Audit report of the 2022–23 annual performance statements

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Auditor-General for Australia

Australian National Audit Office

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT on the 2022-23 Annual Performance statements of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources

To the Minister for Finance

Conclusion

In my opinion, the 2022-23 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR):

- present fairly DISR's performance in achieving its purposes for the year ended 30 June 2023; and
- are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the *Public, Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act).

Audit criteria

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

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

Accountable Authority's responsibilities

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

- the preparation and fair presentation of annual performance statements that accurately reflect DISR's performance and comply with the Act and Rule;
- keeping records about DISR's performance in accordance with requirements prescribed by the Act; and
- establishing such internal controls that the Accountable Authority determines is necessary to enable the preparation and presentation of the annual performance statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statements

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

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which include the relevant Standard on Assurance Engagements (ASAE) 3000

Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

In accordance with this standard, I plan and perform my procedures to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the performance measures and accompanying results presented in the annual performance statements of DISR fairly presents DISR's performance in achieving its purposes and comply, in all material respects, with the Act and Rule.

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

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

Independence and quality control

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

Inherent limitations

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

Australian National Audit Office

Grant Hehir

Auditor-General

Canberra

14 September 2023

Australian Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Annual report 2022–23

industry.gov.au/annualreport

Statement of preparation

I, Meghan Quinn, as the accountable authority of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, present the annual performance statements 2022–23 of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). In my opinion, the annual performance statements are based on properly maintained records, accurately reflect our performance in the reporting period and comply with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act.

Meghan Quinn PSM
Secretary

11 September 2023

Annual performance statements reporting

The annual performance statements demonstrate how our work progressed over the 2022–23 reporting period through performance measures that are aligned to key activities under our purpose statement. The statements were prepared in accordance with the requirements set out for Commonwealth entities in section 16F of the Public Governance Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

Changes to performance measures from *Corporate plan 2022–23*

We continued reviewing and improving our performance measures to reflect the breadth of activities we undertake to achieve our purposes. We also built on what we learnt from the first audit of our annual performance statements by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). Feedback from the audit resulted in some changes to performance measures, as published in the *Corporate plan 2022–23*, which are included in these statements. Table 1 describes the changes.

Table 1: Changes in performance measures

Performance measure	Description of changes from *Corporate plan 2022–23*
3 – Applicant satisfaction with the experience of the grants application process through the business.gov.au portal	To better describe the performance measure, it was updated to remove reference to 'overall' in relation to the experience of the grants application process.
4 – Effective regulation to assure the safety and security of space activities	To better reflect the work of the Australian Space Agency, the target has changed from 'year-on-year decrease in the number of unresolved safety recommendations per authorised space activity' to 'zero fatalities, serious injuries or damage to other property as a result of authorised Australian space activities'. The calculation method also changed in line with this target.
9.1 – Percentage of Questacon's national STEM events reaching lower socio-economic, regional and remote communities	This is a new measure that reflects the contribution of Questacon's work to the department's key activity 1.2 – investing in science and technology. The measure, as it relates to raising awareness of the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), supplements performance measure 9. It demonstrates Questacon's outreach work to those who may otherwise not have access to the Questacon centre in Canberra.

Performance measure	Description of changes from *Corporate plan 2022–23*
11 – Grow Australia's critical minerals sector, including by supporting development of downstream processing capacity	To better describe the performance measure type, it has changed from 'effectiveness' to 'output'.
12 – Increase opportunities for resources project investment	To better describe how this measure relates to our work, the target was updated to reference 'offshore' and structurally updated for clarity.
14 – Safe and effective administration and operation of Australia's offshore oil, gas and greenhouse gas industry	To better align this measure to our role in reviewing the safety regulatory regime, the target was amended from 'identify, review and implement policy reforms to improve the regulatory framework for offshore oil, gas and greenhouse gas (GHG) industry' to 'identify, review and propose policy reforms to improve the safety regulatory regime for Australia's offshore oil, gas and GHG industry'. The calculation method also changed in line with this target.
15 – Anti-Dumping Commission's compliance with legislated and World Trade Organization timeframes is maintained or improved	This is a new measure that reflects the contribution of the Anti-Dumping Commission's work to the department's key activity 1.1 – growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions.

Structure of performance statements

The annual performance statements 2022–23 report against our purpose and the key activities in the *Corporate plan 2022–23* and *Portfolio budget statements 2022–23*.

The following describes the alignment between our purpose statement and key activities in the corporate plan, and the outcomes statement and programs in the portfolio budget statements (PBS).

Corporate plan 2022–23

Purpose statement

Building a better future for all Australians by enabling a productive, resilient and sustainable economy, enriched by science and technology.

Key activity 1.1

Growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions

Key activity 1.2

Investing in science and technology

Key activity 1.3

Supporting a strong resources sector

Portfolio budget statements 2022–23

Outcome 1

Support economic growth, productivity and job creation for all Australians by:

- investing in science, technology and commercialisation
- growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions
- supporting resources.

Program 1.2

Growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions

Program 1.1

Investing in science, technology and commercialisation

Program 1.3

Supporting resources

The annual performance statements 2022–23:

- describe the performance measures aligned to each key activity
- incorporate reporting against each performance measure, including:
  - target and results, as well as a comparison with the previous year's results where a measure has rolled over or the department was able to calculate a comparable previous year's result
  - qualitative analysis for the measure
  - identification of limitations where applicable.

Performance measures and our overall results

In 2022–23, we demonstrated our performance through 16 performance measures, using a mix of output, efficiency and effectiveness measures.

Output measures assess the quantity and quality of the goods and services produced by an activity (including their volume or quantity).

Efficiency measures are generally expressed as a ratio of inputs to outputs, where efficiency involves maximising outputs for a given volume of inputs. The timely delivery of an output is commonly used as a proxy for efficiency.

Effectiveness measures assess how well the department has delivered on its purposes, and where activities have had the intended impact or contributed to achieving the purposes.

Of the 16 performance measures reported on:

- 13 were met
- 1 was partially met
- 2 measures had their baseline set.

Figure 3: Performance measures by type

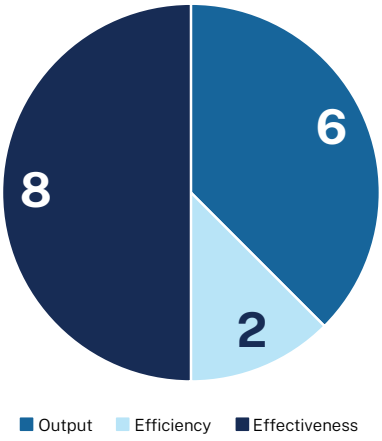


Figure 4: Assessment of performance

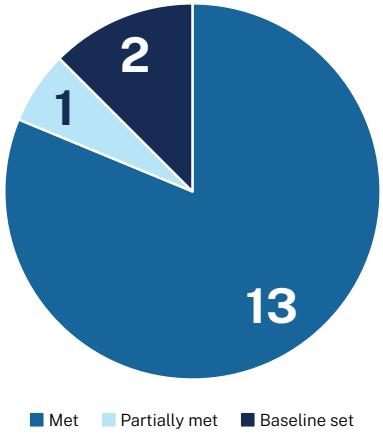


Table 2: Snapshot of our performance measures by measure type and result

Measure type	Measure title	2022–23 result
Effectiveness 	1. Business co-investment through portfolio initiative funding	Met
Output 	2. Proportion of grants and services delivered to regional businesses	Met
Output 	3. Applicant satisfaction with the experience of the grants application process through the business.gov.au portal	Baseline set
Effectiveness 	4. Effective regulation to assure the safety and security of space activities	Met
Effectiveness 	5. Proportion of major projects that are compliant with their approved Australian Industry Participation (AIP) plans	Met
Efficiency 	6. Applications for registration of research and development activities through the Research and Development Tax Incentive (R&DTI) are processed within designated timeframes	Met
Effectiveness 	7. Grow the number of technology-related jobs to 1.2 million by 2030	Met

Measure type	Measure title	2022–23 result
Output 	15. Anti-Dumping Commission's compliance with legislated and World Trade Organization timeframes is maintained or improved	Baseline set[9]
Effectiveness 	8. Number of businesses establishing research-focused collaborations that are facilitated by portfolio programs	Met
Effectiveness 	9. Raising awareness of the importance of STEM through the delivery of portfolio initiatives	Partially met
Effectiveness 	9.1. Percentage of Questacon's national STEM events reaching lower socio-economic, regional and remote communities	Met
Effectiveness 	10. Number of third-party accreditations maintained to ensure NMI measurement services meet national and international best practice	Met
Output 	11. Grow Australia's critical minerals sector, including by supporting development of downstream processing capacity	Met
Output 	12. Increase opportunities for resources project investment	Met
Efficiency 	13. National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator's published assessment timeframes for applications made under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Storage Act 2006* are met	Met
Output 	14. Safe and effective administration and operation of Australia's offshore oil, gas and greenhouse gas (GHG) industry	Met

9 Performance measure 15 was established after the *Corporate plan 2022–23* and its position reflects alignment to key activity 1.1.

Key activity 1.1 – growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions

This activity aims to support the growth of innovative and competitive businesses, industries and regions, and build a diversified, flexible, resilient and dynamic economic base that can identify and adapt to new markets and emerging opportunities. It relates to PBS 2022–23 Outcome 1, Program 1.2.

1 – Business co-investment through portfolio initiative funding

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Maintain an average of at least $1.20 of business co-investment for every $1 of grant funding for portfolio programs that require business co-investment	New measure in 2022–23	$2.83 for every $1.00 of grant funding

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Business co-investment in programs demonstrates commitment to growing innovative and competitive businesses across targeted industries. It provides evidence of business commitment to delivering on the project or activity.

Including a co-investment requirement in programs supports building a resilient, and dynamic economic base. This will support Australian industry to better adapt to new markets and leverage emerging opportunities, thereby creating jobs and benefiting the broader economy.

The departmental programs with contracts in scope for the reporting period are listed at Table 3.

Table 3: Program-specific co-investment requirements

Program name	Program-specific co-investment requirement for every dollar of grant funding	Dollars co-invested for every $1 of grant funding achieved
Critical Minerals Accelerator Initiative	$1.00	$1.50
Critical Minerals Development Program	$1.00	$2.10
Cyber Security Skills Partnership Innovation Fund – Round 2	$1.00	$1.50
Entrepreneurs' Programme – Accelerating Commercialisation Grant	$1.00	$1.05
Entrepreneurs' Programme – Growth Grant	$1.00	$1.00
Innovation Connections Grant	$1.00	$1.19
Maker Projects – Community STEM Engagement grants 2022	$0.25	$0.81
Manufacturing Integration Stream – Round 2	$1.00	$1.96
Manufacturing Translation Stream – Round 2	$1.00	$2.61
Modern Manufacturing Initiative Manufacturing Collaboration Stream	$2.00	$4.45
Moon to Mars Initiative: Demonstrator Mission	$0.33	$0.37
Moon to Mars Initiative: Trailblazer Stage 1	$0.33[10]	$0.76
Supply Chain Resilience Initiative Round 2	$1.00	$1.56
Cooperative Research Centres Grants	$1.00	$2.84
Cooperative Research Centres Projects	$1.00	$1.85

10 Requirement is a minimum co-contribution of $1 million for a maximum grant amount of $4 million.

A high co-investment amount indicates the private sector is willing to spend money on projects that are in line with the policy intent of programs. Driving the result for the 2022–23 financial year was a:

- strong co-contribution from the manufacturing sector and the critical minerals sector through the Modern Manufacturing Initiative programs and the Critical Minerals Development Program
- willingness by a broad range of businesses and researchers to participate in the Cooperative Research Centres Program, leading to a high number of partners and more contributions.

Programs with a lower co-investment result were due to:

- targeting emergent industries, such as in the Moon to Mars Initiative
- targeting community organisations, such as in the Maker Projects.

The overall high result indicates that portfolio funding is well targeted, as funding has gone to competitive organisations that are willing to make significant private sector investment.

Limitations

Data provided as part of this measure is based on the contracted business contribution and grant amount for contracts in scope for the reporting period. Actual co-contributions cannot be determined until progress or final reporting, which often occurs outside the reporting period. It is unlikely to vary significantly from the contracted funding ratio. However, this is monitored over the life of these programs to ensure grantees are meeting their contractual requirements.

2 – Proportion of grants and services delivered to regional businesses

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
25% or more total grants or services delivered to regional businesses	28%	32%

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

The department strives to ensure equitable access to business support regardless of geographical areas. This is achieved by designing grant opportunities that target a range of sectors across Australia spanning both metropolitan and regional areas. Further support is provided through AusIndustry Business Outreach, which operates a network of 30 regional managers across the country who are connected to regions, communities and industries. Regional managers help local business identify government support mechanisms that enable growth opportunities. Our programs are designed to support businesses across our economy. To ensure regional businesses receive appropriate support we aim for at least 25% of grants and services to be delivered to businesses in the regions.

For grants and services delivered in 2022–23, 32.3% were delivered to businesses with a regional address, and 67.6% were delivered to businesses with an address in a major city. Only 0.1% were delivered to businesses that were outside the scope of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure.[11]

Limitations

Data used in this measure is based on the address of the business, and the delivery of the grant or service may occur at a different project location.

11 The ASGS Remoteness Structure defines remoteness areas for the purpose of releasing and analysing statistics. Remoteness areas are derived from the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+) produced by the University of Adelaide. Remoteness areas divide Australia into 5 classes of remoteness on the basis of a measure of relative access to services. They are: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. For more information, refer to www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure.

3 – Applicant satisfaction with the experience of the grants application process through the business.gov.au portal

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Baseline to be set in 2022–23	New measure in 2022–23	Baseline set: 90%

2022–23 assessment

Baseline set

Analysis of result

The department operates the Business Grants Hub, which provides grants to businesses and other organisations across Australia. This service is provided on behalf of the department and 11 other Commonwealth agencies. In 2022–23, the Business Grants Hub executed more than 4,900 grant contracts across 116 grant programs, valued at over $1.94 billion.

These grants help to achieve the government's policy objectives for the benefit of all Australians. An effective grant application process helps businesses engage with government and effectively access the support provided. By measuring satisfaction with the application process at the end of the application form, the department can collect feedback from a broad range of applicants who interact with government, including those who are later deemed unsuccessful for funding.

We have used 2022–23 to set a baseline to inform the target for future years. Before a question on satisfaction was built into the grant application, applicant satisfaction results were collected via survey.

A total of 2,806 responses were recorded through both the survey and application forms:

- 88% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the grant application process
- 9% of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 3% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Table 4: Satisfaction levels by response type

Satisfaction level	Survey responses	Application form responses
Satisfied or very satisfied	289 (73%)	2,176 (90%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	51 (13%)	198 (8%)
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	56 (14%)	36 (1%)
Total number of responses	**396**	**2,410**

Just over 90% of applicants surveyed through the application form were satisfied or very satisfied with the grant application process (compared with 88% of all respondents) and this has been used to set the baseline.

We use customer feedback to inform continuous improvement of the grant application experience across our systems and processes. For example, based on user feedback, we are improving the user experience of completing budget information within the application form. This means policy agencies can be confident their programs are being accessed with user experience in mind.

Limitations

Before a question on satisfaction was built into the grant application, applicant satisfaction was assessed via a survey. Two methodologies were used to collect data for 2022–23. Fourteen per cent of total responses were collected through a survey and 86% were collected through the grant application. Each method had limitations:

- Survey responses were optional. The sample was limited to grant applicants who chose to participate. Responses were collected for the period 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022 and the response rate was 16%. As applicants were surveyed after being notified of the outcome of their application, their response may have been influenced by the success of their application.
- Application responses were compulsory from 9 January 2023 through to 30 June 2023. While the application form stated the satisfaction question would not affect the assessment process, applicants may have believed a positive response would result in a more favourable assessment of their application.

The wording was slightly different across the 2 methods.

- Survey applicants were asked, ‘How satisfied were you with the overall experience of applying for a grant through the portal?’
- Through the application form, applicants were asked, ‘How satisfied were you with the process of applying for this grant?’

Differences in question wording may have influenced applicants’ responses.
From 2023–24 onwards only the application form response will be collected, which will eliminate this discrepancy.

4 – Effective regulation to assure the safety and security of space activities

Target	2021–22 result[12]	2022–23 result[13]
Zero:[14]		
• fatalities	Nil	Nil
• serious injuries	Nil	Nil
• damage to other property	Nil	Nil
across the number of authorised space activities.	7 authorised space activities	5 authorised space activities

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Space capability contributes to Australia's economic prosperity, national security and management of challenges such as climate change. The space sector provides critical data for sectors such as resources, agriculture and environment, as well as access to new markets and high-skilled jobs. It diversifies and advances our manufacturing base, and unlocks emerging technologies in communications, remote operations, robotics and automation.

The *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* is administered by the department through the Australian Space Agency. It aims to achieve a reasonable balance between removing barriers to participation in space activities and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in the space industry. The agency also oversees the safety of space activities, and the risk of damage to persons or property.

This measure aims to provide a quantitative assessment of the agency's effectiveness in achieving this balance. The measure is contextualised by the level of space activity, represented by the volume of authorisations made by the agency, as part of its regulatory role, over the reporting period.

Any fatality, serious injury or damage to other property as a result of a space activity conducted in 2022–23, but notified outside of the reporting period, will be captured in the subsequent reporting period.

Limitations

The *Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* applies only to certain upstream activities in the space sector value chain typically involving space launch. As such, it provides an indicator of activity in the manufacturing and launch segments of the Australian space sector, but does not measure broader Australian space activity.

12 The 2021–22 result has been calculated retrospectively to reflect the 2022–23 performance measure and target rather than the 2021–22 performance measure, which was to develop and implement flexible approaches in the regulation of Australia's space activities, with a target of year-on-year improvement.

13 www.industry.gov.au/australian-space-agency/regulating-australian-space-activities/minister-decisions-about-space-activities.

14 *The Space (Launches and Returns) Act 2018* has terms consistent with the terms 'zero fatalities', 'serious injuries' and 'damage to other property' as a result of authorised Australian space activities.

5 – Proportion of major projects that are compliant with their approved Australian Industry Participation (AIP) plans

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
100%	100%	100%

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

The main objective of the *Australian Jobs Act 2013* is to support the creation and retention of Australian jobs. The Act requires proponents of eligible productive facilities with capital expenditure of $500 million or more to prepare and implement an AIP plan. AIP plans ensure that Australian entities have the opportunity to tender to supply key goods or services through all stages of a project, and get assistance with capability development and integration into global supply chains. This objective is in line with the department's priority to grow competitive Australian industries and jobs, and to secure reliable supply chains.

The AIP Authority assesses projects' 6-monthly compliance reports and supporting evidence to ensure proponents are complying with their AIP plans and not relying solely on their existing supply chains.

The AIP Authority received 167 compliance reports from 95 major projects in 2022–23. The reports were assessed by the AIP Authority with all projects demonstrating compliance with their approved AIP plans, either at submission or after feedback from the AIP Authority and subsequent amendments to the reports. Compliance was verified through major projects providing evidence in their reporting.

Over 2022–23, the AIP Authority actively worked with proponents to achieve compliance and did not detect any compliance breaches requiring use of legislative sanctions. To help proponents to understand and meet the compliance obligations in their AIP plans, the AIP Authority focused on education. This included developing a best-practice user guide and providing feedback on proponents' reports. The feedback assisted new proponents who were unfamiliar with the reporting process and experienced proponents who needed further information and clarification. It also helped in instances where there had been changes to the project, including key personnel.

6 – Applications for registration of research and development activities through the Research and Development Tax Incentive (R&DTI) are processed within designated timeframes

Target	2021–22 result[15]	2022–23 result
95% of applications processed within:		
• 40 business days for first time registrants	99%	100%
• 20 business days for registrants that have applied within 6 months after the end of the income period	99%	99%
• 80 business days for registrations submitted from 6 to 10 months after the end of the income period.	100%	100%

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

The R&DTI program offers a tax offset to companies conducting eligible Research and Development (R&D) activities. This encourages additional R&D investment, which generates wider benefits for the Australian economy.

As at 30 June 2023, for registrations occurring in the 2021–22 financial year:

- more than 12,700 companies were registered for the R&DTI program
- total R&D expenditure was $15.3 billion.

This measure quantifies the number of business days that elapse between the 2 critical administration points of when a company applies to the R&DTI program, and when that company is registered in the program by the department.

While a standard benchmark of 95% is applied for this measure, different processing timeframes allotted to each of the 3 cohorts reflect variations in processing time to register companies under certain conditions.

15 The 2021–22 target was the same as the 2022–23 target. However, the 2021–22 result has been re-calculated to exclude weekends, in line with the 2022–23 result assessment.

The improvement in the 2022–23 results, relative to 2021–22 results, may be attributable to the temporary reallocation of staff from other areas in the branch to work on processing registrations during the registration peak period and the use of more streamlined administrative processes.

Specifically, the processing target for:

- 'first-time registrant' companies is 40 business days. This allows adequate checks to be performed for companies applying to the program for the first time
- 'returning registrant' companies is 20 business days if they are applying within 6 months after the end of the income period (this typically occurs outside peak processing periods)
- 'returning registrant' companies is 80 business days if they are applying within 6 to 10 months after the end of the income period. This 6 to 10 month interval is a peak processing period and the extended target is applied to account for this peak.

R&D activities must be registered before an R&D tax offset is claimed through a company's tax return. Timely registration of an R&D tax offset benefits companies because they can then lodge their tax returns and receive the tax offset benefit.

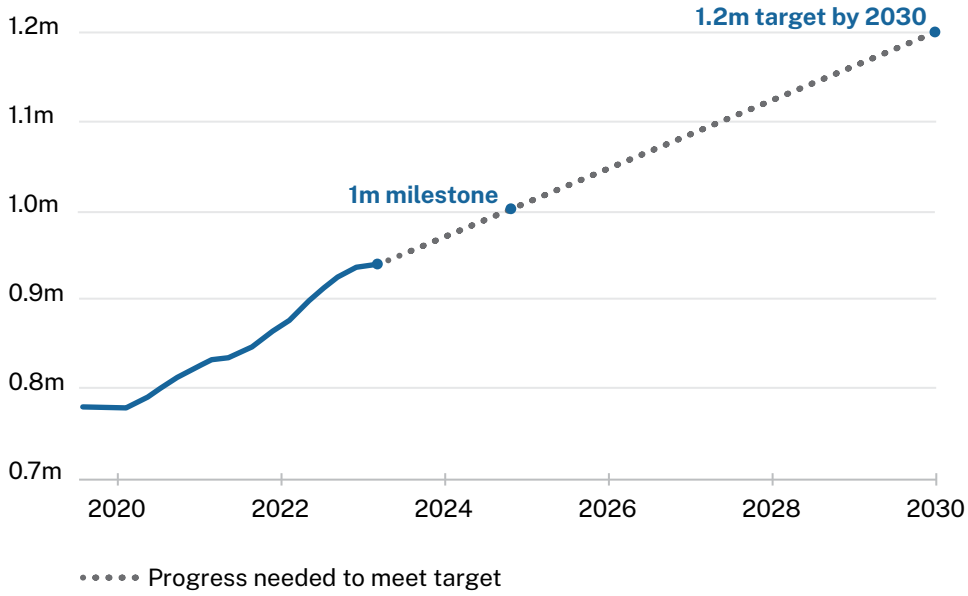
Limitations

The 2022–23 results of this performance measure report processing timeframes for R&D tax incentive applications from the 2021–22 financial year, as companies can apply to register their R&D activities up to 10 months after the end of each financial year.

7 – Grow the number of technology-related jobs to 1.2 million by 2030

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Year-on-year increase	879,800	940,600

Graph 1: Total employment in technology-related jobs



2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Growing the number of technology-related jobs in the Australian workforce is vital to building innovative, competitive businesses that strengthen and drive the growth of our economy. The number of technology-related jobs in May 2023 was 940,600 which represents a 6.9% increase from May 2022, when the total number was 879,800 (6.6% of total employment).

The increase in the number of technology-related jobs is due to a range of economic factors, supported by several government actions. The department leads a range of sectoral strategies, consultations and initiatives that help to mature Australia's technology adoption readiness and highlight the role that technology-related jobs have in improving productivity. Examples include:

- Research and Development Tax Incentive – supports business to invest and grow through R&D, including R&D in relation to technological development
- Initiatives to support the safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI),[16] building on the existing AI ethics framework[17] – the department is also implementing a new responsible AI adopt program and is leading a broader public discussion focussed on ensuring Australia has the right governance mechanisms in place in relation to AI
- National Quantum Strategy[18] – promotes Australia as the world's top destination for people studying, undertaking research in, and working in quantum industries
- National Robotics Strategy[19] – public consultation to inform the strategy is seeking to understand future workforce requirements, including our existing strengths and any gaps that need to be addressed
- Critical Technologies Hub[20] – advises the government on critical technology opportunities, developments and risks. The hub developed the List of Critical Technologies in the National Interest
- Australian Space Agency[21] – through the Australian Space Discovery Centre we showcase the pathways for a career in space, inspiring the future workforce to study subjects and gain experience that will sustain and grow our national space industry
- Questacon, the National Science and Technology Centre[22] – is inspiring the next generation of STEM leaders through initiatives like the Questacon Cyber Program, which is improving cyber security skills, technology awareness and job readiness in young Australians.

16 consult.industry.gov.au/supporting-responsible-ai.
17 www.industry.gov.au/publications/australias-artificial-intelligence-ethics-framework.
18 www.industry.gov.au/publications/national-quantum-strategy/executive-summary.
19 consult.industry.gov.au/national-robotics-strategy.
20 www.industry.gov.au/science-technology-and-innovation/technology.
21 www.industry.gov.au/australian-space-agency.
22 www.questacon.edu.au/about/reports/annual-reviews/annual-review-2021.

Government initiatives outside the Industry, Science and Resources portfolio included:

- the increase of permanent migration visas to address persistent and emerging skills shortages, and to attract people with specialist skillsets, including in technology
- the provision of 480,000 fee-free TAFE and 20,000 new university places
  - as of 30 May 2023, more than 14,500 of the 146,000 fee-free TAFE enrolments were in the priority 'Technology and Digital' sector
  - more than 4,000 of the new university places were in areas such as engineering and technology (at least 2,275 were in information technology)
- the implementation of industry engagement mechanisms in the vocational education and training system to ensure it is more responsive to industry needs (including a dedicated Jobs and Skills Council in technology)
- initiatives to grow the digital capability of the Australian Public Service, including introducing a program to deliver up to 1,000 digital traineeships.

An essential element of the Australian workforce meeting the demand for technology-related jobs is skills development. We contribute to this through targeted programs and our work with the agencies that have the key levers for skills development. Skills-focused work being led by the department include:

- next-generation AI and emerging technology programs, which are expected to attract and train up to 480 job-ready graduates in AI and other emerging technologies
- support to up to 20 PhDs under the Australian Quantum Graduates Program
- initiatives to support greater participation of women in STEM and the ongoing Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review.

The department works across government to support processes and a more coordinated approach to meeting Australia's technology-related jobs challenge. This work includes:

- convening a regular Commonwealth digital skill working group to support engagement and discussion on cross-cutting issues relating to tech skills
- partnering with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on taking forward the Digital and Tech Skills Compact, a commitment made at the Jobs and Skills Summit by the government to work with industry, unions and education and training providers to meet Australia's tech-related skills challenge. A working group established under the compact is finalising its report on a model 'digital apprenticeship' scheme
- contributing to broader government reform initiatives including the Review of the Migration System, the Employment White Paper and the Australian Universities Accord.

15 – Anti-Dumping Commission compliance with legislated and World Trade Organization (WTO) timeframes is maintained or improved

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Baseline to be set in 2022–23	New measure in 2022–23	Baseline set – refer to Tables 5 and 6 in analysis of result

2022–23 assessment

Baseline set

Analysis of result

In administering an anti-dumping system, the department seeks to support Australian industry and the economy by remedying proven instances of unfair international trade. It does this through:

- the Anti-Dumping Commission investigating Australian industries' claims of dumping and subsidisation of imported goods
- seeking and considering evidence from Australian producers and importers, as well as foreign exporters
- making recommendations to the responsible minister on the imposition, continuation, withdrawal or adjustment of dumping and countervailing duties.

The Anti-Dumping Commission operates in accordance with best-practice regulation principles to administer a transparent and accessible system that:

- affords due process to all interested parties
- publishes evidentiary, analytical and process-related material promptly
- meets predictable maximum timeframes.

This is a new performance measure and 2022–23 results established a baseline for future years.

Noting the complexity in building a robust and meaningful performance story, the focus in the first year of reporting is to demonstrate that the Anti-Dumping Commission satisfied its international legal obligations and met strict and extended domestic legislative timeframes for completing cases across all case types. Case types are set out in the:

- *Customs Act 1901*
- *Customs Tariff (Anti-Dumping) Act 1975.*

Table 5 provides a summary of the cases completed (by case type) during 2022–23, the average time taken to complete, the statutory timeframes and a comparison against WTO timeframes, where appropriate.

Table 5: 2022–23 completion timeframes by case type

Case type	Cases completed	Average length (in days)[23]	Statutory timeframe in days (strict or extendable)	WTO timeframe
Dumping and/or subsidy investigation	4	484	155 (extendable)	18 months (or 547 days)
Review of measures	2	347	155 (extendable)	n/a
Duty assessment	20	350	155 (extendable)	18 months (or 547 days)
Accelerated review	4	89	100 (strict)	n/a
Continuation inquiry	7	280	155 (extendable)	n/a
Anti-circumvention inquiry	1	215	155 (extendable)	n/a
Exemption inquiry	8	324	n/a	n/a
Reinvestigations	2	269	As directed by ADRP[24] (extendable)	n/a

To provide context and visibility of the flow and volume of cases received and processed by the Anti-Dumping Commission, Table 6 shows the caseload at the beginning of 2022–23, any actions taken during that period, and the caseload at 30 June 2023.

23 Including any extensions.

24 Anti-Dumping Review Panel.

Table 6: Volume of cases over 2022–23 by case type

Case type	At 1 July 2022	Received	Rejected/ withdrawn	Initiated	Completed	At 30 June 2023
Dumping and/ or subsidy investigation	5	4	0	0	4	5
Review of measures	3	7	2	7	2	6
Duty assessment	27	15	4	14	20	18
Accelerated review	4	3	1	2	4	2
Continuation inquiry	6	6	0	6	7	5
Anti-circumvention Inquiry	1	1	1	0	1	0
Exemption inquiry	10	5	2	7	8	5
Reinvestigations	1	2	0	2	2	1
Totals	**57**	**43**	**10**	**38**	**48**	**42**

Notes:

- For all case types except reinvestigations, an application is lodged by an external party. 'Received' refers to the original lodgement date of an application. For reinvestigations, 'received' refers to the date a request is submitted by the Anti-Dumping Review Panel.
- Most case types require the Commissioner to reject or not reject an application within 20 days of lodgement (exemptions and reinvestigations have no legislative requirement). If the Commissioner is not satisfied that the application meets the relevant requirements of the particular case type then he must reject the application and notify the applicant. Once an application is rejected and the applicant notified then the case is 'completed'.
- An application may be withdrawn by the applicant in writing at any time during the process either prior to initiation or after initiation. Cases withdrawn are considered 'completed'.
- Where the Commissioner decides not to reject an application, a notice to initiate must be published on the website. For investigations, anti-circumvention inquiries, review of measures and continuation inquiries case types, the statutory requirements for publishing a statement of essential facts and providing the final report to the Minister commence from the publication date of the initiation notice (for example, final report is to be provided to the Minister 155 days from initiation, however this date can be extended). Duty assessments, accelerated reviews, exemption inquiries and reinvestigation case types have no requirement to be initiated by notice on our website. However, if they are not rejected, they are regarded as being initiated on the date received.
- A case is regarded as completed when withdrawn, rejected, terminated or upon publication of notice of findings.

For further context regarding the volume and length of extensions, Table 7 shows the extensions for 2022–23 by case type.

Table 7: Extensions of time for 2022–23 by case type

Case type	# of extensions	# of cases extended	Average number of days extended	Average total period extended
Dumping and/ or subsidy investigation	6	2	51	329
Review of measures	8	4	85	192
Duty assessment	59	31	88	195
Continuation inquiry	15	6	38	125
Anti-circumvention inquiry	2	1	30	60
Total	**90**	**44**	**75**	**180**

Establishing a baseline

Data in this reporting period was used to establish the baseline for future reporting periods against which the Anti-Dumping Commission will need to maintain or improve timeframes in the majority of cases, in the majority of case types.

Limitations

As a demand-driven investigative system, working to both strict and extendable legislative deadlines, the Anti-Dumping Commission has limited ability to control timeframes. A range of factors directly and indirectly affect timeframes across all case types including:

- requirements to meet strict legislative timeframes in new cases or reinvestigate previous cases following a merits review
- the level and timeliness of interested parties' engagement
- the need to appropriately sequence decisions on related cases.

To reflect this, the contextual data on volume of cases, by case type, as well as other relevant contextual data, will be subject to comparative, year-on-year analysis in future reporting periods.

Key activity 1.2 – investing in science and technology

This activity aims to boost our science and technology capability to facilitate the development and uptake of new ideas and technology and build a strong base for science to be used in Australian decision-making. It relates to PBS 2022–23 Outcome 1, Program 1.1.

8 – Number of businesses establishing research-focused collaborations that are facilitated by portfolio programs

Target	2021–22 result[25]	2022–23 result
Maintain the number of businesses collaborating year on year	2,070[26]	2,228

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Bridging science and industry through business–research collaboration is essential to help Australia solve problems and bring new technologies, products and services to market. To support this the department delivers initiatives, such as grant programs, to support business–research collaborations. This supports the business community.

The Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Program (both CRCs and CRC Projects) provides grant funding to support industry-led partnerships working on industry-identified problems to improve Australian industry competitiveness, productivity and sustainability.

The total number of business and research organisations active in CRCs and CRC Projects for the 2022–23 reporting period was 1,921 (1,412 in CRCs and 509 in CRC Projects). This is an overall increase of 9.3% from the equivalent reporting period in 2021–22 (1,758).

The Entrepreneurs' Programme Innovation Connections service provided participants with advice and funding to get research projects underway. This included connecting Australian small and medium-sized enterprises with research institutions and helping them apply for grants to fund research projects.

The total number of business and research organisations supported by the Innovation Connections service for the 2022–23 reporting period was 307, on par with the equivalent 2021–22 reporting period, which supported 312.

The 2022–23 result (both for the overall performance measure and the CRC Program) increased primarily due to the addition of successful Round 23 CRCs to the pool of active CRCs contributing to the performance measure, with all CRCs from the previous year (2021–22) continuing to operate in 2022–23.

25 The 2021–22 target was a year-on-year increase.

26 The 2021–22 result was recalculated using current contributing programs, noting the performance measure for 2021–22 was 'number of business–research collaborations facilitated by portfolio programs', with a year-on-year increase target.

Limitations

Contributing programs may be amended year-to-year. For 2022–23, the performance measure and contributing programs shifted from business–research collaborations (in 2021–22) to research-focused collaborations.

9 – Raising awareness of the importance of STEM through the delivery of portfolio initiatives

Target	2020–21 result	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Proportion of Australians who consider STEM skills important when considering employment:			
• Parents > 87%	86%	Not conducted	81%
• Educators > 87%	89%	Not conducted	89%
• Young Australians > 87%	Not conducted	92%	Not conducted

2022–23 assessment

Partially met

Analysis of result

The government's investment in science and technology is focused on building Australia's capability and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), which is essential in harnessing new technologies for future prosperity. The department leads national policy and programs to support community-wide STEM engagement, including among girls, women and people from diverse backgrounds. These programs target the STEM pathway, partly to alter perceptions and increase understanding of STEM careers for young Australians.

In September 2022, the government announced its plan to revitalise both the National Science and Research Priorities and the National Science Statement, to help shape the long-term vision for Australia's science system. This process is intended to re-energise conversations across the Australian science and research sector on the importance of STEM to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for all Australians. The department will also consider the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review outcomes when they are finalised in late 2023, as well as opportunities to strengthen this performance measure for continued alignment with our work.

This performance measure considers 3 surveys – conducted every 2 years – covering parents, educators and young Australians' perceptions of the importance of STEM. This year's result is drawn from the 2 surveys conducted in 2022–23 with parents and educators. The survey for young Australians was conducted and reported in 2021–22. The STEM Equity Monitor and survey results for 2022–23 were released in July 2023.[27]

27 www.industry.gov.au/publications/stem-equity-monitor.

The departmental programs included in this performance measure are:

- Inspiring Australia Science Engagement Program
- National Science Week
- Prime Minister's Prizes for Science
- Citizen Science Grants
- Sponsorship grants for student science engagement and international competitions
- Maker Project Grants
- Targeted Science Communication
- Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship grants program
- Girls in STEM Toolkit
- Women in STEM Ambassador
- Women in STEM Ambassador national awareness raising initiative
- Advancing Women in STEM strategy
- Advancing Women in STEM 2020 Action Plan
- STEM Equity Monitor
- Superstars of STEM
- Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative
- Elevate: Boosting Women in STEM scholarship.

The surveys measure changes in attitudes and perceptions but do not gather qualitative data on 'why' respondents provide their ratings. As such, it is difficult to analyse why the results differ from the target. It could be attributed to general shifts in the operating environment over the 2 years between surveys, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption in education and engagement in extra-curricular activities.

The decrease in parents' overall perceptions that STEM skills are important when considering employment is also reflected in their response to STEM skill specific questions:

- science skills 76% (down from 81% in the previous survey)
- technology skills 87% (down from 89% in the previous survey)
- engineering skills 72% (down from 75% in the previous survey)
- mathematics skills 83% (down from 89% in the previous survey).

There were no changes in educators' overall perceptions that STEM skills are important when considering employment.

Limitations

This performance criteria has been chosen as a proxy for understanding national perceptions of the importance of STEM skills. There are limitations with attributing the direct impact of the department's STEM engagement programs on STEM participation due to factors outside of the department's control. It is also not practical economically to measure the response of an entire population. Therefore, representative sample results are used as a proxy.

Each survey sample is analysed to ensure it represents the intended population. Weighting is applied in some cases for under- or over-representation within the sample and additional methodological information is available in research reports. This data is collected biennially through the *Youth in STEM research report* and the *STEM influencers – parents, teachers and career advisors research report* produced by Youth Insight, which is the research arm of Student Edge that provides national surveys for government and industry organisations.

9.1 – Percentage of Questacon's national STEM events reaching lower socio-economic, regional and remote communities

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
50% national STEM events reaching lower socio-economic communities	59%	58%
60% national STEM events reaching regional and remote communities	72%	80%

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Questacon, the national science and technology centre, is contributing to the Australian community's engagement with science, technology and innovation.
Questacon aims to highlight the value of science and technology in everyone's lives, the importance of developing STEM skills, and the future STEM careers can offer. Questacon is also committed to overcoming social disadvantage and geographic isolation as barriers to engagement.

The government's investment in science and technology through Questacon's national STEM events and virtual programs enable Australians in schools and communities with limited access to a Canberra-based Questacon experience to engage with science, technology and innovation wherever they are.

In 2022–23, national STEM events and virtual programs engaged 44,022 students, teachers, and members of the public across every state and territory. These programs are free to schools, reducing barriers to participation. An additional 249,214 participants interacted with Questacon's exhibits in informal learning institutions across the country.

Schools volunteer to participate in Questacon's free national STEM programs following an opt-in approach. Questacon markets and plans national STEM events in regional/remote and low socio-economic areas to share its vision – of creating a better future for all Australians through engagement with science, technology and innovation. Questacon's national STEM event targets of 50% and 60% are used to provide flexibility in programming circumstances, as well as working into Questacon's national presence strategy.

Background

The 2022–23 reporting period is the first in which the department has established a performance measure relating to Questacon and the national STEM events programs. A benchmark target was set of 50% national STEM events engaging with lower socio-economic communities, and 60% engaging regional and remote communities. The measure reflects the contribution of Questacon's outreach work in raising awareness of the importance of STEM.

As Australia's national science and technology centre, Questacon supports community engagement with science, technology and innovation. In 2022–23, Questacon welcomed 464,297 visitors from the public and schools to enjoy exhibits, shows and inspirational learning experiences at its centre in Canberra. This was 164,297 higher than forecast in Questacon's 2022–23 planning. During 2022–23, 105,921 school students visited the centre on excursions, showing a slow return to pre-pandemic averages of 150,000 students per year.

Limitations

Geo-locational data was not available for 13 (1.5%) of the national STEM events (869 in total) and were therefore excluded from the data used to calculate the result.

10 – Number of third-party accreditations maintained to ensure NMI measurement services meet national and international best practice

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Maintain global acceptance of over 300 measurement capabilities under the Mutual Recognition Arrangement of the International Committee of Weights and Measures	New measure in 2022–23	313
Maintain NMI's 24 National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accreditations across calibration and testing, reference material production, and proficiency testing functions		25
Maintain World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accreditation for NMI's sports drug testing capability		Maintained

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

The National Measurement Institute (NMI) plays an important role in the Australian economy by leading Australia's measurement system. This work is driven by advances in science and technology to continuously adapt to, service and enhance the productivity and growth of Australian industry.

Maintaining trusted national and international accreditation for our measurement laboratories, standards and services supports domestic and international trade. It provides assurance to consumers, governments and other stakeholders that Australian products and results across a range of sectors are underpinned by scientific expertise and infrastructure of the highest international standards.

To meet these targets, NMI continuously maintains laboratories and capabilities at a suitable standard for these accreditations. For example, ISO/IEC 17025, *Testing and calibration laboratories*, is the relevant standard for calibration laboratories, and sets out a range of requirements such as ensuring equipment is appropriately calibrated so results are accurate.

Maintenance of these accreditations is achieved via internal and external audit processes, where NMI is required to demonstrate:

- competency in performing the measurement services for which accreditation is held
- compliance with standard accreditation requirements.

Globally accepted measurement capabilities

The Key Comparison Database maintained by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) lists 313 internationally recognised calibration and measurement capabilities (CMCs) for NMI, with 105 in chemistry and biology, and 208 in general physics. This maintains the level of CMCs from the previous financial year and exceeds the minimum requirement of 300 CMCs in this performance measure.

Achieving and maintaining CMCs requires NMI to meet 3 fundamental criteria:

- participation in scientific comparisons
- operation of an appropriate quality management system
- international peer review of claimed calibration and measurement capabilities.[28]

National Association of Testing Authorities accreditations

NMI's 24 NATA accreditations across the functions of calibration and testing, reference material production, and proficiency testing that are part of this performance measure for 2022–23, were all maintained. The additional NATA accreditation attained in mid-2022 was also maintained, keeping the total number of NATA accreditations at 25.

Each NATA accreditation is reassessed every 3 years, with a surveillance visit of the relevant laboratory at 18 months.[29]

NMI and its predecessor organisations have continuously maintained the accreditation required to deliver measurement standards and science for decades. In 2022–23, NMI celebrated the 70th anniversary of its oldest NATA accreditation, for sample analysis services delivered from its Melbourne laboratory.

World Anti-Doping Agency accreditation

WADA accreditation for NMI's sports drug testing capability was maintained in such a way that services to Sport Integrity Australia were delivered as per the memorandum of understanding. A new certificate of accreditation received from WADA on 9 January 2022 authorises NMI's Australian Sports Drug Testing Laboratory to conduct doping control analyses from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

WADA accreditation is renewed annually. Amongst other requirements,[30] accreditation must meet the requirements of the International Organization for Standardization's ISO/IEC 17025 which is separately accredited by NATA.

28 More details on the approval process are available at www.bipm.org/en/cipm-mra/cmc-approval-process.

29 The accreditation process and requirements are available at nata.com.au/accreditation/how-to-get-accredited.

30 Accreditation requirements are detailed at www.wada-ama.org/en/accreditation-process.

Key activity 1.3 – supporting a strong resources sector

This activity aims to support the sustainable development of the resources sector, attract private sector investment and encourage innovative technologies. It relates to PBS 2022–23 Outcome 1, Program 1.3.

11 – Grow Australia's critical minerals sector, including by supporting development of downstream processing capacity

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result[31]
Year-on-year increase in the number, progress and total capital expenditure of critical minerals projects		
• Estimated value	$22–36 billion	$30–42 billion
• Project pipeline[32]	71	81
• Publicly announced	16	21
• Feasibility	41	44
• Committed	12	13
• Completed	2	3

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Growing the critical minerals sector in Australia will deliver strong economic benefits, including increased trade and job creation. The Critical Minerals Strategy 2023–2030 positions Australia as an ethical, reliable and secure supplier of critical minerals within global supply chains. The department is responsible for supporting this growth, including in relation to development of downstream processing capability.

The 2022 *Resources and energy major projects* (REMP) report noted, 'Australia's critical minerals major project pipeline comprised 81 projects in this year's report, with an estimated value of $30–42 billion'. Using the current methodology there were 71 projects for the 2021–22 reporting period.[33]

31 As reported in the 2022 REMP report.

32 The definitions for each stage are provided in the methodology section of each report.

33 The *Annual report 2021–22* reported a project pipeline figure of 69. For consistency and ease of comparison, the 2021–22 result in this report uses the Critical Minerals List applied in the 2022 REMP report from which the 2022–23 result is derived. The increased project pipeline 2021–22 figure reflects the inclusion of 2 high-purity alumina projects.

Through the Critical Minerals Development Program, the government approved close to $100 million in grants across 19 projects to help progress early and mid-stage critical minerals projects towards financing and production, targeting those undertaking downstream processing activities.

The department's activities also contribute to diversifying global supply chains and positioning Australia as an ethical, reliable and secure suppler of critical minerals. Our activities included:

- facilitating strategically important critical minerals projects
- partnering with other countries to build global supply chains
- supporting research and development
- working to align Australia's policy and regulatory settings to better support investment and unlock downstream processing and manufacturing opportunities
- improving access to information about regulatory approvals, funding and investment
- promoting investment and identifying global opportunities.

We publish the data underpinning this performance measure (the REMP report) at www.industry.gov.au/publications/resources-and-energy-major-projects.

Limitations

While a significant contributor to this measure, there are many factors outside of government control which contribute to the achievement of this target, such as investment being subject to market fluctuations. Still, the chosen metric remains the most appropriate metric for assessing the impact of government efforts to grow the sector given its robust methodology, transparency, efficiency, and ongoing applicability.

The focus of the REMP report is solely on 'major' investments valued at over $50 million each (based on publicly available sources). The report (and this performance measure) does not reflect the substantial investment by mining and energy companies in replenishing equipment, plant and other property. Full methodology of data collection and analysis is provided in the REMP reports.

Changes to Australia's Critical Minerals List affect projects and aggregate figures reported in the REMP report (refer to the analysis of result for the impact on the 2021–22 to 2022–23 reporting periods). Should the list be updated, discontinuities will be clearly identified in performance reporting analyses.

12 – Increase opportunities for resources project investment

2022–23 target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
At least one of the following:	New measure in 2022–23	
• the release of acreage for:		1
- petroleum exploration		
- greenhouse gas storage exploration		
• the award of titles for:		5
- petroleum exploration		
- greenhouse gas storage exploration		

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Releasing offshore acreage and awarding new permits for petroleum and greenhouse gas storage exploration can support investment in the offshore resources sector and facilitate the abatement of carbon emissions. New investment supports a strong resources sector and is a driver for the creation of high-skilled jobs in regional Australia.

The department manages and facilitates the acreage release process which includes stakeholder consultation across government and the broader public. Consultation supports identification and consideration of any potential impacts of exploration activity in an area, including impacts to First Nations cultural heritage, the environment, other marine users (such as tourism and fishing industries) and communities. The department ensures legislative requirements are met and decisions to award permits are supported by robust, evidence-based advice.

One offshore petroleum exploration acreage release occurred in 2022–23, comprising 10 areas in Commonwealth waters off Western Australia, Victoria, and the Ashmore and Cartier Islands.

Five offshore greenhouse gas storage assessment permits were also awarded during 2022–23, in conclusion of the 2021 Offshore Greenhouse Gas Storage Acreage release. The permits are located in Commonwealth waters offshore Western Australia and the Northern Territory.[34]

34 www.industry.gov.au/publications/2022-offshore-petroleum-exploration-acreage-release.

13 – National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator (NOPTA) published assessment timeframes for applications made under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Storage Act 2006 (OPGGS Act) are met

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
90%	93%	97%

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

NOPTA, within the department, is responsible for the efficient and effective regulation of Australia's offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas (GHG) activities. As part of this role, it administers petroleum and GHG titles in Australian Commonwealth waters in accordance with the OPGGS Act.

Processing applications that meet published timeframes[35] provides transparency and accountability to government and industry. It supports a strong offshore resources sector by creating business certainty and can assist with managing project timelines within energy markets that continue to evolve.

Application assessment target timeframes for Joint Authority–related decisions were agreed by the Joint Authority in 2015.[36] In 2019, NOPTA developed indicative assessment timeframes for Titles Administrator decisions.

In 2022–23, NOPTA finalised 382 applications, with 97% of all applications assessed within the published timeframes for assessment. This is an aggregated figure of both petroleum and GHG applications. The improvement in the result for 2022–23 compared with 2021–22 was due to multiple factors including:

- 115 fewer applications and less decisions made on technically complex applications
- improvements to processes and procedures such as monthly application debrief sessions.

35 www.nopta.gov.au/legislation-and-compliance/legislative-overview/application-assessment-timeframes.html.

36 The Joint Authority for the offshore area off each state (except Tasmania) and the Northern Territory is constituted by the responsible Commonwealth minister and the relevant state or Northern Territory minister. Further information about the Joint Authorities is at www.nopta.gov.au/_documents/JA-operating-protocols-july2015.pdf.

14 – Safe and effective administration and operation of Australia's offshore oil, gas and GHG industry

Target	2021–22 result	2022–23 result
Identify, review and propose policy reforms to improve the safety regulatory regime for Australia's offshore oil, gas and GHG industry	New 2022–23 measure	The department completed the review of the safety regulatory regime for the offshore oil, gas and GHG industry and identified policy reforms to improve the safety of the regulatory regime. The department proposed 23 policy reform measures to the Minister for consideration.

2022–23 assessment

Met

Analysis of result

Safe and effective administration and operation of the offshore oil, gas and GHG industry is essential to supporting a strong resources sector in Australia. This performance measure reflects the department's policy responsibility to maintain and improve the industry's regulatory regime.

During 2022–23, the department identified, reviewed and proposed policy reforms to the regulatory regime for the safety of workers in the offshore oil and gas sector. This drew on the Offshore Oil and Gas Safety Review completed by the department in 2021 in relation to our periodic regulatory and continuous improvement process.[37] This review was designed to:

- support the offshore resources sector through continuous regulatory improvement and to ensure the safety regime remains consistent with best oilfield practice
- enable the government to evaluate the efficacy of the regulatory environment
- drive the accountability in the offshore oil, gas and GHG storage industries to continue to enhance safety practices.

37 www.industry.gov.au/publications/offshore-oil-and-gas-safety-review.

Implementing updated safety regulations supports the offshore oil, gas and GHG industry in improving safety practices to comply with the latest regulatory standards. The work undertaken by the department in 2022–23 to identify, review and develop policy proposals ensured that the proposed safety measures included consideration of current and emerging safety priorities. It also provided an opportunity to consider the applicability of the findings of other recent reports into industry safety and additional stakeholder feedback. This included through engagement on current safety priorities at the offshore oil and gas worker Health and Safety Representatives Forum in November 2022. Proposed safety policy reform measures included:

- strengthening the role of health and safety representatives in identifying and managing safety risks
- broadening the definition of workforce health and wellbeing to ensure a good psychosocial working environment
- improving the prevention, reporting and investigation of sexual harassment
- modernising the regulation of diving
- amendments to the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* and supporting regulations, that will support the offshore oil, gas and GHG industry in improving safety practices through compliance with the latest regulatory standards.

The proposed policy reforms are aimed at improving facility design and operation, regulating operators and titleholders, and improving compliance and enforcement measures. These policy reforms will help ensure the safe and effective operation of Australia's offshore oil, gas and GHG industry.