Attachment A

Australian Government
National Archives of Australia

Self-initiated Capability Review 2023

National Archives of Australia

Commonwealth of Australia (National Archives of Australia) 2023

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Foreword from the Director-General

Like many other government agencies, National Archives of Australia (National Archives) is navigating a number of challenges across a variety of landscapes including technology and cyber-security, workforce capability, preservation and digitisation, community engagement, and information management practices.

It is vital that National Archives is capable and equipped to continue to contribute to and work collaboratively with other National Collecting Institutions to protect and promote Australian content and culture. National Archives has an additional responsibility to provide a general right of access to Commonwealth records, which differentiates us from other cultural institutions.

National Archives has embarked on a journey of transformation, through which it is maturing a range of practices and approaches and has self-initiated this review because we understand how valuable such insights can be in setting a foundation for future development.

This self-initiated review was supported by the Australian Public Service Commission and conducted independently through a Senior Review Team, Brendan Boyle (former Chief Executive of the Department of Internal Affairs – New Zealand Government) and Cheryl-anne Moy (former Deputy Secretary, Department of Home Affairs), with administrative support provided within National Archives.

National Archives invited the independent Senior Review Team to meet with the Executive team, branch representatives, committee members and key external stakeholders to gain an understanding of the agency's operations, areas of strength, expectations and known challenges that contribute towards achieving outcomes for the future.

I commend the Senior Review Team for their work and engagement with the agency. The review identifies our strengths as well as areas for focus and provides a foundation for continuous improvement into the future to meet government objectives and public expectations.

I also wish to thank the staff at National Archives, and external supporting stakeholders for their insight into and cooperation with the review, and their continued drive to support the agency's future business operations.

Simon Froude
Director-General
National Archives of Australia

Foreword from the Senior Reviewers

The Director-General of National Archives of Australia (National Archives), Simon Froude, invited the Review team to undertake a Capability Review of the agency (the Review) in accordance with the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) Capability Review Framework (the Framework). This Review is the first self-initiated Review under the new APSC Framework.

The Review provides an assessment of the areas of strength of National Archives and areas for improvement to ensure that National Archives meets the expectations of government, stakeholders, and the community in the future.

This Review was independent, forward-looking, and designed to assess National Archives' ability to meet its future objectives and challenges. Discussions held within the agency were face-to-face and online to facilitate the participation of all staff who wished to engage with the Review team. External stakeholders also participated in interviews to inform the Review.

In addition, a significant desktop review was completed of a wide range of strategic and corporate documents and allied data, to gain a wide understanding of current state and future intentions.

National Archives is responsible for leadership in best practice management of the official records of the Commonwealth and to ensure that Australian Government information of enduring significance is secured, preserved, and made available to government agencies, researchers, and the community.

National Archives' *Strategy 2030: a transformed and trusted National Archives* documents the aspiration of the leadership team and staff to progress their mandate of preservation, protection, and access to the collection. A Functional and Efficiency Review (the Tune Review) by Mr David Tune AO PSM in 2020 noted that the challenges facing National Archives are substantial.

The Tune Review noted that a more fundamental, structural reform process was needed to meet the challenges that impact the ability of National Archives to deliver its legislated mandate and implement its strategic priorities within its financial footprint. Post the Tune Review, the Government provided funding of $67m over 4 years (2021-2025) to accelerate a program to digitise at-risk documents, reduce backlogs for access requests and invest in cyber security and the Next Generation Digital Archives.

The funding received post the Tune Review initiated the *Defend the Past, Protect the Future* (DPPF) program which is working to deliver projects to address backlogs for access applications and to invest in the preservation of records and facilitate digital access to records. As noted, this funding will cease in 2025. National Archives has a growing task to keep abreast of the task of describing and digitising more than 48 million items held in the collection.

Under the DPPF program National Archives has:

- Implemented a dedicated project hub to provide strategic leadership and change management across the DPPF program.
- Constructed a purpose-built digitisation hub within an existing storage facility for outsourced digitisation.
- Digitised 264,121 at-risk items.

- Described 438,007 items, of which 336,748 items will be treated as part of at-risk and on-demand digitisation.
- Consolidated approximately 4,860 shelf-metres of the collection from ageing facilities.
- Engaged 13 agencies to contribute to the development of records authorities as part of plans to improve information management, and developed records authorities for 9 agencies.
- Uplifted all Essential Eight strategies to Maturity Level 2 across National Archives Information and Communications Technology (ICT) environment as part of cyber resilience measures.
- Completed a unified communications project as part of the Next Generation Digital Archive.

This terminating measure ceases in 2024-25.

Funding was received by National Archives to preserve Australia's cultural heritage:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
National Archives of Australia	$m	$m	$m	$m	$m
	-	19.7	17.1	15.5	15.4

The Government provided $67.7 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to National Archives to:

- Accelerate digitisation and preservation for the National Archives' at-risk records.
- Provide additional staffing and capability for 'access applications' and improve Digitisation on Demand services.
- Invest in cyber security and future digital enhancements.

Throughout the Review it became clear that the legislative base of National Archives requires strengthening to clearly articulate and strengthen the role of National Archives in enforcing record management standards across government entities. Additionally, there was discussion amongst stakeholders that certain aspects of government record release should be addressed in legislation where there are national security considerations.

This Review identified that those issues identified in the Tune Review remain current and impact the capability of National Archives to deliver on government objectives. The size of the collection continues to grow (despite not yet being transferred to the custody of National Archives) and the task of receiving items as digitally preserved by the originating agency continues to be a challenge.

Describing and digitising the collection must be a priority to ensure ready access to the collection for government, stakeholders, and the community and to reduce the ongoing cost of item storage and property costs into the future.

The placement of National Archives in the Infrastructure Portfolio from July 2022 provides opportunity to work with other National Collecting Institutions and the Galleries, Library, Archives, and Museum sector to collaborate more effectively across the federal and state and territory governments.

Staff in National Archives are keen to improve and grow in their roles and to support the mission of the agency. Senior leaders must look to develop staff at all levels and open communication channels to ensure the best information is readily available to staff to support their decision-making processes and decisions.

National Archives is to be congratulated for initiating this Review and for the professional engagement of staff at all levels throughout the Review. It was clear to the Review team that staff are passionate about the success of

National Archives, and willing to look for continual improvements in their culture, policy, processes, systems, and practices.

We thank the Director-General for the opportunity to explore the current and future capability of National Archives and commend this report to the Executive to assist them continue their growth in their mandate to secure, preserve and make public the archival resources of Australia.

We would also like to acknowledge the openness of staff and stakeholders with who we met and their constructive approach to this review.

We are grateful for the logistical and secretarial support provided by Stephen Avery and Hayley Sciberras from National Archives.

Cheryl-anne Moy

30 August 2023

Brendan Boyle

30 August 2023

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Context

About the review

As part of its plan for reform of the Australian Public Service (APS), the Australian Government has implemented a pilot Capability Review program through the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) with a view to enshrining the Reviews in legislation through amendments to the *Public Service Act 1999*. The aim of the program is to:

- Embed a culture of continuous improvement across the APS
- Ensure that APS agencies can deliver government priorities and outcomes for Australians.

The Terms of Reference for this Review form Appendix C.

The Review of National Archives was designed to be a high-level view of its strategic operations and was undertaken in July and August 2023. The Review team visited and met with staff in the Peter Durack Building in Mitchell, ACT; National Archives Head Office in Parkes, ACT; New South Wales State Office in Chester Hill and Melbourne State Office and the Victorian East Burwood facility.

The Review team met with the Director-General, all Assistant Director-Generals (ADGs), Executive Level 2 officers from all branches, and APS staff from Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne.

The Review team also met with leadership and team members from the Office for the Arts (OFTA) within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA).

Discussions covered all domains of the Framework and facilitated discussions regarding National Archives' *Strategy 2030: a transformed and trusted National Archives* (Strategy 2030*)* and the desired future state of National Archives. Staff were clearly able to articulate current capability state and capability gaps that impact achievement of long-term strategies. Equally they were able to well articulate opportunities to address these capability gaps.

The Review team also met with the following independent advisers to the Director-General:

- Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee
- Member of the Audit and Risk committee
- Chair of the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council
- Member of the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council
- Chair of the Project Assurance Committee.

The Review team had mind to the Functional Efficiency Review of the National Archives of Australia 2020 (the Tune Review), undertaken by Mr David Tune AO PSM, and the ongoing implementation of recommendations arising from that review.

The Review team has fact checked comments and information based on currently available information.

About the agency

National Archives provides leadership in best practice management of the official records of the Commonwealth and ensures that Australian Government information of enduring significance is secured, preserved and available to government agencies, researchers, and the community.

National Archives was established under the *Archives Act 1983* (Archives Act) and is a noncorporate Commonwealth entity (a listed entity) under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and an Executive Agency under the *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act).

The Archives Act 2A(a)(b) provides a mandate to National Archives to:

a. identify the archival resources of the Commonwealth
b. preserve and make publicly available the archival resources of the Commonwealth
c. oversee Commonwealth record keeping by determining standards and providing advice to Commonwealth institutions; and
d. impose record keeping obligations in respect of Commonwealth records.

National Archives:

- ensures the Australian Government creates and keeps records of its actions and decisions to demonstrate accountability to the community and as evidence of the integrity of the operations of the Australian Public Service.
- authorises destruction of information assets with no ongoing value to government or the community.
- selects and preserves the most significant records of the Australian Government and makes these available to government and the public as a national resource to enrich and inform Australians' past, present and future.

In 2022, under machinery of government changes, National Archives' functions transferred from the Attorney-General's portfolio to the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts portfolio. National Archives reports to Minister Burke through OFTA within DITRDCA.

The Director-General is the Accountable Authority under the Archives Act and has regular governance meetings with the Senior Executive Officers of OFTA, and the opportunity for 'as needs' meetings with the Minister. OFTA sits within DITRDCA and coordinates all policy discussions regarding National Archives' remit across Government and supports National Archives in cross-agency negotiations and discussions. The relationship between DITRDCA and National Archives has evolved over the past 12 months to be productive and supportive on both sides.

The 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) set out National Archives' outcome and program structure, as follows:

Outcome 1: To promote the creation, management, and preservation of authentic, reliable, and useable Commonwealth records, and to facilitate Australians' access to the archival resources of the Commonwealth.

Program 1.1: National Archives provides stewardship of the records of the Australian Government to provide access to the evidence and memory of our nation, connecting Australians with their identity, history, and place in the world.

National Archives' longer-term strategy is set out in Strategy 2030, which sets out a vision for a transformed and trusted National Archives. Under Strategy 2030, National Archives articulates the following 4 strategies to guide the building of future capability to deliver its program:

- Enable best practice information and data management by Australian Government entities.
- Secure and preserve nationally significant Australian Government information and data.

- Connect Australians to the national archival collection.
- Innovate to lead archival practice in the digital age.

Total funding from government in 2022-23 is $107.1 million and this amount is forecast to reduce across the forwards to $95.6 million in 2026-27 reflecting terminating measures such as the Defend the Past, Protect the Future (DPPF) program budget measure.

National Archives has a touchpoint in every Australian Government department and agency, as they work to assist entities meet the policies, standards and processes for record and document management, digitisation, preservation, and transfer. Staff are responsible for a wide range of activities from access to records and items, preservation, physical transfer, collection management, digitisation, public engagement, and corporate management of the agency. Several governance forums assist this interaction and support entities compliance with the Archives Act requirements. Additionally, and to a smaller degree, staff work across the National Collecting Institutions (NCIs) on common events and share experience and forward calendars of exhibitions.

Management of Australian Government Records

National Archives has responsibility for the preservation, conservation and digitisation policies and standards for use by Commonwealth entities.

The Archives Act provides authority for National Archives to set information management policy and standards for all Australian Government agencies. Current information management practices are labour intensive and have resulted in delays in:

- provisioning access requests
- transfers of records into National Archives custody
- archiving material, which has led to some records being put at risk e.g., deterioration prior to ability to be digitised; and
- preservation.

Efforts by National Archives to improve information and data management have seen some progress in whole of government management capability. Implementation, however, is progressing at varying rates across departments and agencies.

By comparison, we note the core elements relevant to access and protection that are reflected in the relevant pieces of State archives legislation albeit with some variety in time limits for transfer requirements.

National Archives released its core whole of Government information management policy, *Building Trust in the Public Record* in January 2021, replacing the previous policy *Digital Continuity 2020*. The policy supports information and data management capability in Australian Government agencies, to meet current and emerging information challenges, and to guide broader Government priorities such as digital transformation and data use and sharing.

There are 3 mandatory actions and 14 recommended actions for agencies under the policy. National Archives measures the success of the policy via the annual *Check-Up* agency survey by monitoring how agencies have implemented these actions.

The 2022 Check-Up survey is a self-assessment and was published to National Archives' website in June 2023. Given the agencies' self-assessment model it is difficult for National Archives to verify agencies' self-assessments independently and accurately. A link to the report is available at: Check-up survey | naa.gov.au

The recent Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Audit *Management of Information* Assets (Report No 44 of 22-23) found that the inability of National Archives to independently verify the self-assessments

reduce(d)s the reliability of the National Archives' assessment of progress and reporting to Australian Government ministers and other stakeholders.

Structure

From 1 August 2023, National Archives has a new organisational structure comprising of the Office of the Director-General, managed by an Executive Level 2 officer (EL2), and reporting directly to the Director-General, and 5 branches.

- Office of the Director-General ensures that National Archives meets its obligations as a non-corporate Commonwealth entity. This includes responsibility for corporate governance, risk, legal, integrity and executive support.
- Access and Public Engagement ensures access to the collection through digital platforms, research centres, access examination, reference and description services, education and lifelong learning programs, exhibitions, publishing, marketing, communications and media engagement, the NAA Member program, corporate events and national and international partnerships.
- Collection Management protects records of archival value by identifying them through the disposal authorisation process and transferring them into custody, manages the collection to ensure its authenticity, integrity, preservation, usability and availability across its network of offices throughout Australia, and sets whole-of-government information management standards. It also works with Australian Government agencies to build their information management maturity by providing advice and guidance on compliance with the Archives Act 1983 and National Archives' requirements and standards.
- The Chief Operating Officer (COO), as head of Corporate Services, provides the enabling services of human resources, finance, procurement, and property and security management. The branch also undertakes special corporate projects and capability development.
- Data and Digital provides digital capability and technology, cyber security, software and governance of information and data assets.
- The Transformation Office oversees the development and execution of National Archives' transformation program, undertakes research and innovation in digital archival management, special corporate projects and capability development, and ensures National Archives can achieve its vision and objectives through effective reform.

The new structure moved the Corporate Governance and Risk section to the Director-General's management and the Transformation Office introduced to ensure change is driven. Additional funding, announced as part of the National Collecting Institutions – Sustainability Funding, is managed in line with government expectations to ensure National Archives has the capability needed to meet future needs.

Staffing

At 1 August 2023, National Archives' Average Staffing Level (ASL) was 352.5. In 2023-24, National Archives' ASL cap is 326.2. Of this, 311 ASL is funded to ongoing programs and 15 temporary ASL is allocated to the DPPF program, actual Full Time Equivalent (FTE) is 19.1. The DPPF program allocation will decrease over future years with 15 ASL in 2023-2024 and 2024-25 and the project phased out by 2025-2026.

Approximately 71% of staff are located in Canberra, with the remainder located in state and territory facilities. In Tasmania, Northern Territory, South Australia and Victoria, National Archives shares a property footprint with a partner state- and- territory-based collecting institution (Library or Archives).

ASL by branch on 1 August 2023:

Branch	Budgeted ASL	Actual ASL	Percentage of Budgeted ASL
Office of the Director-General	22	17.1	6.24
Access and Public Engagement	75.6	72.8	21.45
Collection Management	147	138.8	41.70
Corporate Services	50.9	42.4	14.44
Data and Digital	51	49.1	14.47
Transformation Office	6	5.9	1.7
Totals	**352.5**	**326.1**	**100**

Overview

Excellence Horizon

In August 2021, National Archives published Strategy 2030 setting out their vision for a transformed and trusted National Archives. *National Archives will be a world-leading archive, empowered and resourced to ensure that authentic government information and data are created, secure, preserved, and accessible to government and the Australian community. The National Archives will create and harness new opportunities for engagement, collaboration, innovation and learning with and among government, industry, researchers, and the Australian public.*[1]

Underpinning the transformative strategies to enable, secure, connect and innovate is a drive for comprehensive digital capability and service delivery. This includes improving legislation, governance, and workforce digital literacy; using emerging technologies to assist government agencies better manage information and data; and scale up capability to digitise and preserve at-risk collections.

To be a trusted and valued partner in the protection of government records, National Archives must have strong relationships across government and demonstrate drive and initiative to ensure departments and agencies maintain appropriate control over their records and that they work toward a digital standard and reduce forward years physical items and correctly digitise those records as they are created. The future of archiving government records must look to move away from physical items to digital items to preserve items as they are born.

Strategy 2030 articulates 6 aspirations which are core to the transformation journey of National Archives over the next decade:

- Trust – trust in National Archives is assured through modern and effective governance, current legislation and policies, and sound administration of resources that protect information, assets, and people.
- Information and Data Policy – National Archives authority, role and advice are recognised, ensuring government entities prioritise, resource, and implement the information and data management standards and requirements of the Archives Act.
- Secure and Preserve – all archival material is identified, secured, preserved, and protected from obsolescence neglect or hostile action.
- Connecting with audiences – Australians meaningfully connect with the national archival collection – the evidence and memory of this nation - starting with Australia's Indigenous heritage, how the nation came to be and continues to evolve.
- Innovation – National Archives harnesses the resources, technology and partnerships required to be one of the world's foremost archives and change leader.
- Workforce Capability – National Archives has a culture and sustainable resources for a dynamic user-centred and skilled workforce.

Strategy 2030 defines the purpose, vision, and values of National Archives:

[1] Strategy 2030, National Archives of Australia.p2 August 2021

Purpose: to provide leadership in best practice management of the official record of the Commonwealth and ensures that Australian government information of enduring significance is secured, preserved and available to government agencies, researchers, and the community.

Vision: Australia's cultural identity and democracy are strengthened by connecting people with the evidence of Australian Government activities and decisions.

Values:

- **Service excellence** – deliver quality and responsive services that meet the needs and expectations of our clients and partners.
- **Leadership** – strive to be national and international leaders in information and data management policy, digital transformation, archival collection management and creative public engagement.
- **Innovation** – look for new and better ways to do business and deliver digital services that are user-centred and embrace the future.
- **Responsibility** – take responsibility for delivering the goals and priorities comprising a transformational program of work.
- **Collaboration** – work with the public, private and civil society sectors to achieve shared goals and outcomes.

Agency strengths

Strategy 2030 indicates that National Archives is engaged in domestic and international fora to further their influence, gain information and work on collaboration across different jurisdictions and issues.

These engagements support National Archives as a signatory to the Open Government Partnership with a role to improve the discoverability and accessibility of government data, archived records and deliver information management and access laws for the 21st century.

Additionally**,** as a member of the International Council on Archives (ICA) they support the ICA leadership and collaboration in archival policy, research, skills development and capability development programs, education, conferences**,** and information sharing fora.

The ICA and National Archives hosted the inaugural Indigenous Matters Summit, *See Us, Hear Us, Walk with Us*: *challenging and decolonising the archive* in Adelaide in 2019. The Tandanya declaration became the first international declaration by archives on Indigenous peoples and matters, and National Archives continue to implement the spirit and actions of the declaration.

National Archives is also part of the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) the Galleries, Library, Archives, and Museum (GLAM) Peak in Australia and implements Australia's requirements of the Universal Declaration of Archives, based on Australia's member status of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Culturation Organisation (UNESCO).

These domestic and international engagements support and enhance National Archives' reputation. A further strength is the strong identification staff have with the purpose of the agency. This is evident through discussions, and through the responses provided in the 2022 and 2023 APS Censuses. Many staff have been in the agency for 20 plus years and some for more than 30. Those that have been in less time, i.e., under 10 years, have generally spent time in other collecting institutions either overseas or within Australia. While there is strength in these long-term relationships with the agency and the sector (GLAM or NCIs), there are also deficits with limited staff having a strong APS background and network. Networks are generally limited to those held from previous roles.

The placement of National Archives in the DITRDCA portfolio provides potential to leverage and expand the cross fertilisation of knowledge and experience of a large department into National Archives and to work with OFTA to gain greater collaboration amongst the NCIs.

Equally the Future Business Model (Appendix F) lends itself to true collaboration with NCIs and the Australian and International GLAM sector. This collaboration must be at the advancement of National Archives and not at the expense of day-to-day operations or project and outcome achievements, given resource restraints and the tasks ahead of National Archives to describe, digitise and preserve the collection.

National Archives' footprint in each state and territory serves the agency well, even as they move to reduce their holdings of storage across multiple sites. The accessibility of the collection to state and territory-based clients is critical to the mission and to avoid movement of fragile records; the ability to digitise the majority of the collection is critical to continued access for government and the community.

DPPF program investment has galvanised the staff and their focus on digitising the collection and creating a longer-term strategy for National Archives. Under the DPPF program, 264,121 critical at-risk collection items have now been digitised (44,270 paper, 45,402 audio-visual and 174,449 photographic).

Additionally, over one million Second World War service records have now been digitised as part of the DPPF program and a separate program of funding of $10m. These records are now progressively being made

available online free-of-charge. At 30 June 2023, there are approximately 45,000 Second World War service records awaiting digitisation, which will be prioritised over the next 12 months and made available online.

Whilst this investment ceases in 2024-25, the agency must move to a longer-term description and digitisation strategy that is not dependent on Budget funding as a sole source of investment. This strategy must be planned over a longer term (decades) taking into consideration the scope of the current and future collection.

National Archives has a depth of technical capability and expertise which serves the staff and agency well to ensure the preservation, storage and to enable access to the collection. The challenge with this expertise is the demand for services across collection institutions, both federal and state and territory, and the ability of National Archives to retain the required skill sets and dedication to the mission with an ageing workforce and in a tight fiscal environment.

In some areas the Review team heard that expertise and skill sets are 'one-deep' and should a staff member be sick, the work ceases until their return. With the impact of COVID-19 and influenza this year, that has meant a cessation of work for some 4 to 5 days in specific roles. In terms of provision of access to documents, this adds to the issue of back logs. The number of access requests outstanding on 31 July 2023 is 16,198 with the longest waiting request being 16 years old.

Stakeholders showed strong commitment to the mission and direction of National Archives and a good understanding of the issues and challenges. There is some constructive tension in stakeholder desire to see a stronger commitment to records management and preservation by federal agencies and a recognition that the legislative settings might not provide an authorising environment matched to the accountability. There was an acknowledgement of the pressure on resources but a strong view that National Archives should be more proactive in driving both digital transfer and preservation.

Areas for capability improvement

Operating Context

All government agencies have had to adapt to a new working environment and evolve their operating models since the advent of COVID-19. Workforce flexibility, a constrained financial environment and portfolio change is the 'new normal' and common across the entire public service. Competition for scarce resources, especially in digital and data security, is only likely to increase.

National Archives is a small portfolio agency of 352 ASL within a large parent department (DITRDCA), with a national footprint and significant fixed costs driven by a physical collection encompassing circa 480km of shelving with less than 30% of the collection described at the item level. Approximately 8.72% of the collection has been digitised (equating to 4,067,213 items). 'Old media' e.g., audio/video is fragile and degrading. The distinct vinegar scent of degrading analog film was present in several cold storage areas. Skills are needed to straddle analogue and obsolete formats as well as digital records. Given the fiscal environment, the FTE cannot be bolstered to bring in new staff to manage new technology and leave older technology to current staff. A crossover of skill sets must be planned for training current staff in new technology and new staff in latent technology.

The Review team, through discussion with staff, formed a view that the size and scale of the physical collection overpowers staff and constrains longer term planning for description and digitisation of the collection, outside of specific government funded initiatives, such as the DPPF program. Staff and leadership are overwhelmed by Business as Usual (BAU) activity both inward looking – digitisation, access, description, preservation**,** and access; and outward looking – events, exhibitions, stakeholder engagement, and working with departments on information policy, procedures, standards**,** and transfers.

Approximately 70% of the national archival collection is not described at the item level and consequently not easily discoverable by clients without assistance from National Archives. Records that are not described impact the ability of operational and service delivery areas to deliver on their objectives.

The National Description Strategy 2021-2024 aims to describe records by prioritising those that are of most interest to a wide range of audiences based on the following characteristics:

- Archival value – those records that warrant retention and confirmed as valuable records by National Archives; and
- Suitability for access – those records in the Open Access period or within 3 years of the open period.

Other records are prioritised and considered based on the level of interest and use, records of national or local significance and those required for specific strategic priorities. Based solely on a priority basis, it is therefore the case that much of the collection will never be a priority to describe and therefore digitised. A described collection would reduce unnecessary intervention and workload by National Archives to provide access to the collection.

New budget funding of $67.7m was appropriated in response to the Tune Review. Legislative amendments to the Archives Act are being considered by OFTA to give the Director-General wider powers and to provide for greater incentives/consequences for federal agency compliance. The cessation in 2025, of the funding related to the DPPF program, was a concern to many staff and stakeholders.

National Archives has an ambitious Strategy 2030 program of work under way. In the next 6 years, amongst other policy and ICT initiatives, the plan is to deliver the following measures:

- 100% of agencies manage all information and data digitally.
- Identify and describe 100% of the national archival collection.
- 30% of the national archival collection is digitised and accessible online.
- Digitise and preserve all at-risk collections.
- Develop a Pacific Regional documentary heritage digital archive.

DITRDCA exercises oversight and liaison via OFTA. This is an evolving working relationship. OFTA fully manages the Ministerial relationship which reduces the Director-General's role as Accountable Authority. This is balanced against the positives of the relationship given the size of the portfolio and OFTA being a central point for all NCIs in the portfolio. The Director-General has met with the Minister 3 times in 14 months – one of those being due to a records security incident. This is a similar tempo of meetings for other NCIs.

OFTA advise that the Minister has requested a consistent approach across NCIs, collaboration more broadly across the sector through partnerships, and greater external engagement, together with an enhanced focus on records relating to First Nations people.

Legislation

The lack of incentives and consequences for agencies to comply with the Archives Act effectively means that the Director-General holds federal accountability without the levers to drive compliance and ensure records protection and integrity. The ANAO has reported on the need for agencies to improve creation, management**,** and preservation of records in accordance with their legislative responsibilities. The most recent Check Up Survey in June 2023 showed mixed maturity, with scores being skewed towards asset governance vs appraisal and preservation. Only 16% of agencies have a metadata strategy in place, with 49% having a strategy under development. Sixteen percent of agencies have information unable to be used before its authorised disposal date due to storage in obsolete file formats or deterioration of the records. Only half of the agencies surveyed had an information governance framework in place.

There was little evidence that the Archives Act 2A was a central consideration in how the collections of Commonwealth departments and agencies were being preserved or transferred to National Archives. Given the ambitious Strategy 2030 and Future Business Model, we consider that any future review of legislation must provide an authorising environment, incentives, and consequences for agencies to apply best archival practice to records management.

The ANAO recently identified 2 agencies, one who had not transferred a single record to National Archives since its inception and a central department that had transferred one record across 4 years. National Archives holds the view that, despite the articulation of their role in the Archives Act, they do not have the legal teeth to hold agencies accountable or to raise remedies to actions or lack of action, such as those displayed by the 2 agencies.

It is concerning that we heard from OFTA that some departments and National Security Agencies are lobbying OFTA for significant changes to limit the production of documents under the Archives Act, without close liaison with National Archives. OFTA manage the policy and Archives Act under the Accountable Authority Instructions on behalf of all NCIs, however OFTA does not hold the deep understanding of the policy at an operational and collection level to ensure mitigation of unintended consequences of any changes to the Act. Close cooperation and inclusion of the Accountable Authority (the Director-General under the Archives Act) is necessary to achieve legislation that best protects and preserves the records of government.

Strategy

Strategy 2030 is ambitious and appears resourced in the short term but there are real issues beyond the window of new funding and in terms of Executive Board commitment. Ambition needs to be balanced with realism and an acknowledgement of the cost and benefit implied in 'world-leading'. Strategy 2030 is heavily capability dependent on digital investment and skills.

Several participants identified the large number of strategies and recommendations that they are required to implement – synergy of the strategies must be considered and prioritised to the funding available in the short and long term.

The Review team also note the limited time that the Executive Board sets aside for strategy forming, monitoring**,** and planning. The leadership team would benefit from regular dedicated strategic planning sessions. Currently there is predominantly a focus on current business at the Board meetings. To augment this, the Board would benefit from more time together, both formally and informally.

We recognise that the Director-General is based in Adelaide and that several of the Executives increasingly utilise remote working. However, we consider that it would be beneficial both to leadership team dynamics and to the wider staff to see the Executive working and interacting more cohesively and visibly. This could be helped by the Executive Board committing to be together onsite in Canberra for a dedicated week each month.

Since 2001, National Archives has digitised approximately 8% of the collection – over some 22 years; however, according to Strategy 2030 the plan is to digitise a further 22% in the next 7 years. The Review team was unable to gain a confident view as to how this uplift of more than 800% per year will be sustained within budget, given the cessation of approximately $7m per annum operating (DPPF program) funding in 2024-25. Additionally, with less than 30% of the collection described at the item level, a target of 100% of the collection being described by 2030 is extremely ambitious.

Whilst Cyber Security (below) is ramping up to national security levels, and many new staff are being asked to undertake NEGATIVE VETTING (NV) 1clearances, National Archives is rated as an OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE agency. There is limited access to PROTECTED emails and often those who can receive them have to arrange for the intended recipient to read them over their shoulder. This causes issues with receiving and providing information to the parent department, particularly during ministerial and budget discussions. A decision to move to PROTECTED or maintain OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE and improve current work processes is required to settle the disconnect between asking for NV1 to access systems when National Archives is not yet rated to PROTECTED. NV1, NV2 and Positive Vetting are currently necessary for some secure archive processing and collection access, but not for general staff access to ICT systems. The delays in getting these clearances through the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency (AGSVA) is causing work delays and loss of staff as potential employees opt for immediate work offers. Equally, once junior staff or non-ongoing employees have such clearances**,** they become attractive to poaching by other agencies, which did not bear the cost of waiting for the clearance or cost of the clearance itself.

This issue is causing tension in the Executive Level cohort and is seen to be an unnecessary delay to resourcing their teams. The Review team was unable to access a related ICT security policy or reasoning related to this issue.

Workforce

Recruitment, retention and remuneration issues have been strongly signaled. Competition for scarce resources e.g., digital, cyber, preservation, is matched by issues with an ageing workforce, key person risks and an

onboarding process hampered by security clearances which can take up to 14 months. The drive to digital conversion has heightened the clash between legacy analogue skills and the new technology skills required for the future. It was described as 'living in compromise' rather than consistent with leading edge thinking and practice. Staff are passionate but we heard that they do not feel comfortable facing difficult issues if it means creating conflict with another branch.

What will a 'Digital Archivist' look like over the next 5-10 years? Access to archive tertiary education is dwindling in Australia, with limited institutions offering any courses or subjects. Digital education has not yet moved to include archive considerations and both federal and state institutions compete for staff with qualifications and hands-on experience.

Having a national footprint provides flexibility but also opens National Archives to more competition for talent as state archival agencies are prepared to aggressively recruit and, in some states, pay higher than National Archives. Seventy one per cent of staff are currently located in ACT. There are opportunities to consider the viability of roles being less geographically dependent e.g**.,** corporate and some technical positions. Some roles are location-dependent**,** but many are not. Where such flexibility exists, National Archives should be open to recruiting from a national pool of talent and take advantage of modern technology and practice to provide remote working as an option.

While National Archives is a small agency by federal standards, this small scale can also be an advantage, providing agility and a strong identifiable organisational culture that can be leveraged in recruitment and skills development. One of the advantages of operating in a smaller agency is that executive level staff have the opportunity to gain a broader range of experience and skills, increasing their value and marketability.

While the size and focus of National Archives means that it is likely to be a destination agency for professional archivists, the breadth of management and leadership experience offered can be a great steppingstone to bigger roles. Corporate memory is strongly invested in an ageing workforce leading to key person risks (in core archival roles) and a conservative culture. Corporate staff are more portable to the multitude of government departments, both state and federal, than specialist archivists or collection managers. High turnover in this space can lead to lower administration capability overall and increased risk. Specialist roles within National Archives will not be specialists in, for example, the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), or the *Public Service Act 1999* (Public Service Act). The corporate area is tasked with maintaining the good health of the agency's day-to-day operations and ensuring the Accountable Authority is not exposed to breaches of these and other governance and administrative Acts. Support from the corporate team to the Director-General and Assistant Director Generals (ADGs) must be consistent and robust and must be applicable to the environment.

Leadership development targeted at strategic thinking, change management and culture building is needed alongside professional technical development to ensure that ADGs and Executive Level staff have the skill sets to collaborate and engage effectively internally, within government and with the citizenry.

There is ministerial expectation as to greater focus on records relating to First Nations people, but we note the limited capability across the organisation, with most skill sets based in the Northern Territory.

Staff advised that they are feeling deskilled in terms of ministerial and parliamentary support – they have no access to the Parliamentary Document Management System (PDMS), do not have access in real time to changes made to Ministerial Submissions or Briefs, and staffs' ability to write briefs and prepare for Senate Estimates is limited.

Culture

Surveys indicate a strong culture linked to the purpose of the organisation and a deep understanding of core business and the legislative settings of the Archives Act. However, there is less evidence of similar understanding or commitment to the wider public service. In addition, newly recruited future staff are less likely to have the same deep commitment to National Archives' purpose. While a strong focus on the integrity of the collection is commendable, we did receive comment that the value placed on the collection can overshadow and crowd out the important administrative tasks that are needed to maintain good governance and for accountability purposes.

The Executive Board culture appears to be less constructive with comments indicating competition, limited desire to have solidarity around decisions once made, lack of adherence to best practice governance (e.g**.,** relitigating budget decisions outside of agreed processes) and little time set aside for strategic thinking and planning. Commitment to Strategy 2030 is mixed with questions challenging aspiration vs realism. A reluctance to tackle conflict is also evident in a lack of strong performance management.

All Executive Board members need to adopt an enterprise view, balancing their branch operational needs with the best interests of National Archives and their obligations in delivering to the public. The Executive Board should recommit to a first principles leadership and management approach with a focus on their legislative and regulatory requirements whilst aligning the governance of National Archives to that focus.

There are multiple governance committees which are at the organisational level**,** however there are also branch based committees which cut across other business lines thus creating excessive administration and committees having the same composition. Streamlining the entire governance would reduce the administrative burden on staff and better focus branches on their enterprise accountabilities.

Strategy 2030 has an enhanced focus on external sectoral collaboration and partnerships. This will need to be matched by building an internal culture that models and rewards collaboration, encourages the necessary behaviour and deals with inconsistent behaviour. Collaboration requires a set of practiced skills that are often counter-cultural in a public sector environment characterised by insularity, conservatism**,** and competition for internal resources. Recruitment and staff development will need to prioritise the acquisition and building of these skills in a deliberate and purposeful manner.

There appears to be some insularity in recruiting and contracting, with the Executive often bringing in people they know from previous roles, rather than developing new active networks. One ADG talked about the difficulty in engaging with departments and agencies in roundtable discussions. We heard that departments and agencies tend to send junior staff and do not take their role as seriously as National Archives believes is warranted.

The Executive Level cohort are frequently not involved in the development of the new collections' programs, and therefore, the program is slow as they determine what implementation means in reality. The Executive Level cohort were vocal about their ability to contribute to the success of programs if they were engaged early in ICT programs, and collection and access management programs. They also have no visibility of what has been briefed to the Minister and therefore what expectations have been created. Advice indicated the annual Statement of Expectations issued by the Minister to the Director-General is forthcoming.

Technology

The shift to digital preservation has been slow. Despite having a digital repository for 30 years there is limited content now stored, compared to the size of the collection. There was a theme, in many discussions, of being

ready for an imminent 'digital deluge', but this seems unlikely given digitisation results since 2001 and given the current legislative settings and the ability of National Archives to enforce compliance.

Cyber security was a consistent theme in all discussions held by the Review team. The emphasis on cyber security permeated all decision making from recruitment to operational requirements. While the focus is understood, there is a feeling that it has dominated the digital landscape at the expense of the operating environment and has restricted access to Commercial of the Shelf (COTS) tools that would enhance productivity in several branches. Many comments were made that 'everything is blacklisted until you apply for it to be available' which slows down operations. In addition, there was no transparent program of ICT implementation with products being requested and, in some cases, several years delay between request and communication of non-delivery response. The issue of the laptop trial and slow rollout was mentioned often and seen as another blocker to being able to do the job. Also, the planned cancellation, post COVID-19 lockdowns, of Microsoft Teams' licenses without engagement or staff consultation, and the rollout of M365 which led to telephony failures and customer service issues.

There is also concern about Data & Digital making unilateral decisions with little or no communication with the business. While a constructive tension is desirable, there is a strong view from business owners that the decision-making environment is opaque and not enabling with the lack of transparency regarding ICT priorities, projects being rolled out and development timelines creating a difficult relationship environment across all branches. Branches recommend a co-design and human-centered approach vs the current approach of a technology solution being developed excluding consultation with users and in time frames which do not consider the workload of each branch.

Additionally, there was concern across all branches as to the lack of alignment between Data & Digital and the business units and a 'one size fits all' model to cyber security that is not obviously backed by a risk appetite that best differentiates between public facing and secure archives and corporate systems and tools. With all applications sitting on a single network and platform, a conservative highly protective approach has been applied which in some areas appears to be equal to or higher security than national security agencies.

A singular agency security and risk appetite assessment and future pathway should be transparent to all ADGs, Executive Level staff and those APS with the appropriate clearances.

Infrastructure Portfolio and OFTA

While OFTA provides oversight and assistance there is little evidence yet of National Archives seeking to leverage the opportunity that the scale of the parent department can offer. The first year of National Archives within the DITRDCA has successfully built relationships and working operations with the department and OFTA.

OFTA has a limited view of the collaborative possibilities of the NCIs, with a primary approach of leaving NCIs to work that out amongst themselves. Consideration of the role of the department and OFTA in driving collaboration around workforce, current and future capability, preservation, and citizen engagement would be beneficial to all NCIs and government.

National Archives and OFTA must leverage the maturity of the department to assist National Archives and NCIs in their mission and drive collaboration across the other collecting institutions in more than event management and planning. Collaboration across the institutions supports government's National Cultural Policy and focus on protecting the knowledge and cultural expressions of First Nations people.

National Archives can help shape this operating model within DITRDCA, especially with respect to workforce, collaboration, and investment across the NCIs. Purposeful synergies need to be explored and leveraged. It will

also need to 'lean-in' to the policy and ministerial engagement space to ensure the Director-General's accountabilities are well understood and respected.

A rhythm appears to be in place for the Director-General and Chief Operating Officer to engage with OFTA however a regular ministerial rhythm of engagement would benefit OFTA and the Director-General to ensure a relationship of trust exists between the Director-General and Minister.

National Archives of Australia Advisory Council

The National Archives of Australia Advisory Council (the Council) has a legislative role to provide advice to the Minister on matters relating to the advancement of National Archives. The Review team spoke to the Chair and to a member of the Council. The Council holds several major concerns relating to property, legislation, administrative practices across departments and digitisation.

Firstly, they noted the salary rates of National Archives being lower than the central agencies which, in their view, creates a recruitment issue for National Archives. This matter is dealt with later in this report. Additionally, the Council is keen for legislation to be tabled which provides National Archives with a greater capacity to regulate the record keeping of government agencies and enforce compliance measures.

The Council sees a larger role for National Archives in driving government digital work and in amending legislation to move records to National Archives much earlier than the current 20-year standard. The Council is concerned about the delay in departments assessing documents under the access arrangements of the Act. The delay in some departments is years and the Council noted the risk attributed to the Director-General, particularly as National Archives has no levers to control the assessment by other government departments.

For several years, the Council has considered that National Archives requires a purpose-built facility in the Parliamentary Triangle to ensure the national records can be seen in fit for purpose exhibition spaces and National Archives can stand beside other collecting and cultural institutions as a tourist and educational facility. The current lease on East Block expires in 2030 and the Executive will need to further consider their property future in the next 12 months to ensure they have appropriate plans in place. The Review team recommends further discussions with the Department of Finance to determine the usage of current government space within the Parliamentary Triangle.

There have been issues raised as to the capability and skills mix across the Council and their visibility of correspondence to the Minister on the actions of the Council. This will be an ongoing issue for consideration as roles become available and will require strong ministerial and OFTA liaison and influence.

The Council continues to look for new initiatives and improvements to ensure National Archives is fully meeting its remit.

Detailed assessment of agency capability

This section provides an assessment of agency capability based on the Capability Review framework at **Appendix A**. Assessments were made according to the following high-level maturity rating scale.

Maturity rating	High-level maturity rating description

Emerging	Agency mostly demonstrates: • Critical weakness in current capability • Critical weakness in its ability to deliver the capability in the short or medium term • No or minimal awareness of capability gaps • No or minimal action underway to address the capability gaps • No or minimal evidence of learning or a focus on continuous improvement
Developing	Agency mostly demonstrates: • Weakness or gaps in current capability • Concerns in its ability to deliver future capability • Some current and future capability gaps not clearly identified and forecasting of future capability challenges needs to be improved • Identified weaknesses not systematically addressed • Greater focus on learning and continuous improvement is needed
Embedded	Agency mostly demonstrates: • Good current capability • Majority of future capability gaps identified • Activities to improve in areas of current and future capability gaps, and is well placed to continue improving • Majority of business areas have some focus on learning and continuous improvement
Leading	Agency mostly demonstrates: • Excellent current capability • Strategic and systematic approach to forecasting future capability challenges and responding accordingly • Plans and undertakes development to meet future and changing needs and conditions • Actively participates in learning and focusses on continuous improvement

Review team assessment of National Archives capabilities

Leadership and Culture

Element	High-level maturity rating	
Purpose, vision and strategy		Developing
Values, culture and behaviour		Developing
Leadership and governance		Emerging
Review and evaluation		Emerging
Embodies integrity		Developing

Collaboration

Element	High-level maturity rating	
Engagement with ministers		Developing
Contribution to the public sector (federal, state/territory, local and international)		Developing
Partnerships and engagement outside the public sector		Developing
Putting people and business at the centre of policy and services		Developing

Delivery

Element	High-level maturity rating	
User focus and experience		Developing
Strategic policy		Developing
Service delivery and improvement		Emerging
Managing for performance and outcomes		Developing
Capability to do the job		Developing

People

Element	High-level maturity rating	
Strategic workforce planning and development		Developing
Staff performance and capability		Developing
Staff engagement and experience		Embedded
Model employer		Developing

Resourcing and Risk

Element	High-level maturity rating	
Asset (Physical) management	✓	Embedded
Asset (ICT) management	✓	Developing
Information and data management	✓	Developing
Cyber security	✓	Developing
Financial management	✓	Developing
Procurement, contract, and project/program management	✓	Developing
Risk management	✓	Emerging

Core domain: Leadership and Culture		
Element: Purpose, vision, and strategy: The capability to develop an appropriate purpose, vision and strategy based upon government priorities and legislative functions and successfully communicate these to staff, stakeholders, and users. • Purpose, vision, and strategy are developed with reference to government priorities and legislative functions and are responsive to external changes. • Purpose, vision, and strategy are clearly communicated and implemented across all areas of business.		
Assessment maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives' strategic vision is maturing. The purpose, vision and strategy are clearly articulated within strategic documents and aligned to Strategy 2030, a 10-year strategic document which sets out the vision for a transformed and trusted National Archives.

The PBS, Corporate Plan and Agency Business Plan are each aligned to Strategy 2030. National Archives assess the relevance, reliability, and completeness of information for each non-financial performance measure in achieving its purpose(s). In addition, each year, the PBS, and performance measures inform the development of strategic annual business plans.

Branch plans provide information on each of the branch's priorities, significant risks, and available resources, which are then strategically collated into the Agency Business Plan. Progress against the Agency Business Plan and Corporate Plan performance measures are assessed quarterly, to ensure the agency can address planned and unplanned priorities and to test the effectiveness of the business planning process.

There has been considerable recent work to review National Archives' cultural approach with the revised 'Our Values' being launched on 5 July 2023. The project to develop new values commenced in 2022 and involved engagement with a large cross-section of National Archives staff at all levels.

The strategic plan is now complemented by National Archives' Future Business Model, which provides a visualisation of National Archives in 2030, aligned with Strategy 2030, and prioritisation of work to ensure the agency meets their aspirational goals. Strategy 2030 will be reviewed in 2025 to ensure goals are still aligned with the expectations of the Government and the Australian people.

The Future Business Model was developed from the ground up through extensive consultation with over 250 staff. The Future Business Model confirms the aspirational goals of Strategy 2030 and has ensured they are embedded in a practical roadmap and prioritisation plan to ensure delivery.

While the strategic documents are comprehensive and consistent with the desired direction of National Archives, we are concerned about 2 key issues – the lack of confidence in delivery versus strategic intent, and the need for a reality check of progress to the Future Business Model based on capability and resource gaps. While Executive leadership and staff support the direction, there is less confidence in the ability to deliver in the stated timeframes. Time-limited funding, workforce pressures and a lack of legislative authority all combine to threaten the strategic intent.

National Archives has numerous strategies that read well individually but there appears limited operational planning and coordination across multiple fronts e.g., planning to describe and digitise the collection are

related to priority and risk (rightly so in the first instance), however there is no longer term plan to address the description or digitisation of the entire collection. There is also little evidence of ADGs monitoring, critiquing**,** and updating their strategies.

As mentioned in the summary section above, we consider dedicated time on strategic planning and a more visible unified presence of the Executive Board would aid both team dynamics and demonstrate a cohesive leadership team to the wider organisation.

Core domain: Leadership and Culture		
Element: Values, culture, and behaviour: The capability to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation and measure the benefit of these activities to policy, programs, and service delivery. • Leaders drive continuous improvement and innovation to achieve better results.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives is working to build a culture of continuous improvement and innovation that enables and empowers staff to trial new things within National Archives' risk appetite. This means that leaders need to encourage trial and error and respond well when mistakes are made and admitted to. It also means that the agency needs to build a consistent level of engagement with monitoring of performance and evaluation throughout the agency and clearly articulate their desired security level across the agency and the risk appetite for each part of the agency.

The 2023 APS Census results shows that while 85% of staff believe that it is one of their responsibilities to continually look for new ways to improve the way we work, and 91% say they suggest new ways of improving how work is done, however only 32% of staff believe that the agency recognises and supports the notion that failure is a part of innovation.

This seems to suggest that as an agency, National Archives has a low-risk appetite for innovation. The National Archives Risk Management Framework and Policy risk appetite statement claims: 'Generally National Archives accepts medium levels of risk for projects and activities which present opportunities for better outcomes for us and our stakeholders.

National Archives' 'cultural refresh' project commenced in 2022 and involved engagement with a large cross-section of National Archives staff across all levels. Based on the key insights from the cultural review, 3 cultural pillars emerged, aligning with the ideal future culture that National Archives staff desire. The 3 cultural pillars are: Inclusive, Collaborative, and Innovative.

The 3 pillars have now transformed into National Archives' '*Our Values*', launched on 5 July 2023, and will be the focal point for all creative and internal communications content.

National Archives has also introduced new mentoring and leadership programs. The mentoring program commenced in 2021 and provides a positive, self-directed learning experience built over a period with benefits including career development, job satisfaction, increased productivity, expanded networks, support for major change and effective succession planning. The mentoring program is supported by a Mentoring Toolkit, which provides guidance for developing a mentoring partnership, either as part of a formal program or for those who create their own mentoring opportunities.

National Archives' Leadership Development Framework details the approach to developing leadership capabilities and culture to empower staff of National Archives to lead at all levels. The framework also provides a pathway to build leadership capabilities via development programs and support initiatives, including the Leadership Development Program.

The Leadership Development Program is a program designed to enhance and support the leadership capabilities of National Archives Executive Level cohort. The aim of the program is to build an effective, efficient and positive leadership culture through implementation of a leadership practice that provides consistency and transparency for current and future leaders.

APSC Census indicate a strong culture linked to the purpose of the organisation and a deep understanding of core business and legislative settings. In 2023, 87% of staff believed strongly in the purpose and objectives of National Archives – 3% higher than other cultural institutions. There is less evidence of similar understanding or commitment to the wider public service. In addition, the next generation of newly recruited future staff are less likely to have the same strength of commitment to National Archives' purpose.

The Executive Board culture appears to be less constructive with comments indicating competition, limited desire to have solidarity around decisions once they are made, lack of adherence to best practice governance (e.g**.,** relitigating budget decisions) and little time set aside for strategic thinking and planning. Commitment to the Strategy 2030 is mixed with questions challenging aspiration vs realism. A reluctance to tackle conflict is also evident in a lack of strong performance management.

The cohort of ADGs did not present to the Review team as a cohesive team, with a silo focus evident in decision making, and a lack of accountability for decisions and behaviours from some ADGs demonstrated in our discussions. A cohesive and highly functional leadership team who are held to account for their leadership, management and administration is critical to the success of National Archives.

This is not helped by the lack of time that the senior leadership spend together in person. With the Director-General located in Adelaide and most members of the Executive Board utilising remote working, there needs to be a dedicated and purposeful effort to have a cohesive and visible presence in Canberra for e.g., at least one week a month.

In the absence of repeatable and consistent leadership from the ADGs, staff will be attached to their personal mission with the agency but removed from commitment to the organisation.

The small scale of National Archives should be an advantage, providing agility and a strong identifiable organisational culture that can be leveraged in recruitment and skills development.

An enhanced focus on external sectoral collaboration and partnerships must be matched by a similar internal culture that models and rewards the necessary behaviours and deals with inconsistent behaviours. Collaboration and a relational approach require a set of practiced skills that are often counter-cultural in a public sector environment characterised by insularity, conservatism**,** and competition for internal resources.

The APS Census results for 2023 note that National Archives' Senior Executive Service (SES) Manager index scores are some 11-29 percentage points behind the overall APS results; 14-29 percentage points behind medium sized APS agencies; and 6-17 percentage points behind similar specialist agencies. Less than 25% of staff believed that the SES Officers work as a team.

The leadership development focus is acknowledged by the Review team however we consider that the agency needs a more targeted investment into strategic change management, performance management and culture building with a stronger eye to the future. Current investment of $482k vs an operating budget of $87m represents 1.8% per employee. We heard attempts at prioritising training were too often crowded out by BAU. We believe a targeted spend of 3-5% of senior management salary is the type of meaningful investment necessary to bring the quantum and quality of change necessary to meet the Strategy 2030 and other emerging challenges, particularly as the agency grapples with transition to a digital focus. Online

learning models are useful for a broader ‘shotgun’ approach to leadership development but must be accompanied by building more strategic leadership capability.

Core domain: Leadership and Culture		
Element: Leadership and governance The capability to deliver effective leadership, including good decision making, to identify and develop leaders, and establish organisational structures that are efficient and effective. • Leaders make decisions that are evidence-based, ethical, efficient**,** and effective, draw on consultation and are responsive to diverse objectives and priorities. • Leaders at all levels are identified, recruited**,** and developed to ensure the highest standards of leadership and exemplify the Secretaries Charter of Leadership Behaviours. • The organisational structure of the agency is efficient and effective for achieving its objectives.		
Maturity rating		***Emerging***

National Archives has a new organisational structure which came into effect from 1 August 2023. The new structure has introduced a new branch to the agency, the Transformation Office, with responsibility for whole of agency projects and initiatives that form part of National Archives transformation agenda. The new branch is intended to ensure change is driven and that appropriations are utilised effectively (announced as part of the National Collecting Institutions – Sustainability Funding) to ensure it has the tools needed into the future. The new organisational structure is designed to support the achievement of National Archives' objectives across 5 branches.

The 2023 APS Census results show that only 25% of staff believe that National Archives' SES work as a team, and 27% believe communication between SES and staff is effective. These results indicate that the agency is siloed and that the Executive do not collaborate well. To help address this, the Executive engaged YellowEdge consultancy to conduct SES 360-degree leadership workshops and training.

Effective decision-making is intended to be enabled through National Archives Corporate Governance Framework, which outlines the key authorities, principles and processes required for embedding good governance across the agency. It incorporates National Archives' legislative and policy obligations and acts as a principled guide to achieve agency-wide understanding and implementation of governance.

National Archives' leadership is supported through the Leadership Development Framework, which details the approach to developing leadership capabilities and culture to empower staff to lead at all levels. The framework also provides a pathway to build leadership capabilities via development programs and support initiatives.

National Archives utilises a range of initiatives designed to develop the capacity of its leadership. The initiatives are complementary and include formal and informal, and on- and off-the job initiatives. The initiatives will continue to evolve based on the outcome of workforce planning activities, APS Census results, development requirements identified in individual work plans and the strategic directions of National Archives.

Through discussions we found there seems little sense of urgency in tackling the identified challenges and issues. The focus seems to be on obtaining more resources rather than the Executive Board 'cutting the cloth' in a cohesive manner according to agreed priorities**,** identifying and transparently understanding the resource

trade-offs. We observed signs of a culture of 'hand-wringing' and learned helplessness rather than leaning into the issues, collaborating for problem-solving and sharing resources.

Data & Digital claim the need for greater resources**,** but we heard from several stakeholders that the existing network configuration is gold-plated and over-specified with high investment in a cyber security environment that does not match the security or any stated risk profile of the organisation. There is no clear differentiation between necessarily secure infrastructure (collection) and corporate systems that have a lower risk profile. The rationale provided is that they co-exist on the same network**,** but this should be able to be managed with architectural and system configuration choices that better reflect risk and have a more enabling focus. The organisation cannot afford to be constrained or held to ransom by cyber security requirements that are over-specified. While the system might be highly secure, it is at the cost of useability and not commensurate with risk and the needs of the business. Rather than being configured for business need, the network is configured in accordance with a security zero risk tolerance in an unclassified environment.

We consider that a 'zero-risk' approach is neither affordable nor practical.

Much comment was received from business owners about the lack of flexibility or enabling approach from Data & Digital, coupled with an absence of communication and timeliness in decision-making e.g., the slow rollout of laptops, difficulties in implementing Wi-Fi and the difficulty in implementing off the shelf tools for public access. It was regularly described as '*unbelievably slow and cumbersome'*.

We noted with interest the Data & Digital Strategy V1.0 that indicates a strategic shift of Data & Digital from a service provider to a 'broker, integrator and orchestrator'. While the strategy is an impressive document, this shift does not appear consistent with what we heard from business leaders as to what they want and need from ICT. We query the extent of buy-in and commitment from the business to this shift. Like several other strategies across National Archives there is little evidence of monitoring and tracking progress, testing of fitness for purpose and good governance and critique.

Data & Digital does not appear to have been subject to strong governance oversight and critical analysis of its operations and decisions. It has created a silo of ICT operations and there is little evidence of working closely with business units to meet their needs. ICT staff are not embedded in the business units, rather located**,** and operating in a dedicated area in Canberra. The Executive Board needs good ICT capability to confidently challenge and work with Data & Digital to ensure business needs are met. This is not to say that there shouldn't be constructive tension in a questioning environment – the hallmark of a mature and confident executive leadership team.

Core domain: Leadership and Culture		
Element: Review and evaluation The capability to use review and evaluation activities to maintain performance and drive improvement. • Evaluation activities are resourced and used to improve performance.		
Maturity rating		***Emerging***
The implementation of existing policies and projects is generally effective at achieving intended outputs, particularly for the administration of business-as-usual activity. However, National Archives struggles to set non-financial program (i.e., Collection) performance targets that are meaningful. In 2022, National Archives engaged the Synergy Group to conduct workshops across all levels to improve the way performance targets are described and measured. National Archives is continuing work to review and enhance performance targets, data sources and methodology. Under the National Archives' Program and Project Management Framework, projects are required to prepare an end project report during the project closure phase, reviewing how the project performed against project objectives, benefits and lessons learned. At their completion, major projects provide closure reports to National Archives' Project Assurance Committee (PAC) for review. PAC provides assurance to the Executive Board and Director-General about the management of significant or complex projects being undertaken by National Archives. A stronger culture of critical analysis, from conception and evaluation of ideas through to monitoring and adapting strategic plans is required. Whilst project management is developing well, each branch owns strategies which show little evidence of monitoring, review and evaluation of progress and effectiveness. There is also little evidence of how this critical analysis and performance monitoring is brought together across the multiple dependencies of each strategy on broader National Archives strategies and programs.		

Core domain: Leadership and Culture		
Element: Embodies integrity The capability to promote and embed integrity and APS values across all business areas of an agency in a way that informs and influences business practices across the agency. • A pro-integrity and values-based culture are understood and practised.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

In 2017, National Archives conducted a cultural review, and one of the key developments derived from this process was a cultural statement known as 'The Archives Way'. The Archives Way was developed with input from leaders and staff and was designed to describe the future culture of National Archives.

The Archives Way Refresh Project commenced in 2022 and involved engagement with a large cross-section of National Archives staff across all levels.

Based on the key insights from the cultural review, 3 cultural pillars emerged, aligning with the ideal future culture that National Archives staff desire. The 3 cultural pillars are:

1. Inclusive
2. Collaborative
3. Innovative

The 3 pillars have now transformed into 'Our Values', replacing 'The Archives Way' cultural statement, and now provide the focal point of all creative and internal communications content.

As part of National Archives' Internal Audit Work Program, National Archives initiated an audit into its integrity maturity. The audit will assess National Archives' current state against the Integrity Maturity Framework released by the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI). The audit will conduct a gap analysis between National Archives' *current* maturity state and *desired* maturity state to demonstrate opportunities for improvement in relation to National Archives' Integrity Framework.

National Archives also needs to turn its mind to promoting and integrating the APS Values, allowing staff to understand where they fit within the bigger picture of the APS. The *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions of 2022* provide that the APS is to incorporate and uphold the APS Values of:

- Impartial
- Committed to Service
- Accountable
- Respectful and
- Ethical

The APS Commissioner's Directions are enshrined in a legislative instrument and attached to matters such as Suspected Breaches of the Code of Conduct, so the importance of each staff member understanding the purpose, meaning and demonstration of each value in their day-to-day work, should be regularly imparted through the leadership team to all staff. Promotion of the values is the role of every SES and Executive Level

staff member, through day-to-day work, training, specific actions (APSC posters, incorporating into team meetings) and modelling by the Executive Board.

Core domain: Collaboration		
Element: Engagement with ministers The capability to maintain open, trusted**,** and respectful relationships with minister/s and provide impartial and evidence-based advice to them. • Relationships with minister/s are characterised by clarity of roles, openness, trust and respect. • Advice is impartial, evidence-based**,** and responsive to priorities of the minister/s.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives has little direct contact with the Minister and his office. As a portfolio agency, National Archives is required to go through OFTA for all communication with the Minister. The Director-General meets with the Minister infrequently and on an 'as needs' basis. National Archives provides the Minister's office with a monthly ministerial information brief, which provides information about matters important to National Archives, and with key activities and events. At the time of this review, the Minister has been unable to attend events or tour National Archives' facilities, however the Review team notes advice the Minister has now visited the National Office to open the *Focus: Australian government photographers* exhibition in November 2023. The Review team considers that the current operating model limits the capability of the Director-General and Minister to fully manage the remit of National Archives. Under legislation, the accountability for National Archives' performance rests with the Director-General however there is limited engagement with the Minister and all interaction is managed by OFTA, including briefings. Building and maintaining a constructive and professional relationship with the Minister is important to the outcomes achieved by National Archives and the Minister receiving an unfiltered view of the agency. Whilst the Minister has a very large portfolio of NCIs, a rhythm of interaction, including virtually should be explored. A rhythm appears to be in place for the Director-General and COO to engage with OFTA however a regular ministerial rhythm of engagement would benefit OFTA and the Director-General to ensure a relationship of trust exists between the Director-General and Minister. In staff discussions, there was concern raised that the skill set of ministerial briefing (written and oral) and committee briefings was being lost in National Archives staff as they do not have access to the PDMS and OFTA manage all briefings to the Minister. The Review team recommends that access to PDMS be reinstated**,** and briefs for the Minister originate in National Archives and move through to OFTA within PDMS, such that National Archives has continual visibility of briefs sent to the Minister/s and their responses.		

Core domain: Collaboration		
Element: Contribution to the public sector (federal, state/territory, local and international). • The capability to make productive contributions to the public sector, both domestically and internationally, and establish enduring and collaborative relationships with other public sector agencies to support government priorities**.** • Enduring the collaborative relationships with public sector agencies deliver on government priority outcomes. • Relationships with public sector and government agencies (including federal, state/territory, local and international) are characterised by appropriate levels of openness, trust and mutual respect, and a shared commitment to outcomes.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives' contribution to the public sector includes the preservation and management of records and access to the collection. National Archives works with departments and agencies to assist their compliance with the standards and policies designed to protect records of the Commonwealth. Importantly National Archives also provides access to the collection to individuals, departments, agencies, and researchers to acquit requests which may range from individual and author research to legal discovery. This access may be digitally and readily available via, for example, RecordSearch, or may require physical retrieval from the archive storage to be presented in paper or as an object. Citizens may access the collection at a dedicated location in each state and territory by appointment.

In a more visible way, National Archives curates events to highlight sections of the collection of public interest. From *Dedicated to the Dedicated, Whitlam, the Arts and Democracy* as an exhibition in Parkes, ACT to online stories from the Archives such as *Rescue in the Antarctic*. These examples of promotion of the collection support governments' engagement with the citizenry.

National Archives also contributes to the public sector through the CAARA, which comprises the heads of the government archives authorities of the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and each of the Australian states and territories.

CAARA is a peak body of government archives and records institutions in Australia and New Zealand. The aims of CAARA are to improve the practice of government archives and records management knowledge sharing and collaboration.

National Archives' Senior Executives meet regularly with the NCIs and engage through the small agencies' forum.

National Archives also provides support to other Commonwealth agencies through facilitation of the Government Agencies Information Network (GAIN) Australia.

GAIN Australia is a national network supporting agency information and records managers in the Australian Government and provides professional development and networking opportunities through online and face-to-face forums and events. It includes information and records management updates from National Archives

and provides mechanisms for information management professionals across government to share their expertise and experiences.

GAIN forums provide an opportunity for information management professionals to network with colleagues from Australian Government agencies and discuss contemporary information and records management challenges and priorities.

While OFTA provides oversight and assistance there is little evidence yet of National Archives seeking to leverage the opportunity that the scale of the parent department can offer.

OFTA also has a limited view of the collaborative possibilities of the NCIs, with a primary approach of leaving the NCIs to work that out amongst themselves. Consideration of the role of the department and OFTA in driving collaboration around workforce, current and future capability, preservation, and citizen engagement would be beneficial to all NCIs and the Government.

National Archives can help shape this operating model within DITRDCA, especially with respect to workforce, collaboration, and investment across the NCIs. Purposeful synergies need to be explored and leveraged. National Archives will also need to 'lean-in' to the policy and ministerial engagement space to ensure the Director-General accountabilities are well understood and respected.

Core domain: Collaboration		
Element: Partnerships and engagement outside the public sector The capability to engage and establish respectful and collaborative partnerships with users of government services and non-government entities to understand their experiences and needs. • Connections with users of government services are respectful, collaborative, and focused on understanding their experiences and needs. • Partnerships and engagement with businesses and the not-for-profit sector are respectful, collaborative, and focused on understanding their experiences and needs.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives has made good progress in establishing partnerships in order to increase access and showcase the value of heritage collections. Some examples of relevant statistics reinforce the value in continuing to build and evolve these collaboration opportunities: • During 2022-23 a total of 148,965 transcribed item entries were loaded to RecordSearch nationally by volunteers. • National Volunteer Program - various projects including transcription, description, and repackaging records. • In 2022-23, 226,189 records were access examined for release, of those 22,591 were in response to applications for access by the public and 203,598 records were examined proactively. • A total of 13,594 visitors were recorded during 2022-23. This includes onsite, offsite, and online via exhibitions, forums and seminars and educational and research programs and official visits hosted by National Archives. • NAA Members Program – 1,176 memberships. • Partnerships/Sponsorships – Community Heritage Grants Program, Ian McLean Scholarship Australian National University (ANU) Partnership, Australian Research Council (ARC) University of Adelaide and ARC Macquarie Uni research support partnerships, National Archives & Australian Historical Association Postgraduate Scholarship. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Program. • Private collection material donations – precious items belonging to Captain Matthew Flinders including letters and books. • Monetary donations - $1m donated to National Archives by long-time supporter and philanthropist Ms Barbara Mason for the Second World War digitisation project 'Putting a face to the name' to help ensure tens of thousands of fragile photographic negatives of Australian service men and women are digitised and made accessible. A total of $56,900 in other donations was recorded for National Archives during 2022-23. National Archives is an active member of both the Australian Society of Archivists and the ICA. The ASA advocates for and supports archives, archivists, and recordkeeping in Australia by providing leadership, creating current, relevant, accessible member services, and promoting the diversity and value of archives and archivists.		

The ICA is the premier, non-government organisation that guides effective records management and archival practice internationally. Archivists from 199 countries and territories belong to the ICA.

The ICA is dedicated to the effective management of records and the preservation, care**,** and use of the world's archival heritage through its representation of records and archive professionals across the globe.

It is positive to see and hear of the strong international and state and territory connections that are in place. Learning from and sharing best practice with other archives jurisdictions provides great opportunity for National Archives to be a smart follower where possible and know where to lead when necessary. This could also extend to collaborating on investment into identifying and understanding future trends as well as potential sharing of expertise through, for example, secondments both internationally and through the relationship with the various state and territory archives institutions, cultural institutions and agencies and the broader GLAM sector.

Issues were raised with the Review team as to the capability and skills of the Advisory Council, and their visibility of correspondence to the Minister on the actions of the Council. As new members are appointed to the Council, these issues will need to be addressed to ensure strong support for the Minister, OFTA and National Archives will need to ensure appropriate liaison and influence is in place to support the continuing success of the Council.

Core domain: Collaboration		
Element: Putting people and business at the centre of policy and services The capability to leverage partnerships with external stakeholders, such as the public, communities, business, the not-for-profit sector**,** and other governments to deliver policy and services. • Works towards a vision for partnership between the public service and people, communities, businesses, the not-for-profit sector, universities, states, territories**,** and others.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives works with partners around the world and collaborates with other archives, professional associations, governments, and the private sector in Australia and internationally. To support this collaboration, National Archives is currently developing a new partnerships strategy. We noted good evidence of successful public access and exhibition initiatives that were often undertaken in partnership with other cultural institutions e.g.**,** National Archives open day marking the 75th anniversary of the Malta-Australia Migration Agreement at the Victorian Office in partnership with the Maltese Community Council of Victoria; National Archives' partnership with the Black Diasporas Melbourne project, which documents the historical experiences of African-Australian people in Melbourne. In addition, successful international collaboration projects with both the Netherlands and France confirm the value and interest in partnering for public interest. National Archives plays an active leadership role in the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA). They manage the branch finances, membership and the PARBICA website. PARBICA represents more than 20 Pacific nations, states**,** and territories, including Australia. Under the Future Business Model, National Archives is looking to improve its understanding of the audiences that use, access**,** and engage with the collection, both public and government. This knowledge will inform the new audience strategy, enabling appropriate design and coordination of services across multiple access channels and platforms, prioritisation of different cohorts, attract new audiences and extend outreach ability based on user needs.		

Core domain: Delivery		
Element: User focus and experience The capability to use the principles of partnership and co-design, and feedback mechanisms to deliver effective and fit for-purpose outcomes and services for people and business. • The experience and needs of users of government services are understood through robust feedback mechanisms and acted upon. • Principles of partnership and co-design with users of government services and their representatives are used to design services that meet their needs.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives supports multiple channels - online and onsite, self-service and mediated - to enable diverse user groups to access services and engage with the collection.

While online self-service is the primary access channel, the value of mediated and onsite services to meet the needs and expectations of diverse audience groups and users is supported, including those with different levels of digital literacy.

Under the Future Business Model, National Archives is looking to improve its understanding of the audiences that use, access**,** and engage with the collection, both public and government. This knowledge is intended to inform the new audience strategy, enabling the design and coordination of services across multiple access channels and platforms, prioritisation of different cohorts, attracting new audiences and extending outreach based on user needs.

National Archives holds many important records documenting the individual and collective histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their contribution to the history of this nation.

Building relationships with First Nations people, organisations, and communities, respecting connections, culture, lands, and history is vital to the management of, and access to records, and to the provision of services to First Nations communities, organisations**,** and individuals.

National Archives is working to ensure that appropriate cultural protocols inform all aspects of their work, including how the collection is managed, making information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples available in respectful and appropriate ways, and being mindful of cultural sensitivities that may be present in records and recognising the diversity of cultures and views within communities.

In early 2021, National Archives released the '*Our Way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols*.' The protocols set a framework for National Archives for the next 5 years in line with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy to build a culturally competent organisation that facilitates trust between National Archives and First Nations people, communities, and organisations.

The Review team notes the strong focus from government in building cultural competency and confidence in First Nations people engagement and collaboration. There is further opportunity for collaboration with First Nations people and stakeholders to develop metadata that is appropriate for the records and communities to which they relate.

National Archives acknowledge the need to build better capability among staff to co-design initiatives noting that critical person skills are primarily located in Northern Territory. Addressing this risk is critical to outcomes and credibility of National Archives as a collaborative and consultative agency within government.

Core domain: Delivery		
Element: Strategic policy The capability to deliver high quality and forward-looking strategic policy that meets strategic objectives and ministerial priorities. • The agency's policy advice has a clear scope and objective, is well-reasoned, forward-looking and takes into consideration the strategic context in the government's agenda. • The agency plans and manages its interventions (including regulation, programs, and services) to achieve its strategic objectives and ministerial priorities.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives released its Australian Government information management policy, *Building Trust in the Public Record* in January 2021, replacing the previous policy 'Digital Continuity 2020'. The policy supports information and data management capability in Australian Government agencies, to meet current and emerging information challenges, and to guide broader Government priorities such as digital transformation and data use and sharing.

The ANAO has recently released its audit on the Management of Information Assets, which examined the effectiveness of National Archives' implementation of the policy and selected entities' management of information assets (records, information, and data).

The audit found that National Archives' arrangements to plan, oversee and manage implementation of the policy were partly effective. National Archives has no performance measure in place to monitor entity compliance with a key, mandatory policy, and legislative requirement for entities to transfer 'retain as national archives' (RNA) information assets as soon as practicable, or within 15 years of creation, to the care of National Archives and there is evidence that this requirement is not being met.

As part of its regulatory obligations, National Archives also issues general records authorities (GRAs) to authorise the disposal of information and records of administrative business activities and responsibilities common to many Australian Government agencies. They set out the requirements for:

- keeping records
- destroying records
- transferring records.

Under DPPF program Measure 3.1, National Archives is working to increase its agency engagement to improve information management processes and policy obligations. This includes improved process of identifying RNA records, and authorising destruction of temporary records in Australian Government agencies; improved reporting and liaison with agencies; and providing supporting processes and tools to administer and implement records authorities by agencies.

National Archives has noted the need for better organisational alignment of enterprise strategies and policies to Strategy 2030 and the Corporate Plan and is undertaking a stocktake to identify misalignment and/or misunderstanding. The Review team is advised that, following the stocktake, work will commence aligning the strategies, and developing a consistent approach to strategy development and implementation practices.

The Review team note that lack of incentives and consequences for agencies to comply with the Archives Act effectively means that the Director-General holds federal accountability without the levers to drive compliance and ensure records protection and integrity. The ANAO has reported on the need for agencies to improve creation, management**,** and preservation of records in accordance with their legislative responsibilities. The most recent Check Up Survey in June 2023 showed mixed maturity, with scores being skewed towards asset governance vs appraisal and preservation.

Through the process of the Review there was little evidence that the Archives Act 2A(b) was a central consideration in how the records of Commonwealth departments and agencies were being preserved or transferred to National Archives. This was premised on the view of National Archives and OFTA that there was no legislative remedy for National Archives to hold agencies to account. The Review team notes that there are no compliance issues covered in the *Archives Regulations 2018* which address this specific issue.

The ANAO identified 2 agencies, one who had not transferred a single record to National Archives since its inception and a central department that had transferred one record across 4 years. National Archives remains of the view that they have no legal remedy to hold these agencies to account for the actions found in the audit.

The Review team note advice draft legislation is proposed to amend the Archives Act, or has potential consequences that effect the Archives Act. It is recommended that National Archives are closely consulted on all such proposed amendments as it is best placed to discuss any implications and remove any potential unintended consequences."

Core domain: Delivery		
Element: Service delivery and improvement The capability to deliver effective and efficient services and improve service delivery by undertaking and acting on evaluation and user feedback. • Effective and efficient services are delivered that focus on the needs of their users.		
Maturity rating		***Emerging***
National Archives provides several services to the public. These include school visits providing curriculum-aligned programs that connect students with pivotal moments in 20th-century Australian history; online learning resources to help students do research with primary sources; research centres, where researchers can access documents, maps, and audio-visual material from the collection; and events and exhibitions. Feedback from these services is used to improve customer experience. National Archives conducts an annual information management survey, titled Check-up. The survey is an online self-assessment tool designed to measure Australian Government agencies' maturity and performance in managing their information assets (records, information**,** and data). Survey questions relate to agencies' information management maturity, and challenges in managing information assets, and providing quantitative data relating to information assets in agencies. National Archives uses the data collected through the Check-up survey to plan future service delivery, including transfer and preservation of records of the Australian Government to National Archives; as an evidence base for practical information management advice to agencies; and to prepare reports to the Australian Government on the state of its information management. The Review team recommends that this information is also used to address potential non-compliance as found in the recent ANAO Audit.		

Core domain: Delivery		
Element: Managing for performance and outcomes The capability to deliver on commitments to government, measure the value provided, and employ a systems thinking approach to delivery. • Commitments to government are delivered and the agency is prepared for future priorities. • A systems thinking approach to delivery is adopted. • Service delivery models are evaluated regularly, and findings acted on.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
In 2021-22, National Archives received $67.7m over 4 years for the National Archives – preserving Australia's cultural heritage budget measure. National Archives established the DPPF program to deliver this budget measure. National Archives established a Project Hub to oversight this body of work. The Project Hub is responsible for coordinating governance, reporting, internal and external communication, and change management for the DPPF Program of work, and for improving project management and building staff capabilities. The Project Hub reports regularly on the progress of this work, including to National Archives' governance committees - PAC, Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), and Executive Board. In April 2023, the government announced further funding of $36.5m for National Archives. This funding comprises $17.4m for capital expenditure to be used over the next 2 years, to move to government certified data centres and the replacement of the external facing components of RecordSearch to improve public access, with some small amounts to improve security; and $19.1m to be used over 4 years to continue proactive digitisation of at-risk and high use records, increase digital storage and moving public facing websites. From 1 August 2023, National Archives has created a new Transformation Office, with responsibility for whole of agency projects and initiatives, including the DPPF program of work, that form part of National Archives' transformation agenda. The intent is that the new branch will ensure change is driven and that the additional funding is appropriately used while delivering required outcomes.		

Core domain: Delivery		
Element: Capability to do the job The capability to use best practice examples worldwide to inform and deliver policy and services. • Drives the capability of the public service to deliver policy and service solutions and embodies best practice world-wide.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

In mid-2020, National Archives established the Digital Archives Innovation and Research (DAIR) section to lead the agency's digital archiving capability through innovation and research activities. DAIR is leading National Archives through a program to assist the agency achieve its vision of being a world leading archive in the digital age. DAIR's role includes:

- maintaining awareness of emerging developments in digital archival practice
- engaging with the local and international digital archiving community
- researching policies and techniques to support long-term preservation of and access to digital material; and
- building digital archiving capability within the organisation.

As a research-focused section, DAIR works collaboratively with operational areas to address business problems to ensure National Archives is continuing to respond to the challenges of digital archiving.

To support this transformation, National Archives has developed the Digital Archives Strategic Research Priorities Framework (the framework) to identify research priorities for the next 3 to 5 years. The framework contains 2 key components:

- the overarching identification and prioritisation of research topics, incorporating the development and management of a DAIR Strategic Research Priorities Plan
- the management of individual research projects and activities.

The Review team notes the statement in the framework:

'It is important that the governance of both the overarching framework and specific research projects and activities is based on an understanding of the operational needs, current and emerging, of National Archives and that any research work is scoped to consider future implementation and/or to inform decision making around techniques and practice.'

It was not clear to the Review team as to the degree of governance oversight that has been applied to ensure alignment of research priorities with business needs. We suggest this is an issue for the Executive Board to review.

Core domain: People		
Element: Strategic workforce planning and development The capability to use strategic workforce planning and development to anticipate and respond to the future needs and priorities of government and users of government services. • Workforce planning has a future focus, supports the delivery of strategic objectives and is responsive to emerging priorities. • The workforce design and structure help the agency achieve and maintain operational responsiveness and flexibility.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives' Workforce Plan 2022-2027 identifies key challenges and opportunities relating to the organisation's demand for skills in the future and the anticipated workforce supply of skills. The plan considers workforce needs against the objectives identified in Strategy 2030 and the Corporate Plan 2021-22 to 2024-25 and takes an organisation-wide approach to strengthening the workforce to ensure goals can be achieved. With an emphasis on building capability, the plan sets out strategies to train and upskill the workforce to enable National Archives to adapt to meet new and emerging challenges. Four key priorities have been identified in the plan through data analysis and consultation with senior managers. These 4 priorities – uplifting recruitment and attraction strategies, strengthening retention, enhancing professional management capabilities, and amplifying digital skills – underpin the themes of the National Archives Strategic Workforce Plan 2021-2025. The plan is not about changing people or positions but is focussed on ensuring the right skills are built, at the right time, to enable National Archives to achieve its objectives. Throughout discussions the key themes of recruitment, retention and remuneration were strongly articulated and fully described. The competition for scarce resources e.g., archivists, preservationists, audio**,** and visual technologists were matched by issues with an ageing workforce, key person risks and an onboarding process hampered by slow security clearances for up to 14 months. The drive to digital conversion has heightened the clash between legacy analogue skills and the new technology skills required for the future. It was described as 'living in compromise' rather than consistent with leading edge thinking and practice. Staff are passionate but we heard that they do not feel comfortable challenging these legacy issues if it means creating conflict with another branch. What will a 'Digital Archivist' look like over the next 5-10 years? This question needs to be addressed now to ensure National Archives is training the right people to be ahead of the recruitment curve when skill shortages exist because they are new roles with no one trained, not old roles that can be recruited into. Having a national footprint provides flexibility but also opens National Archives to more competition for talent as state archival agencies are prepared to aggressively recruit. Seventy one percent of staff are currently located in ACT. There are opportunities to consider the viability of roles being less geographically dependent e.g., corporate. This could open the agency to a broader field of candidates who can undertake		

roles without being based in Canberra. The state and territory footprint should be seen as providing the opportunity for access to a national pool of talent.

While the size and focus of National Archives means that it is likely to be a destination agency for professional archivists, the breadth of management and leadership experience offered can be a great steppingstone to bigger roles. Corporate memory is strongly invested in an ageing workforce leading to key person risks (in core archival roles and corporate) and a conservative culture.

Leadership development targeted at strategic thinking, change management and culture building is needed alongside professional technical development to ensure that staff have the skills sets to collaborate and engage effectively within government and with the citizenry.

There is ministerial expectation as to greater focus on records relating to First Nations people**,** but we note the limited capability across the organisation, with most based in the Northern Territory.

Staff advised that they are feeling deskilled in terms of ministerial and parliamentary support – they have no access to the PDMS, do not have access in real time to changes made to ministerial submissions or briefs, and staffs' ability to write briefs and prepare for Senate Estimates is limited.

Core domain: People

Element: Staff performance and capability

The capability to develop staff in a way that is aligned to the future needs of the APS, and to use performance management to deliver on strategic priorities and encourage high performance.

- Performance of individuals and teams delivers on strategic priorities and high performance is encouraged in a fair and transparent manner.
- Poor or inadequate staff performance and inappropriate behaviours are remedied promptly and effectively.
- Staff development opportunities are aligned to APS capability requirements and benefit the APS and the staff member.

Maturity rating		***Developing***

Effective performance management is fundamental to the achievement of a productive performance culture within National Archives. Individual performance is linked to organisational and business outcomes. The expectations, development needs and support provided for staff are identified through constructive and regular two-way discussions between managers and staff and formalised within individual's performance agreements.

In National Archives, performance management is administered in accordance with the Performance Management Policy. The policy is divided into 2 parts.

Part 1 – outlines the formal Performance Management Scheme in which all staff in National Archives are subject to, including the SES. The scheme operates on an annual cycle commencing on 1 July each year.

Part 2 – outlines the Managing Unsatisfactory Performance process provided under the National Archives of Australia Enterprise Agreement 2017-20. This process may be instigated where performance is identified as unsatisfactory or a rating of one through the Performance Management Scheme is received.

Despite evidence of good performance management policies, we heard through interviews that the practice does not match the policy. It appears that some branches do not have a strong culture of performance management. There is a sense of a reluctance to tackle long-standing performance issues, an aversion to conflict and tolerance of unsatisfactory performance. Given the pressures on workforce recruitment and retention, an enhanced and professional focus on performance management will be necessary. This should be part of the investment in leadership and capability building built into the professional development planning.

Core domain: People		
Element: Staff engagement and experience Sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace are prioritised and diverse experiences are valued and elevated. • Approach to staff safety encompasses wellbeing, physical safety**,** and mental health; and encourages staff to raise issues in the workplace.		
Maturity rating		***Embedded***

National Archives values and supports diversity and inclusion and works to foster a culture of belonging and empowerment in the workplace. National Archives understands that the workforce is strengthened by the diversity of the people.

The Diversity Plan 2022-2025 sets out the objectives of National Archives in improving the diversity of the workforce and developing capacity to value and embrace our diversity to inform what we do. This plan builds on the foundations established by the Workplace Diversity Program 2017–20 for an inclusive workplace. Implementation of this plan renews the focus on increasing the representation of diverse staff through recruitment, development**,** and retention initiatives.

National Archives' vision is for a workforce that recognises, values and fosters diversity, including making best use of the skills and attributes of our people, and aims to deliver organisational objectives. They aim to create an environment where people are supported, are accepting of their colleagues, and feel safe without fear or bias.

The 2022 APS Census results indicate that 68% of staff agree that National Archives supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace, and 75% indicate they are proud to work in the agency. Despite these positive results, the overall turnover rate for staff to the end of May 2023 is 17%.

National Archives is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for all staff. The Archives Health and Wellbeing Program is designed to encourage and support a healthier workplace and ongoing healthy lifestyle choices, complementing existing safe working practices that are conducted as required under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011.*

The program has been in place since September 2016. This program was recognised and accredited by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner, in October 2016 as an ACT based organisation committed to the health and wellbeing journey. In 2020, Archives reached Platinum Status Embed with ACT Healthier Work.

The 2023 APS Census results indicate that 60% of staff are satisfied with the policies/practices in place to help them manage their health and wellbeing. This is a reduction from 65% in 2022 and should be managed closely to ensure staff are both aware of the policies and have feedback into the policies.

The Review team were impressed by the strong sense of commitment to the purpose and integrity of National Archives among staff that we met with. Equally in our various visits we were impressed by the work health and safety attitudes of staff and the presentation of premises where risk was well controlled (e.g., storage facilities). There was a strong operational understanding of asset performance and maintenance to maintain the integrity of the collection and mitigate risk e.g., air-conditioning, records shelving approach,

pest control and facility security were evident and well understood. We observed a very strong commitment to protect the collections.

There is a genuine passion and vocational approach to the career that staff have chosen and a dedication to the craft and mission of the organisation. Surveys indicate a strong culture linked to the purpose of the organisation and a deep understanding of core business and the legislative settings.

There is less evidence of similar understanding or commitment to the wider public service. In addition, newly recruited future staff are less likely to have the same commitment to the National Archives purpose. Senior leadership must be cognisant of the risk of this shift and guard against any weakening or dilution of dedication to purpose.

Core domain: People		
Element: Model employer The capability to engage with staff to foster safety and inclusivity and use people-based polices to deliver a quality employee experience and a dynamic workplace. • The agency is aware of and seeking to implement best practice people-based policy across all areas, including diversity, talent management, flexibility, and pay and conditions.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

National Archives strives to be a model employer and has long supported flexible working arrangements, recognising that providing flexible working options is integral to developing opportunities for increased staff satisfaction, retention, engagement, and sustained organisational knowledge.

National Archives recently introduced a pilot to assess the effectiveness of hybrid working arrangements. The pilot provides an opportunity to assess the quality of flexible working outcomes based on both individual outcomes and organisational requirements.

The 2022 APS Census results indicate that 74% of staff are overall, satisfied with their job, and 75% are proud to work in the agency.

Throughout discussions, the Review team was advised by most ADGs and the Executive Level cohort that the salary levels of National Archives were well below other agencies and were an inhibitor to recruiting staff. The APSC published pay scales of over 100 government agencies show the following in relation to National Archives pay levels:

APS5 maximum rate is higher than 30 other departments and agencies, including Home Affairs, the National Library, the parent department of DITRDCA, the Australian War Memorial, National Museum of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archives as an example.

APS5 minimum rate shows similar results.

APS6 minimum rate is higher than DITRDCA, Home Affairs, Defence, Services Australia and most Collecting Institutions.

APS6 maximum rate is higher than 26 other agencies, but lower than the main departments and higher than 4 Collecting Institutions.

Executive Level 1 minimum is higher than Home Affairs, Services Australia**,** and all NCIs.

Executive Level 1 maximum is higher than most NCIs but lower than DITRDCA by approximately $1000.

Executive Level 2 minimum is higher than Services Australia, Defence and Home Affairs.

Executive Level 2 maximum is lower than Services Australia, Home Affairs and Defence and higher than 4 NCIs.

We acknowledge the concerns raised by management about challenges in recruitment. However, the widely held belief that pay scales are not competitive is not backed by the data. There are other agencies that pay more; however, the main issue is not at the entrance level for each classification. National Archives'

bandwidth at most classifications is narrower than other departments, which is a negotiated position in enterprise agreements. For similar work, agencies are paid less than National Archives at almost every level.

If, on the face of it, pay scales are appropriate, the agency should undertake a more focused piece on analysis to try and get to the root causes(s) of recruitment challenges. The organisation is a destination for professional archivists but appears less attractive to other corporate and professional roles. There may be a range of factors – location, lack of flexible work options given some roles must be onsite, constraints with onboarding, lack of profile, small scale**,** and security clearance requirements. In some cases, in state- and-territory-based sites, the location of sites is difficult for staff due to lack of public transport lines to the site. National Archives may need to reset its strategy for acquiring, managing, and deploying talent for today's agile, digital, analytical, technologically driven strategic environment.

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Asset (physical and ICT) management The capability to manage assets (physical and ICT) across their lifecycle to support the delivery of strategic objectives and be adaptive to change. • Strategic planning for and acquisition of assets (physical and ICT) supports delivery of objectives and is adaptive to change. • Asset and technology investment proposals are evidence-based and engage appropriately with risk, and the delivery and management of assets is effective.		
Maturity rating	✓	***Embedded (Physical)***
Maturity rating	✓	***Developing (ICT)***

During 2021-22, National Archives undertook a detailed review of the then Asset Management Policy. The purpose of the review was to understand the process for management of assets, in particular the digitisation of assets and the subsequent accounting treatment of these assets.

As an outcome of the review, National Archives developed a new Asset Management and Accounting Policy, which came into effect from August 2022. The purpose of the new policy is to provide direction to staff in relation to the management of assets under the control of National Archives. Under the new policy, National Archives adopts a lifecycle approach to the management of its assets, which are organised around the phases of an asset lifecycle.

Non-financial assets are defined as service potential or future economic benefits controlled by an entity as a result of past transactions or other past events. Non-financial assets are categorised as current (able to be realised within 12 months) or non-current (unlikely to be realised within 12 months) and encompass items such as property plant and equipment. National Archives has non-financial assets in the following categories - buildings (right of use), property (plant and equipment), heritage and cultural and software.

The Review team considered that the management of physical assets was embedded. In terms of ICT assets there were indications that ICT had over invested in security infrastructure such that the ICT environment was not fit for purpose for National Archives. This investment appears to be at the expense of business need. We recommend a business led, customer centric ICT model be explored to ensure that business needs are a central consideration in the development of ICT architecture and infrastructure.

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Information and data management The capability to use and manage information and data across all business areas of an agency and ensure sharing across government and beyond. • High quality information and data are planned, acquired**,** and used as strategic assets. • Information and data are shared across and beyond government.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives is aiming to be a forward looking, innovative and exemplar Australian Government agency employing best practice approaches for the management of information and data assets. This includes the full implementation of the *Building Trust in the Public Record policy* and the *Information Management Standard for Australian Government.* Governance oversight of information and data management is provided by the Information and Data Governance Committee (IDGC). The IDGC is as an operational committee of the Executive Board that provides assurance and direction for policies and standards for information and data governance. The IDGC is responsible for the governance of all National Archives' information and data assets, and coordinates agency information and data management frameworks, strategies**,** and policies. The IDGC is also oversighting implementation of a Digital Asset Register to strengthen National Archives' data governance. The Review team recommends oversight of this governance mechanism by the ARC. We note the composition of the IDGC and consider that the newly appointed ADG Chief Transformation Officer would be a logical addition to the governance group. Additionally, the ADG Collections Management would be an important addition. Data Strategy 2023-2025 maps a path for National Archives to achieve its commitment to maximising data's value, ensuring trusted and protected data, enabling data's use and growing data capabilities within National Archives. The strategy focuses on 4 strategic objectives that embed data as a fundamental business enabler - maximising the value of data, data is trusted and protected, enabling data use, and building data capability.		

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Cyber security The capability to implement robust cyber security policies and practices based on global and domestic standards. • Policies and practices on cyber security are widely consulted, implemented and updated as required.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***

With an ever-changing threat landscape in the realm of cyber security there is an increasing risk and likelihood that Australian Government agencies will be subject to threat actors seeking to compromise their ICT systems. This has placed an onus on agencies to properly protect their systems by implementing the Essential Eight cyber security controls provided by the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC).

A key component of Measure 4.1 of the DPPF program of work is the Essential Eight uplift project, which aims to improve National Archives' cyber security posture and maturity with the implementation of the Essential Eight mitigation strategies. The Essential Eight uplift project has implemented all Essential Eight strategies to Maturity Level 2 across National Archives' ICT environment. National Archives is continuing work on its Essential Eight maturity, with an aim to meet some of the Maturity Level 3 requirements by June 2025.

Whilst cyber security is ramping up to national security levels, and we are advised that most new staff are being asked to undertake NV1 clearances, National Archives is rated as an OFFICIAL: Sensitive agency. There is limited access to PROTECTED emails and often those who can receive them have to arrange for the intended recipient to read them over their shoulder. This causes issues with the parent department during ministerial and budget discussions. A decision to move to PROTECTED or to improve current work processes is required to settle the disconnect between asking for NV1 to access systems when the system is not rated to PROTECTED. NV1, NV2 and Positive Vetting are necessary for some secure archive access but not for general staff.

This disconnect is causing considerable tension amongst staff and the need has not been appropriately articulated or demonstrated to the Review team. There is an urgent need for a decision to be made on the security rating of the agency i.e., OFFICIAL: Sensitive or higher; and a full business case should be undertaken to consider the reason, the business need, the cost and the ramifications on current work, workforce, physical security, and broader security implications.

Many comments were received about the emphasis on cyber security. While the focus is understood, there is a strong view from SES, the Executive Level cohort and stakeholders that it has dominated the digital landscape at the expense of the operating environment and has restricted access to COTS tools that would enhance productivity. Many comments were made that 'everything is blacklisted until you apply for it to be available and then you wait for a response of yes or no'.

Staff expressed concern about Data & Digital making unilateral decisions with little or no communication with the business. While a constructive tension is desirable, there is a strong view from business owners that the decision-making environment is opaque and not enabling. There were questions as to the lack of alignment between Data & Digital and the business units and a 'one size fits all' model to cyber security that is not obviously backed on a risk appetite that best differentiates between public facing and secure archives and

corporate systems and tools. With all applications sitting on a single network and platform, a conservative highly protective approach has been applied which in some areas appears to be higher focus than national security agencies.

Staff also talked about the lack of transparency in Data & Digital regarding priorities, projects being rolled out and development timelines. The issue of the laptop trial and slow rollout was mentioned often and seen as another blocker to being able to do the job. Also, the planned cancellation of Microsoft Teams' licenses without consultation and the rollout of M365 which has led to telephony failures.

The move of Data & Digital in their new strategy to an 'integrator' does not appear aligned with the business needs of the rest of the organisation and we did not hear commitment from the Executive Board to this significant shift.

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Financial management The capability to use financial planning to support the delivery of strategic objectives and allocate financial resources to maximise deliverables and ensure transparency and accountability. • Financial (administered and departmental) planning supports delivery of strategic objectives. • Financial (administered and departmental) resources are allocated to maximise the quality and efficiency of deliverables; and their use is transparent and accountable.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives' strategic objectives are set in their PBS Outcome – *To promote the creation, management, and preservation of authentic, reliable, and usable Commonwealth records and to facilitate Australians' access to archival resources of the Commonwealth.* Strategic directions are established by the Accountable Authority in consultation with stakeholders (internal and external) with available resources allocated to deliver the identified outcomes. Financial resources are allocated annually and reviewed regularly (monthly) by the Executive Board with adjustments made to meet changing priorities and needs. ARC provides independent financial oversight and controls management. The ARC meets quarterly to monitor National Archives' financial outcomes and risk strategy. Financial outcomes are published externally in the annual report in accordance with Resource Management Guide 135 Annual Reports for non-corporate Commonwealth Entities and the applicable accounting standards. Both the ARC and Executive Board has input into the establishment of an internal audit program which reviews areas of interest and provides findings and recommendations for improvement/adoption of better practice. We did note a history and culture of year-end underspends in the staff area despite much concern about lack of resources. Good governance requires agreed setting of budgets accompanied by an executive culture that is equipped with good information and has a culture and established processes of budget review, evaluation**,** and adjustments to meet business needs to maximise resources. We would expect this to be a standing focus for the Executive Board on at least a quarterly basis. This would also mitigate the practice of late budget bids or out of planning cycle relitigation of budget decisions. This was a further indication of a siloed leadership team who have a singular focus and a lack of solidarity regarding Executive Board decisions. The Review team notes that National Archives is currently working with ANAO on financial statements clearance and resolving issues. Further attention should be paid to risk controls and regular assessment of the budget allocation process to ensure it is fit for purpose on an ongoing basis.		

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Procurement, contract**,** and project/program management The capability to govern and manage procurement, contract**,** and project/program activities in an efficient, effective, ethical and economical manner. • Procurement, contract**,** and project/program activities are governed and managed efficiently, effectively, ethically and economically.		
Maturity rating		***Developing***
National Archives has been reviewing its traditional procurement approaches and practices and is working to: • Streamline the acquisition of goods and Services. • Simplify the administration surrounding the purchasing process while maintaining accountability. • Empowering business areas to procure goods and services while being supported by a central Procurement Advisory Unit. • Encouraging strategic procurement activities using panel arrangements and coordinated procurements with other commonwealth entities. • Entrench integrity, independence, transparency, and accountability into procurement activity. National Archives' Procurement Advisory Unit provides policy advice, and support to procurement activities undertaken by the agency. During 2022, a new version of the Financial Management Information System saw the implementation of 2 new modules to support the procurement process with sourcing (approaching the market) and contracting models. The new process embeds workflow processes, delegations and improves reporting. Contracts and procurement information are stored centrally in the financial system, and available to all staff who need access to this information, which includes suppliers, dates of arrangements, value of contracts, end dates, contracts about to expire and renewal prompts being automated. Work has commenced on refreshing manuals and guides to reflect changes to Government Policy and increase internal accountability on procurements using independent assessors for complex procurements, with a focus on regular market testing. The Procurement Advisory Unit reviews the ethics of potential suppliers. For example: use of ethically sourced consumables, compliance and regard to modern slavery laws, Buy Australia**,** and the Indigenous Procurement Policy. National Archives' probity officer is involved in purchasing decisions of significance. National Archives has been procuring goods and services for some time without any significant incidents. The Review team notes that ICT procurement advice is undertaken within the Data & Digital branch and encourages all branches to use the Corporate Services branch procurement advisor to ensure consistency across National Archives.		

Core domain: Resourcing and Risk		
Element: Risk management The capability to use risk management and internal audit functions to support accountability, innovation and organisational improvement. • Risk management identifies, mitigates, manages**,** and reports risks, and enables innovation. • Internal audit functions are independently governed and contribute to organisational improvement.		
Maturity rating		***Emerging***

National Archives' ARC provides independent advice and assurance to the Accountable Authority (Director-General) on the agency's risk, accountability and control framework including reviewing the appropriateness of financial and performance reporting as well as the systems of risk oversight and management, and internal control. On occasion, the ARC Chair also meets informally with the Director-General.

In early 2021, National Archives introduced its revised Risk Management Framework and Policy. Under the framework and policy, National Archives takes all reasonable measures to engage with and manage risks appropriately in a way that assures the integrity of the activities of the agency while maximising benefits for the Australian people.

National Archives recognises it is not possible, or necessarily desirable, to eliminate all risks inherent in its work. Accepting some degree of risk in business practices promotes efficiency and innovation. National Archives is willing to accept higher levels of risk when the potential benefits outweigh the negative consequences of risks. In doing so, it must be able to demonstrate it has made informed, evidence and risk-based decisions.

National Archives has engaged KPMG to undertake its internal audit functions. ARC reviews the proposed internal audit coverage, ensuring that the coverage takes account of National Archives' primary risks before approval is given by the Accountable Authority.

ARC also reviews all internal audit reports, providing advice to the Accountable Authority on major issues identified in those reports, and recommending action on significant matters raised – including identification and dissemination of information on good practice.

ARC advised they would like a higher level of oversight on risk management related to ICT procurement, and implementation of ICT projects. Concerns were raised by all groups regarding National Archives' risk management approach in ICT in that it does not have a deliberate focus on establishing the risk appetite with differentiation according to class of risk. It seems to be a 'one size fits all' low to very low risk appetite and tolerance.

Additionally, as with all audit and risk committee meetings across the Commonwealth, it is expected that all those staff who are asked to present at these meetings, do so in person, particularly when they are Canberra based. This provides greater opportunity for ARC, and PAC, members to fully engage with the accountable officer for the length of time necessary to ensure they can report adequately to the Accountable Authority regarding risk that he may carry in various domains of the agency.

The ARC must be seen by the Executive as a 'critical friend' and an opportunity for utilising the skills and experience of the committee rather than as a compliance function and exercise.

The agency's response

I welcome the report of National Archives' self-initiated Capability Review and the opportunity for the agency to participate as part of the wider Australian Public Service (APS) Capability Review program. National Archives is focused on a process of necessary change to meet the future needs of government and the expectations of the Australian public and is well placed to build on the findings from the review.

National Archives' Strategy 2030 sets out a vision for a transformed and trusted National Archives, that Australia's cultural identity and democracy are strengthened by connecting people with the evidence of Australian Government activities and decisions. To help meet our vision, National Archives has recently implemented a number of initiatives, including development of a 'Future Business Model', reinvigoration of 'Our Values' and creation of a new Transformation Office.

The Future Business Model was launched during May 2023 and provides a clear and engaging visualisation of the National Archives in 2030, aligned with Strategy 2030, Our Values, and other key strategic documents (included as Appendix F to this report). The Future Business Model project followed a human-centred design process, collaborating with over 200 staff over a series of interviews and workshops to understand the challenges staff were facing and to collaboratively design the future. Under the Future Business Model, National Archives' operating model is shifting to a digital-first and audience-centred approach, with national offices supported by local expertise.

To complement our Future Business Model, the reinvigoration of Our Values provides is a set of cultural principles and behaviours that support and underpin our vision. Importantly, these principles reflect what employees believe our culture needs to be. The reinvigorated Our Values was launched on 5 July 2023 and is the start of a cultural change journey to take us into 2024 and beyond.

In August 2023, we created a new Transformation Office within National Archives to oversee the development and execution of National Archives' transformation program and to ensure the agency can achieve its vision and objectives through effective reform. The Transformation Office has responsibility for progressing the agency's digital transformation agenda, enhancing the agency's project management capability and providing rigour around the projects funded through the recent budget announcements.

I am pleased to hear the positive attitude reflected in the report towards a supportive and inclusive culture and commitment to the work of the agency through a strong understanding of how roles support the delivery of outcomes and pride in the work we do to protect and make the collection accessible. Building on the reform work the agency is implementing, we acknowledge there is need for further reflections in the areas of enhanced digital and technology platforms, change and communication management, workforce capability to meet the demands of the collection and accessibility, legislation and compliance amendments to support information management practices.

National Archives looks forward to working with the government, other cultural and collecting institutions and the Australian community as we implement actions to address the findings and recommendations highlighted in the capability review. These actions will enable National Archives to deliver on our vision and purpose.

I would like to thank Brendan Boyle and Cheryl-anne Moy for their engagement and insights into the capabilities of National Archives. I would also like to thank National Archives staff, Stephen Avery and Hayley Sciberras, for providing administrative support for the review.

Simon Froude
Director-General
National Archives of Australia

Appendix A: Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Description
ACLEI	Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity
ACSC	Australian Cyber Security Centre
ADG	Assistant Director-General
Advisory Council	National Archives of Australia Advisory Council stated in the Archives Act
AGSVA	Australian Government Security Vetting Agency
AMP	Asset Management Policy
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANU	Australian National University
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ARC	Audit & Risk Committee
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASL	Average Staffing Level (across a financial year)
BAU	Business As Usual
CAARA	Council of Australasian Archives and Records
Census	APS Employee Census
CI	Collecting Institution (e.g., Library, Museum, Archive)
Collection	The full collection of the National Archives of Australia
COO	Chief Operating Officer
COTS	Commercial off the Shelf Tools (ICT focus)
COVID	Coronavirus Disease 2019
D&D	Data and Digital
DAIR	Digital Archive Innovation and Research
DG	Director-General
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development Communication and the Arts
DPPF	Defend the Past, Protect the Future
EE8	Essential Eight (cyber security)
EL	Executive Level
FAS	First Assistant Secretary (SES Band 2)
FTE	Full Time Equivalent staffing numbers

GAIN	Government Agencies Information Network
GLAM	Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum sector
GRA	General Records Authority
ICA	International Council on Archives
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDGC	Information & Data Governance Committee
M365	Microsoft 365
NAA	National Archives Australia
NV	Negative Vetting (Level 1 or 2)
OFTA	Office for the Arts
PAC	Project Assurance Committee
PARBICA	Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statement
PDMS	Parliamentary Document Management System
PGPA Act	Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act
PS Act	Public Service Act
RNA	Retain as National Archives
SES	Senior Executive Service
The Tune Review	Functional Efficiency Review by Mr David Tune AO PSM
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Appendix B: Capability Review framework – domains and elements

Core domain	Element	Description of the element
Leadership and Culture	Purpose, vision and strategy	The capability to develop an appropriate purpose, vision and strategy based upon government priorities and legislative functions and successfully communicate these to staff, stakeholders and users.
	Values, culture and behaviour	The capability to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation and measure the benefit of these activities to policy, programs and service delivery.
	Leadership and governance	The capability to deliver effective leadership, including good decision-making, to identify and develop leaders, and establish organisational structures that are efficient and effective.
	Review and evaluation	The capability to use review and evaluation activities to maintain performance and drive improvement.
	Embodies integrity	The capability to promote and embed integrity and APS values across all business areas of an agency in a way that informs and influences business practices across the agency.
Collaboration	Engagement with ministers	The capability to maintain open, trusted and respectful relationships with minister/s and provide impartial and evidence-based advice to them.
	Contribution to the public sector (federal, state/territory, local and international)	The capability to make productive contributions to the public sector, both domestically and internationally, and establish enduring and collaborative relationships with other public sector agencies to support government priorities.
	Partnerships and engagement outside the public sector	The capability to engage and establish respectful and collaborative partnerships with users of government services and non-government entities to understand their experiences and needs.
	Putting people and business at the centre of policy and services	The capability to leverage partnerships with external stakeholders, such as the public, communities, business, the not-for-profit sector and other governments to deliver policy and services.
Delivery	User focus and experience	The capability to use the principles of partnership and co-design, and feedback mechanisms to deliver effective and fit-for-purpose outcomes and services for people and business.

Core domain	Element	Description of the element
	Strategic policy	The capability to deliver high quality and forward-looking strategic policy that meets strategic objectives and ministerial priorities.
	Service delivery and improvement	The capability to deliver effective and efficient services and improve service delivery by undertaking and acting on evaluation and user feedback.
	Managing for performance and outcomes	The capability to deliver on commitments to government, measure the value provided, and employ a systems thinking approach to delivery.
	Capability to do the job	The capability to use best practice examples worldwide to inform and deliver policy and services.
People	Strategic workforce planning and development	The capability to use strategic workforce planning and development to anticipate and respond to the future needs and priorities of government and users of government services.
	Staff performance and capability	The capability to develop staff in a way that is aligned to the future needs of the APS, and to use performance management to deliver on strategic priorities and encourage high performance.
	Staff engagement and experience	The capability to develop and maintain an inclusive working environment that gives staff a sense that they belong and are valued.
	Model employer	The capability to use best practice people-based polices to deliver a quality employee experience and a dynamic workplace.
Resourcing and Risk	Asset (physical and ICT) management	The capability to manage assets (physical and ICT) across their lifecycle to support the delivery of strategic objectives and be adaptive to change.
	Information and data management	The capability to use and manage information and data across all business areas of an agency and ensure sharing across government and beyond.
	Cyber security	The capability to implement robust cyber security policies and practices based on global and domestic standards.
	Financial management	The capability to use financial planning to support the delivery of strategic objectives and allocate financial resources to maximise deliverables and ensure transparency and accountability.

Core domain	Element	Description of the element
	Procurement, contract and project/program management	The capability to govern and manage procurement, contract and project/program activities in an efficient, effective, ethical and economical manner.
	Risk management	The capability to use risk management and internal audit functions to support accountability, innovation, and organisational improvement.

Appendix C: Terms of Reference

Capability Review Program

Self-initiated Capability Review of National Archives of Australia

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Capability Review Program (the Program) is intended to improve the delivery of outcomes to Australians by enabling the continuous improvement of Australian Public Service (APS) agencies. Agency capability reviews are intended to embed a culture of continuous improvement and to ensure that the APS is building and maintaining the right capabilities to respond to challenges now and into the future. These reviews assess an agency's current and desired capability, identify opportunities for improvement, and lead to development of an action plan. The assessment of capability at the agency level also provides a robust evidence base to identify opportunities for service-wide reform.

The Program can support self-initiated capability reviews by agencies seeking to engage in capability improvement. Conducting a self-initiated capability review does not preclude an agency from being externally reviewed as part of the Program.

These Terms of Reference set out governance, roles and responsibilities, scope and operating details for the self-initiated capability review of National Archives of Australia (National Archives).

Self-initiated capability review core terms

This self-initiated capability review meets the same standards of independence and accountability as external capability reviews conducted under the Program:

- Independent Reviewer(s) are selected in line with the Guiding Principles for Engaging an Independent Reviewer following consultation with the APS Commissioner
- The Senior Review Team and Review Team will apply the Capability Review framework (the Framework) and maturity rating scale
- The Capability Review report (the Report) and action plan will be published on the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) website.

Senior Review Team

To ensure transparency, independence and accountability, the self-initiated capability review will be led by a Senior Review Team, comprised of:

- Independent Reviewer 1: Cheryl-anne Moy
- Independent Reviewer 2: Brendan Boyle.

Review Team

The Senior Review Team will be supported by staff from National Archives to apply the methodology, undertake the analysis, and prepare review deliverables.

- Review Team Lead: Stephen Avery, Director, Organisational Capability, National Archives
- Capability Review Sponsor: Ruth Fenwick, Chief Operating Officer, National Archives.

Agency resourcing

The cost of the capability review and all associated staffing costs will be borne by National Archives.

Program Team support

The APSC will make available the key program artefacts for undertaking a capability review.

The Capability Reviews Team will be available to respond to requests for advice from the Review Team on the application of the Program methodology, the Framework and maturity rating scale. They can be contacted via capabilityreviews@apsc.gov.au.

Governance for this review

The Senior Review Team and Review Team will meet on a regular basis to synthesise research and planning during the discovery and assessment (iteration of findings) phases of the self-initiated capability review.

The Senior Review Team will meet on a regular basis with the Director-General and Capability Review Sponsor to provide status updates during the discovery, assessment (iteration of findings) and report development phases of the self-initiated capability review.

Scope

The self-initiated capability review will assess the maturity of National Archives against the Framework. **Appendix A** confirms the core domains and elements that will be agreed as in scope for the purposes of this capability review.

Duration

Based on the agreed scope, the duration of the capability review is expected to be:

- Start date: 5 June 2023
- Anticipated completion date: 25 August 2023.

Deliverables

Following completion of the self-initiated capability review, the Senior Review Team will deliver the Report to the Director-General for endorsement 11 August 2023.

The Director-General will provide the Senior Review Team with a response to the Report within 10 business days, to be incorporated into the Report.

National Archives will prepare an action plan, responding to the self-initiated capability review, as soon as practical following the Director-General's endorsement of the Report.

National Archives will share the lessons learned from the self-initiated capability review with the APSC.

Transparency

A copy of the signed Terms of Reference will be provided to capabilityreviews@apsc.gov.au within 20 business days of signing for information.

National Archives will provide the Report and action plan to capabilityreviews@apsc.gov.au to be published on the APSC's website within 20 business days of the date for completion of the action listed in the Deliverables.

Reporting

National Archives will report progress against their action plan in their annual report.

Authorisation

[SIGNATURE]	2 June 2023 **[DATE]**
Simon Froude **Director-General**	

Appendix A – Scope of the self-initiated capability review

Core domain	Element	Description of the element	In scope
Leadership and Culture	Purpose, vision and strategy	The capability to develop an appropriate purpose, vision and strategy based upon government priorities and legislative functions and successfully communicate these to staff, stakeholders and users.	
	Values, culture and behaviour	The capability to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation and measure the benefit of these activities to policy, programs and service delivery.	
	Leadership and governance	The capability to deliver effective leadership, including good decision-making, to identify and develop leaders, and establish organisational structures that are efficient and effective.	
	Review and evaluation	The capability to use review and evaluation activities to maintain performance and drive improvement.	
	Embodies integrity	The capability to promote and embed integrity and APS values across all business areas of an agency in a way that informs and influences business practices across the agency.	
Collaboration	Engagement with ministers	The capability to maintain open, trusted and respectful relationships with minister/s and provide impartial and evidence-based advice to them.	
	Contribution to the public sector (federal, state/territory, local and international)	The capability to make productive contributions to the public sector, both domestically and internationally, and establish enduring and collaborative relationships with other public sector agencies to support government priorities.	
	Partnerships and engagement outside the public sector	The capability to engage and establish respectful and collaborative partnerships with users of government services and non-government entities to understand their experiences and needs.	

Core domain	Element	Description of the element	In scope
	Putting people and business at the centre of policy and services	The capability to leverage partnerships with external stakeholders, such as the public, communities, business, the not-for-profit sector and other governments to deliver policy and services.	
Delivery	User focus and experience	The capability to use the principles of partnership and co-design, and feedback mechanisms to deliver effective and fit-for-purpose outcomes and services for people and business.	
	Strategic policy	The capability to deliver high quality and forward-looking strategic policy that meets strategic objectives and ministerial priorities.	
	Service delivery and improvement	The capability to deliver effective and efficient services and improve service delivery by undertaking and acting on evaluation and user feedback.	
	Managing for performance and outcomes	The capability to deliver on commitments to government, regulatory obligations, measure the value provided, and employ a systems-thinking approach to delivery.	
	Capability to do the job	The capability to use best practice examples worldwide to inform and deliver policy and services.	
People	Strategic workforce planning and development	The capability to use strategic workforce planning and development to anticipate and respond to the future needs and priorities of government and users of government services.	
	Staff performance and capability	The capability to develop staff in a way that is aligned to the future needs of the APS, and to use performance management to deliver on strategic priorities and encourage high performance.	
	Staff engagement and experience	The capability to develop and maintain an inclusive working environment that gives staff a sense that they belong and are valued.	

Core domain	Element	Description of the element	In scope
	Model employer	The capability to use best practice people-based polices to deliver a quality employee experience and a dynamic workplace.	
Resourcing and Risk	Asset (physical and ICT) management	The capability to manage assets (physical and ICT) across their lifecycle to support the delivery of strategic objectives and be adaptive to change.	
	Information and data management	The capability to use and manage information and data across all business areas of an agency and ensure sharing across government and beyond.	
	Cyber security	The capability to implement robust cyber security policies and practices based on global and domestic standards.	
	Financial management	The capability to use financial planning to support the delivery of strategic objectives and allocate financial resources to maximise deliverables and ensure transparency and accountability.	
	Procurement, contract and project/program management	The capability to govern and manage procurement, contract and project/program activities in an efficient, effective, ethical and economical manner.	
	Risk management	The capability to use risk management and internal audit functions to support accountability, innovation and organisational improvement.	

Appendix D: Current strategies of National Archives

Published Online

- Strategy 2030: a transformed and trusted National Archives
- National Archives of Australia Corporate Plan 2022-23 to 2025-26
- National Archives Data Strategy 2023-25
- National Archives Description Strategy 2021-24

Not Published

- National Archives Workforce Plan 2022-27
- National Archives Data and Digital Strategy 2022-25
- National Archives Storage Strategy 2021-25
- National Archives Transfer Strategy 2020-24
- National Archives Reference Service Strategy 2021-24
- National Archives Property Portfolio Strategy 2030

Appendix E: List of material provided to the Senior Review Team

National Archives Strategy 2030
National Archives Future Business Model
Archives Act 1983
National Archives Organisational Structure
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Organisational Structure
National Archives Portfolio Budget Statements 2023-23
National Archives Corporate Plan 2022-23
National Archives Committee Agendas
National Archives Workforce Plan 2022-27
National Archives Leadership Development Framework
National Archives APS Census Results 2022
National Archives APS Census Results 2023
National Archives Agency-wide Action Plan
National Archives of Australia Enterprise Agreement
National Archives Corporate Values
National Archives Building Trust in the Public Record
Australian National Audit Office Report – Management of Information Assets
National Archives Check-up Strategy 2022
National Archives Data Strategy 2023-25
National Archives Description Strategy 2021-24
National Archives Storage Strategy 2021-25
National Archives Transfer Strategy 2020-24

National Archives Reference Service Strategy 2021-24
National Archives Risk Management Framework and Policy
National Archives Risk Management Guide
National Archives self-assessment
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts self-assessment
Operational View
Digital Asset Register
National Archives Functional Model
National Archives Data and Digital Strategy 2022-25
Corporate Network Security Risk Management Plan
Critical Asset List
Business Engagement Work Take-on Process
Staffing Information
Management Initiated Reviews
Security Clearance Information
Draft SES Charter
Australian Public Service Commission Capability Review
Preservation and Digitisation Dashboard
National Archives Office Accommodation Strategy 2030
Internal Audit – Defend the Past, Protect the Future
Digital Archives Strategic Research Priorities Framework and Plan
Australian State and Territory Archives Summary

Appendix F: National Archives Future Business Model

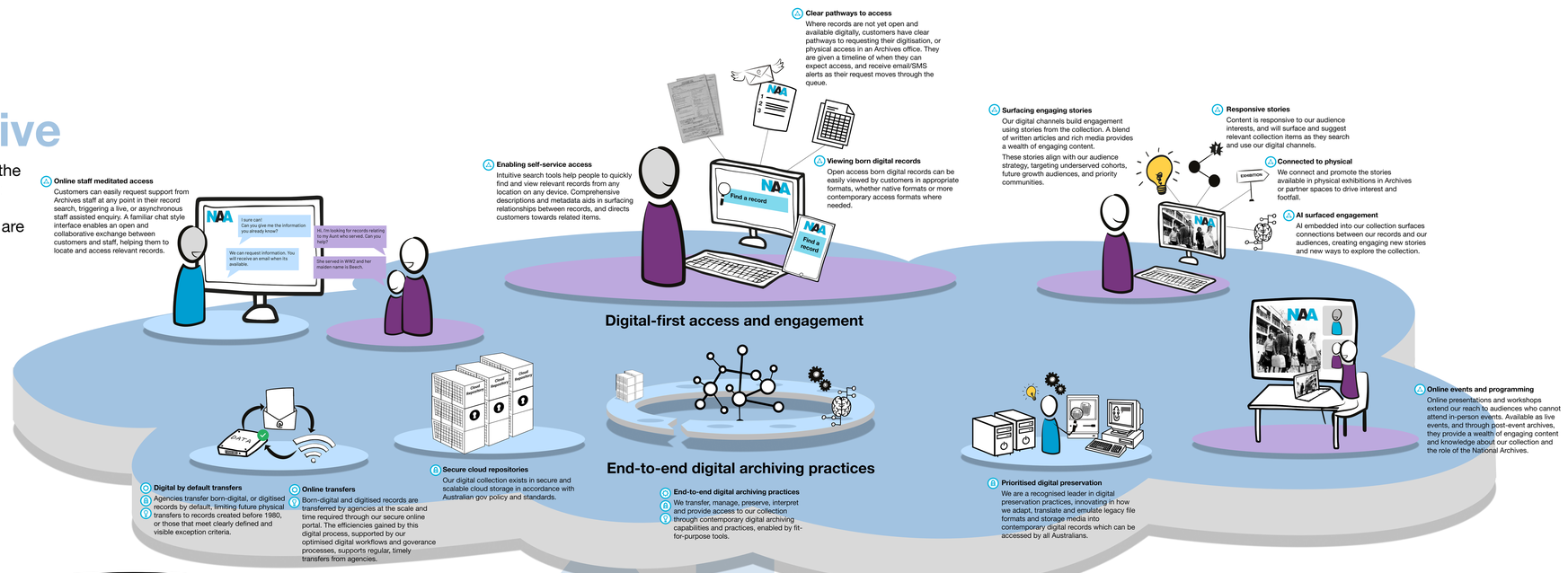
National Archives of Australia

Future Business Model

V0.5 DRAFT - 16th May 2023

A digital-first archive

We are digital-first in all aspects of our organisation, in the tools we use to manage our collection, in how we meet audience needs, how we work internally and in the capabilities we develop. We are not digital only, but we are analogue by exception.



Online staff meditated access
Customers can easily request support from Archives staff at any point in their record search, triggering a live, or asynchronous staff assisted enquiry. A familiar chat style interface enables an open and collaborative exchange between customers and staff, helping them to locate and access relevant records.

Enabling self-service access
Intuitive search tools help people to quickly find and view relevant records from any location on any device. Comprehensive descriptions and metadata aids in surfacing relationships between records, and directs customers towards related items.

Clear pathways to access
Where records are not yet open and available digitally, customers have clear pathways to requesting their digitisation, or physical access in an Archives office. They are given a timeline of when they can expect access, and receive email/SMS alerts as their request moves through the queue.

Viewing born digital records
Open access born digital records can be easily viewed by customers in appropriate formats, whether native formats or more contemporary access formats where needed.

Surfacing engaging stories
Our digital channels build engagement using stories from the collection. A blend of written articles and rich media provides a wealth of engaging content.
These stories align with our audience strategy, targeting underserved cohorts, future growth audiences, and priority communities.

Responsive stories
Content is responsive to our audience interests, and will surface and suggest relevant collection items as they search and use our digital channels.

Connected to physical
We connect and promote the stories available in physical exhibitions in Archives or partner spaces to drive interest and footfall.

AI surfaced engagement
AI embedded into our collection surfaces connections between our records and our audiences, creating engaging new stories and new ways to explore the collection.

Online events and programming
Online presentations and workshops extend our reach to audiences who cannot attend in-person events. Available as live events, and through post-event archives, they provide a wealth of engaging content and knowledge about our collection and the role of the National Archives.

Digital by default transfers
Agencies transfer born-digital, or digitised records by default, limiting future physical transfers to records created before 1980, or those that meet clearly defined and visible exception criteria.

Online transfers
Born-digital and digitised records are transferred by agencies at the scale and time required through our secure online portal. The efficiencies gained by this digital process, supported by our optimised digital workflows and goverance processes, supports regular, timely transfers from agencies.

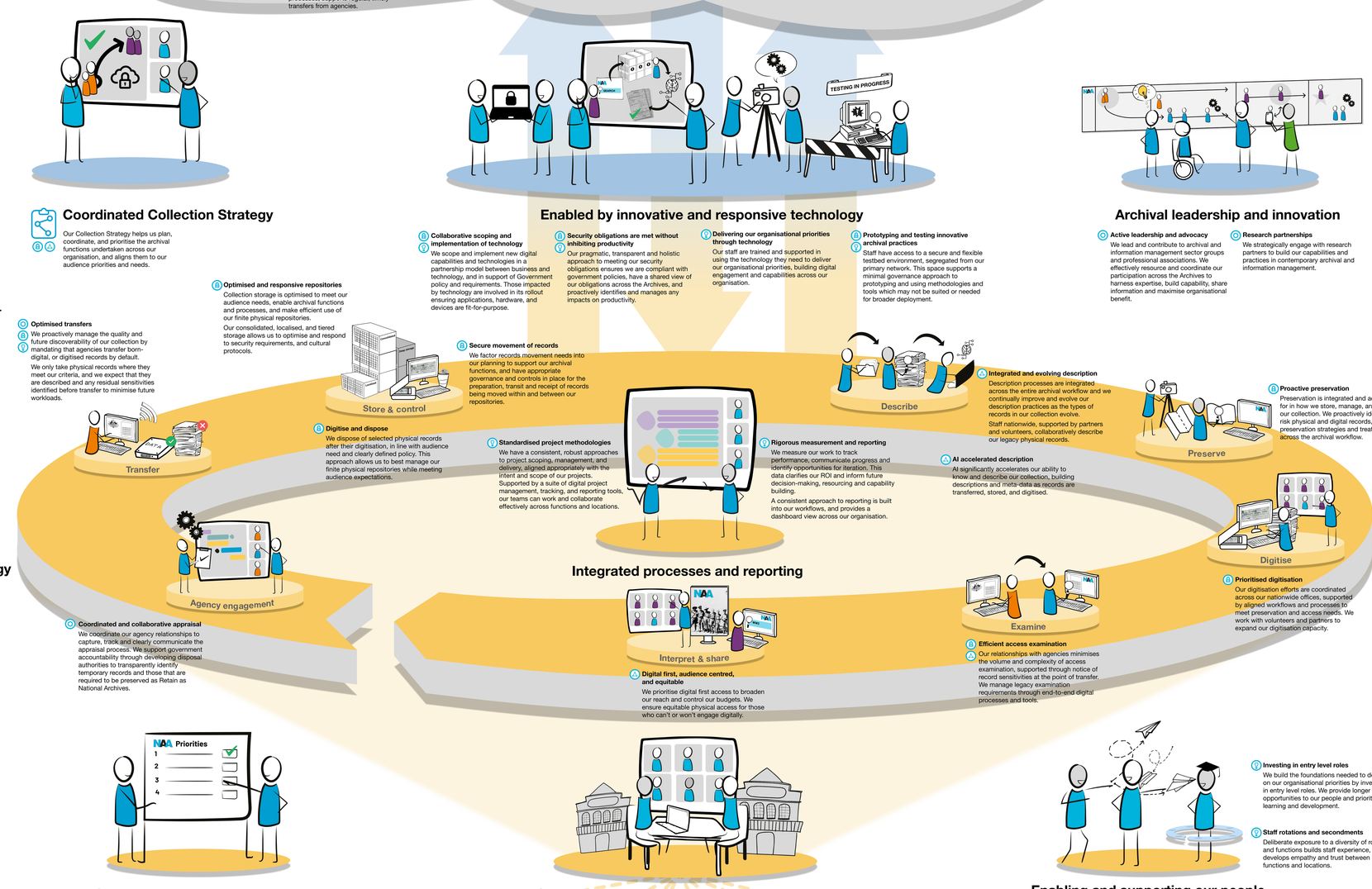
Secure cloud repositories
Our digital collection exists in secure and scalable cloud storage in accordance with Australian gov policy and standards.

End-to-end digital archiving practices
We transfer, manage, preserve, interpret and provide access to our collection through contemporary digital archiving capabilities and practices, enabled by fit-for-purpose tools.

Prioritised digital preservation
We are a recognised leader in digital preservation practices, innovating in how we adapt, translate and emulate legacy file formats and storage media into contemporary digital records which can be accessed by all Australians.

Working as One Archives

We collaborate and consult by default. We don't work in silos and we don't make decisions in isolation. We work towards the same organisational goals and support and trust each other to achieve them in accordance with Our Values.



Coordinated Collection Strategy

Our Collection Strategy helps us plan, coordinate, and prioritise the archival functions undertaken across our organisation, and aligns them to our audience priorities and needs.

Optimised transfers
We proactively manage the quality and future discoverability of our collection by mandating that agencies transfer born-digital, or digitised records by default.
We only take physical records where they meet our criteria, and we expect that they are described and any residual sensitivities identified before transfer to minimise future workloads.

Optimised and responsive repositories
Collection storage is optimised to meet our audience needs, enable archival functions and processes, and make efficient use of our finite physical repositories.
Our consolidated, localised, and tiered storage allows us to optimise and respond to security requirements, and cultural protocols.

Enabled by innovative and responsive technology

Collaborative scoping and implementation of technology
We scope and implement new digital capabilities and technologies in a partnership model between business and technology, and in support of Government policy and requirements. Those impacted by technology are involved in its rollout ensuring applications, hardware, and devices are fit-for-purpose.

Security obligations are met without inhibiting productivity
Our pragmatic, transparent and holistic approach to meeting our security obligations ensures we are compliant with government policies, have a shared view of our obligations across the Archives, and proactively identifies and manages any impacts on productivity.

Delivering our organisational priorities through technology
Our staff are trained and supported in using the technology they need to deliver our organisational priorities, building digital engagement and capabilities across our organisation.

Prototyping and testing innovative archival practices
Staff have access to a secure and flexible testbed environment, segregated from our primary network. This space supports a minimal governance approach to prototyping and using methodologies and tools which may not be suited or needed for broader deployment.

Archival leadership and innovation

Active leadership and advocacy
We lead and contribute to archival and information management sector groups and professional associations. We effectively resource and coordinate our participation across the Archives to harness expertise, build capability, share information and maximise organisational benefit.

Research partnerships
We strategically engage with research partners to build our capabilities and practices in contemporary archival and information management.

Secure movement of records
We factor records movement needs into our planning to support our archival functions, and have appropriate governance and controls in place for the preparation, transit and receipt of records being moved within and between our repositories.

Digitise and dispose
We dispose of selected physical records after their digitisation, in line with audience need and clearly defined policy. This approach allows us to best manage our finite physical repositories while meeting audience expectations.

Standardised project methodologies
We have a consistent, robust approaches to project scoping, management, and delivery, aligned appropriately with the intent and scope of our projects. Supported by a suite of digital project management, tracking, and reporting tools, our teams can work and collaborate effectively across functions and locations.

Rigorous measurement and reporting
We measure our work to track performance, communicate progress and identify opportunities for iteration. This data clarifies our ROI and inform future decision-making, resourcing and capability building.
A consistent approach to reporting is built into our workflows, and provides a dashboard view across our organisation.

Integrated and evolving description
Description processes are integrated across the entire archival workflow and we continually improve and evolve our description practices as the types of records in our collection evolve.
Staff nationwide, supported by partners and volunteers, collaboratively describe our legacy physical records.

AI accelerated description
AI significantly accelerates our ability to know and describe our collection, building descriptions and meta-data as records are transferred, stored, and digitised.

Proactive preservation
Preservation is integrated and accounted for in how we store, manage, and share our collection. We proactively identify at-risk physical and digital records, and apply preservation strategies and treatments across the archival workflow.

Prioritised digitisation
Our digitisation efforts are coordinated across our nationwide offices, supported by aligned workflows and processes to meet preservation and access needs. We work with volunteers and partners to expand our digitisation capacity.

Efficient access examination
Our relationships with agencies minimises the volume and complexity of access examination, supported through notice of record sensitivities at the point of transfer. We manage legacy examination requirements through end-to-end digital processes and tools.

Digital first, audience centred, and equitable
We prioritise digital first access to broaden our reach and control our budgets. We ensure equitable physical access for those who can't or won't engage digitally.

Coordinated and collaborative appraisal
We coordinate our agency relationships to capture, track and clearly communicate the appraisal process. We support government accountability through developing disposal authorities to transparently identify temporary records and those that are required to be preserved as Retain as National Archives.

Government Information Management Strategy

Leading government accountability through better information management practices
We have a coordinated and resourced program to develop standards, policy and advice, to communicate with agencies and to monitor implementation.
Our investment builds relationships with agencies, raises the quality of records and supports government accountability.

Connected agency-facing functions
Our agency-facing staff and roles connect and coordinate our nationwide approach to agency engagement and service provision.

We coordinate feedback analysis to inform aligned planning
We are rigorous in gathering data and feedback from agencies, building and sharing our understanding of their needs collaboratively. This data informs our service delivery to government.

Shared organisational priorities

Shared organisational priorities
Our priorities are informed by our legislation, Strategy 2030 and this business model. We decide them collaboratively and communicate them widely across our organisation, setting clear targets and sharing progress.
Our Collection, Audience and Government strategies align with our organisational strategies providing a clear roadmap for delivery.

Collaboration across functions and locations

National processes with local flexibility
Consistent yet flexible policies, processes and tools enable staff to collaborate effectively at a national scale, while balancing the need to adapt to local context.
Regular review and iteration of our workflows creates the space for local office practices to be scaled nationally.

National collaboration across our core archival workflows
Our work is delivered through national work programs, coordinating our distributed workforce in the collaborative delivery of our core services
They are supported by technology that enables effective collaboration regardless of physical location.

We hold ourselves and each other accountable to collaboration
Our commitment to collaboration empowers our staff to call out where they are impacted by a process or technology change without consultation.
Clear paths to mediation resolve concerns in a transparent and consistent way.

Enabling and supporting our people

Investing in entry level roles
We build the foundations needed to deliver on our organisational priorities by investing in entry level roles. We provide longer term opportunities to our people and prioritise learning and development.

Staff rotations and secondments
Deliberate exposure to a diversity of roles and functions builds staff experience, and develops empathy and trust between functions and locations.

Workforce planning and resourcing
Our workforce plan ensures we have the capabilities and resources we need to deliver on our organisational priorities.

Staff development and progression
A commitment to ongoing staff development builds confidence in career progression, increases staff retention and supports our digital-first approach to how we work.

Audience Strategy

Our deep audience understanding drives our strategy
Our Audience Strategy is informed by our deep and empathetic understanding of our audiences, both existing and emerging. It guides how we shape our collection and deliver services to best meet their needs.

We co-design our services with those who use and are impacted by them
We are committed to co-design practices, in alignment with broader APS recommendations. We design and refine our services in collaboration with our audiences, ensuring they meet their evolving needs and expectations.

Audience-centred

We base our decisions and shape our services based on the needs of the people we serve – the public, Government and our staff. We test our services, gather feedback and data and use this evidence to inform decisions and iterations.

National offices, local expertise

We are a national organisation with a presence in each state, but we work together collaboratively on national, location-agnostic programs. We leverage local capabilities and expertise that exist in each location, for the benefit of our organisation and our audiences.

Strategic partnerships

Volunteering partnerships
A coordinated approach to volunteer relationships creates a pipeline of volunteer projects to expand our resources in managing our collection, and extend our reach to broader audiences.

Education partnerships
We work with the tertiary sector to support the development of information management, archival courses and development opportunities.

Funding partnerships
We actively seek and partner with philanthropists, external organisations, community groups and private individuals to support and fund future projects and service delivery.

Coordinated partnership approach
We coordinate our approach to build partnerships that extend our reach, capabilities, resourcing, and funding.

Localised, responsive storage

Localised responsive storage
Smaller repositories exist in addition to our main, consolidated facilities, supporting physical access to records of significance for communities, and enable local digitisation efforts.
Their contents and capacity evolve over time according to changing audience needs.

Local knowledge and community connections
Offices in state and territory capitals support staff in building local audience understanding, and fostering connections with the local community.
For example, First Nations strategies and protocols may be led by Northern Territory staff, shaping our national approach.

Equitable access for all Australians

Equitable access for all Australians
We provide access to our collection and services equitably for all Australians, including those who cannot, or choose not to engage with us digitally. We respect our audiences needs, where cultural, accessible, or emotional, and ensure we provide meaningful access.

First Nations people first
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols are coordinated and embedded across all Archives activities, from our managing our collection through to providing access

Co-located offices
Public-facing National Archives spaces may be co-located with complementary agencies, such as State Records, or State Libraries.
These co-located public spaces extend our reach to audiences who might not otherwise engage with the Archives, and may present cost benefits.

Physical access by exception
Physical access to already-digitised records is provided equitably according to clearly defined criteria. We will always ensure physical access respects our audiences cultural and accessibility needs.
Our criteria for physical access are published transparently, and revisited regularly in line with our Audience Strategy.

Touring exhibitions
Exhibitions and related programming expand our engagement activities to audiences across Australia who can't easily reach our offices in state and territory capitals.

Targeted in-person access and engagement

Partnered engagement
We partner with other cultural or complementary organisations to build engagement with our collection and efficiently expand our reach across Australia.

Promoting the National Archives
We control and manage how partner organisations and external entities use and display our collection, ensuring records in our collection are always presented with visible National Archives branding, and clear links to our website.

Targeted in-person engagement
Physical exhibitions and programming align to our organisational and audience priorities, deepen our engagement with existing audiences and communities, and expand our reach to new audiences

Consolidated, optimised repositories

Consolidated and optimised repositories
Our consolidated repositories located in Canberra, Sydney and Perth secure our records, optimise our finite physical space.
Our collection and audience needs guide our ability to apply tiered storage, supporting our preservation and digitisation efforts and ensuring equitable access to physical records for those with a genuine need.

Deep storage
When legacy collection records have been digitised, where limited or no access to the original record is required, deep storage enables optimised, low-touch storage of physical records in accordance with our preservation requirements.

Building on the strengths of local offices to extend our capabilities nationwide.
Centres of knowledge and expertise in specific offices are supported to build their practices and raise Archives staff's capabilities nationwide.
For example, Sydney staff's AV and digital preservation expertise may lead our efforts nationally.

Flexible and accessible public spaces

Centrally located public spaces
Public facing spaces are located within CBDs, or in central locations with reliable and accessible public transport links.

Audience-driven consultation rooms
Open plan research centres evolve into modular and flexible consultation rooms, responding to the local audience demand for physical access to the collection.
Moveable partitions enable multiple uses for the public, agencies, and staff, including private access, staff mediated sessions, and group engagements.

Supporting physical and digital access
Consultation spaces support both physical access and on-site digital access through the provision of modern computers, screens, and headphones.

Future State Concepts

About this map

This map brings to life the future state of the organisation in 2030.

It is based on research and collaboration with over 200 staff across five states in the first half of 2023.

It is complemented by detailed written concepts in the accompanying slide deck, which describe in detail the short, medium and long-term actions the organisation will undertake to achieve each concept.

As actions are put in place, this vision will gradually be reached and the map updated.

National Archives | Government Agencies | Australian Public | Partners

Key Strategy | Enable | Secure | Connect | Innovate

Strategy 2030 pillars

1. Managing an evolving collection

1.1 A digital-first collection
Our digital collection continues to grow, through our coordinated approach to the digitisation of records already in our collection and through transfers of born digital and digitised records. We are adept at managing, describing and preserving digital records in our custody with skilled staff using appropriate tools.
Importantly, we still manage and preserve physical and analogue records in our care and will continue to do so. We prioritise these records for digitisation based on access and preservation needs.

Detailed concepts:
1.1.1 End-to-end digital-first collection management
1.1.2 Prioritised digitisation of analogue collection
1.1.3 Digital-by-default access examination

Secure, Innovate

1.2. An optimised, responsive collection
Our collection evolves in accordance with our strategy and supporting processes as we apply contemporary, world-leading collection management practices.
Storage is optimised to support our archival functions, and to ensure it is available to be shared with our audiences. We implement decisions about what physical records we no longer keep once they have been digitised to our standards based on audience needs, and to support the sustainability of our finite physical repository spaces.

Detailed concepts:
1.2.1 Collection Strategy
1.2.2 Consolidated physical storage
1.2.3 Optimised and tiered storage capabilities
1.2.4 Application of digitise and dispose policy

Secure, Connect

1.3. A known and discoverable collection
We understand the vital role that a well-described collection plays in enabling our archival functions, and in being able to share and interpret the collection.
We invest in new ways to enhance our capacity to describe our existing collection, and align our processes to support description-based activities as part of shared planning and delivery of all collection management activities.

Detailed concepts:
1.3.1 Evolving our description practices
1.3.2 Embedded description across projects
1.3.3 Known and described transfers
1.3.4 Acceleration description through automation and Artificial Intelligence

Connect

2. Sharing and interpreting the collection

2.1. Audience-led approach
We are an audience-centred organisation and our functions and services are delivered in accordance with audience needs.
We strive to deliver equitable and efficient access to all Australians, primarily though digital-first channels but also though in-person services where needed.
We understand the needs of our different audience groups and develop our services to reach priority audiences, in particular the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Detailed concepts:
2.1.1 Audience strategy
2.1.2 First Nations first

Connect

2.2. Digital-first access and engagement
We prioritise digital access and engagement as the most effective and efficient means of sharing and interpreting our collection, and to reach more audiences nationally.
We support online digital access through intuitive and user friendly platforms, aided by online mediated support such as interactive chat and online seminars on collection access and discovery.
We have invested in online engagement for priority audience groups such as schools and members.

Detailed concepts:
2.2.1 Self-service digital access platforms
2.2.2 Social media enables greater reach
2.2.3 Digital engagement programs
2.2.4 AI supports access to the collection

Connect

2.3. Equitable access and targeted in-person engagement
We support a multi-channel approach to collection access and engagement, recognising that digital-first does not mean digital only.
We take a coordinated and strategic approach to how we support in-person access and engagement, recognising the reality of the digital divide and allowing diverse users to engage with our services and our collection.
We seek to integrate physical and digital services and experiences as much as possible.

Detailed concepts:
2.3.1 Multiple channels for diverse users
2.3.2 Defined criteria for in-person access
2.3.3 Targeted, integrated In-person engagement

Connect

2.4. Flexible and accessible physical spaces
Whilst we are a digital-first archive, we recognise the continued value of physical spaces across our geographic locations to support in person access to, and engagement with the collection, including mediated support for digital access and engagement.
We have flexible spaces that respond to changing audience needs and expectations including the provision of culturally safe spaces.

Detailed concepts:
2.4.1 Public spaces are centrally located
2.4.2 Flexible, multi-purpose physical spaces

Connect

3. Leading government accountability

3.1 Coordinated and audience-centred agency engagement
We lead Australian Government information management in accordance with our legislation. We coordinate our agency-facing functions for information management policy and advice; appraisal and disposal; and transfer, guided by our Government Information Management Strategy. We have a well-developed contemporary understanding of our government audiences and their needs, informed by our regular agency assessments and other feedback mechanisms, and base the design, delivery and improvement of our services around this understanding.

Detailed concepts:
3.1.1 Government Information Management Strategy
3.1.2 Feedback analysis informs aligned planning

Enable

3.2 Best practice information management
We lead Australian Government information management by developing policies, standards and advice to assist Australian Government agencies to create, manage and use fit for purpose records and information assets.
We authorise the retention and destruction of Australian Government information assets, and identify, preserve and makes accessible the records of the Australian Government. These legislated functions are essential to supporting accountability of the Australian government and in maintaining trust in the official records of the Australian government.

Detailed concepts:
3.2.1 Leading best practice information management
3.2.3 Accountable appraisal and disposal processes

Enable

3.3 Coordinated and supported transfers
We secure the archival collection by working with Australian Government agencies to efficiently and effectively transfer Retain as National Archives records into our custody where they can be preserved and made accessible to users. Through our proactive national transfers program, we apply a digital-first approach to all new transfers, and only take physical records into our collection by exception, based on clearly defined criteria and where there are benefits to do so.

Detailed concepts:
3.3.1 Agencies transfer digital records by default
3.3.2 Records are transferred through an online portal

Enable

4. How we work

4.1 Inclusive and collaborative working
We support each other and understand the importance of collaboratively working together to achieve our organisational objectives. We celebrate and acknowledge our successes, and work together to learn and improve when something doesn't work out the way we intended. We embed collaborative ways of working at all levels and across branches and sections for the benefit of our organisation and our audiences.

Detailed concepts:
4.1.1 We hold each other accountable to collaboration
4.1.2 Changes are made in partnership
4.1.3 Cross-discipline and cross-location teams

4.2. Shared organisational priorities
We have clearly defined organisational priorities, that are known and visible across our organisation. They drive our focus and we align ourselves and resourcing around these priorities. Our branch and section priorities support, enable and complement our organisational prioritise.
We recognise we need to strategically identify our organisational priorities taking into account our core mission and organisational objectives and the needs of our audiences. We understand we all have a responsibility to support and enable our organisational priorities.
We understand we can't do everything at once, and as such we plan and sequence our organisational priorities and supporting activities accordingly.

Detailed concepts:
4.2.1 Collaborative, transparent prioritisation
4.2.2 Strategies align with organisational priorities
4.2.3 Our organisation is structured and resourced to deliver our priorities

4.3. Integrated processes and workflows
We have integrated processes and workflows that enable us to work to effectively work together across our BAU and project activities so that we can address common issues and challenges efficiently, and so that we can innovate.
This supports the delivery and alignment of our functions and services nationally, and our digital-first approach to how we work.

Detailed concepts:
4.3.1 A consistent approach to project management
4.3.2 Governance for BAU, programs and projects

Innovate

4.4. Measurement and accountability
Our decision-making, planning, program delivery, budget and resource allocation is underpinned by fit for purpose data and measurement activities. We track, analyse and measure the impact of our programs and services in accordance with clearly defined metrics, and use this data to support continuous improvement and meet our audience needs and expectations.
We monitor and report on organisational performance and strategy to be accountable and to support our organisational outcomes.

Detailed concepts:
4.4.1 Consistent and streamlined reporting processes
4.4.2 Metrics inform planning and budget allocation

Innovate

4.5. Innovative and responsive technology
We deliver our functions and services through innovative and responsive technology that we leverage for organisation-wide benefit. Our programs and services depend on having fit-for-purpose technology and supporting infrastructure that is scalable, robust, secure and responsive to our evolving needs.
We are able to engage with our audiences nationally, and better meet their needs and expectations through collaborative deployment and management of our technology.

Detailed concepts:
4.5.1 Technology project processes enable archival business needs
4.5.2 Staff are supported to use technology
4.5.3 Our technology supports staff to work anywhere
4.5.4 Security obligations are met without inhibiting our productivity

Enable, Innovate

4.6. Enabling and supporting our people
We connect and engage with our people, and support them to do their best work. We have strategic frameworks in place to support our recruitment and retention, workforce planning and capability development activities nationally,
We have a dynamic and diverse workforce, and people are connected to our organisational purpose.
We actively provide opportunities for people to develop in their roles and progress in their careers, and experience other parts of our organisation.

Detailed concepts:
4.6.1 Our workforce plan ensures we have the capabilities to deliver
4.6.2 Staff development gives confidence in career progression
4.6.3 We invest in entry-level roles
4.6.4 Recruitment practices and work arrangements attract staff

Innovate

4.7. A national approach
Our national presence across the country is integral to how we operate and the organisation benefits from having a coordinated national approach to how we deliver our functions and services. Our audiences receive better experiences through national work programs driving integrated services, drawing on local expertise and knowledge of our collection.

Detailed concepts:
4.7.1 National work programs are developed collaboratively
4.7.2 Centres of expertise exist across our locations
4.7.3 Local knowledge shapes the collection and local service delivery

Innovate

4.8. Archival leadership and innovation
We have a reputation as a leading archive in the digital age and participate actively in the national and international archival community, including allied areas such as records and information management, preservation and digital preservation, and the broader cultural sector.
Though sharing our knowledge and working collaboratively with others, we are effective at continuously improving our practice across all our functions and services.

Detailed concepts:
4.8.1 We coordinate to lead archival best practice
4.8.2 We have a testbed to support innovation in contemporary archival practices

Innovate

4.9. Strategic partnerships
Working collaboratively beyond the boundaries of our organisation is core to how we deliver our functions, improve our practices and engage with our audiences. We take a strategic approach to partnerships to draw on the knowledge, expertise and/or support of others to help us progress against our strategic priorities.

Detailed concepts:
4.9.1 Coordinated planning extends our reach, capabilities and resources
4.9.2 Cultural sector public engagement partnerships
4.9.3 Targeted research partnerships
4.9.4 Volunteering partnerships
4.9.5 Tertiary sector partnerships

Innovate, Connect