis. The reasonable assurance conclusion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Australian National Audit Office

George Sotiropoulos

Group Executive Director, Performance Statements Audit Services Group

Delegate of the Auditor-General

Canberra

18 September 2025

PART 2

Annual performance statements

Statement of preparation

I, Mike Kaiser, as the accountable authority of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, present the annual performance statements for 2024–25 of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

In my opinion, the annual performance statements are based on properly maintained records, accurately reflect our performance in the reporting period and comply with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act.

Mike Kaiser
Secretary
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Introduction

We are committed to excellence in performance information as a means of demonstrating to the Parliament, public and stakeholders how we deliver on our purposes.

Our performance framework is structured to create a line of sight across our purposes, outcomes, key activities and performance measures through the portfolio budget statements, corporate plan and annual report.

Our outcomes are the same here as in the departmental 2024–25 portfolio budget statements. Excluding Key Activity 1.3: Drive climate adaptation and resilience, our portfolio budget statements programs are also our key activities as defined in sections 16E(2) and (3) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (the PGPA Rule).

We continued to review and refine the performance measures set out in the Corporate Plan 2024–25. Refinements are reflected in the Corporate Plan 2025–26.

The annual performance statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements set out for Commonwealth entities in section 16EA of the Rule.

The annual performance statements reconcile performance measures published in the department's Corporate Plan 2024–25 for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

There were no changes to the department's purpose, key activities, organisational capability or operating environment that had a significant impact on the department's overall performance in the reporting period. Internal and external factors that influenced individual performance measure results are presented in the performance results section.

Summary of our non-financial performance results

For 2024–25, out of a total of 24 performance targets, we achieved 17, partially or mostly achieved 5, did not achieve 2 (Table 2).

Table 2: Key performance results summary

Measure	Measure outcome
Outcome 1: Climate Change and Energy	
CCE01: Australia's emissions and projected emissions are on track to meet legislated commitments.	**Achieved**
CCE02: Share of renewables in Australia's electricity mix.	**Achieved**
CCE03: The Safeguard Mechanism is on track to achieve its legislated net emissions targets.	**Achieved**
CCE04: Expand the amount of renewable energy and dispatchable capacity targeted for underwriting by the Commonwealth Capacity Investment Scheme.	**Achieved**
CCE05: Proportion of Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards (GEMS) registration applications processed by the GEMS Regulator within 14 days from the time of application.	**Achieved**
CCE06: Investment leveraged through portfolio low emissions technology initiatives.	**Partially achieved**
CCE07: Maintain Australia's security of supply of quality liquid fuels.	**Partially achieved**
CCE08: Australia has a plan to adapt to nationally significant climate risks.	**Partially achieved**

Measure	Measure outcome
Outcome 2: Environment	
EN01: Stability or improvement in the: • national average of Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS) scores • national average of National Connectivity Index scores (NCI).	**Not achieved**
EN02: National average of the Threatened Species Main Index.	**Achieved**
EN03: Percentage of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* referral and approval decisions that meet statutory timeframes.	**Mostly achieved**
EN04: Number of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* approved projects that were subject to active compliance monitoring.	**Not achieved**
EN05: Percentage of Australia's land that is protected or conserved.	**Achieved**
EN06: An improvement in the proportion of National and Commonwealth Heritage assessments undertaken and completed against legislated timeframes.	**Achieved**
EN07: National standards to manage environmental impacts of industrial chemicals.	**Achieved**
EN08: National resource recovery rate.	**Achieved**
Outcome 3: Antarctica	
AN01: Deliver priority Antarctic science that advances Australia's interests.	**Achieved**
AN02: Improve our understanding of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean through mapping and charting.	**Achieved**
AN03: Conduct an annual deep-field activity to support Australia's national Antarctic interest.	**Achieved**
Outcome 4: Water	
WA01: Implement national policy and programs to improve water security and management.	**Achieved**
WA02: Increase in the volume of water recovered to enhance environmental outcomes in the Murray–Darling Basin to meet the 450 GL of additional environmental water target.	**Achieved**
WA03: The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme is improved through stakeholder consultation.	**Achieved**
WA04: Commonwealth environmental water is managed effectively to protect and restore environmental assets.	**Achieved**
WA05: Increase opportunities for First Nations people water ownership and participation in decision making.	**Partially achieved**

Changes to our performance measures

Our 2024–25 portfolio budget statements and Corporate Plan 2024–25 provided performance measures for the reporting period. Table 3 summarises changes to the published documents. Some editorial changes have been made to measures to improve clarity and understanding. These changes are not included in Table 3.

Table 3: Variations from Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25 and/or Corporate Plan 2024–25

Measure	2024–25 PBS and/or Corporate Plan page reference	Variation
CCE02	34	Methodology and data sources – added information on new statistics published as part of the 2025 AES release.
CCE03	35	Methodology and data sources – updated to explain data lag and to reflect availability of 2024 emissions projections.
CCE07	40	Methodology and data sources – refined to improve clarity on data compiled.
EN01	43	Rationale and Methodology and data sources – improved level of detail to reflect progression of data inclusion and availability.
EN04	46	Target and Tolerances – defined based on analysis of 2023–24 data. Caveats and disclosures, Rationale and Methodology and data sources – refined to improve understanding and reflect progress in the measure.
EN05	48	Tolerances – defined based on analysis of previous year data.
EN06	51	Methodology and data sources – clarified where to find public information on statutory timeframes.
EN07	52	Methodology and data sources – clarified the target determination by counting the number of new chemical substances listed in the IChEMS Online Register.
EN08	53	Target – expanded explanation of target in relation to 2030 target.
AN01	55	Tolerances – updated to align with target. Rationale – updated consistent with the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan.* Methodology and data sources: correction to source years.
AN02	55	Rationale – updated consistent with the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan.* Methodology and data sources – expanded detail on data sources.

Performance results

Outcome 1: Climate change and energy

Support the transition of Australia's economy to net zero emissions by 2050; transition energy to support net zero while maintaining security, reliability and affordability; support actions to promote adaptation and strengthen resilience of Australia's economy, society and environment; and take a leadership role internationally in responding to climate change.

Key activity 1.1: Reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

This key activity aims to shape the global response to climate change and ensure we achieve our emissions reduction targets of 43% by 2030 and support net zero by 2050. The department is committed to delivering the Australian Government's policy priorities. This work includes leading development of a new Net Zero Plan for Australia, underpinned by 6 sectoral decarbonisation plans. These will inform Australia's next Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement, including our 2035 emissions reduction target. The department has the lead for the Electricity and Energy Sector Plan, and is supporting development of the agriculture and land, transport, built environment, industry and resources sector plans.

The department delivers policies to drive emissions reductions across the economy, including through decarbonisation of the electricity sector, electrification of other energy uses, efforts to improve energy productivity and performance.

The reformed Safeguard Mechanism commenced on 1 July 2023 and will deliver emissions reductions consistent with Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement and provide a trajectory to net zero emissions by 2050. We have created a new measure to track our performance against the Safeguard Mechanism net emission targets arising from the reforms (see CCE03 on page 39).

Measure CCE01	**Australia's emissions and projected emissions are on track to meet legislated commitments.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	National Inventory shows net emissions at least 21% below 2005 levels in the inventory year 2023. The latest emissions projections indicate that progress is being made to close any gap between the projected emissions and the legislated 2030 targets.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Annual emissions inventory results confirm emissions reduction at least equal to the target reduction.	Annual emissions inventory result is less than (i.e. falls short of) the target reduction.	Annual emissions inventory result is less than (i.e. falls short of) the target reduction.
	Annual emissions projections show Australia's progress to its 2030 targets is equal to or better than the projection in the previous year.	Annual emissions projections indicate Australia is on track to meet its 2030 targets.	Annual emissions projections indicate Australia is not on track to meet its 2030 targets.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

In the inventory year 2023 (which corresponds to financial year 2022–23), Australia's net emissions were 25.9% below 2005 levels.

The latest emissions projections show the gap between projected emissions in 2030 and Australia's legislated 2030 target is closing. Australia's emissions are projected to be 42.6% below 2005 levels in 2030 in the current policies (or baseline) scenario, compared to 37% in the previous projections. Emissions are projected to be 42.7% below 2005 levels in the 'with additional measures' scenario, compared to 42% in the previous projections.

Analysis of performance

Australia's National Inventory Report 2023 was submitted to the United Nations in May 2025. It reported that Australia's net national greenhouse gas emissions were 453.4 million tonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2-e) in 2022–23. This is a decrease of 25.9% (158.5 Mt CO_2-e) from 611.9 Mt CO_2-e in 2004–05, and an increase of 2.9% (12.8 Mt CO_2-e) on 2021–22 levels.

The increase in emissions since 2021–22 was primarily driven by:

- reductions in the land sector net sink, largely due to the end of extended La Niña conditions contributing to increased fire activity and less annual soil carbon sequestration
- increased emissions from transport, representing a partial recovery in transport activity following the end of COVID-related restrictions.

These drivers were partially offset by a continued downward trend in electricity generation emissions.

Long-term drivers of emissions reduction since 2004–05 include:

- changes in the electricity generation mix (with increased generation from renewable sources – largely driven by national and state/territory policies, including the Commonwealth Renewable Energy Target – displacing generation from fossil fuels)
- increased methane capture in the energy and waste sectors, including in response to national policy incentives such as the Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme and state-based regulation
- technology innovations, including those supported by government policies and programs such as the activities of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and Clean Energy Finance Corporation
- the land sector changing from a net source of emissions to a net sink (including due to reduced land clearing, increased forest cover through plantations and natural regeneration, and expansion of savanna fire management through Indigenous burning practices supported by the Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme).

Over the period since 2004–05, other shorter-term drivers of emissions fluctuations include:

- broadscale impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–22)
- general economic downturn during the Global Financial Crisis (2007–09)
- temperature influences on electricity demand
- the Australian Government's Carbon Pricing Mechanism (2012–15)
- broader climatic factors, including from the El Niño and La Niña cycle, which has the strongest impact on year-to-year climate variability in Australia
- multiple significant flooding events in 2007, 2009–15 and 2020–22
- significant drought events – the millennium drought (1997–2009, and 2017–19).

Australia's emissions projections 2024 was published in November 2024.

Projected emissions in the baseline scenario, which reflects current policies, have fallen from 386 Mt CO_2-e in 2030 in the 2023 emissions projections to 352 Mt CO_2-e in the 2024 emissions projections. Tracking towards the target has improved from 37% to 42.6% below 2005 levels in 2030.

Compared to the previous projections, the 2024 emissions projections were updated to reflect policy developments and more recent forecasts of domestic and global demand for Australian energy, resources and agricultural products as well as the latest information on technology costs, uptake and deployment.

New federal policies included in the 2024 emissions projections baseline scenario are the 82% renewable electricity target and the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES). These follow the implementation of the expanded Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) and Renewable Energy Transformation Agreements to support delivery of the 82% renewable target, and the passage of the NVES legislation through the parliament in May 2024.

Projected emissions in the 'with additional measures' scenario in 2030 have decreased from 358 Mt CO_2-e in 2023 emissions projections to 351 Mt CO_2-e in the 2024 emissions projections. Tracking towards the target has improved from 42% to 42.7% below 2005 levels in 2030. The updated 'with additional measures' scenario includes:

- the National Hydrogen Strategy, released in September 2024, supported by Hydrogen Headstart and the Hydrogen Production Tax Incentive
- the Critical Minerals Production Tax Incentive
- the Industrial Transformation Stream (round 1) of the Powering the Regions Fund.

Further details of updates in the 2024 emissions projections when compared to the 2023 emissions projections can be found on pp. 25–27 of *Australia's emissions projections 2024*.

Caveats and disclosures

Australia's national greenhouse gas inventory is compiled consistent with Paris Agreement rules and guidelines, including Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emission estimation guidelines. It is also subject to continuous improvement based on latest available data, research, technology and practices.

The department is working with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) on a complex, multi-year project to improve the way Australia identifies changes to forest cover across Australia. Delays to this work meant that a key dataset used for some land-use categories (deforestation, reforestation and sparse woody vegetation) was not available for the National Inventory Report 2023. Emissions estimates for these categories were held constant at the same levels as the previous National Inventory Report. This approach is consistent with IPCC guidelines. All other land use categories in the National Inventory Report 2023 were updated for the latest available data including annual weather and fire mapping data that reflects the end of the extended La Niña period.

The National Inventory Report 2023 incorporates improvements to emission estimation approaches in the energy, agriculture and land sectors. The Paris Agreement requires that any changes to emission estimation approaches must be applied to inventory years back to 1990 in accordance with IPCC guidelines, to enable a comparison of emissions across time. This includes changes to internationally agreed emission estimation and reporting rules and guidelines, and nationally determined improvements to emissions estimation methods. This requirement can result in recalculations to emission estimates for previous years. Examples of recalculations are:

- moving to a more sophisticated emission estimation method or updated data sources
- changes to internationally agreed rules on emission metric values for global warming potential.

Such recalculations can impact assessments of progress towards Australia's national emissions reduction targets, given they are based on national inventory data.

The annual National Inventory Report presents Australia's greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2 years prior to the submission year. Submission of the report each year fulfils Australia's emissions reporting obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. This data provides the basis for tracking Australia's progress towards its national emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, also legislated in the *Climate Change Act 2022*.

In addition to the National Inventory Report, we publish a quarterly update of Australia's national greenhouse gas inventory. The most recent update was published in August 2025. It incorporated improvements applied to the National Inventory Report 2023 and reported that Australia's net emissions for the year to March 2025 were 28% below 2005 levels.

The department prepares the emissions projections annually using the best data of forecast activity in the economy, information about current policy settings and technology available at the time of publication. The projections indicate what Australia's future could be if the assumptions that underpin the projections occur. A range of factors, some interrelated, may influence actual emissions outcomes in the future. These include:

- changes in the economic outlook
- implementation of, or changes to, government policies and measures
- technology change
- unforeseen delay in large capital projects
- risk associated with climate change, including physical impacts.

A statement of uncertainty can be found in Appendix A (pp. 102–103) of *Australia's emissions projections 2024*.

Rationale

Australia has legislated its emissions reduction targets of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 (on both a point target and an emissions budget basis). The target for each year is for the year in which finalised inventory data becomes available (not in the year for the purposes of annual reporting). The target reflects a straight-line trajectory from Australia's 2020 target of 5% below 2000 levels and Australia's 2030 target of 43% below 2005 levels. This trajectory is consistent with the method applied to estimate Australia's emissions budget from 2021–30.

Methodology and data sources

Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts (national greenhouse gas inventory and emissions projections) are prepared by the department consistent with the rules and guidelines adopted under the Paris Agreement, including IPCC guidelines on emissions estimation.

The department uses robust and comprehensive data collection systems to inform the Accounts' compilation, including data collected and published by Australia's principal statistical agencies and reported under Australia's mandatory facility-level emissions reporting system. These systems are coupled with emission estimation methods and models based on the latest science, technologies, and practices, with resulting estimates subject to extensive internal and external quality-assurance processes. Data is validated through the states and territories and through detailed technical reviews under the Paris Agreement.

2023–24 result

Achieved. In the Inventory year 2022 (which corresponds to the financial year 2021–22), Australia's net emissions were 29% below 2005 levels.

The latest emissions projections published at that time showed the gap between projected emissions in 2030 and Australia's legislated 2030 target was closing. Australia's emissions were projected to be 37% below 2005 levels in 2030 in the baseline scenario (compared to 32% in the previous projections), and 42% below 2005 levels in the 'with additional measures' scenario (compared to 38% in the previous projections).

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure CCE02	**Share of renewables in Australia's electricity mix.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	Renewable electricity rising towards 82% nationally by 2030.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	For years prior to 2030 – a year-on-year increase. For 2030 – target is reached [within 2 percentage points].	Not applicable.	For years prior to 2030 – a year-on-year decrease. For 2030 – target is not reached [within 2 percentage points].
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Renewable electricity generation made up 38.4% of the national on-grid electricity generation mix in calendar year 2024, up from 37.8% in 2023.

Analysis of performance

The largest source of renewable electricity generation on-grid in 2024 was solar (19%) followed by wind (13%), hydro (5%) and bioenergy (1%).

The growth in renewable generation in 2024 slowed from previous years, largely driven by unfavourable climate conditions for hydro and wind generation. However, continued renewable energy capacity additions in 2024 will support performance in future years. 2024 saw a record 7.5 GW of renewable energy capacity added, up from 5.3 GW in 2023.

Projections for the electricity sector, as published in the Australia's Emissions Projections 2024, show Australia is on a pathway to meet the 82% target of on-grid electricity generation by 2030. These projections assume that the build of new renewable capacity, including to meet state targets and plans, occur as announced. The projections also show the trajectory to the target will be non-linear, with larger growth in the renewable generation percentage expected in the 2 years to 2030 as increased levels of renewable capacity are connected to the grid as a result of supporting policies.

Caveats and disclosures

The timing and availability of the Australian Energy Statistics data may vary year to year. It relies on the availability of data provided by external agencies.

The data for the performance result may lag the performance period by up to one year (e.g. for the 2024–25 performance period, the most recent data for the share of renewables from the Australian Energy Statistics will be for the 2023–24 financial year and 2024 calendar year).

Rationale

The Australian Government has committed to a national target of 82% renewable electricity by 2030. Delivery of the government's policies and programs to increase interconnection and grid capacity (such as Rewiring the Nation and other transmission initiatives, funding for batteries and pumped hydro storage) will encourage renewable energy investment along with different mechanisms such as the CIS and the Guarantee of Origin scheme.

Methodology and data sources

The historical share of renewables in Australia's electricity mix is routinely calculated and published through our annual Australian Energy Statistics (AES) process. New statistics of on-grid generation to align with the 82% target definition have been published as part of the 2025 AES release.

Additionally, the annual preparation of Australia's emissions projections includes commissioning electricity market modelling that produces estimates of renewable electricity shares in future years. The modelling will account for changes in policy and can be expected to provide an indication of whether Australia is on track to reach the 82% target.

2023–24 result

Renewable electricity generation made up 35% of the national electricity generation mix in calendar year 2023, up 3 percentage points on 2022.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

This 2023–24 result is as reported in the annual report 2023–24 using the previous methodology and is not directly comparable to the 2024–25 result which uses an updated methodology.

Measure CCE03	**The Safeguard Mechanism is on track to achieve its legislated net emissions targets.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	137 Mt CO_2-e in 2023–24.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Published Safeguard data shows Safeguard net emissions are on track to achieve the cumulative target for 2020–21 to 2029–30 by being below the indicative annual value.	Published Safeguard data shows Safeguard net emissions are above an indicative annual value in one year but are still on track to achieve the cumulative target for 2020–21 to 2029–30.	Published Safeguard data shows Safeguard net emissions are not on track to achieve the cumulative target for 2020–21 to 2029–30.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Safeguard net emissions were 127.8 Mt CO_2-e in 2023–24.

Analysis of performance

Safeguard net emissions decreased from 137.9 Mt CO_2-e in 2022–23 to 127.8 Mt CO_2-e in 2023–24. While the Safeguard Mechanism does not have interim annual net emissions targets, this outcome indicates that annual net emissions are declining on a trajectory consistent with the legislated Safeguard target of cumulative net emissions remaining below 1,233 Mt CO_2-e between 2020–21 and 2029–30.

This reflects the outcomes of the first year of the reformed Safeguard Mechanism, which commenced on 1 July 2023. The Safeguard Mechanism is a key policy lever to help achieve Australia's emissions reduction targets of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050. Under the reforms, baselines (limits on net emissions) are reduced each year, with the annual baseline decline rate calibrated to ensure that the legislated Safeguard emissions reduction targets are met and are consistent with the achievement of national targets.

The department has policy responsibility for the Safeguard Mechanism. The legislative framework for the Safeguard Mechanism is set out in the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (the NGER Act). Detailed requirements of the Safeguard Mechanism are set out in legislative rules, primarily the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (Safeguard Mechanism) Rule 2015 (the Safeguard Rules).

Caveats and disclosures

There are no external factors that have affected the results, ability to measure the results, or limitations on the reported data. The result is obtained directly from data published by the Clean Energy Regulator, which administers the scheme. The quality and completeness of the data is underpinned by the NGER scheme, Australia's framework for reporting and disseminating company information about greenhouse gas emissions, energy production, energy consumption and other information specified under NGER legislation.

While performance in 2023–24 indicates that the Safeguard Mechanism is on track to meet its cumulative emissions targets over the decade to 2029–30, year-to-year outcomes may not provide a linear indication of progress toward the cumulative target, if net emissions in subsequent years significantly exceed the indicative annual values. Higher than expected production growth or use of trade-exposed baseline adjustments could contribute to higher-than-expected net emissions in future years. The 'reserve' which has been incorporated into the baseline decline rate and built into the indicative annual values helps protect against this risk.

The indicative 2023–24 target was set based on the expected trajectory of aggregate Safeguard baselines in *Australia's emissions projections 2023* updated for the Safeguard Rule Amendment in February 2024, the latest available Safeguard projections at the time the target was set. *Australia's emissions projections 2024* have subsequently been released. The reported 2023–24 outcome was also lower than the aggregate baselines for 2023–24 in *Australia's emissions projections 2024*.

Rationale

The reformed Safeguard Mechanism commenced on 1 July 2023 and require large industrial facilities to deliver a proportional share of Australia's 2030 climate target. Safeguard net and gross emission targets have been legislated in the objects of the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (NGER Act). Further information on the Safeguard Mechanism is available on the department's website (Safeguard Mechanism).

This performance measure focuses on the net emissions target over the decade to 2029–30: cumulative Safeguard net emissions are required to remain below 1,233 Mt CO_2-e between 2020–21 and 2029–30.

The Safeguard Mechanism does not have interim annual net emissions targets. Indicative annual values have therefore been estimated based on the expected trajectory of aggregate Safeguard baselines, which applies a limit on the net emissions from Safeguard facilities. Safeguard baselines have been estimated based on Australia's emissions projections 2023, updated for the Safeguard Rule amendment in February 2024; the latest available projections at the time the target was set for the corporate plan 2024–25. The indicative annual values incorporate the reserve, which has been built into the baseline decline rate to account for any higher-than-expected production growth and use of trade-exposed baseline adjustments.

If reported net emissions remain below the indicative annual values (and continue to do so in 2028–29 and 2029–30), then the cumulative emissions target of 1,233 Mt CO_2-e will be achieved. Given the inclusion of the reserve in the baseline decline rate, it will be possible for the cumulative emissions target of 1,233 Mt CO_2-e to still be achieved if the annual indicative value is exceeded in one or more years, and if this is offset by lower values in other years.

Methodology and data sources

Historical net emissions

The NGER scheme is Australia's framework for reporting and disseminating company information about greenhouse gas emissions, energy production, energy consumption and other information specified under NGER legislation. This includes historical data for Safeguard-covered facilities. The NGER scheme is administered by the Clean Energy Regulator (CER). The CER is required to publish information reported by Safeguard entities after each financial year, including total Safeguard and facility-level net emissions.

Outcomes are reported for the previous financial year (i.e. 2023–24 outcomes are reported in 2024–25) due to the administrative dates for reporting and compliance under the Safeguard Mechanism (for example, while 30 June marks the end of the compliance period each year, the emissions and production reporting deadline is on 31 October each year, and the deadline to surrender units to meet Safeguard liabilities is then on 31 March the following year).

Australia's emissions projections

The annual Australia's emissions projections include projections of Safeguard emissions. Australia's emissions projections incorporate a variety of data inputs, assumptions, and methods. The projections use the best available data to project Australia's future emissions. The department engages with a technical working group comprised of representatives from Australian Government agencies to test the methodologies, assumptions, and projections results. Australia makes formal submissions on its emissions projections to the UNFCCC, and these are subject to review from an expert review team coordinated by the UNFCCC secretariat.

The latest methodology report sets out how the latest *Australia's emissions projections 2024* were prepared, including key data inputs, assumptions, formulas, and methods.

2023–24 result

New measure in 2024–25.

Key activity 1.2: Support reliable, secure and affordable energy

This key activity aims to lead the energy market reform to support investment and market outcomes in the long-term interests of consumers, increase national energy efficiency, and support the security of domestic and international supply chains. This includes implementing transformation in a way that enhances our energy security and affordability and creates economic opportunities and jobs, particularly for regional Australia.

The Australian Government released the National Energy Performance Strategy on 5 April 2024. The strategy outlines the government's approach to improve energy performance across the economy, lifting the role of the demand-side of the energy system to support the government's objectives to deliver net-zero emissions, energy affordability and reliability.

The government maintains the Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS), a national framework to encourage new investment in Australia's renewable capacity. On 23 November 2023, an expansion of the scheme was announced to target a total of 32 GW of new capacity nationally. The expanded scheme is being rolled out from 2024 to 2027, and provides reliable, affordable and low-emissions energy to all Australians. A new measure has been included to track the performance of the scheme (see CCE04 below). The CIS will be underpinned by bilateral Renewable Energy Transformation Agreements with the states and territories.

The Australian Government has laid the groundwork for an offshore wind industry, in recognition of the benefits of reliable, secure clean energy and for local economies in the regions. A clear legal framework has been established, and 4 areas declared suitable for offshore sites. Twelve feasibility licences have been granted so far, with a total capacity of 25 GW. The government is continuing to implement the framework and deliver an industry development plan to provide a stable investment environment, maximise opportunities for Australians, and support state governments to meet offtake targets.

This key activity also includes the funding and financing provided by the portfolio's investment agencies, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. Grants and loans from these entities can help reduce barriers to investment by de-risking projects and reducing up-front capital costs.

Measure CCE04	**Expand the amount of renewable energy and dispatchable capacity targeted for underwriting by the Commonwealth Capacity Investment Scheme.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	16 GW		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Opened tenders targeting total capacity.	Opened tenders targeting more than 50% of capacity.	Opened tenders targeting less than 50% of capacity.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

The total capacity targeted through CIS Tenders opened to 30 June 2025 is 17.1 GW made up of 12 GW generation and 5.1 GW dispatchable capacity, and which exceeds the stated 2024–25 Performance Measure target of 16 GW.

Analysis of performance

Capacity targeted

Renewable energy projects of 12 GW generation and 5.1 GW of dispatchable capacity have already been targeted for underwriting support through the CIS tender processes, including:

- 0.6 GW (2,400 MWh) of dispatchable capacity through the South Australia–Victoria tender which opened for bids on 15 December 2023
- 6.0 GW of renewable capacity through Tender 1 for the National Electricity Market (NEM) which opened for bids on 31 May 2024

- 0.50 GW (2,000 MWh) of dispatchable capacity through Tender 2 for the Wholesale Electricity Market (WEM) in Western Australia which opened for bids on 22 July 2024
- 4.0 GW (16,000 MWh) of dispatchable capacity for Tender 3 in the NEM which opened for bids on 13 November 2024
- 6.0 GW of renewable generation capacity for Tender 4 in the NEM which opened for bids on 13 December 2024.

Executed contracts

While this performance measure focuses only on the targeting of capacity through tenders opened (as described above), these tender processes have resulted in 17 signed contracts, called Capacity Investment Scheme Agreements (CISA), at 30 June 2025 with further CISAs being negotiated.

The total contracted capacity to be provided underwriting support through CISAs is 5.04 GW, made up of 4.2 GW generation and 0.83 GW dispatchable capacity as set out below, by tender.

Table 4: Total contracted capacity to be provided underwriting support through Capacity Investment Scheme Agreements

Tender	Number of CISAs Executed	Generation Capacity (GW)	Storage Capacity (GW/GWh)
SA–Vic Dispatchable	5 confirmed	N/A	0.83 GW / 2.63 GWh
CISA Tender 1 NEM Generation	12 confirmed	4.2 GW	*See note below N/A
CISA Tender 2 WEM Dispatchable	0 confirmed	N/A	0
Total	**17**	**4.2 GW**	**0.83 GW**

Table 4 notes: *Several hybrid projects which have received underwriting support through Tender 1 CISAs (indicated in the table above) will also deliver 1.908 GWh of storage capacity. While the storage components of these hybrid projects are not underwritten by the CIS, it is still worth noting the additional capacity delivered.

In addition, an early CIS pilot funded the expansion of the NSW Roadmap Tender 2 – Firming Infrastructure by up to an additional 550 MW. The joint tender, which concluded in November 2023, selected 6 new battery and virtual power plant projects that will deliver more than 1 GW of capacity in the NEM.

Caveats and disclosures

Nil

Rationale

The CIS provides a national framework to encourage new investment in renewable capacity, such as wind and solar, as well as clean dispatchable capacity, such as battery storage. It aims to help build a more reliable, affordable and low-emissions energy system for all Australians.

The CIS will bring jobs and investment to regional communities, strengthen industries that create our sustainable future and support First Nations people to preserve their unique cultures and heritage and remain on Country.

The Australian Government will provide for successful CIS tender projects, with an agreed revenue 'floor' and 'ceiling'. This will provide a long-term revenue safety-net that decreases financial risks for investors and encourages more investment when and where it is needed.

Revenue underwriting is being used domestically and globally to support investment into the energy transition.

Methodology and data sources

Total capacity of projects targeted to receive revenue support under each tender. To ensure accuracy the maximum rated output of a generator or other electric power production equipment (or nameplate capacity) receiving revenue underwriting under the CIS will be used. This is specified by the project proponent and will be included in their bid documentation.

Comparison to the target. The Commonwealth will maintain a record of the total capacity of projects targeted through CIS tender processes. This will be the source of the data to inform the measure.

2023–24 result

New measure in 2024–25.

Measure CCE05	**Proportion of Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards (GEMS) registration applications processed by the GEMS Regulator within 14 days from the time of application.**		
Measure type	Efficiency (proxy); Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	99%		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	> or = 99.0% of applications are processed within 14 days from the time of application.	Not applicable.	<99.0% of applications are processed within 14 days from the time of application.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

99.9%

Analysis of performance

The GEMS regulator successfully processed 99.9% of registration applications within 14 days of application, demonstrating a high level of operational efficiency. The result exceeds the performance target and is the same as last financial year's result (99.9%).

This achievement builds trust and confidence in the regulator's effectiveness and responsiveness to increase the development and supply of energy efficient appliances in Australia, reducing greenhouse emissions and saving consumers money.

Caveats and disclosures

The calculation of time to complete a registration commences at the time an application is lodged and stops when the application is approved or refused. The timing continues to run on weekends and public holidays; however, time is paused if a request for additional information is made by the regulator until such time as a reply is provided. This is consistent with the *Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Act 2012*, subsection 67(4).

System data is verifiable and repeatable.

Rationale

Through timely and efficient processing times, we are easing the regulatory burden on businesses to help ensure that we are not an impediment to the development and supply of energy-efficient appliances and equipment sold in Australia.

Methodology and data sources

Data is captured in the department's Energy Rating Product Registration system. A report is generated from the Energy Rating Product Registration system detailing each application processed and the timeframe to process in days.

2023–24 result

99.9% of GEMS registration applications were processed by the GEMS Regulator within 14 days from the time of application.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure CCE06	**Investment leveraged through portfolio low emissions technology initiatives.**		
Measure type	Efficiency; Quantitative		
Target	Leverage at least $2 of new investment for each $1 of Commonwealth funding.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	The actual leverage achieved for both agencies separately and together in the year should be more than the target.	One agency has achieved a rate above the target.	Neither agency has achieved a rate above the target.
Outcome	**Partially achieved**		

2024–25 result

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) provided $352 million in funding to projects with a total value of $980 million in the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. This represents a leverage of 1.8 dollars in new investment for every dollar of ARENA funding invested.

The CEFC invested $5.2 billion in projects with a total value of $28.1 billion in the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 (30 June figures not yet available). This represents a leverage of 4.4 dollars of new investment for every dollar of CEFC funding invested.

The combined investments are $5.6 billion in projects with a total value of $30.7 billion, representing total new investments of $25.1 billion, or a leverage of $4.5 for every Commonwealth dollar invested. This far exceeds the performance target of $2 for every Commonwealth dollar invested.

Analysis of performance

Comparison of ARENA's results between this year and 2023–24 figures appears to show a decline in leverage performance. However, this is a result of the different mix of project types ARENA manages and the variable proportion of deployment projects, which involve near commercial-ready technologies, that are funded in any one year.

ARENA's grant funding is targeted at a mix of early-stage innovation, feasibility studies, demonstration projects and deployment projects. This mix enables renewable energy technologies to be funded at the various stages as they progress through technical and commercial readiness. The early stages of development require higher rates of Commonwealth funding support as they provide a less attractive rate of return for investors.

ARENA's previous year's annual report notes that deployment stage projects contributed to the high leverage of new investments ($226.6 million of funding to deployment projects with a total project cost of $2.4 billion):

'The overall leverage ratio was driven by deployment projects. These large-scale projects have substantial funding requirements with ARENA funding often supporting projects to secure relatively large quantums of debt financing.'

The CEFC performance covers a full year to 31 March 2025 as the 30 June quarter figures are not available at the time of analysis. This was the same reporting period as used in the previous year.

In comparison to the 2023–24 leverage of 7 of new investment, the 2024–25 result is 4.4. While this leverage still far exceeds the performance target of $2.00 for every Commonwealth dollar invested, the reduction can be attributed to a larger proportion of investments in projects under the Rewiring the Nation (RTN) fund and other specialist investment funds (SIFs), which all have a lower rate of return and therefore attract less new investment.

For the 2023–24 period, the investment in RTN and SIFs was $155 million for projects with a total value of $347 million (leverage 1:2). This was from total CEFC investments of $1.1 billion for total project value of $9.0 billion.

By comparison, in the 2024–25 period, the investment in RTN and SIFs was $3.5 billion for projects with a total value of $16.2 billion (leverage of 3.6). This was a much higher proportion of the CEFC's $5.2 billion for total project value of $28.1 billion. The remaining investments under the General Portfolio attained an approximate leverage ratio of 1:6.

Further information on the performance of these agencies can be found in their annual reports on their respective websites.

Caveats and disclosures

Data used for this performance measure does not include new ARENA programs which provide production credits, such as Solar Sunshot as they are not designed to leverage private investment. Programs that use production credits support businesses by bridging the gap between the cost of production and price during the early stages of commercialisation. Unlike programs that provide capital grants and seek to crowd in private investment, proponents that participate within production credit programs are expected to seek to reduce their production costs as part of commercialisation.

Other programs, such as Powering the Regions Fund and the Carbon Capture Technology Program, which have different policy objectives and are not designed to leverage private sector finance, are also excluded from the analysis of performance on this measure.

Rationale

Investment is a leading indicator of Australia's progress towards the development and commercialisation of renewable energy and low emissions technologies. These will underpin the Powering Australia plan's aim to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030, and support net zero emissions by 2050.

Two agencies in the portfolio, the ARENA and the CEFC provide financial assistance to Australian industry, and balance achieving value for taxpayers with pursuing their significant policy goals. The department has a key role in supporting these agencies through the appointment of board members, provision of funding and the development of policy documents such as investment mandates and statements of expectations.

Methodology and data sources

ARENA and CEFC report and record data, which is provided quarterly to the department, and their respective annual reports. The data relates to the projects funded by these agencies, and is collected to give insights on changing behaviour, and the limitations, costs, and benefits of renewable energy technologies. It is also used to inform the standards, regulations and policies needed to ensure that Australia is ready for the growth of the sector.

The department actively engages with ARENA and CEFC and carries out a basic quality-assurance process on the quarterly data reported by both agencies.

2023–24 result

In 2023–24, data collected to support this progress tracking includes:

- The ARENA invested $392m for total project value of $2.85bn from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. This presents a leverage of $6.31 of private investment for every $1.00 of Commonwealth funding.
- The CEFC invested $1.13bn for total project value of $8.99bn from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (30 June figures not yet available). This presents a leverage of $7.86 of private investment for every $1.00 of Commonwealth funding.

This makes a combined investment of $1.5bn for total project values of $11.8bn. This results in a combined total private investment of $10.3bn, representing a leverage of $6.86 private investment for every $1.00 of Commonwealth funding.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure CCE07	**Maintain Australia's security of supply of quality liquid fuels.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	Average days of stocks of petrol, diesel and jet fuel that meet the Australian fuel quality standards are not lower than the 2018 and 2019 average.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Targets are met for all fuel types (petrol, diesel, jet fuel).	Targets are met for some but not all fuel types (petrol, diesel, jet fuel).	Targets are met for no fuel types (petrol, diesel, jet fuel).
Outcome	**Partially achieved**		

2024–25 result

In 2024–25, average days of stocks were 28 for petrol, 25 for diesel and 20 for jet fuel. For petrol and diesel, this was higher than the 2018 and 2019 average of 24 days for petrol and 20 days for diesel. For jet fuel, this was lower than the 2018 and 2019 average of 24 days leading to the 'partially achieved' outcome.

Analysis of performance

Average stocks of diesel and petrol increased in 2024–25, with average diesel stocks in 2024–25 the highest ever recorded.

Average jet fuel stock volumes rose by 8% in 2024–25, although remained below the 2018 and 2019 averages. Over the last two years jet fuel demand has seen strong growth, with sales volumes in 2024–25 exceeding pre COVID-19 levels to reach the highest ever recorded. This has tempered the level of jet fuel stocks held relative to demand. This does not mean Australia's jet fuel supplies were less secure.

The Minimum Stockholding Obligation (MSO), which commenced on 1 July 2023 under the *Fuel Security Act 2021*, guarantees minimum stock levels of jet fuel, petrol and diesel are held by industry and underpins our domestic fuel reserves. During 2024–25, the total volume of stock required to be held under obligation was 2,485 million litres for diesel, 1,070 million litres for petrol, and 581 million litres for jet fuel. Industry exceeded the MSO across all three fuels for all obligation days in 2024–25.

The department administers the:

- *Fuel Security Act 2021*, including setting the volume required to be held under the Minimum Stockholding Obligation and overseeing compliance
- *Petroleum and Other Fuels Reporting Act 2017*, including monitoring stocks, demand and supply of liquid fuels, and publishing aggregate official statistics to support fuel market transparency
- *Fuel Quality Standards Act 2000*, including setting the quality standards for diesel and petrol supplied to consumers.

Caveats and disclosures

Stocks data are reported at the end of each month rather than average stocks during the month. This is consistent with international conventions for reporting of closing stocks statistics, including to the International Energy Agency. Stock levels at the end of the month can fluctuate significantly due to a range of factors, including shipping schedules and seasonal demand.

Rationale

To ensure the long-term security of supply of quality liquid fuels so that Australians and Australian businesses can obtain the fuel they need when they need it. Security of supply of liquid fuels is essential to keep the Australian economy operating – liquid fuels provide over half of Australia's final energy use. Most of Australia's liquid fuel supplies come from imported products, or from imported crude which goes into our domestic refineries. Having sufficient stocks of fuel on hand in Australia is an important part of ensuring security of supply.

Methodology and data sources

Industry reports data on stocks and sales in accordance with the *Petroleum and Other Fuels Reporting Act 2017* through the online Liquid Fuels Gateway. The department compiles the stocks and sales data and calculate average days of stock each month based on total stocks divided by average daily consumption rates over the previous 12-month period. Statistics and underlying datasets are stored in the department's internal database, the Petroleum Statistics Information Management System. Aggregate statistics for the measure are published in the monthly Australian Petroleum Statistics on energy.gov.au.

2023–24 result

In 2023–24, average days of stocks were 27 for petrol, 23 for diesel and 21 for jet fuel. For petrol and diesel, this was higher than the 2018 and 2019 average of 24 days for petrol and 20 days for diesel. For jet fuel, this was lower than the 2018 and 2019 average of 24 days.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Key activity 1.3: Drive climate adaptation and resilience.

This key activity aims to ensure Australia has a comprehensive plan in place to adapt to the nationally significant impacts of climate change. This plan will be informed by a national climate change risk assessment that identifies the major national climate change risks and prioritises the most significant risks to be addressed in the national adaptation plan.

Measure CCE08	Australia has a plan to adapt to nationally significant climate risks.		
Measure type	Output; Qualitative		
Target	Second stage of National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan completed.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Nationally significant climate risks and shortlist of highest priority risks facing Australia identified, and summary report completed and expected to be released early 2024. Second stage of risk assessment analysing 11 highest priority risks to be completed and published at the end of 2024–25. National Adaptation Plan completed by end of 2024–25.	Nationally significant climate risks facing Australia identified but analysis of highest priority risks not commenced. Draft National Adaptation Plan published but consultation not complete and Plan therefore not finalised.	Nationally significant risks are not identified, and summary report not published. Draft National Adaptation Plan not published.
Outcome	**Partially achieved**		

2024–25 result

Following release of the first pass assessment of the National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan Issues Paper in March 2024, the department undertook significant consultation and development of both the National Climate Risk Assessment (in partnership with the Australian Climate Service) and the National Adaptation Plan.

The department expects the release of the National Climate Risk Assessment to incorporate a comprehensive report on the priority risks identified in the first pass assessment, an overview report, a climate hazards overview, an online data and information portal and several technical reports. Release is expected before the end of 2025.

The department has substantially advanced the development of the National Adaptation Plan and undertook consultation and discussions with state, territory and local governments, non-government organisations and others on the key concepts and framework in the National Adaptation Plan. The National Adaptation Plan is expected to be released before the end of 2025.

Analysis of performance

The finalisation of the National Adaptation Plan has extended beyond the previous timeframes of completion by the end of 2024–25 due to the need consider the findings of the National Climate Risk Assessment and conduct extensive consultation and engagement.

The National Climate Risk Assessment was nearing completion by the end of 2024–25 but had not been finalised due to its scale and complexity and the significant volume of technical analysis that needed to be undertaken.

Caveats and disclosures

Noting the extensive consultation and engagement undertaken throughout the development of the National Adaptation Plan, the Australian Government is no longer intending to release a draft National Adaptation Plan for comment prior to final release.

Rationale

The impacts of climate change are already being experienced in Australia and all Australian governments will need to plan for multiple future risks from the impacts of climate change.

We are responsible for delivering the National Climate Risk Assessment and a National Adaptation Plan. The National Climate Risk Assessment will deliver Australia's first comprehensive national assessment of the risks from climate change over this century. The National Adaptation Plan will deliver a nationally consistent pathway that prioritises Australia's adaptation actions and opportunities.

Quantitative performance targets for 2025–26 and beyond will need to be informed by the results of the National Climate Risk Assessment and the National Adaptation Plan. It is anticipated these targets will be able to be set in 2025.

Methodology and data sources

A comprehensive methodology has been developed for undertaking the National Climate Risk Assessment based on international leading practices and in consultation with experts, academics, stakeholders from all levels of government, private sector, non-governmental organisations, and First Nations communities. Consistent with this methodology, the first stage of the National Climate Risk Assessment identified 11 priority national risks from climate change impacts, which will be subjected to quantitative analysis in stage 2. This will be considered complete when the second stage report is published on the department's website.

The National Adaptation Plan will be considered complete when the Plan is published on the department's website.

2023–24 result

The first pass assessment of the National Climate Risk Assessment was undertaken between July and December 2023, with the outcomes of the first pass assessment published on the DCCEEW website in March 2024.

The second pass assessment commenced by June 2024.

Preparation of the National Adaptation Plan had commenced and extensive consultation was underway, including through an issues paper that was released for public consultation in March 2024.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Outcome 2: Environment

Conserve, protect and sustainably manage our natural resources including through a nature positive approach; protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage; reduce and regulate the use of pollutants and hazardous substances; and take a leadership role on these issues internationally.

Key activity 2.1: Conserve, protect and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment through a nature positive approach.

This key activity aims to create circumstances in which nature – species and ecosystems – is being repaired and is regenerating.

The Australian Government is implementing regulatory reforms, investing in programs and developing strategies to support reform. These initiatives include protecting and conserving 30% of our land and 30% of our marine areas (the marine component being led by Parks Australia) and halting the extinction of threatened species.

It also includes reforming Australia's environmental laws, improving the quality and accessibility of environmental data, and strengthening regulatory posture and compliance arrangements under existing legislation. Other activities include ongoing delivery of environmental programs as well as efforts to increase private investment in nature by building the legislative arrangements and supporting frameworks for investment (for instance, the Nature Repair Market). Establishing environmental-economic accounts and the underpinning indicators will help us to better understand the condition of the environment and interactions between the economy and the environment.

Measure EN01	**Stability or improvement in the:** • national average of Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS) scores • national average of National Connectivity Index scores (NCI).		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	Maintained or improved trajectory, compared to the baseline, for the HCAS and NCI scores.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	HCAS and NCI score ≥ baseline	Either the HCAS or NCI score ≥ baseline	HCAS and NCI scores < baseline
Outcome	**Not achieved.**		

2024–25 result

Habitat Condition Assessment System (version 3.3)

Table 5: Habitat Condition Assessment System (version 3.3) result

	2018 (2009–2018) (baseline)	2022 (2013–2022) (previous reporting year)	2023 (2014–2023)
Average	0.6378	0.6372	0.6364

National Connectivity Index v2.0 (incorporates HCAS v3.3 datasets)

Table 6: National Connectivity Index v2.0 (incorporates HCAS v3.3 datasets) result

	2018 (2009–2018) (baseline)	2022 (2013–2022) (previous reporting year)	2023 (2014–2023)
Average	0.5105	0.5099	0.5090

Analysis of performance

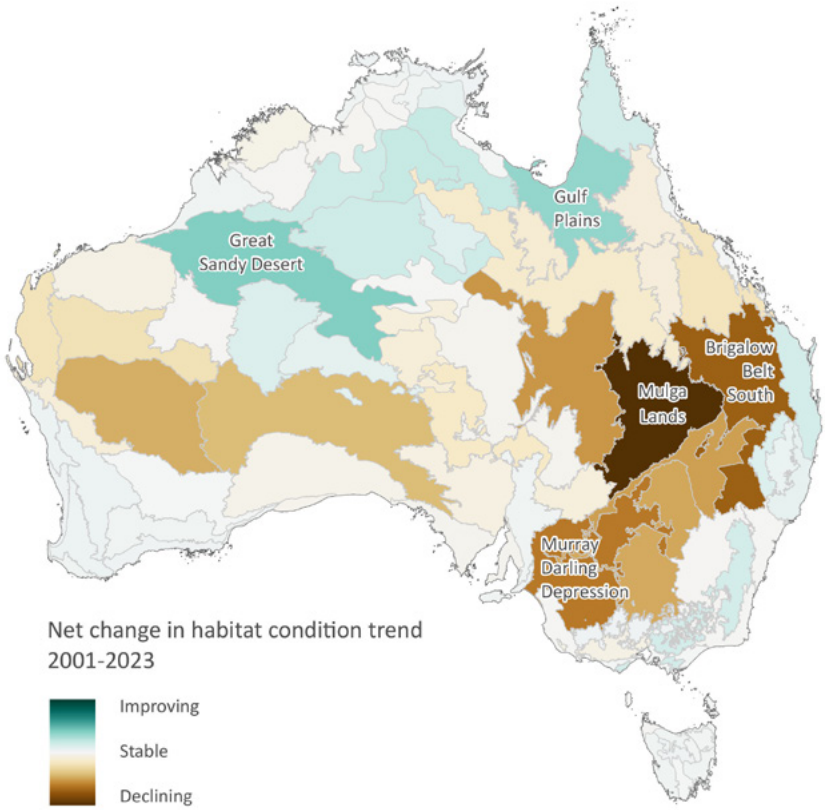
The Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS) and the National Connectivity Index (NCI) measures provide nationally consistent, repeatable, and cost-efficient ways to monitor the condition and connectivity of native vegetation habitats for biodiversity. Both the HCAS and NCI are relative indices, scored between zero and one, where zero means entirely removed natural habitat and one means relatively intact natural habitat.

At the continental level, average HCAS and NCI scores have shown a slight decline compared to both the previous reporting year (2022) and 2018 baseline. Although the change between baseline and 2023 (current reporting year) is statistically significant, meaning it is unlikely due to chance, the magnitude of the change is very small. This indicates that while the data shows a real difference over time, that difference at the continental level is minimal, suggesting that overall condition and connectivity has remained relatively stable. Trends become more apparent when assessed at the site-level (90 x 90 m) using time-series data within each bioregion.

As shown in Figure 4, the 2 bioregions having the greatest net improvement in habitat condition are Great Sandy Desert (GSD) and Gulf Plains (GUP), while the 3 bioregions having the greatest net decline are Mulga Lands (MUL), Brigalow Belt South (BBS) and Murray–Darling Depression (MDD). Most bioregions have approximately the same amount of improvement in condition as decline making them relatively stable. ‘Net’ refers to the difference between statistically significant increases and decreases in linear trends.

Bioregions that have shown the most net decline in habitat condition are predominately associated with more intensive land use with lower levels of protected areas. The impact of a change in habitat condition or connectivity on biodiversity can be higher in a bioregion that has already experienced substantial land conversion or has high levels of native species diversity, than a bioregion with high levels of retained habitat. A historical legacy of these intensively managed landscapes is higher concentrations of threatened species.

Figure 4: Net change in habitat condition trend 2001–2023



Caveats and disclosures

HCAS and NCI mainly report on Australia's continental terrestrial ecosystems, as they are based on Landsat remote sensing data of above-ground, predominantly vegetated landscapes, initially assessed at 250 x 250 m in previous reports, and now assessed at 90 x 90 m resolution back to 1988. This means that finer non-vegetated features, such as rivers, wetlands and coastal strips are not accurately depicted.

HCAS and NCI are Earth observation-based prediction models with explicit uncertainty that will continue to be improved. Due to a change in source data or methods, previous years' scores have been recalculated to maintain a coherent time series for assessing whether the measures have maintained or improved their trajectory.

The EN01 continental measure and bioregional trend result in Figure 4 report only on those pixels with sufficient remote sensing data. Investigations are being undertaken to understand and identify potential options for improving results in areas with high cloud cover.

Rationale

Healthy functioning habitat is fundamental to the persistence of species and populations. Tracking change in condition and connectivity at a continental level complements local level observations of habitat and ecosystem status.

When coupled with other metrics, habitat condition and connectivity scores give insight on the effectiveness of policy, programs and regulation to improve native ecosystems. Change will rarely be immediately detectable. It will be influenced by the scale of interventions such as:

- on-ground management decisions by state/territory governments, landowners and non-government organisations
- natural variation
- catastrophic events such as the 2019–20 bushfires and extensive floods of 2020–22.

We maintain national datasets on:

- land use
- land cover
- native vegetation types
- biogeographical regions
- threatened species and ecological communities
- vegetation condition and connectivity.

Over time, we have improved and extended these datasets. This allows us to report with increasing accuracy on ecosystems through the lens of habitat type, condition and connectivity. These measures help us to understand ecosystem status nationally.

In 2012, the CSIRO began work on HCAS, and since 2015, updates to HCAS have been in partnership with the department. This is a novel approach to ecosystem condition assessment. The first product release to the public was in April 2022 (HCAS v2.1) using MODIS remote sensing data from 2001 to 2018. The current version, HCAS v3.3, was released to the department in June 2025 and is based on Landsat remote sensing data from 1988 to 2024.

In 2022, the department commissioned CSIRO to develop a HCAS-derived NCI v2.0 to report on connectivity across landscapes and nationally. Connectivity emerges from the configuration of condition values of pixels across a larger area, noting that landscape fragmentation is a known driver of biodiversity decline. Work is under way with CSIRO and NSW Government scientists to review the National Connectivity Index implementation to ensure it remains consistent with the latest science.

Methodology and data sources

HCAS

Data source: 2025 Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS) version 3.3, available at https://data.csiro.au/collection/csiro:65549. The data used in this report is provided in the folder labelled '1. HABITAT_CONDITION'. Ten-year epochs of the remote sensing data were used to estimate stability or improvement in the HCAS national measure. Three-year epochs were used to report on bioregional trends in habitat condition.

HCAS Methodology

The HCAS combines environmental data, remotely sensed data and location data on intact habitats in reference condition to provide a consistent estimate of ecosystem condition for all locations across Australia. Reference sites (condition levels close to one) are selected from the pool of available data to be representative of each site of interest (every 90 m pixel) and used as benchmarks for the calculation of condition which is derived as a proximity to reference condition. The current version (HCAS v3.3, CSIRO 2025) is at 90 m grid resolution and uses 14 Landsat-derived remote sensing variables representing a wide range of ecosystem characteristics, using annual time series data from 1988 to 2024. The previous HCAS v3.0 was a 250 m product using Landsat, as a pilot for the operational 90 m product. Technical reports can be accessed at: https://research.csiro.au/biodiversity-knowledge/projects/hcas/.

A statistical nonparametric paired test was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the continental mean of the 2018 (baseline) and 2023 (current reporting year) HCAS datasets. This is a standard statistical method to test the null hypothesis that the two continental means are the same (no difference), at the 0.05 significance threshold. A block-bootstrap resampling method is applied to integrate the pixel-based uncertainty and account for the spatial correlation in the HCAS outputs. The statistical significance provided by this test is influenced by the sample size, which here is very large due to the number of pixels across the rasters at 90m resolution. On the other hand, the *effect size* (expressed in standard deviation units) provides a standardised measure of the magnitude of the difference, independent of sample size or significance testing. A standard metric to quantify effect size is Cohen's *d*, which here results in $d = 0.0037$ for the difference between the 2018 and 2023 HCAS means. This result typically falls within the 'small-to-negligible' category, as per conventional benchmarks where $d = 0.2$ is interpreted as 'small', $d = 0.5$ as 'medium', and $d = 0.8$ as 'large'.

NCI

Data Source: 2025 National Connectivity Index v2.0, based on HCAS v3.3, available at https://data.csiro.au/collection/csiro:65549. The data used in this report is provided in the folder labelled 'NCI' in '4.CONNECTIVITY_CONDITION'. Ten-year epochs of the remote sensing data were used to measure stability or improvement in the NCI national measure.

NCI Methodology

The NCI uses HCAS as an input. It reports on the context within which a location exists, rather than the location's condition. The NCI v2.0 score for a location is a measure of the amount of connected habitat around that location. This score is calculated by determining the optimal paths through the landscape for organisms to move from a given location to every other surrounding location. The accumulated cost of movement along each path, is a function of both distance and habitat condition between these locations.

This is used to determine the weight of the habitat value of each destination location. The weighted habitat values of surrounding locations are added up and assigned to the given location. These calculations are performed at multiple scales and then aggregated to account for the varying distances that different types of organisms might be expected to move through the landscape, as some will be restricted to a few hundred metres while others might extend to many kilometres.

2023–24 result

Table 7: Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS v3.0) and National Connectivity Index v2.0 (NCI based on HCAS v3.0) results reported in 2023–24

Habitat Condition Assessment System (HCAS v3.0)					
	2018 (2001–2018) (baseline)	**2019 (2002–2019)**	**2020 (2003–2020)**	**2021 (2004–2021)**	**2022 (2005–2022)**
Average	0.6484	0.6499	0.6506	0.6506	0.6502

National Connectivity Index v2.0 (NCI based on HCAS v3.0)					
	2018 (2001–2018) (baseline)	**2019 (2002–2019)**	**2020 (2003–2020)**	**2021 (2004–2021)**	**2022 (2005–2022)**
Average	0.4277	0.4296	0.4309	0.4313	0.4312

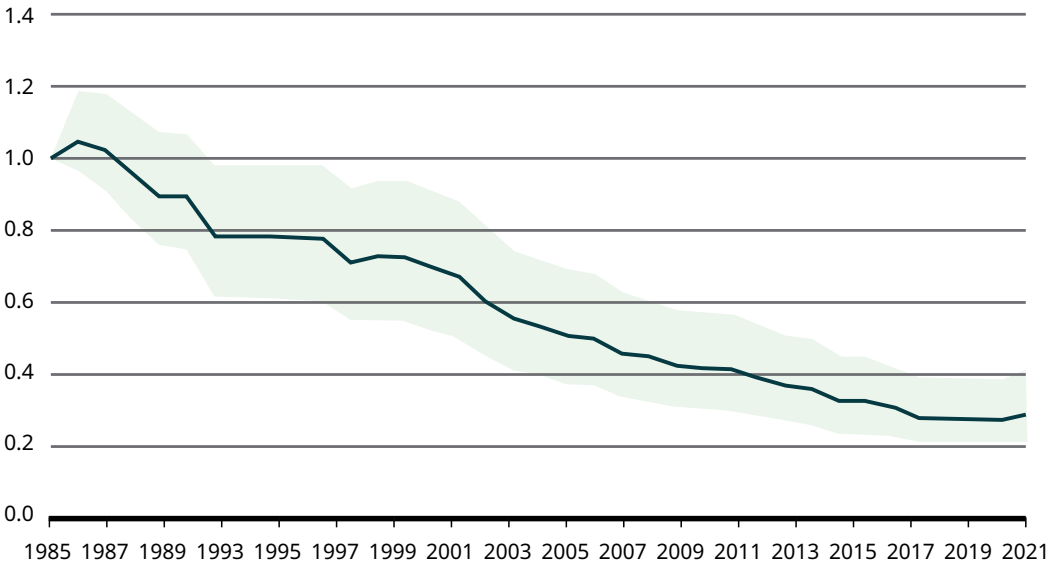
The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure EN02	**National average of the Threatened Species Main Index.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulator		
Target	Maintained or improved trajectory.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	TSX main index is stable or improving.	Note: measure is either achieved or not achieved. For this measure there is no partially achieved.	TSX main index is declining.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

0.282

Figure 5: Threatened Species Index



Analysis of performance

The Threatened Species Index (TSX) provides a reliable and robust measure of change in the relative abundance of Australia's threatened species. The index starts at the value of 1, with the yearly value reflecting the level of abundance relative to the starting year. Because the data takes time to collect, process and publish, there is a time lag, with the final year of the index currently being 2021. The index also shows shaded 95% confidence limits, which illustrates the amount of variation in the underlying species trends. The TSX Visualizer (tsx.org.au) allows users to select certain fields (e.g., species group, state/territory, etc), including threatened species status. For the purposes of this report, only species listed as threatened under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) are included.

The TSX was most recently updated in November 2024. In total, 299 EPBC listed species were included in the index, an increase of 50 from the previous year. While showing a decline of approximately 72% since 1985, the most recent index score shows a small improvement in relative species abundance. Over recent updates of the TSX, the rate of decline has flattened with the latest result indicating this positive outcome has been sustained. As Matters of National Environmental Significance, the Australian Government has a responsibility to promote the recovery of all EPBC listed species. While many of the included species benefit directly through targeted Australian Government conservation initiatives (e.g. Saving Native Species program, National Heritage Trust), other benefits are provided through landscape-scale investments (e.g. Indigenous Protected Areas Program); departmental policy initiatives; preparation and implementation of conservation planning documents; and through regulation. The department also works closely with state/territory governments, Indigenous land managers, conservation groups, natural resource management regions, eNGOs and universities to promote conservation outcomes for listed threatened species.

All threatened species projects funded directly by the department that include collection of abundance data are encouraged or required to provide their data to the TSX if they meet the required quality standards. Improved trajectories resulting from these investments will be reflected in future years.

Caveats and disclosures

For the purposes of this analysis, all species included in the index are threatened species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The TSX is limited by the number and spatial distribution of high-quality data sets available for inclusion into the model. As a composite index it hides single-species trends, although these can be generated via the data management interface. Single species trends from the TSX are not used by the department for reporting purposes as they are prone to larger variance and require additional interpretation.

The TSX is also constrained by the timeliness of obtaining data and typically reports the index 3 years in arrears. This occurs due to lags in the provision of data-by-data owners.

Changes in the TSX also reflect a range of factors that may partially or fully sit outside the direct control of the department, including climatic conditions; climate change; natural disasters; invasive species and disease impacts; and developments under the jurisdiction of state and local governments.

The scores provided for the TSX have statistical confidence limits, which do not form part of the corporate reporting metric. However, full reporting to the department includes these.

Rationale

Tracking change in the trajectory of EPBC listed threatened species is important to determine the effectiveness of Australia's policy, regulatory and program interventions focused on species recovery.

Methodology and data sources

The base year used is 1985, as it is the longest time series available. All taxa are selected (currently birds, mammals, amphibians, plants), in all states/territories, and only EPBC listed threatened species.

While baselines have been established for the TSX, future iterations of this measure will also include a recalculation of the previous year's scores, as additional historical data and species are typically added to the index database each year. This will allow assessment of whether the measure has maintained or improved its trajectory over subsequent years, without needing to address concerns about changes in the actual score reported in the previous year.

The data owner is Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN).

2023–24 result

The Annual Report 2023–24 published a TSX score for 2020 of 0.398.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Note: In the 2023–24 corporate report, the TSX score for 2020 was reported as 0.398. In the latest version of the TSX, the score for 2020 has been revised down to 0.267 and the score for 2021 is now 0.282. This is because each year the TSX is re-calculated to include additional historical data, and new species are typically added to the index database. This allows assessment of whether the measure has maintained or improved its trajectory over subsequent years without needing to address concerns about changes in the actual score reported in the previous year. It does not mean that the index from the previously included species (of birds, mammals and plants) was worse than previously reported. For the most recent index this includes the addition of data for the first time on amphibians, which notably underwent significant population declines due to Chytrid fungus in the '80s and '90s.

Measure EN03	**Percentage of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* referral and approval decisions that meet statutory timeframes.**		
Measure type	Efficiency (proxy); Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	100% (noting tolerance of >85% equals mostly achieved).		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Achieved = 100% Mostly achieved = 85 – 99%	50–84%	<50%
Outcome	Mostly achieved		

2024–25 result

88%

Analysis of performance

The department is responsible for making decisions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) in relation to impacts on matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). A key decision is whether an action has significant impacts on MNES and therefore requires assessment (referral decision).

If an action does require an assessment, the next key decision is whether impacts on MNES can be mitigated such that the impacts are not unacceptable and can be allowed to proceed (approval decision).

Of the 346 referral and approval decisions due in 2024–25, 305 were on time (88%), 41 were late.

Late decisions were attributed to delays associated with:

- complexity of assessment
- consulting proponent
- further information requested by decision-maker
- consideration of new information.

Caveats and disclosures

This result is an accurate reflection of referral and approval data on 1 July 2025.

Rationale

The department is responsible for determining whether referred projects require assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), and whether any conditions should be attached to approvals to ensure that significant impacts on matters of national environmental significance could be avoided, offset or mitigated.

Methodology and data sources

Data is sourced from a departmental database (the EPBC portals and assessment system). A report is generated to determine:

- a count of referral and approval decisions due in the reporting period
- a count of referral and approval decisions made within the statutory timeframe (number of days), depending on decision type
- the percentage of referral and approval decisions made within the statutory time frame.

2023–24 result

- 86% (referral and approval decisions)
- 85% (assessment decisions)

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure EN04	**Number of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* approved projects that were subject to active compliance monitoring.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	150 EPBC Approvals will be subject to compliance monitoring, through assessment of Annual Compliance Reports. Over the forward years these targets will be revised to incorporate audit functions derived from 2024–25 data.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	100% = 150 EPBC Approvals are subject to compliance monitoring via assessment of Annual Compliance Reports.	≥ 80% = 120 EBPC Approvals are subject to compliance monitoring via assessment of Annual Compliance Reports.	< 80% = less than 120 EBPC Approvals are subject to compliance monitoring via assessment of Annual Compliance Reports.
Outcome	Not achieved		

2024–25 result

Over the 2024–25 reporting period, 100 EPBC Approvals were subject to compliance monitoring through the assessment of 105 Annual Compliance Reports.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Analysis of performance

As of 30 June 2025, a total of 100 EPBC Approvals were subject to compliance monitoring through the assessment of 105 Annual Compliance Reports.

In January 2025, the department's Compliance and Enforcement Branch commenced the development and implementation of a new process for accepting and assessing Annual Compliance Reports using case management systems, Comtrac and MARA, and supporting system, PowerBI, rather than manual inputs into spreadsheets. The process included the development of guidance documents, standard operating procedures, implementation, and induction and training of officers.

The new process, including use of the case management systems, has improved long-term capability and data-integrity. However, the introduction and implementation of these improvements has slowed monitoring activity during the second half of the performance period as resources and effort were redirected to the development and implementation of the new process. This foundational work was essential to support the rollout of the new processes and systems to assess Annual Compliance Reports.

While introducing the new process has impacted the capacity to monitor EPBC Approvals through the assessment of Annual Compliance Reports in the short-term, this investment will have longer-term efficiency and data-integrity benefits, supporting overall regulatory maturity.

As the new process has now been implemented, the target of monitoring 150 Approvals through the assessment of Annual Compliance Reports (ACRs) remains suitable and should be achieved in future reporting periods.

Caveats and disclosures

The 2024–25 target does not include compliance audits or independent audits because during the 2023–24 reporting period the department was developing its audit capability and as such, there was insufficient baseline data to include those audits in the performance measures for 2024–25. Compliance audits and independent audits will be included in the future data sets and targets for this performance measure.

As a result of the new audit function, to reduce duplication of compliance monitoring of EPBC Approvals subject to both audit and submission of ACRs, the prioritisation tool for ACR subject to compliance monitoring was modified. In addition to the National Environmental Significance Threat and Risk Assessment (NESTRA) score, the prioritisation tool also considers:

- whether an audit has been, or will be, carried out for this approval in the reporting period
- whether the approval type is a departmental compliance priority
- assessment of ACRs in previous years
- any previous non-compliance relating to the approval.

The approval decisions subject to active monitoring may differ over the course of each year and approval decisions that are not monitored over the course of this reporting period may be subject to compliance monitoring over future years.

Rationale

The department is responsible for monitoring compliance with EPBC approval conditions. The department uses various activities to monitor compliance. For the purposes of this measure, compliance monitoring includes reviews of Annual Compliance Reports.

Active compliance monitoring provides the Australian public with confidence that actions are implemented as approved and approval conditions are being met, and a timely response to non-compliance can be achieved. Compliance monitoring for EPBC approval conditions also provides some assurance that the intended environmental outcomes of the EPBC Act and respective EPBC approvals are being met, and timely responses to non-compliance can help reduce any associated environmental harms.

Active monitoring and timely compliance action have improved voluntary compliance by approval holders. Prioritising non-compliance with Annual Compliance Reports and applying a graduated compliance model led to an increase in both compliance outcomes achieved and voluntary submissions last financial year. As awareness of obligations grows through education and enforcement, further improvements in Annual Compliance Report submissions and compliance are expected.

Compliance action is managed using the department's case-management system, Comtrac.

Methodology and data sources

Data is sourced from departmental databases (Mara, Comtrac and SPIRE) to determine the total number of active EPBC approvals, and compliance-monitoring activities undertaken.

A report is generated to determine the total number of Annual Compliance Reports submitted and reviewed within each financial year.

All approved projects are reviewed in the context of our risk-based project-prioritisation model, the NESTRA tool. NESTRA informs the department's compliance monitoring focus on those projects that pose the greatest risk to the environment and can reduce the regulatory burden on projects that are low risk for approval holders who consistently do the right thing.

2023–24 result

Over the 2023–24 reporting period, 491 annual compliance reports were submitted by approved project holders, of which 159 were assessed for compliance.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure EN05	**Percentage of Australia's land that is protected or conserved.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	24%		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	24%	Protected and conserved areas cover more than 22.42% and less than 24%.	No additional growth in the protection and conservation of land in Australia during the year.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

As at 30 June 2025, 24.46% of Australia's landmass is protected or conserved, based on CAPAD 2024 data and IPAs dedicated between 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2025.

Analysis of performance

The target for the 2024–25 financial year is that 24% of Australia's land is protected or conserved. The tolerances have been set based on the target achieved in 2023–24.

Protected Areas

Collaborative Australian Protected Area Database (CAPAD) 2024 shows protected areas covered 22.57% of Australia's landmass as at 30 June 2024. Further information can be found at Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database: protected area data.

Since 30 June 2024, over 14 million hectares have been added to the National Reserve System (NRS) through the dedication of 6 Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs). Protected Areas now cover 24.46% of Australia's landmass (more than 188 million hectares). These new protected areas will be reflected in the 2026 edition of CAPAD.

Conserved areas

Environment Ministers agreed a National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) Framework in June 2024 to support a nationally consistent approach to the recognition of OECMs (referred to as conserved areas in Australia). For more information see National OECMs Framework. No conserved areas were recognised during the 2024–25 financial year.

Caveats and disclosures

The percentage of Australia's land that is protected as indicated above is based on data from CAPAD 2024 and IPAs dedicated since 30 June 2024. The above figure does not include information on protected areas designated by state/territory governments or private landholders since 30 June 2024. CAPAD is compiled every 2 years.

Rationale

Protected and conserved areas play an important role in Australia's efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. In July 2022, the Australia Government committed to a national target to protect 30% of Australia's land and 30% of marine areas by 2030, the '30 by 30' target. At their meeting in October 2022, Environment Ministers agreed to work collectively to achieve this national target.

Several departmental policies and programs are relevant to the 30 by 30 target. A 10-year objective in the Threatened Species Action Plan is that at least 30% of Australia's landmass is protected and conserved, and the Strategy for Nature 2024–2030 includes the 30 by 30 target as one of 6 priority national targets. The following initiatives intersect with the target: Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program; the Protecting Important Biodiversity Areas Program; the Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business; and the Regional Planning Initiative.

This performance measure does not cover the 30% protection of marine areas. This is the responsibility of Parks Australia.

While the department has a role in coordinating national action, the achievement of 30% protection/conservation is dependent on factors outside the department's control, such as state/territory biodiversity conservation policies and programs.

Methodology and data sources

The department's Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database (CAPAD) records details on protected areas including size, location, and management arrangements.

Data on protected areas is held and maintained by the state/territory governments and some environmental non-government organisations in their respective data systems. Every 2 years the department releases CAPAD which provides this information at a national level. The methodology to compile the CAPAD data is documented internally by the department.

2023–24 result

As of 30 June 2024, 22.42% of Australia's landmass was protected (based on CAPAD 2022 data and IPAs dedicated between 30 June 2022 and 30 June 2023).

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Key activity 2.2: Protect Australia's cultural, historic and First Nations' heritage.

This key activity aims to protect and sustainably manage Australia's natural, historic and Indigenous heritage places for future generations. DCCEEW works to effectively administer legislation that supports the assessment and listing of places of Commonwealth and national heritage significance, and support the Minister to make decisions on applications for the protection of First Nations' cultural heritage. The department also works to support the successful nomination of places for inclusion on the World Heritage List, under the World Heritage Convention, and report to UNESCO on Australia's protection and management of its World Heritage-listed properties. DCCEEW will continue to deliver the Australian Heritage Grants program and the new First Nations' Heritage Grants program to support ongoing investment, and ensure First Nations' values are incorporated in our listed places.

The Australian Government has agreed to the development of a new heritage strategy for Australia. The strategy will help realise the Nature Positive Plan and support national consistency in addressing key challenges such as the threat to heritage posed by climate change. In partnership with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance, the government is working to reform and strengthen First Nations cultural heritage protections. A performance measure has been introduced to assess the timeliness of the department's support for heritage assessments undertaken by the Australian Heritage Council (see EN06 on page 50 of the Corporate Plan 2024–25).

The department will continue to monitor and report on the National Heritage List (NHL) and Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) every 5 years, in accordance with the EPBC Act. This report is a statutory requirement and provides both houses of parliament and the public with information on how effectively places of significant or outstanding value for Australia are being managed. It also provides information on new places that have been included on the NHL and CHL. The next report will be for the period from 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2028.

Measure EN06	An improvement in the proportion of National and Commonwealth Heritage assessments undertaken and completed against legislated timeframes.		
Measure type	Efficiency (proxy); Quantitative		
Target	75% of National and Commonwealth Heritage assessments, for nominations received after 1 July 2021, are on track, or completed within legislated timeframes.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	75% of assessments completed or on track to be completed.	Assessments have progressed through the milestone stages.	Less than 75% of assessments are completed or on track to be completed within legislated timeframes.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

The statutory completion deadlines for all 7 (100%) National Heritage assessments captured through this measure are considered on track. There are no Commonwealth Heritage assessments currently underway as no nominations were received after 1 July 2021.

Analysis of performance

The statutory completion deadlines for all 7 (100%) National Heritage assessments captured through this measure are considered on track. These deadlines are included in the Finalised Priority Assessment Lists (FPAL) for the National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists.

The department undertakes the research, analysis and consultation required for National and Commonwealth Heritage assessments on behalf of the Australian Heritage Council. The current membership of the council is available on the department's website: Australian Heritage Council. Officials work closely with the expert council members to finalise assessment reports for the full council to make decisions on whether a place meets the required threshold for listing, before briefing the Minister to make a final decision on listing and completing the statutory steps (including registering a gazette instrument if a place is to be listed). The listing process is outlined in this flowchart: National Heritage List cycle.

Over the past year, the department has progressed 4 places through the Might Have Values stage of the statutory assessment process by supporting the council to make decisions on:

- Ballara
- Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade Route
- Binthi Warra Indigenous Heritage Places
- Ghow Swamp.

The National Heritage assessment of North Pole Dome - Meentheena continues following a Might Have Values decision by the council in December 2022.

The National Heritage assessment for Elizabeth Farm, Experiment Farm and Hambledon Cottage has commenced and work is being undertaken to take the assessment to the council for a Might Have Values decision in March 2026.

The National Heritage assessment of the Nut and Volcanic Features of the Stanley Peninsula is expected to be finalised soon.

Caveats and disclosures

The FPAL also includes 12 other assessments that commenced prior to 2021 that are not included in this measure. These assessments were added before the implementation of the council's Free, Prior and Informed Consent policy statement which changed the approach to accepting and progressing nominations. Since the most recent FPAL was published in November 2024, the Coral Sea has been removed as it is included in the National Heritage List as 'The Battle of the Coral Sea Site'.

Not all information contained in the Australian Heritage Database, including assessment deadlines, is publicly available.

Rationale

The assessment of the National and Commonwealth Heritage values of places on the Finalised Priority Assessment List (FPAL) can take many years to complete. The EPBC Act stipulates that National and Commonwealth Heritage assessments should be completed within a set timeframe, usually up to 10 years. The EPBC Act does not allow for an assessment to be stopped without completing the full legislative process. Resourcing for the research and consultation required for this task has been inconsistent and at times insufficient as other work has been a higher priority.

In 2021 the council released its policy statement on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). This document outlines the approach that the council takes in working with First Nations people to obtain their FPIC through the assessment of places for inclusion in the National or Commonwealth Heritage lists. Places nominated since 2021 are the subject of this measure.

Policy changes to the way nominations to the National and Commonwealth Heritage lists are made, particularly in relation to First Nations heritage places, will also improve timeframes through improved engagement.

Until a place is listed, it is not protected for its heritage values under the EPBC Act. Improving assessment timeframes will improve the capacity of the department to provide protection to Australia's significant heritage places.

Methodology and data sources

Key assessment milestones (Might Have Values report, statutory consultation, Final Values report, Decision brief to Minister) are being met within a timeframe that allows for the overall assessment to be completed before the legislated timeframe expires.

Information on statutory timeframes are included in the Australian Heritage Database record for each place. They are also included on the department's Finalised Priority Assessment Lists for the National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists webpage.

Timeframes and milestones are outlined and tracked through the project plans for each place's assessment.

2023–24 result

New measure in 2024–25.

Key activity 2.3: Accelerate the transition to a circular economy, while safely managing pollutants and hazardous substances.

This key activity aims to help Australia transition to a circular economy, tackle the waste crisis, and reduce the impact of harmful chemicals.

In October 2022, Australia's Environment Ministers agreed to work with the private sector to design out waste and pollution, keep materials in use and foster markets to achieve a circular economy by 2030. This commitment recognises that we cannot continue to produce and consume in a way that leaves our environment worse off.

This key activity fulfils the department's role in leading and coordinating national efforts to transition Australia to a circular economy. This includes establishing a Circular Economy Framework to set the direction for our transition and coordinating action across levels of government.

Measure EN07	**National standards to manage environmental impacts of industrial chemicals.**		
Measure type	Output; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	National standards are made and/or consolidated for a further 1,000 industrial chemicals each year (including the 12 chemical groups that Australia has previously ratified under the Stockholm Convention).		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	The number of industrial chemicals to which new IChEMS scheduling decisions apply meets or exceeds the planned target for the financial year.	The number of industrial chemicals to which new IChEMS scheduling decisions apply has increased by at least half, but not all the number forecast for the financial year.	New IChEMS scheduling decisions apply to fewer than half of the industrial chemicals forecast for the financial year.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

As of 30 June 2025, national standards were in place for the management of 2,187 industrial chemicals, including all industrial chemicals previously ratified by Australia and that have since been listed on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Analysis of performance

When determining the number of chemicals, the department uses Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Numbers (CAS RN) as a unique identifier of chemical substances.

During 2024–25, new standards were created for the management of 1,260 industrial chemicals, building on the 816 set in 2023–24 and 111 set in 2022–23. The first national standards were made on 14 December 2022.

Standards created in 2024–25 apply to 11 separate chemicals or groups of chemicals, including the severe restriction of:

- 2 chemicals listed on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in the preceding 12 months for global action
- chemicals listed on the Minamata Convention on Mercury to globally reduce and eliminate their production and use
- a chemical group that exhibits similar risk characteristics and is a regrettable substitute for a previously scheduled high concern chemical group.

Caveats and disclosures

To avoid confusion and to accurately reflect the number of individual industrial chemicals which are covered by the national standards, the department reports against the Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Numbers (CAS RN) as a unique identifier.

A list of relevant CAS RN are published on the IChEMS Online Register.

Rationale

The Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS) provides nationally consistent standards for jurisdictions to regulate the import, manufacture, export, use and disposal of industrial chemicals. This supports Australia's transition to a safe circular economy.

Since its establishment in December 2022, 33 individual chemicals or chemical groups have been scheduled in the IChEMS Register, resulting in standards being applied to 2,187 related substances.

Methodology and data sources

Standards are published on the IChEMS Online Register, which is updated as scheduling decisions are made. Performance against the targets can be determined by counting the number of new chemical substances listed in the IChEMS Online Register at the end of each reporting period.

2023–24 result

As of 30 June 2024, national standards were in place for the management of 927 industrial chemicals, including all industrial chemical groups that Australia is yet to ratify under the Stockholm Convention.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure EN08	National resource recovery rate.		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	62% (based on data to 30 June 2021 published in December 2022, which was used to establish a straight line projection toward the 2030 target in the National Waste Policy Action Plan).		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Met or exceeded the target recovery rate.	The recovery rate has improved relative to the last report but has not hit the target recovery rate for that financial year.	The recovery rate has declined relative to the last report.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Updated data to 30 June 2023, released by the department in the biennial waste and resource recovery publication in December 2024, forms the basis of performance reporting for this measure. The national resource recovery rate was 66% as at 30 June 2023.

Analysis of performance

The 2024–2025 result is an increase on the national resource recovery rate as at 30 June 2021, which was 63%.

The department contributed to improvements through implementation of the waste export bans under the *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020* and investment in recycling infrastructure via programs such as the Recycling Modernisation Fund. Recovery outcomes are also influenced by state/territory governments, local councils and industry activities.

Caveats and disclosures

Historical data updated to 30 June 2021, released by the department in December 2022, forms the basis of the performance target for this measure. Forecast resource recovery rates are based on historical data trends and should be interpreted with caution. Forecasts are inherently uncertain and subject to change; particularly as new data becomes available or previously reported data is revised. As such, actual recovery rates may differ from those projected.

Rationale

The National Waste Policy Action Plan includes a target to achieve an 80% recovery rate for waste in Australia by 2030. Resource recovery is an indicator for reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and moving towards a circular economy.

Methodology and data sources

Resource recovery figures are published biennially in National Waste and Resource Recovery Reporting.

The recovery rate is calculated as the total percentage of waste by weight that was either reused or recycled or recovered as energy within a financial year.

The Corporate Plan targets for the forward years have been calculated by forecasting a constant rate of progress and adjusting to account for the 3-year reporting lag between releases of the National Waste Report and the Corporate Plan.

2023–24 result

Australia's National Waste Report 2022 indicates that the resource recovery rate was 63%. This is based on 2020–21 data.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Outcome 3: Antarctica

Advance Australia's environmental, scientific, strategic and economic interests in the Antarctic region by protecting, researching and administering in the region, including through international engagement.

Key activity 3.1: Contribute to Australia's national Antarctic interests through science, environmental management and international engagement, including delivering Australia's scientific research and operations in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

Our Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) delivers Australia's commitment to conserving the Antarctic environment. We also deliver Australia's scientific research and operations in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

This key activity aims to ensure Australia's ongoing presence, scientific research and environmental stewardship in the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT). It also contributes to our active engagement in the international forums of the Antarctic Treaty system, and helps to ensure Australia remains a leading and influential player in the Antarctic region.

This key activity leads and coordinates delivery of the Australian Antarctic Program (AAP), a highly complex logistical program, including maintenance of 4 year-round stations, to maintain a strong presence in the Australian Antarctic Territory. The AAP also supports the conservation and management of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean environments, including at Heard Island and the McDonald Islands.

We undertake and support world-class research in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, including with international partners, that has global benefits and supports Australia's interests and responsibilities in the region.

We also work closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence and other government agencies to uphold Australia's significant and long-standing national interests in Antarctica, articulated in the Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan.

Measure AN01	**Deliver priority Antarctic science that advances Australia's interests.**		
Measure type	Output; Quantitative		
Target	Publish 75 peer-reviewed journal articles.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	75 or more peer-reviewed journal articles published.	50–74 peer-reviewed journal articles published.	Less than 50 peer-review journal articles published.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

113 peer-reviewed journal articles published.

Analysis of performance

The 2024–25 result is an increase from the previous two reporting periods (95 publications in 2023–24, and 102 in 2022–23).

Scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals are regarded as a significant contribution to the department's delivery of the Australian Antarctic Program, consistent with the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan*. They are a measure by which the department demonstrates Leadership and excellence in Antarctic science and contribution to the international body of recognised best-available science.

Caveats and disclosures

The reported data is 'point of time' (20 June 2025). Research projects may be ongoing throughout the year or across multiple years. Records collected for this measure are a snapshot of the database and will not include publications entered after the reporting date. In addition, there may be a lag of several years between the completion of field work and the publication of peer reviewed journal articles, with current financial year publication performance linked to previous financial years' seasonal field support.

The department's Corporate Plan 2024–25 referenced 2023–24 dates in the methodology section for this measure. This has been corrected to 2024–25 in the reporting of this result. In addition, tolerances for this measure in the department's Corporate Plan 2024–25 were expressed as quantity of peer-review journals published. This is also corrected here to be the quantity of articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

Editorial changes have been made to the rationale and methodology descriptions to simplify it and provide additional clarity on the process undertaken.

Rationale

The department leads the Australian Government's scientific program in Antarctica. This work contributes to understanding of issues of global significance including climate change, the human footprint in Antarctica, the conservation of Antarctic and Southern Ocean wildlife, and the sustainable management of Southern Ocean fisheries. Through targeted science and international partnerships, the department works to better understand the Antarctic and Southern Ocean region.

The successful delivery of our research activities positions Australia as a leader in global scientific efforts to understand and monitor Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. This supports our interests in the Antarctic Treaty system and other Antarctic international engagement, consistent with the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan*.

Methodology and data sources

Research is undertaken in Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic, the Southern Ocean and in Australia, with the department providing planning, administrative and operational support. Each project has a plan that sets out its specific methodology, partnerships, resources, logistical requirements and a path to impact.

Peer-reviewed articles are produced by scientists conducting research as part of the Australian Antarctic Program. These scientists are employed by the department, other government agencies, and domestic and international research institutions.

Each peer-reviewed journal article makes a significant and lasting contribution to our understanding of, and responsibility for, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean region.

Projects provide milestone reports which specify the publications produced as part of the project. These publications are reviewed by senior departmental scientists prior to being approved for inclusion in the Australian Antarctic Program Publications Database. Due to the timing of Antarctic season operations, milestone reporting and review processes do not necessarily coincide with financial year reports. This can create a lag in the inclusion of publications into the database beyond the completion of the financial year.

The Australian Antarctic Program Publications Database is publicly available at publications.aad.gov.au and may be searched to find scientific papers or articles of interest from the Australian Antarctic Program.

Literature recorded in 'Category 1' are published in peer-reviewed journals and are regarded as significantly contributing to advancing our understanding of the Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, including the impacts these areas have on global systems. These papers are also seen as significantly contributing to Australia's standing and leadership in Antarctic and Southern Ocean forums.

To calculate achievement against the target, a search of the database is undertaken using the Specialised Search with the following parameters:

AAD content: All (this will include both AAD authors and external authors)

Category: *1: Peer-reviewed literature*
From year: *2024 Month: July to December*
To year: *2025 Month: January to June*

The output data will provide all the Category 1 literature within the database on the date the search is conducted.

2023–24 result

95 publications. The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure AN02	**Improve our understanding of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean through mapping and charting.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness, Qualitative		
Target	Improve the coverage and/ or resolution and/or data domains across various maps and charts in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	The coverage and/ or resolution and/or data domains across various maps and charts in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has increased in the year.	N/A.	The coverage and/ or resolution and/or data domains across various maps and charts in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has not changed in the year.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

A total of 131 new maps covering Antarctica and the Southern Ocean have been generated. Seven per cent of these maps resulted in increased spatial coverage, 84% resulted in increased temporal coverage, 37% improved resolution, and 31% increased the data domain (e.g. a new subject or program resulting in a new edition).

Analysis of performance

The total number of maps generated by the department as of 30 June 2025 is 2296. This is an increase from the 2 previous years' reporting: 2165 maps at 30 June 2024, and 1996 maps at 30 June 2023.[1]

A key milestone achieved was the provision of mapping products and advice to support the Minister for the Environment and Water's announcement of the proposed expansion to the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve.

There were 109 requests made for new or updated maps. These requests support various aspects of Antarctic operations, including policy, expeditions, and science. Of these, 27 requests resulted in the creation of new maps, 34 requests in updated maps, 20 requests resulted in creating/sending digital content (e.g. digital content for requestors to use in their own mapping tools), and 28 requests in printing/delivery of existing maps.

Although web usage metrics are limited in their reliability, the available information indicates 133,846 views of maps within the map catalogue during the reporting period.

Caveats and disclosures

As each map in the map catalogue is unique, every new map added to the catalogue represents a functional increase in coverage, resolution or data domain.

An increase in spatial coverage was considered jointly with resolution and data domain. For example, a new map of the Denman Glacier would be considered new spatial coverage for a given resolution, although the Denman Glacier had been mapped at a larger scale.

Additional information is provided to further detail the methodology. Although the overall target is qualitative, the most practical means of providing evidence for this is through the increased number of new maps, which is a quantitative metric. Each map represents an increase in coverage and/or resolution and/or domain. Identical maps are never re-released, and each new version stored in the catalogue must provide additional information or detail.

Map records for 2 maps were retroactively updated, which resulted in maps that would have been included in the 2023–24 reporting period but were not available at the time of that reporting. In addition, the status of 3 other maps generated in 2023–24 were retroactively updated from 'completed' to 'draft' making them not reportable. This change of 'completed' status was an exceptional case and not expected to impact results for this measure in future. Details of these maps can be provided on request.

1 The department refined its map catalogue query methodology in 2024–25 to provide improved definition, repeatability, and contextual accuracy. The numbers of maps generated in the 2 prior years have been updated here using the improved methodology.

Rationale

The department manages the delivery of the Australian Antarctic Program consistent with the *Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan*.

Maps and charts support a broad range of activities, including safe and effective operations, situational awareness, maintenance of facilities and equipment, and scientific research. Relevant products include hydrographic charts to support safe navigation for ships, maps of stations to provide critical information for expeditioners, and satellite information to identify habitat and locations for wildlife.

Enhancing and refining the coverage (temporal and spatial), the resolution (level of detail) and information (various data domains/layers) of maps and charts is fundamental to improving our understanding of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

An improved understanding of the environment enables the department to:

- manage protection of the region, including identifying the boundaries and content of areas of significance requiring protection. In turn, this enables the department to administer the Australian Antarctic Territory, and regulate activities, for example under the *Antarctic Treaty (Environment Protection) Act 1980*
- focus research on newly discovered, unmapped areas
- use up-to-date information to improve research outcomes
- engage in national and international collaborative mapping and surveying outcomes.

Methodology and data sources

The department's Australian Antarctic Data Centre (AADC) annually advances the content of the Australian Antarctic Map Catalogue (AAMC), which is a compilation of all known Antarctic, sub-Antarctic and Southern Ocean maps and charts published by the Australian Government. To determine whether this performance measure has been achieved, the growth and internal uses of the AAMC content will be reported.

Data sets for this measure are drawn from 3 primary sources:

- **The Australian Antarctic Map Catalogue** – This is the catalogue of all maps, and their metadata, generated and curated by the department; including public and non-public maps.
- **The AADC's internal Jira ticket management software** – This software tracks tasks performed by the AADC's staff, and includes specific fields and metadata to track relevant mapping tasks.
- **The AADC's storage logs** – The AADC's primary data storage system, StorageGRID, provides detailed logs of all data accessed both internally and externally. Map access statistics have been drawn from these logs.

2023–24 result

A total of 169 new maps were generated by the department covering Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. Twenty-five per cent of these maps resulted in increased spatial coverage, 91% resulted in increased temporal coverage, 41% improved resolution, and 57% increased the data domain (e.g. a new subject or program resulting in a new edition).

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure AN03	Conduct an annual deep-field activity to support Australia's national Antarctic interest.		
Measure type	**Effectiveness; Qualitative**		
Target	Conduct an annual deep-field activity to support the AAP.		
Tolerances	Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved
	Deep-field activity occurred.	N/A	No deep-field activity occurred.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Two deep-field activities were conducted to support the AAP.

Denman Terrestrial Campaign

The Denman Terrestrial Campaign was conducted in the Bunger Hills approximately 450 km from Casey Station in 2024–25, supported by inter- and intra-continental aviation.

Million Year Ice Core

The Million Year Ice Core project was conducted at North Patch, during December 2024 and January 2025, supported by the department's traverse capability, and inter- and intra-continental aviation.

Analysis of performance

Denman Terrestrial Campaign

The Denman Terrestrial Campaign was undertaken during the 2024–25 Australian Antarctic Program season – the final year of this 3-year initiative. This campaign was the largest and most logistically complex deep-field science program supported by the department in more than 20 years. The 2024–25 campaign brought together scientists from the department and key partner organisations, including Securing Antarctica's Environmental Future, the Australian Centre for Excellence in Antarctic Science and the Australian Antarctic Program Partnership.

The campaign was based at the remote Edgeworth David Base, around 450 km west of Casey Station in the Australian Antarctic Territory. From this base camp, one satellite camp (Camp Kiewa) was established during 2024–25, and 2 short term occupation sites at Dolgoe Camp and Dobrowlski Polar Station were set-up and utilised for the first time in 2024–25. The department operated the base and ancillary camps as summer-only remote field camps. Personnel and equipment were transported to the camps and surrounding areas of scientific importance via fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, supported by aviation infrastructure and operations.

Field operations commenced in late November 2024.

Despite weather and operational constraints, the department successfully delivered a diverse suite of advanced scientific investigations, including:

- ice core drilling and paleoclimate analysis
- studies of subglacial hydrology and geochemical composition

- sediment sampling to reconstruct environmental histories
- geological research on deep-Earth structures
- ocean circulation and biogeochemical assessments
- remote sensing and airborne radar surveys
- biodiversity, microbial and wildlife studies
- landscape and bathymetric mapping
- deployment of autonomous monitoring stations.

Following the completion of scientific work, the final objective of Denman Terrestrial Campaign was to remove all equipment, supplies and remediate the Edgeworth David Base site. This objective was fully achieved. Edgeworth David Base has been fully remediated from the 3-year campaign, with all tracks and camp sites remediated and equipment returned to Casey. The site was remediated as per the requirements of the project's initial environmental examination.

Million Year Ice Core

The Million Year Ice Core project aims to recover an ice core containing a million-year record of Earth's climate and atmospheric composition. The project seeks to improve our understanding of climate science, with implications for predicting the future climate response to anthropogenic carbon emissions.

New information from ice modelling and ice penetrating radar data identified the potential for recovery of continuous ice core of up to 2 million years in age at Dome Concordia North or 'North Patch'. The traverse tractor train travelled 1200 km inland from Casey Station in the Australian Antarctic Territory. The purpose-built tractors and sled systems transported mobile infrastructure, scientific equipment and logistical support to the site.

The science and drilling team departed Casey station in late December 2024, flying to Concordia Station and meeting the traverse team to travel to the drill site at North Patch. The first 150 m of the planned 3,000 m Antarctic ice core was successfully drilled and safely returned to Australia for analysis.

Drilling is expected to continue over multiple summer seasons, with a current target to reach bedrock at around 3,100 m depth in 2028–29 which will provide an up to 2 million-year climate and atmospheric record.

The department provided all training, logistics and support for these activities.

Caveats and disclosures

Nil.

Rationale

The AAD leads the Australian Government's scientific program in Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and the Southern Ocean. Australia's leadership in Antarctic science is advanced through modern logistics and flexible infrastructure. This includes a modern research and supply vessel, ground traverse and intracontinental aviation capability, and the establishment of mobile camp infrastructure. This facilitates the delivery of Australia's scientific research outside of the station operating areas, including deep-field expeditions into the interior of the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT), an external territory of Australia administered by the department under the *Australian Antarctic Territory Act 1954*.

In addition to facilitating world-class scientific research, deep-field activities enable Australia to maintain and improve an understanding of less-accessible areas of the AAT and support collaboration and engagement with international partners.

The logistics network capability underpins the delivery of the Australian Antarctic Program, supporting Australia to advance its leadership and excellence in Antarctic science.

Methodology and data sources

Deep-field activities are those conducted outside of the Antarctic station operating areas, including into the most remote parts of the AAT. The location and movement of deep-field activities are captured via Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) and transmitted to the Operations Management Centre (OMC) and Station Management. The data is captured in real-time, transmitted daily in situation reports (sitreps) and stored in an electronic management system. Sitreps of deep-field activities are also recorded in the Station Leader report, Operations Coordinator reports and End-of-Season report.

During the program's operational season, the OMC issues daily briefs to all staff, stations and the Bureau of Meteorology's Antarctic Operations section. The briefs provide update on all key activities, events and the location of operational assets.

Spatial data is used to map the location of operational assets and may be summarised in the daily information briefs.

2023–24 result

Two deep-field activities were conducted to support the AAP. The Denman Terrestrial Campaign was undertaken in the Bunger Hills (450 km from Casey Station) in 2023–24. The Traverse departed Casey Station in December 2023, successfully traversed to Little Dome C, 1150 km inland. This activity delivered critical cargo to support work on the Million Year Ice Core Project and returned to Casey in January 2024.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Outcome 4: Water

Improve the health of rivers and wetlands and enhance the sustainable, efficient and productive use of Australia's water resources.

Key activity 4.1: Protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's water resources.

This key activity aims to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's water resources, safeguarding the future of Australia's rivers and wetlands for future generations, while ensuring a safe and secure supply of sufficient water quality and quantity for communities, culture and industries.

The activity includes delivering the Murray–Darling Basin Plan. Following the passage of the *Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Act 2023*, the department is focused on delivering the Basin Plan, including the additional 450 GL of environmental water by 31 December 2027. Delivering the Basin Plan includes working with Basin states to recover and manage water to maintain river health, biodiversity and water quality. Implementation of the Basin Plan also contributes to Australia meeting our international obligations under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The activity includes the development of a new National Water Agreement, which will address water-security challenges arising from an ever-changing landscape, by setting overarching objectives, outcomes and best practice principles for water management nationally.

The activity is further supported by the National Water Grid Fund (NWGF) which invests in nationally significant water infrastructure projects and research initiatives, including those that will provide essential town water supplies to support liveability in First Nations communities. This activity also aims to increase opportunities for First Nations communities in water ownership and participation in decision-making.

Measure WA01	**Implement national policy and programs to improve water security and management.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	National policies and programs implemented by the Commonwealth, states and territories have improved water security and management, demonstrated by statistical improvement on internationally recognised water-related targets.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Implementation of national water policies and programs results in equal or improved performance on all SDG6[2] targets reported within the year.	Implementation of national water policies and programs results in equal or improved performance on all but one SDG6 target reported within the year.	Implementation of national water policies and programs results in declining performance on more than one SDG6 target reported within the year.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 6: 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' (United Nations 2024)

2024–25 result

The department is committed to working with state and territory governments to drive a cohesive national approach to water resource management, and to the pursuit of the goals and targets set under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) aims to *ensure availability and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation for all* and is measured against 8 sub-targets and 11 indicators of progress. Australia's national water management policies help guide positive improvements against these sub-targets and indicators.

The department coordinates reporting to the UN on Australia's progress against the indicators under SDG6. The department works with technical agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to gather relevant data and provide it to the UN. The UN then uses that data to calculate Australia's performance on SDG6, which is then published on Australia's Country Profile.

In 2024–25, Australia provided new data against the following SDG6 indicators:

- 6.1.1 – Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services*
- 6.2.1a – Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services*
- 6.3.1 – Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flows safely treated*
- 6.4.1 – Change in water use efficiency over time^
- 6.4.2 – Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available^ freshwater resources.

*Data sources covered the 2023–24 period.
^Data sources covered the 2022 calendar year.

Water Supply, Sanitation and Treatment

SDG6 indicators 6.1.1, 6.2.1a, and 6.3.1 focus on the supply and safe management of drinking water services, sanitation services, and wastewater flows. Reporting under these indicators is informed by the Bureau of Meteorology's National Performance Report (NPR), which is informed by data collected from 86 water service providers with 10,000 connections or more (capturing over 26 million people across urban centres). It does not capture information from service providers with fewer than 10,000 connections. As a result, it is not possible to get an accurate picture of water supply and treatment for all Australian communities – particularly regional and remote communities.

Recognising this limitation, the UN has reported that:

- 100% of Australia's population has access to at least a basic level of safely managed drinking service (6.1.1)
- 100% of Australians are using improved sanitation facilities, including:
  - 96% of Australians who have access to safely managed sanitation services
  - 4% of Australians who have access to a basic level of safely managed sanitation services
- 99% of wastewater flows in Australia are safely treated, including 96% of domestic wastewater (6.3.1).

Results for indicators 6.1.1 and 6.2.1a have remained stable since 2000.

Water-use efficiency and water stress

Over the reporting period, the UN sought data for the 2022 calendar year. For that year, Australia's level of water stress as a proportion of available freshwater resources (6.4.2) remained relatively stable, at approximately 5%, compared to 2021 figures. Australia's water use efficiency, which is measured as the ratio of US dollar value added to the volume of water used by all economic activities, with a focus on agriculture, industry and the service sectors, improved from approximately USD 78 per cubic metre to approximately USD 81 per cubic metre.

Over the past 10 years, rates of water stress in Australia (6.4.2) has declined, while water-use efficiency (6.4.1) has tracked upwards, indicating that national water resource management policies have promoted a more sustainable and productive level of water consumption and use.

Analysis of performance

While state/territory governments are primarily responsible for managing water within their jurisdictions, the Australian Government has continued to deliver national policies and programs to improve water security and management. The Australian Government provides national coordination and leadership to drive policy and law reforms to manage water resources sustainably and productively for future generations of Australians.

The Australian Government collaborates with the states/territories through various national frameworks and agreements to manage water resources, including the National Water Initiative (NWI) and Murray–Darling Basin Plan. The recent progress to develop a new National Water Agreement and build on the 2004 NWI reflects a collaborative approach to ensure sustainable water planning in a changing climate, to strengthen the influence of First Nations people in water management and enables Australia to meet new challenges to our water security.

The Australian Government also provided $28.6 million to maintain the independence of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance to undertake inquiry, oversight and public engagement functions under the *Water Act 2007*.

The Australian Government has invested $3.2 million over the 2024–2025 financial year to support hydrological (water) modelling software that models the impact of rainfall and climate conditions on rivers and dams. This modelling is critical to environmental, agricultural and utility water management in Australia and is relied upon to contribute to the health of rivers and wetlands, and the sustainable, efficient and productive use of Australia's water resources.

The Australian Government is investing in safe and reliable water for Australians through a range of planning, science and construction projects. This included an investment of more than $580 million from within the National Water Grid Fund (NWGF) for 79 new projects in 2024–25, in partnership with jurisdictions. The NWGF is the Australian Government's infrastructure investment program to improve water access and security by delivering nationally important water infrastructure projects that unlock potential, build resilience, and promote growth and sustainability. This includes investment in essential town water, dams, weirs, pipelines, water recycling and treatment plants and other water storage, distribution and scientific solutions. Funding has also been provided to continue the Commonwealth's contribution to the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme that reduces demand for drinking water by informing consumers about water efficiency at the point of sale.

The Australian Government is protecting groundwater resources in the Great Artesian Basin, vital for the communities, industries and environments that rely on them. In the 2024–25 Budget, the Australian Government committed up to $32.0 million to deliver vital on-ground water security projects in Basin. This investment supports implementation of the Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan developed by the Australian, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australian and New South Wales governments, by assisting parties to identify and respond to the risks, issues, challenges and opportunities associated with use of Great Artesian Basin water.

Caveats and disclosures

Australia's reporting against the targets and indicators of SDG6 does not occur annually. The timeframes between reporting period can vary from annually to triennially. Data sources used the United Nations to assess Australia's progress are not contemporary and generally relate to past years. As a result, SDG6 performance results do not align with the reporting period for this annual report. Reporting cannot be more contemporary than this, because the raw data collected by other government agencies requires time for collection and analysis.

Consequently, the performance of water policy initiatives progressed in 2024–25 cannot be measured using domestic or international reporting tools for up to 3 years after the end of the reporting period.

Water supply, sanitation and treatment results

The department recognises that Australia's performance results for water supply, sanitation and treatment do not represent an accurate picture of the Australian landscape.

This is due to limitations in the scope of the core dataset – the NPR. As the NPR does not collect data from service providers with fewer than 10,000 connections, there is an information vacuum of small regional and remote communities – the same communities that are likely to have less access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services.

The department is working with the Bureau of Meteorology, states/territories, and industry to expand NPR reporting obligations to all water and wastewater service providers to ensure a truer understanding of Australia's performance. Once the NPR is expanded, the department expects Australia's SDG6 performance results to shift significantly to present a richer and more valuable picture of Australia's performance. This will likely involve a drop in the overall results.

Rationale

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. Securing our water resources is essential to protecting Australian public health, societal stability, environmental sustainability, and the longevity and productivity of Australian industries. The increase of significant and unique climatic and environmental challenges means we require a strong, consistent national approach to water security, particularly in relation to identifying risks/impediments and determining priority actions.

State/territory governments are primarily responsible for managing water within their jurisdictions. The Australian Government provides national coordination and leadership to drive policy and law reforms to manage Australia's water resources sustainably and productively for future generations of Australians. The department helps guide water management in the states and territories to ensure a consistent, risk-based approach to securing safe, appropriate quality water supplies for current and future generations.

The department monitors the effectiveness of national water-policy implementation in the states/territories as a routine part of meeting Australia's international environmental obligations. The Australian Government has committed to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6: 'By 2030, ensure availability of clean water and sanitation for all'. This sets a wide range of targets for clean and safe drinking water, sanitation, water quality, water availability, integrated water resource management and environmental water. Changes in Australia's performance on SDG6 targets can indicate relative improvements or declines in water security and management in Australia.

Data collected and reported against SDG6 targets is conducted either annually, biennially or triennially, and is made available publicly on the UN website at Australia's Country Profile.

Methodology and data sources

To drive water policy, law reform and current and future regulatory approaches in Australia, the department collaborates and consults with state/territory governments, other Australian Government agencies with an interest in water management, scientists, councils and committees of experts, and communities. The department does this through community engagement, seeking scientific advice, and formal committees such as the National Water Reform Committee and the Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests.

To meet international environmental obligations, the department coordinates reporting to the UN on water security and management in Australia. The department works with technical agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to gather relevant data and provide it to the UN. The UN then uses that data to calculate Australia's performance on SDG6, which is then published on Australia's Country Profile.

2023–24 result

New measure in 2024–25.

Measure WA02	**Increase in the volume of water recovered to enhance environmental outcomes in the Murray–Darling Basin to meet the 450 GL of additional environmental water target.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Qualitative		
Target	100 GL		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	When target is fully achieved, including if water recovery is contracted but conveyance processes have not yet been completed.	When target is mostly (above 90%) achieved, and all reasonable steps have been taken to meet the target. For example, substantive action is well progressed, however, water recovery transactions have not yet been completed.	When target is not achieved (below 90%), and all reasonable steps have not been taken to meet the target: from 7 December 2023 the Water Act requires the Minister take all reasonable steps to meet the 450 GL target by 31 December 2027.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Recovery of 450 GL of additional water target.

Achieved. In 2024–25, an additional 130.1 GL/y was recognised as contributing to the 450 GL target. This was a combination of registered and contracted additions to the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings as well as assignment of existing holdings toward the 450 GL target.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Analysis of performance

The target has been fully achieved, with more than the target 100 GL/y being recognised as contributing to the 450 GL Basin Plan target.

This includes 23.3 GL/y from the Selected Catchments Open Tender, 25.4 GL/y from Expression of Interest 2: Large Portfolios, 78.2 GL/y from over-recoveries and 3.2 GL/y from Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program.

Caveats and disclosures

Some purchased and infrastructure volumes are contracted only, meaning the Commonwealth will receive the volume; however, it has not yet been registered on the appropriate water registers as conveyance processes or project delivery is continuing.

Rationale

The Murray–Darling Basin covers much of south-eastern Australia, across NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and the ACT. The Murray–Darling River system is important for communities, industries, and the environment.

Under the *Water Act 2007*, the Murray–Darling Basin Plan establishes water-recovery targets that are to be achieved to bring the Basin back to a healthier and sustainable level.

Methodology and data sources

We recover water entitlements and register them with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) provides state recovery data from state registers. We capture and manage water recovery information in our Water Entitlements Purchasing System and verify the data through internal monthly reconciliations and external quarterly reconciliations with the MDBA. Water recovery information is captured and managed through the Water Entitlements Purchasing System. State recovery data is provided by MDBA from state registers. All water recovery figures are expressed in gigalitres per year long-term diversion limit equivalence.

2023–24 result

Bridging the Gap targets – surface and groundwater

Partially achieved. During 2023–24, a total 19.5 GL/y of additional surface water was registered towards the remaining 49.2 GL/y Bridging the Gap target. No groundwater was recovered.

Recovery of 450 GL of additional water target

Achieved. In 2023–24, an additional 4.6 GL/y was registered to the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure WA03	**The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme is improved through stakeholder consultation.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative; Regulatory		
Target	Stakeholders are consulted on all significant matters that impact them.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Stakeholders consulted on 100% of significant matters that impact them.	Stakeholders consulted on above 50% of significant matters that impact them.	Stakeholders consulted on below 50% of significant matters that impact them.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

Stakeholder consultation

In 2024–25, the regulator engaged with stakeholders on a range of changes to policy, standards and conditions (Table 8). All relevant stakeholder groups were consulted or involved in developing the changes.

Table 8: Stakeholder consultation – regulatory policies, standards and conditions

Element	Government	Industry	Public
Amendment to the *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards WELS Determination 2013* – including updating references to standards and deregulating miscellaneous products.	WELS Officials Group (WELSOG)[1], Government of New Zealand and Water Ministers were consulted and agreed to the changes.	WELS Advisory Group (WELSAG)[2] and WELS scheme registrants were issued a discussion paper and invited to provide feedback by survey or submission. Individualised post feedback meetings were also conducted.	The survey was publicly available on the water rating website.
Second annual public survey for nomination of new products to be regulated under the scheme.	WELSOG, Government of New Zealand and co-regulators were invited to nominate products.	WELSAG, peak industry groups, water utilities, research groups, consumer advocacy groups, manufacturers and registrants were invited to nominate products.	The public were invited to nominate products, promoted through social media.

Element	Government	Industry	Public
Impact analysis for improving the water efficiency of commercial ice makers.	N/A[3]	WELSAG, manufacturers and suppliers were engaged through workshops, survey and invited submissions.	Draft impact analysis was made available on the water rating website and promoted through social media.
Review of *AS/NZS 6400: Water efficient products – Rating and labelling* - development of the proposal for change	N/A[4]	Industry working group codesigned the revision proposal, and are Standards committee WS-32 members.	N/A[4]
Regulator Advice Notices – registration and labelling requirements for 1) multiple flow controllers to be sold with taps and showers and 2) adjustable cistern flush volumes.	The Australian Building Codes Board was consulted to ensure alignment with WaterMark requirements.	WELSAG and industry members who are registrants and suppliers of the products were invited to provide feedback.	N/A[5]

Table 8 notes:

[1] The WELSOG members are senior officials representing all Australian governments.

[2] The WELSAG includes representatives of the plumbing and appliances industries, government coregulators (Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Regulator, WaterMark administrators in the Australian Building Codes Board), related voluntary product labelling schemes (Smart Approved WaterMark), and advocacy groups for small businesses and consumers.

[3] Governments will be consulted on the final impact analysis, informed by stakeholder views of the draft report.

[4] Governments and the public will be invited to comment on changes to the standard later in the process of revision. Proposals should be developed by Standards Australia standards committee members and technical specialist.

[5] The notices are technical in nature and do not directly relate to public interests.

Analysis of performance

The performance measure continued to be met in 2024–25 through multiple avenues of consulting with stakeholders on matters that may impact them. The items listed in the table are the formal, structured stakeholder consultations undertaken by the WELS Regulator and staff. Feedback received during the consultations referred to was used to either refine draft documents or to finalise the documents.

In relation to amendment to the WELS Determination, state/territory government support meant that the updated standard became legislated, introducing minimum water efficiency for all WELS products and removing inefficient products from the market. This served to align with what can be installed under the Plumbing Code of Australia and associated regulations. A new upper band of 5 stars for showers was introduced, which has been supported and taken up by industry and consumers. The amendments further served to deregulate miscellaneous products that do not save water, like bottle fillers. The industry consultation on the proposed amendments led to refined definitions for the deregulated products and facilitated a smooth transition for the removal of inefficient products from the Australian market.

The consultation regarding new products that could be considered for regulation under the WELS scheme supports saving water by identifying opportunities to improve the water efficiency of more types of products, including those used in commercial settings. Through this public process, water utilities and product manufacturers proposed a number of products and offered evidence to support the assessment of their water-saving potential.

Consulting with a new industry about improving the water efficiency of commercial ice makers has been more challenging. Manufacturers, sellers and buyers are not represented by peak industry groups, and the interface of sales is different in the commercial sector compared to that of household plumbing fittings and appliances. The workshops were effective in consulting directly with industry members who understand the product and the market, and their feedback and technical considerations of the product definitions were used to refine the draft impact analysis, and to better inform the potential water savings.

Codesigning the proposal for the revision of the WELS Standard with industry – which would need to implement any changes – has led to a better-quality proposal which has greater likelihood of being supported through the voting process of the Standards Australia Standards Setting Committee WS-32 to move to project stage. The proposal requires the committee consider refinements to expand or enhance current water ratings and labelling requirements that underpin the WELS scheme. The framework in the standard serves to reduce water demand directly through labelling and consumer awareness but is also leveraged by other government, utility and private enterprise initiatives and regulations that depend on the scheme and its standard to save water.

The issues dealt with in the Regulator Advice Notices were initially raised by industry or identified through compliance inspections of retail stores. The consultation to refine how this small subset of products is to be registered and labelled is ongoing as the range of circumstances for existing product in packaging and on shelves across the market is highly complex. The 2 notices were refined following feedback and will be sent out for consideration by industry again later in 2025. Establishing the position for how these products are to be consistently treated will provide transparency to the regulated community which underpins the integrity of the scheme.

The WELS staff have additionally engaged with numerous domestic and international government agencies, coregulators, industry members and other groups to provide and seek advice and to share information about current and emerging issues and initiatives. This strengthens the regulatory stewardship of the scheme through collaboration and knowledge-sharing across government and industry, supporting reduced demand for water.

Caveats and disclosures

With the exceptions of the amendments to the WELS Determination and the second annual public survey for nomination of new products which are completed, the remaining items are a work in progress. Further engagement and consultation with stakeholders will continue into 2025–26.

Potential bias is managed through reporting only on facts that consultation occurred and the nature of the stakeholders engaged.

Rationale

The national Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme helps Australians to save water by promoting more water-efficient household products such as taps, toilets, urinals, flow controllers, showers, dishwashers and washing machines at point of sale. The department administers the WELS scheme on behalf of the Australian Government and the state/territory governments. Effective regulation of the WELS scheme will continue to save water nationally, contributing to Outcome 4.

Ensuring stakeholders (regulated industries, coregulators, consumer advocacy groups and others) are consulted on significant matters that may impact them will improve the scheme by ensuring reforms are fit for purpose and with a high level of support for implementation.

Methodology and data sources

'Significant matters' are proposed changes to the operation of the scheme that impact stakeholders. Data on stakeholder consultations is held in departmental records. In reviewing annual performance, departmental records on the scheme's significant matters will be reviewed to confirm that consultation has occurred during the review period. Where a consultation process has occurred for all significant matters that are being actively progressed, it will be considered that the target has been met. The performance report will include details of the nature of the consultation.

2023–24 result

The 2024–25 performance measure was simplified from previous years.

The 2023–24 result included a report on stakeholder consultation. The full result is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal. Further information about the operation of the WELS scheme was also reported in Part 5 of the Annual Report 2023–24.

Measure WA04	**Commonwealth environmental water is managed effectively to protect and restore environmental assets.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Qualitative		
Target	Commonwealth environmental water is managed so that less than 5% of available volume of surface water is forfeited.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Surface water in Commonwealth accounts is managed and accounted for, so that less than 5% of the available volume of surface water is forfeited.	N/A	More than 5% of the available volume of surface water is forfeited at the end of the water year.
Outcome	**Achieved**		

2024–25 result

0.05% of surface water in Commonwealth environmental water accounts was forfeited.

Analysis of performance

In 2024–25, a total of 2,466.8 gigalitres (GL) of surface water was available in Commonwealth environmental water accounts (of this, a maximum of 2,440.0 GL was available for use, due to annual use limits applied in some catchments).

During the year, 1,623.1 GL of surface water in Commonwealth accounts was delivered to the Murray–Darling Basin's rivers and wetlands. This included water used for maintaining and improving wetland and riverbank plants, providing food and shelter to support waterbirds, and flows to support native fish condition, spawning and movement.

A further 825.7 GL of surface water was carried over in Commonwealth accounts for use in the 2025–26 water year. In some valleys, evaporative losses are applied during the water year and prior to allocation being carried over into 2025–26. Through these processes, 5.5 GL of surface water was accounted as evaporative losses during 2024–25 and a further 16.8 GL was accounted as evaporative losses on 30 June 2025.

During the year 46.8 GL of Commonwealth held groundwater was retained in aquifers. This included 40.2 GL retained in the Queensland Upper Condamine Alluvium, reducing extraction and contributing to the long-term sustainable diversion target in that system. A further 6.6 GL was retained in NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee aquifers. 12.9 GL of groundwater was carried over into 2025–26 in the Commonwealth's NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee groundwater accounts.

In 2024–25, the CEWH did not purchase or sell any water.

On 30 June 2025, 1.287 GL of surface water was forfeited from water accounts in valleys where water was not delivered and could not be carried over for future use. This represents 0.05% of the 2,466.8 GL of surface water available in Commonwealth environmental water accounts.

Caveats and disclosures

The carryover and use volumes reported are the best available at the time of publication. However, they are subject to minor revision by the responsible state authorities as they finalise state water accounts (which can occur after the 2024–25 water year has closed).

Factors that may limit the use, carryover or trade of Commonwealth environmental water:

- Use of water can be limited by state rules that restrict: regulated flow heights; natural flows; channel competition from other water users; risk of environmental damage; and rules on the maximum annual volume that can be used for entitlements in some catchments.
- Carryover volumes are restricted to limits set by state governments (which vary for different entitlements).
- Trade can be restricted by intervalley limits on transfers and market behaviour (including the need to operate consistently with the CEWH's Trading Protocols).

At the time of reporting, the final volume of water made available and delivered from Queensland unregulated accounts during the 2024–25 water year was not available, so conservative interim delivery volumes for these river systems have been assumed. Additional water delivered from these accounts will increase the total volume of surface water made available and delivered during 2024–25. This will further reduce the percentage of surface water forfeited at the end of the year.

A second reconciliation of water accounts will be undertaken towards the end of August 2025, prior to the provision of Basin Plan Matter 9.1 reporting for the Murray–Darling Basin Authority *Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) Accounting and Registers of Take*. This reconciliation will include the final volume of water delivered through Queensland unregulated water entitlements.

Rationale

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder manages a portfolio of water entitlements to protect or restore environmental assets in the Murray–Darling Basin. Management options for the available water include delivering it to rivers and wetlands, carrying it over for use in the next year, trading it (buying or selling), or forfeiting it. Water that is forfeited provides limited to no benefit for environmental assets (and therefore forfeiture should be minimised).

Methodology and data sources

The CEWH maintains a database of Commonwealth environmental water holdings, including annual water allocations, delivery, trade, and carryover. The available volume of water includes water allocated during the current water year plus water carried over from previous years. The available volume of water that cannot be carried over into the following water year is forfeited. The percentage of surface water forfeited is calculated using best available data at the time of reporting.

2023–24 result

0.18% of surface water in Commonwealth accounts was forfeited.

The 2023–24 result in full is available on the Australian Government Transparency Portal.

Measure WA05	**Increase opportunities for First Nations people water ownership and participation in decision making.**		
Measure type	Effectiveness; Quantitative		
Target	Purchase and transfer water entitlements through the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program (AWEP) to First Nations people in the Murray–Darling Basin. Establish baseline to measure First Nations ability to hold water and current water holdings.		
Tolerances	**Achieved**	**Partially achieved**	**Not achieved**
	Dollar amount not expended due to entitlements not being available to purchase. Entitlements and unspent funds are divested to First Nations enduring water holding arrangement. Baseline is established but target is in development.	Purchasing has commenced regardless of amount spent. Baseline is in development and target is in design.	No purchasing. No baseline developed.
Outcome	**Partially achieved**		

2024–25 result

Purchasing has commenced regardless of amount spent.

Result:

1. Purchasing commenced with 2 limited tenders opened:
   - ATM_2024_3243: Water Intermediary-led limited tender, opened on 11 November 2024.
   - ATM_2025_3664: Market-led limited tender, opened on 10 March 2025.
2. Three contracts were exchanged in the 2024–25 financial year. This information is available on the department's website and published on AusTender:
   - AWEP1002 – 3000008073 – Exchanged 27/03/2025
   - AWEP1067 – 3000008084 – Exchanged 16/06/2025
   - AWEP1017 – 3000008091 – Exchanged 13/06/2025

3. Summary of surface water purchased as at 30 June 2025.

Total value of tenders: $1,211,000

Total volume: 290 megalitres (ML)

Table 9: Surface water volume purchased by catchment as at 30 June 2025

Catchment	Volume purchased
Goulburn Broken	80 ML
Lachlan	10 ML
Macquarie–Castlereagh	200 ML

Baseline is in development and target is in design

Result

The design of the Cultural Flows for Cultural Economies Grants Program has commenced, including the development of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The draft guidelines are published on the Business Grant Hub Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies. Baseline data to measure First Nations' ability to hold water, as well as current water holdings, will be collected during the grant application process. This data will be managed and collected by the Business Grants Hub at the application stage.

Analysis of performance

The Australian Government is delivering on its commitment to increase First Nations' ownership of, and access to, water through the Murray–Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program.

Originally announced in 2018 with $40 million in funding, the program received a significant boost in November 2023, with funding increased to $100 million to better support First Nations within the Murray–Darling Basin.

In June 2024, the department published the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program's Strategic Purchasing Framework. This framework outlines the government's purchasing strategy and will guide the acquisition of $100 million in water entitlements for Basin First Nations people. It sets out key elements such as purchasing methods, entitlement locations, volumes, and licence types.

To expedite water entitlement purchases, the program is operating under interim governance arrangements. Under this model, the Commonwealth will temporarily hold the entitlements until an enduring governance mechanism is co-designed with Basin First Nations people. This future governance model will ultimately manage the entitlements secured during the interim period.

The interim governance structure includes an independently appointed Advisory Group and Directorate. Appointees must identify as, and be recognised by their communities as, Traditional Owners of the Murray–Darling Basin. Together, they play a crucial role in ensuring decisions reflect both cultural and commercial considerations in the procurement and management of water entitlements.

The program is now actively participating in the water market, with 2 limited tenders currently open and 3 contracts exchanged in the 2024–25 financial year.

While there were initial delays in launching the first purchasing approach (ATM_2024_3243), this was due to the essential work of co-designing culturally appropriate purchasing policies with the Interim Governance arrangement. Embedding Cultural considerations throughout all purchasing policies and processes is fundamental to supporting First Nations self-determination and ensuring a transparent, inclusive process. This work required sufficient time to develop meaningfully and navigate the complexities of aligning Cultural priorities with Commonwealth departmental and procurement requirements.

For more information, see Murray–Darling Basin Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program.

The launch of the Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies grants was delayed to ensure the program and its Grant Opportunity Guidelines reflect the needs and aspirations of First Nations people in the Murray–Darling Basin.

This additional time was critical to ensure the grants model is capable of effectively delivering on its intended outcomes for First Nations communities.

Two Have Your Say surveys were conducted to gather feedback, which directly informed the program's design.

Further delays were caused by the 2025 caretaker convention requirements, impacting the program's official opening timeline.

As a result, baseline data collection has also been postponed and is now scheduled to commence in the 2025–26 financial year.

Caveats and disclosures

- **Baseline data to establish water ownership will be collected via the Business Grants hub**. The department acknowledges that this information is self-reported. Staff may follow up with applicants to verify data verbally and ensure it is accurately and appropriately recorded.

- **Reporting on water purchased against the $100 million is delayed from contract exchanged** (as reported on Austender) to settlement due to delays in processing of trade applications forms with State water agencies, which requires an additional 2–4 months to the conveyance process.

Rationale

Currently First Nations people hold rights to about 40% of Australian land through native title, yet own and control less than 0.2% of surface-water entitlements.

Methodology and data sources

Money spent on entitlements for the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program (AWEP) is derived from the department's financial management systems – (TechOne and SAP).

The Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies Program will be a bespoke grants program designed with First Nations people of the Murray–Darling Basin. Data on Basin First Nations entity's ability to hold water will be collected through the grant application; this is proposed to be managed through the Grants Hub.

The Hub includes the data on the number of entities that have Cultural flows plans, Cultural business and economic plans, governance plans and sufficient infrastructure required to support Cultural flows for their Country. The Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies Program will create a baseline for these figures and measure increases over the life of the program.

Agreed baseline Closing the Gap inland water target, data to be supplied by the states/territories.

2023–24 result

New measure in 2024–25.

Product Expansion Program 2024–25 Work Plan

The Product Expansion Program provides a pathway for the inclusion of new products within the WELS scheme. Potential products are identified by stakeholders through a public annual nomination process, and the merits of the products considered through a product assessment framework.

The 2024–25 Work Plan included further consideration of commercial ice makers, clothes washing machines, thermostatic mixing taps and water-cooled wok stoves. Table 63 reports on the progress made for each product.

Table 63: Progress of Product Expansion Program products

Product	Work plan priority	Progress
Commercial ice makers	1	A draft regulatory impact analysis (RIA) was prepared to evaluate options to improve the water efficiency of commercial ice makers. This involved data acquisition, cost benefit modelling and stakeholder consultation. The RIA is expected to be finalised in 2025–26. The RIA must be approved by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office of Impact Analysis) prior to release.
Commercial clothes washing machines	2	It was determined that technical expertise was needed to undertake limited market analysis and evaluate product data availability. A process to procure these services commenced in 2024–25. Initial evaluation of this product is expected to be completed in 2025–26.
Thermostatic mixing taps	3	Thermostatic mixing taps are specifically excluded from the WELS scheme within the *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Determination 2013 (No. 2)*. This exclusion exists due to product limitations that existed at the time that the Determination came into effect. With advancements in innovation and technology, industry have advised that these product limitations no longer apply. A Preliminary Regulatory Assessment was completed with the Office of Impact Analysis, which determined that the impact of regulating thermostatic mixing taps would be less than minor. WELS will look for an appropriate legislative amendment opportunity to include this product within the WELS scheme.
Commercial water-cooled wok stoves	4	It was determined that technical expertise was needed to undertake limited market analysis and to evaluate product data availability. A process to procure these services commenced in 2024–25. Initial evaluation of this product is expected to be completed in 2025–26.

Financial information

The WELS Strategic Plan 2022–25 sets an agreed revenue budget based on projected industry fee revenue, with government contributing 20% of the cost of the WELS scheme.

Table 64 provides the projected and actual industry fee revenue. Projected industry revenue for 2024–25 is based on the WELS 2024–25 Cost Recovery Implementation Statement.

Table 64: WELS industry fee revenue

Item	2021–22 ($)	2022–23 ($)	2023–24 ($)	2024–25 ($)
Industry fee revenue	1,663,830	1,691,182	$1,704,332	$1,741,900
Projected fee revenue	1,695,000	1,762,800	$1,713,000	$1,708,000