

Audit report of the 2023–24
annual performance statements

Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development,
Communications and the Arts



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT on the 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

To the Minister for Finance

Conclusion

In my opinion, the 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA):

- present fairly DITRDCA's performance in achieving its purpose for the year ended 30 June 2024; 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 DITRDCA's annual performance statements complied with Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the PGPA Act, I applied the following criteria:

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

Emphasis of Matter – Revised performance measures

I draw attention to DITRDCA's disclosure of changes to its performance measures from the measures that were originally set out in the 2023–24 Corporate Plan, under the heading *Changes to our performance information*.

I further draw attention to the disclosures in the *Variations to performance information* section of the performance statements that provide additional detail for the changes to 25 measures, including measure descriptions, targets, and methodologies.

My conclusion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Accountable Authority's responsibilities

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

- the preparation of annual performance statements that accurately present DITRDCA's performance in the reporting period and comply with the requirements of the PGPA

Act and any requirements prescribed by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (the Rule);

- keeping records about DITRDCA's performance as required by the PGPA Act; and
- establishing internal controls that the Accountable Authority determines are appropriate to enable the preparation of annual performance statements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statements

My responsibility is to conduct a reasonable assurance engagement to express an independent opinion on DITRDCA'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.

I plan and perform my procedures to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual performance statements of the entity present fairly the entity's performance in achieving its purposes and comply, in all material respects, with the PGPA Act and Rule.

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

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

Independence and quality control

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

Inherent limitations

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

Australian National Audit Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Jago', with a stylized, cursive script.

Carla Jago

Acting Deputy Auditor-General

Delegate of the Auditor-General

Canberra

13 September 2024

Part 2

Annual Performance Statements

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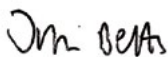
Statement of preparation

Accountable authority statement

I, as the accountable authority for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department), present the 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements for the department, which have been prepared in accordance with paragraph 39(1) (a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

In my opinion, these annual performance statements accurately present the department's performance for the year ending 30 June 2024 (section 16F of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* and comply with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act).

The department continues its improvement journey and is committed to reaching maturity of its performance reporting by 2025.



Jim Betts

Secretary

13 September 2024

Introduction

The 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements outline the progress the department has made towards achieving its purposes:

- > Transport Connectivity
- > Regional Development
- > Territories
- > Communications Connectivity
- > Creativity and Culture.

These purposes have been refreshed for 2024–25,⁶ however, remained the focus of our efforts in 2023–24.

The reporting below has been prepared in reference to the performance information published in the *Department of Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Corporate Plan 2023–24* (Corporate Plan) and subsequently updated through the *Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25* (PBS). The below reporting seeks to demonstrate efficient use of taxpayer resources and a commitment to quality in our work across the department's wide-ranging activities.

The department is advancing along an iterative journey to improve its performance reporting. This includes enhancing our performance framework to comprehensively and meaningfully represent and measure our activities. The department has also sought to uplift corporate capability to improve the reliability and accuracy of performance reporting, and to use this process to inform key learnings across policy areas.

Policy assessment methodology

The department has developed a policy assessment methodology which seeks to evaluate and uplift our role in supporting senior executives and ministers, to make informed policy and funding decisions across the portfolio's remit. In recognition of this role, 7 performance measures have been included which assess the quality, timeliness and evidence base of our policy advice. These are performance measures: 1, 2, 5, 6, 23, 24 and 31. This assessment was made by an internal strategic policy review panel which consisted of 3 experienced departmental officials who impartially determined how well policy advice provided context, analysis and advice for action. A sample of policy advice was assessed by the panel for each relevant measure. Panel members individually gave a score out of 5 for each document based on the 3 predetermined criteria using the thresholds described in Table 2.1: Rating scale. These scores were averaged to create a score for the measure as a whole. A measure was 'met' if it received a score above 3. Panel members did not assess advice originating from their own direct work areas, and signed confidentiality and conflict of interest declarations. All assessments were moderated using an external scribe. From this process, the panel noted key deficiencies and strengths which will be provided as feedback back to policy areas to support capability uplift. Additionally, as a development opportunity, a junior staff member observed the panel's deliberations to gain insight into what makes good policy advice.

⁶ For the department's updated purpose statement refer to our 2024–25 Corporate Plan. Available at: www.infrastructure.gov.au/about-us/corporate-reporting/2024-25-corporate-plan

Table 2.1: Rating scale

Rating	Result	Description
5	Target Met	<p>Meets all the relevant quality standards and adds something extra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Represents exemplary practice > First-rate advice that provides a sound basis for confident decision-making > A polished product
4		<p>Meets all the relevant quality standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Represents good practice > Provides a solid basis for decision-making > Minor changes would have added polish
3		<p>Meets the relevant quality standards overall, but with some shortfalls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provides most of the analysis and information needed > Could be used for decision-making > Was sufficiently fit for purpose for finalisation > Could have been improved in several areas
2	Target Not Met	<p>Does not meet the relevant quality standards in material ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Explains the basic issue but seriously lacking in several important areas > Creates risk of poor decision-making > Should not have been finalised/delivered > Needed substantial improvement in important areas
1		<p>Does not meet the relevant quality standards in fundamental ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lacks basic information and analysis > Creates serious risk of poor decision-making > Should not have been finalised/delivered > Needed fundamental rework
0		<p>Does not meet the relevant quality standard at all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Contains no basic information or analysis > Creates extreme risk of poor decision-making > Should not have been finalised/delivered > Needed complete overhaul

Changes to our performance information

A review of the department's 2022–23 performance information identified issues including omission of performance information, completeness, reliability and governance. On the basis of best practice and prior learnings, we reviewed performance information as was initially published in our 2023–24 Corporate Plan. We subsequently updated a number of measures and targets through the 2024–25 PBS to more fulsomely present our functions through appropriate targets supported by reliable data. We did not publish an updated corporate plan as these changes did not constitute a significant variation. These changes were presented before the end of the performance cycle through the 2024–25 PBS. Table 2.2: Table of changes indicates where there is a variation to key activities, performance measures and targets compared to the 2023–24 Corporate Plan.

The majority of these changes were reflected in the 2024–25 PBS before the conclusion of the financial year in compliance with the 'clear read' principle⁷. Italicised text represents a change that was made through the 2024–25 PBS. Other changes listed below are minor wording changes, and in particular against the published methodology, or are to provide additional clarity.

Table 2.2: Table of changes

Program	Measure	Change type	Rationale for change	Corporate Plan 2023–24 page
1.1	1	<i>Performance measure description</i>	Amended to specify reporting on projects listed in the 'Schedules to the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects'.	43
1.1	1	<i>Target and methodology</i>	Amended to reflect the department's role in delivering quality policy advice on the Infrastructure Investment Program (IIP) to the minister.	43
2.1	2	Key activity	Performance measure 2 included under 'Key Activity: Supporting an efficient and sustainable transport system' to reflect cross cutting contributions.	48
2.1	2	<i>Performance measure description</i>	Amended to combine composite measure targets a. and b. into a single measure.	49

⁷ Further information on the 'clear read' principle can be found in the Department of Finance's *Reporting performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements Resource Management Guide 129*, available at: www.finance.gov.au/government/managing-commonwealth-resources/reporting-performance-information-portfolio-budget-statements-rmg-129/why-performance-information-reported-pbs

Program	Measure	Change type	Rationale for change	Corporate Plan 2023–24 page
2.1	2	Target and methodology	Amended to reflect the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	49
2.1	4	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	51
2.1	5	Target	Target b. removed as it is an activity that constitutes routine departmental work.	52–53
2.1	5	Target and methodology	Amended to reflect the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	52–53
2.1	6	Target and methodology	Amended to reflect the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	54
2.2	7	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	56
2.2	8	Target	Target c. removed as it is an activity that constitutes routine departmental work.	57
2.2	8	Methodology	Updated to reflect equal weighting for each target.	57
2.2	9	Performance measure description	Amended to specify the types of grants the department is reporting against, and how this work contributes to the National Road Safety Action Plan.	58
2.2	9	Target	Target amended to align with the performance measure.	58
2.2	9	Methodology	Updated as methodology was incompatible with the stage the program reached at the end of 2023–24.	58
2.3	12	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	62

Program	Measure	Change type	Rationale for change	Corporate Plan 2023–24 page
2.3	13	Performance measure description and target	Amended to replace 'approved' with the term 'eligible'. Approved communities must be eligible to participate in the Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme.	63
2.3	14	Target	Updated to specify the role of the department.	63–64
2.3	14	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	63–64
3.1	-	Key activity	'Advise on and deliver City and Regional Deals and commitments to enhance Australia's cities and towns' removed as underlying measure (18) was removed.	71
3.1	16	Performance measure removed	This performance measure was removed from 2023–24 as the department has an enabling function for regional programs and does not deliver contract commitments.	72
3.1	17	Performance measure maintained	The performance measure was amended through the 2024–25 PBS, but was found to have been correct as originally published in the 2023–24 Corporate Plan.	73
3.2	18	Performance measure removed	This performance measure was removed from 2023–24 reporting in line with government priorities.	74
3.2	19	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	76
3.3	-	Key activity	'Advise on and deliver City and Regional Deals and commitments to enhance Australia's cities and towns' removed as underlying measure (18) was removed.	71
3.3	20	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	78

Program	Measure	Change type	Rationale for change	Corporate Plan 2023–24 page
3.3	21	Performance measure description	Amended to reflect the purpose of the program.	79
3.3	21	Target	Amended to accurately reflect the stage of the program for the 2023–24 reporting period.	79
3.4	22	Target	Updated to specify the scope is for the 2023–24 reporting year.	81
4.1	23	Performance measure description	Updated to align with the purpose of Program 4.1: Services to Territories.	86
4.1	23	Target and methodology	Amended to reflect the department's role in delivering policy advice on legal and governance arrangements in the territories, in line with the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	86
4.1	24	Performance measure description	Updated to measure the department's role in advising on the delivery of essential services to non-self-governing territory communities.	87
4.1	24	Target and methodology	Amended to enable reporting against the performance measure description, in line with the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	87
5.1	28	Performance measure removed	The department does not control the affordability of telecommunications services.	87
5.1	29	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	96
5.1	30	Performance measure description and target	Amended to reflect the role of the department in the overall management of classification frameworks through publishing classification decisions.	97

Program	Measure	Change type	Rationale for change	Corporate Plan 2023–24 page
5.1	30	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to accurately reflect the methodology.	97
6.1	31	Target and methodology	Amended to reflect the department's role in delivering quality policy advice on the current Australian content framework in line with the whole-of-department approach to measuring policy advice.	103
6.1	37	Methodology	Updated from the 2023–24 Corporate Plan to enable the department to report against target a.	109

Structure of the Annual Performance Statements

The Annual Performance Statements demonstrate a direct link between the department's activities throughout the year and their contribution towards achieving our purposes. The Annual Performance Statements are divided into 6 chapters, with each chapter focusing on performance against one of the department's outcomes.

Each chapter contains:

- > a performance snapshot of achievement against the outcome
- > performance results and analysis of the department's performance.

Select chapters contain spotlights which provide analysis of other work that the department pursued during 2023–24 which would otherwise not explicitly be captured through a performance measure.

Table 2.3: Results key 2023–24

Reporting result	Result calculation range
Target met	≥95%
Target substantially met	75% – 94%
Target partially met	50% – 74%
Target not met	≤49%
No target	Measure does not have a defined target

Performance snapshot

In 2023–24, we demonstrated performance against 34 measures which consist of 40 targets. The department’s effectiveness was assessed across 11 programs which directly support the achievement of our purposes and outcomes. All composite targets, where applicable, were given equal weight in determining the results of performance measures.

Of the 34 performance measures reported on:

- > 24 were met (70%)
- > 2 were substantially met (6%)
- > 5 were partially met (15%)
- > 1 was not met (3%)
- > 2 had no target (6%)

The target under performance measure 21 was not met as its associated program was placed on hold while broader government decisions were made regarding program delivery. This resulted in timeframes not being met as originally agreed. Two performance measures (36 and 37) do not have targets due to their unique operating contexts. The 2023–24 Corporate Plan contained 3 other performance measures not reported on here (16, 18 and 28), however, these were removed as they were found to either be inappropriate or no longer aligned to government priorities as described in Table 2.2: Table of changes.

Figure 2.1: 2023–24 performance results

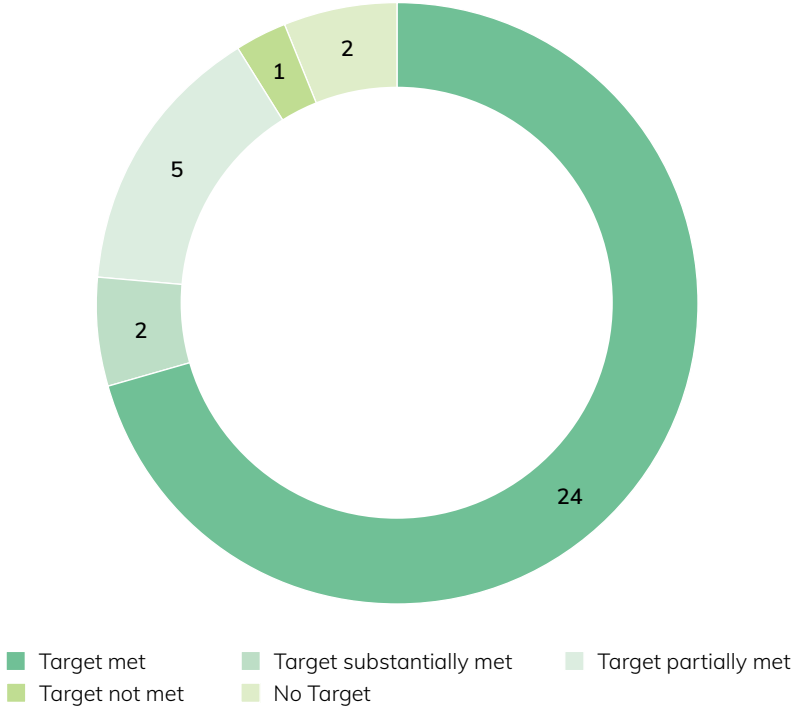


Table 2.4: Performance snapshot by outcome

Outcome	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Outcome 1 — Transport Connectivity (Infrastructure)	1	-	-	-	-
Outcome 2 — Transport Connectivity (Transport)	10	2	2	-	-
Outcome 3 — Regional Development, Local Government, Cities and Northern Australia	2	-	2	1	-
Outcome 4 — Territories	2	-	-	-	-
Outcome 5 — Communications Connectivity	5	-	-	-	-
Outcome 6 — Creativity and Culture	4	-	1	-	2
Total	24	2	5	1	2

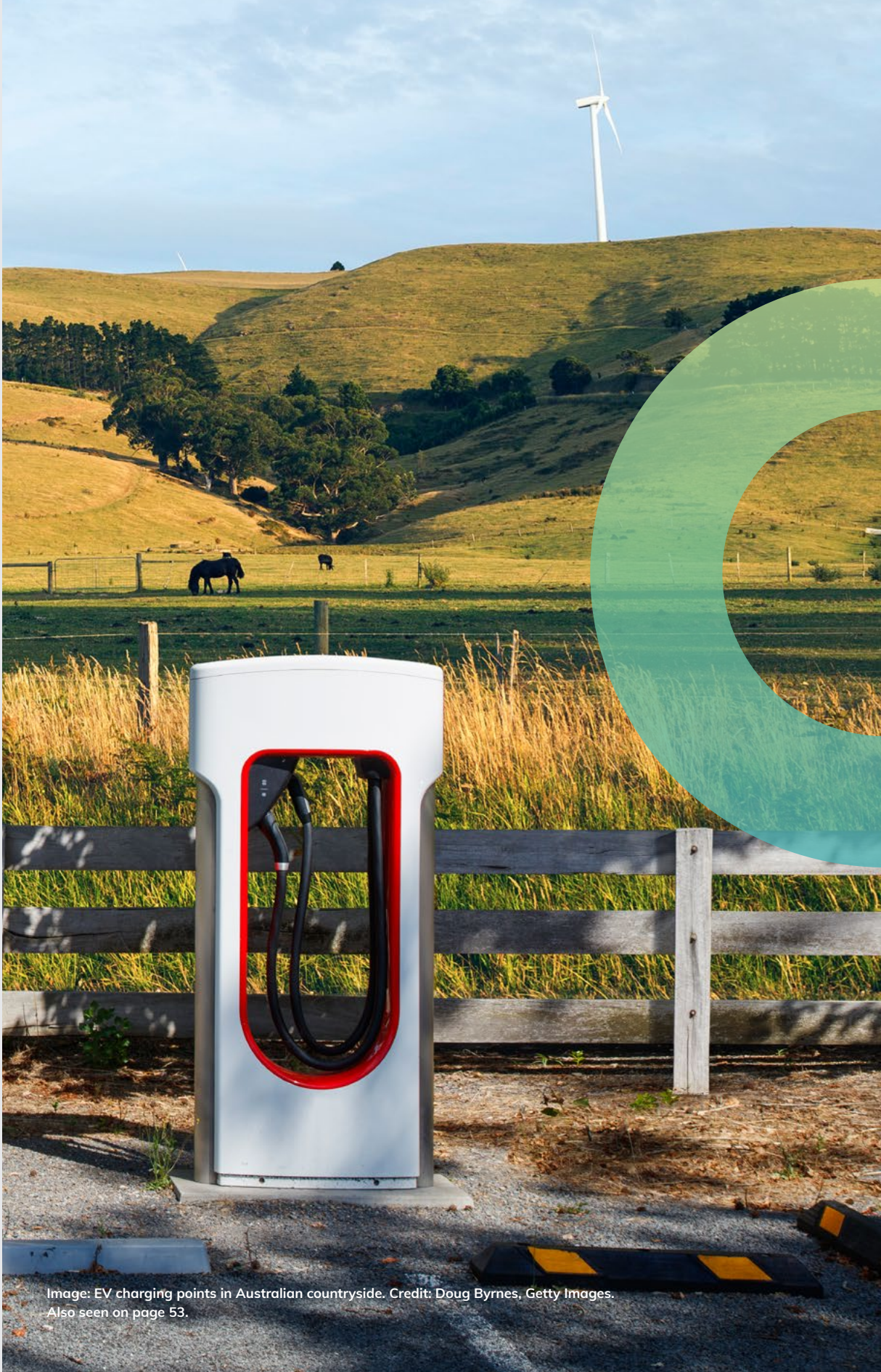


Image: EV charging points in Australian countryside. Credit: Doug Byrnes, Getty Images. Also seen on page 53.

Outcome 1:

Transport Connectivity (Infrastructure)



Outcome Statement

Improved infrastructure across Australia through investment in, and coordination of, transport and other infrastructure.

Purpose: Transport Connectivity

Supporting an efficient, sustainable, competitive, accessible, safe and secure transport system and supporting jobs through infrastructure investment.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 1.1 — Infrastructure Investment	1	-	-	-	-
Total	1	-	-	-	-



Image: Construction worker soil stamper with digger. Credit: DITRDCA

Program 1.1: Infrastructure Investment

The Infrastructure Investment Program supports economic growth, makes travel safer, increases transport access and supports regional development. It increases the efficiency, productivity, sustainability and safety of Australia's land transport infrastructure through programs and policies to improve connectivity for communities and freight.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Deliver and manage the Infrastructure Investment Program (IIP).	1

Performance results

Performance measure 1	Provide policy advice for funding decisions on infrastructure investment projects, as listed in the Schedules to the National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.41 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.43</i>
Category	Policy
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Land Transport Infrastructure Division
Limitations	The department identified and removed further exclusions from its population after random sampling processes had concluded. In response, the department lowered its confidence interval from 90% to 85% to account for a reduction in the sampled population. The department accepts a minor increase to our margin of error to uphold the integrity of our assessment processes.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sampled policy advice was 3.9 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 21 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department's internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 36 pieces. This provides the department with a confidence level of approximately 85% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

The policy advice reviewed as part of this performance measure directly relates to the department's role in supporting funding and project approval decisions made by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government for the Infrastructure Investment Program (IIP), under the *National Land Transport Act 2014* (the NLT Act), *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and *Federal Financial Relations Act 2009* (FFR Act). The department's policy advice details how projects represent a proper use of funds and are eligible for funding under the relevant legislation. Without this advice, and the decision-making it facilitates, funding for the program could not be expended on projects.

The provision of high quality, timely and evidence-based advice enables the proposed projects to be approved and funded, by including an assessment of project specific details. Once funding is approved, it continues to support the IIP project by enabling payments based on milestones agreed between parties. The timeliness and quality of this advice is instrumental in the administration of the IIP.

In 2023–24, the department anticipates the final expenditure for the IIP to be \$11.2 billion — this is the highest expenditure for the IIP in a financial year.

In 2023–24, the department:

- > received 1,060 milestone claims
- > made 874 milestone payments
- > rejected 186 milestone payments.

Spotlight

The Richmond-Winton Road upgrade

The Richmond-Winton Road upgrade focused on widening and resurfacing 11.2km of priority sections in North Queensland to reduce the impact of wet weather and enhance road safety. The work finished in 2022–23, and the project was finalised by the department in 2023–24.

The total project cost was \$12.8 million with the Australian Government's contribution totalling \$10.2 million (with the Queensland Government contributing the remainder). The department, with the Queensland Government, oversaw project development, delivery and evaluation, releasing milestone payments to Queensland on receipt of appropriate evidence and inputting into project governance as needed. There were project delays of three months due to inclement weather, remote location issues and other priorities, however the project still realised savings on total project costs at completion.



Image: Courtesy of the Department of Transport and Main Roads — Queensland Richmond-Winton Road upgrade.

The Richmond-Winton Road upgrade required an Indigenous Participation Plan (IPP). Under the Australian Government's *Indigenous Employment and Supplier-Use Infrastructure Framework*, IPPs must be developed for specific new road and rail construction projects, including projects that:

- > receive \$7.5 million or more in federal funding
- > are under \$7.5 million but have a high potential for strong Indigenous participation outcomes.

Consistent with the project's IPP the project maximised economic and employment opportunities for Indigenous workers, businesses, and suppliers.

- > **Employment Opportunities:** The project set a 3% recruitment target for Indigenous workers, translating to 959 anticipated work hours. Through collaboration with local Indigenous organisations, the project significantly surpassed this, achieving 2,007 Indigenous work hours (209% of the target).
- > **Supplier Engagement:** The project set a 4% Indigenous supplier use target, with an anticipated \$426,000 in contracts for Indigenous suppliers. It exceeded this goal, awarding \$520,147 to Indigenous businesses (122% of the target), fostering local economic growth.
- > **Capacity Building:** Training programs, mentorship, and support initiatives were implemented to promote sustainable development for Indigenous workers and businesses.
- > **Cultural Awareness:** All project staff received cultural awareness training to foster a respectful and inclusive work environment.

The Australian Government's *Indigenous Employment and Supplier-Use Infrastructure Framework* sets out a whole-of-government approach to increase opportunities for Indigenous job-seekers and businesses' participation in the delivery of Australian Government-funded land transport infrastructure projects. This enables Indigenous Australians to share in the economic opportunities created by these projects.

Spotlight

Melbourne Airport Rail Link

In 2023–24, the department facilitated negotiations between the Victorian Government and the operator of Melbourne Airport, Australian Pacific Airports (Melbourne) Pty Ltd (APAM), in relation to the location of the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) station at Melbourne Airport.

At the 2018–19 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$5 billion towards the project, based on a 50:50 split with the Victorian Government. The scope of the project is to provide a rail service for passengers travelling between Melbourne Airport and the Melbourne city centre, via Sunshine Station.

In April 2023, engagement between the Victorian Government and APAM ceased due to unresolved negotiations regarding the airport station location and design.



Image: Courtesy of the State Government of Victoria — Airport Station. Concept design only — subject to planning and environmental approvals and stakeholder engagement.

To find a resolution, the department engaged an independent negotiator to work with the Victorian Government and APAM, on the delivery of the MARL project.

The department developed Terms of Reference to articulate the scope of the review, how the review would be administered, and defined what was to be delivered following the review.

The department undertook the procurement of the independent negotiator in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, and engaged them on 4 April 2024.

Meetings between the parties, and other relevant stakeholders, were undertaken in line with the Terms of Reference to gather information to support the development of recommendations to the Australian Government on potential options to progress the project. The department also provided secretariat and other support for the negotiator.

The independent negotiator finalised their report on 6 June 2024, making 3 main recommendations, which were shared with the parties. These recommendations included that the Commonwealth and Victorian Government proceed with 'no regrets' work at Sunshine Station, that refreshed traffic modelling work be undertaken on the timeline for capacity of the Tullamarine Freeway and recommended against further Commonwealth and state consideration of an underground airport station at this time.

In July 2024, APAM advised its acceptance of an above-ground station for the proposed airport rail line. The parties will now undertake further discussions on aspects of the design, construction and operation of the proposed station.

The department's use of an independent negotiator has provided clarity in regards to the station location, enabling a pathway for the project to progress. The Commonwealth will continue to work with the Victorian Government and APAM to progress the project's approval requirements.

Spotlight

Shared Oversight of Government Business Enterprises

In 2023–24, the department continued to provide oversight and governance to support the delivery of nationally significant infrastructure projects such as Inland Rail, Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport and intermodal terminals being delivered by Government Business Enterprises (GBEs). The department achieved this through consistent engagement with, and reporting from Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) and its subsidiary Inland Rail Pty Ltd (IRPL), WSA Co Limited and National Intermodal Corporation Limited. The department continued to work with the GBEs to ensure appropriate governance arrangements were in place to support the delivery of government objectives.

In 2023–24, the department worked with the Department of Finance and ARTC to implement the government's response to the recommendations of 'The Delivery of Inland Rail: An Independent Review' (the Review) undertaken by Dr Kerry Schott AO. As of 30 June 2024, implementation of the government's response to 12 of the Review's 19 recommendations have been completed. The response to an additional recommendation has also now been implemented. Implementation of the response to the remaining 6 recommendations remain in progress.

One of the Review's recommendations was the establishment of a subsidiary company of ARTC to deliver the Inland Rail project. The department worked with ARTC and the Department of Finance to develop and implement the governance arrangements required to support the establishment of IRPL and transfer of delivery of the project. On 1 May 2024, IRPL took responsibility for the delivery of the Inland Rail project.



Image: Courtesy of Inland Rail Pty Ltd

Image: A helicopter landing, Australia. Credit: Tobias Titz, Getty Images.
Also seen on page 63.



Outcome 2: Transport Connectivity (Transport)



Outcome Statement

An efficient, sustainable, competitive, safe and secure transport system for all transport users through regulation, financial assistance and safety investigations.

Purpose: Transport Connectivity

Supporting an efficient, sustainable, competitive, accessible, safe and secure transport system and supporting jobs through infrastructure investment.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 2.1 — Surface Transport	4	-	1	-	-
Program 2.2 — Road Safety	1	2	-	-	-
Program 2.3 — Air Transport	5	-	1	-	-
Total	10	2	2	-	-



Image: Newcastle Rail, NSW. Credit: DITRDCA

Program 2.1: Surface Transport

The surface transport program supports economic growth, makes travel safer and increases transport access through delivering programs, policies and regulation for efficient, sustainable, safer and better-connected road, rail and maritime sectors.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Advise on and deliver better road safety as well as heavy vehicle and rail regulation.	2
Advise on technology advances in the road transport sector.	3
Implement the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy and Action Plan.	4
Supporting an efficient and sustainable transport system.	2, 3, 5, 6
Supporting a safe and accessible transport system.	2, 3, 6
Manage domestic maritime policy, programs and regulation to support efficient sea trade, vessel safety, Australian maritime skills capability and environment protection.	4, 6

Performance results

Performance measure 2	Policy advice to support rail safety and productivity reforms (including rail interoperability), and progression towards the implementation of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) and Heavy Vehicle Road Reform (HVRR) proposals
Target	a. Rail policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based b. HVRR and HVNL policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.47 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.49
Category	Policy
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Surface Transport Emissions and Policy Division

Performance measure 2	Policy advice to support rail safety and productivity reforms (including rail interoperability), and progression towards the implementation of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) and Heavy Vehicle Road Reform (HVRR) proposals
Limitations	The department identified and removed further exclusions from its population for target b. after random sampling processes had concluded as some of the sampled pieces were in draft and were otherwise not relevant for inclusion in the original population. In response, the department lowered its confidence interval from 90% to 80% for target b. to account for a reduction in the sampled population. The department accepts a minor increase to our margin of error to uphold the integrity of our assessment processes.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sampled rail policy advice (target a.) was 4.06 out of 5. The total average score of the sampled HVRR and HVNL policy advice (target b.) was 3.46 out of 5 meaning advice across both targets was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

The department’s internal strategic policy review panel assessed 16 pieces of policy advice for target a. from a total population of 20 to provide the department with a confidence interval for the result of 90%. The department’s internal strategic policy review panel assessed 13 pieces of policy advice for target b. from a total population of 24 to provide the department with a confidence interval for the result of approximately 80%.

Analysis

The department provided policy advice to support the continued progress of the rail reform packages; including improving the interoperability of rail systems workstream, HVNL and HVRR.

The department collaborated and consulted with a number of key stakeholders, including: state and territory governments, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR), the National Transport Commission (NTC), the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), Commonwealth agencies such as the Treasury, and Austroads. The department’s continued collaboration with the NTC and stakeholders, ensured that both rail reform and the HVNL and milestones remained on track during 2023–24.

Rail reform

The department provided policy advice in support of the Rail Safety National Law review (the review). The review’s terms of reference drafting were led by the department and received endorsement by all governments. The review was delivered by an independent reviewer with the NTC and completed in April 2024. The review’s recommendations focused on the positioning of the ONRSR to effectively deliver its regulatory functions and the flexibility of legislation to support the National Rail Action Plan’s interoperability agenda.

The department continued to work with the NTC and state and territory governments to improve the interoperability of rail systems. The department also manages the \$180.1 million Regional Australia Level Crossing Safety Program to improve safety around railway crossings in regional areas. The Regional Australia Level Crossing Safety Program supports collaboration between governments, industry and the public by implementing a holistic and coordinated approach towards improving safety around level crossings.

Heavy vehicle reform

The department’s policy advice supported the progression of HVNL reform proposals. In 2023–24, the department drafted key pieces of advice to support the delivery of the 2024 HVNL Decision Regulation Impact Statement to the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers’ Meeting. The department additionally supported the delivery of a national automated access system in its coordination of the National Automated Access System Oversight Committee.

In 2023–24, the department provided advice to guide the forward approach in delivering the HVRR — this process will be rolled out in 2024–25 to inform advice to the secretary and ministers. The department provided policy advice to support the finalisation of products for the implementation of the HVRR. These products include the Phase 6 report and Data Governance Guide for the National Service Level Standards, signing an agreement with Compass IoT to trial the provision of connected-vehicle data and a ministerial briefing on the regulatory component of heavy vehicle charges. We additionally engaged with various stakeholders to support the design and development of the HVRR including; states and territories through the Land Transport Market Reform Steering Committee, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Treasury, and the New Zealand Ministry of Transport and industry associations.

Performance measure 3	Progress of reforms to support the safe, legal and nationally consistent introduction and uptake of Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs) in Australia
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The majority of Commonwealth-led actions in the National Land Transport Technology Action Plan (NLTTAP) 2020–23 are completed by the end of 2023 and progress is made towards developing the next iteration of the NLTTAP b. Progress on a national Automated Vehicle Safety Law (AVSL) and associated in-service framework meets the timeframes set by Infrastructure and Transport Ministers Meetings (ITMM)
Methodology	<p>The annual progress report against actions in the NLTTAP is used to assess performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The majority is defined as $\geq 80\%$ of Commonwealth-led actions in the NLTTAP and its Annual Review progress report. b. An analysis of updates provided to ITMM and/or the Infrastructure and Transport Senior Officials Committee (ITSOC) on the progress of Commonwealth-led elements of the regulatory framework, compared against the implementation timeframes agreed by ITMM.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24, p.49 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.50
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target partially met.
Divisional owner	Surface Transport Emissions and Policy Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24.

Target a. nine out of the 11 actions in the NLTTAP 2020–23 were complete by the end of 2023 which is a result of 81%.

Target b. the Commonwealth-led element of the regulatory framework was completed within the implementation timeframes agreed by the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers.

Analysis

Commonwealth-led actions in the NLTTAP

The Commonwealth-led actions in the 2020–23 Action Plan were implemented in collaboration with other entities — including states and territories, the National Transport Commission (NTC), and Austroads.

During 2023–24, the department made significant progress towards developing the next iteration (2024–27) of the NLTTAP.

The Action Plans support Australia to progress towards a nationally consistent deployment of emerging transport technologies like CAVs. A key workstream in the 2020–23 Action Plan and the draft 2024–27 Action Plan is in developing the regulatory framework for the safe deployment of Automated Vehicles and the agreement from ITMM for the Commonwealth to progress with drafting the AVSL. The Action Plans support the department’s ‘Transport Connectivity’ outcome to support an efficient, sustainable, competitive, accessible, safe and secure transport system. The draft 2024–27 Action Plan builds on the work of the 2020–23 Action Plan and supports Commonwealth, state and territory governments’ (ITMM’s) interoperability, decarbonisation, freight productivity and safety priorities.

Automated Vehicle Safety Law (AVSL) progress

The department led the development of AVSL drafting instructions in consultation with the states and territories, the NTC, and other relevant Commonwealth entities. These have been considered by ITMM and work is now underway to proceed with drafting the new law.

The department also worked with the NTC, and state and territory officials, to undertake consultation on a number of further policy issues that will need to be settled prior to finalising the AVSL. There was strong engagement from a wide range of community and industry groups in this process, and the department is now working through the submissions received to determine how to best resolve these matters.

Performance measure 4	Progress implementing the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy (the Strategy) to 2040
Target	Delivery milestones specified in the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy are met for the financial year and a five-year review of the Strategy and Action Plan is commenced
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > State and territory provided data is verified and approved by data owners, and then consolidated to provide a national view of performance, consisting of an analysis of program and policy outcomes consistent with the National Action Plan and jurisdictions' individual implementation plans. > Documentation of the commencement of open written submission process and consultation workshops are consolidated into an internal report for analysis and reporting.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.48 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.51</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target partially met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target partially met.
Divisional owner	Surface Transport Emissions and Policy Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was partially met in 2023–24.

The department commenced the 5-year review of the Strategy and Action Plan in August 2023. The review was completed and its report published in May 2024. Due to the commencement of the review of the Strategy and Action Plan, Infrastructure and Transport Ministers agreed that the annual report would not be completed for this cycle.

Analysis

The department met the second component of its target in 2023–24, as it commenced, conducted and completed the first 5-year review of the Strategy and Action Plan (the Strategy). The review found that the Strategy's foundations remained strong, however, there were some areas that could be strengthened. These included:

- > updating the Strategy's goals to include references to decarbonising the freight and supply chain sector, resilient supply chains, a portable workforce and improving productivity
- > proposing 4 new National Priority Action Areas: productivity, resilience, decarbonisation and data, under which nationally significant actions will be developed
- > developing key performance indicators for inclusion in the refreshed Strategy.

The department's success in delivering the 5-year review of the Strategy and Action Plan will ensure they remain fit for purpose into the future.

The department consulted with a number of Commonwealth departments and agencies as part of the review of the Strategy and Action Plan. Given the breadth of Strategy, the department's work to deliver its review was critical to ensure the review was holistic in its consideration of matters and took into consideration views outside the remit of the department.

The department's performance demonstrates the relevance of the foundations of the Strategy to the current day environment. This work has empowered the department to address gaps identified by industry, such as the decarbonisation of the sector.

Performance measure 5		Advice on reducing CO ₂ emissions for the transport sector
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence-based	
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.	
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.48 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.52</i>	
Category	Policy	
2023–24 result	Target met	
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.	
Divisional owner	Surface Transport Emissions and Policy Division	
Limitations	Not applicable.	

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sampled policy advice was 3.86 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 15 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department's internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 16 pieces. This provides the department with a confidence level of approximately 95% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

In relation to land transport, the department's policy advice supported the implementation of the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES), noxious emissions standards (Euro 6d for light vehicles and Euro VI for heavy vehicles), and the Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System. Advice has additionally assisted the National Transport Commission in making a case for reform to mass limits to support the introduction of Euro VI for heavy vehicles.

In relation to the maritime sector, the department's policy advice successfully influenced securing approval of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions negotiation mandate at the 81st session of the International Maritime Organization's Maritime Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 81) in March 2024, agreed a green and digital shipping corridor

memorandum of understanding with Singapore, and undertook 4 rounds of consultation on the *Maritime Emissions Reduction National Action Plan* (MERNAP).

During 2023–24, the department developed impact analyses and submissions to provide advice on policy development, consultation timing and outcomes, legislative development, determinations and amendments. Three impact analyses were developed:

- > *Improving Australia’s fuel and vehicle emissions standards Final Impact Analysis*
- > *Final Impact Analysis for Improving Pedestrian Safety — Acoustic Vehicle Alerting Systems for Quiet Road Transport Vehicles*
- > *Cleaner, Cheaper to Run Cars: The Australian New Vehicle Efficiency Standard Impact Analysis.*

These impact analyses were assessed by the Office of Impact Analysis as good practice.

Passage of the *New Vehicle Efficiency Standard Act 2024* in May 2024, together with the 2024–25 Budget, will enable implementation of the policy, including the development of various legislative instruments and rules, establishment of a department regulator and build of the necessary IT systems.

To support Australia protecting its national interests in further negotiations at the International Maritime Organization on the establishment of a regulatory framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping, a revised negotiation mandate will be sought from government. The development of Australia’s proposed position will be informed by detailed economic modelling.

Synthesising the strong industry stakeholder engagement in the co-design consultation process to date on the MERNAP will provide the evidence supporting the department’s advice to the government on a pathway for decarbonising Australia’s domestic maritime sector.

The department worked closely with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Treasury, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in developing advice.

Performance measure 6	Provide policy advice supporting maritime safety
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence-based to support decision making on maritime safety matters
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> , p.48 and <i>DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24</i> , p.54
Category	Policy
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Surface Transport Emissions and Policy Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sample policy advice was 4 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 5 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department's internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 5 pieces. This provides the department with a confidence level of 100% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

For the purposes of this assessment, the department considered submissions that were developed to provide the government with advice on policy development, consultation timing and outcomes, legislative development, declarations and amendments. In 2023–24, policy advice has supported advancements in legislation to improve maritime safety policy settings. This includes actions that:

- > introduce legislative provisions that will provide clarity for safety provisions between 2 different regulatory regimes for offshore floating production, storage and offloading vessels
- > remake sunseting regulations to include vessel management plans for Australian Border Force vessels
- > update the safety legislation for domestic commercial vessels is referencing the correct corresponding state legislation
- > meet Australia's international obligations by advancing our maritime safety legislation to cover industrial personnel, and enabling seafarers to use electronic certificates to meet their certification requirements.

The advice provided in ministerial submissions presents a solid basis for decision-making. All advice to advance maritime safety policy settings to government has been supported by evidence-based findings.

Australia participates in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS), which aims to promote the consistent and effective implementation of applicable IMO instruments. The audit scheme aims to provide an audited Member State with a comprehensive and objective assessment of how effectively it administers and implements those mandatory IMO instruments, which includes those with respect to maritime safety.

Under the IMSAS, an audit of Australia's compliance with, and implementation of IMO international conventions was undertaken in April 2023. Australia performed well in this audit, with a limited number of findings (4) and observations (1).

In developing policy advice, the department works closely with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. The department also collaborated and consulted with state and territory governments, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Attorney-General's Department, AusTrade, central agencies (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, and the Department of Finance) and peak industry bodies.

The advice provided by the department enabled the government to ensure maritime safety policy settings kept pace with international standards and is consistent with Australia's international obligations. The department's advice has also supported legislation which provides a pathway to address long-standing gaps between the regulation of safety under the Navigation Act 2012 and the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*.

To build on the results and remain agile, the department will continue to look for ways that enhance the quality and content of policy advice. Additionally, the department will continue to strengthen existing stakeholder relationships whilst looking for opportunities to establish new ones.

Program 2.2: Road Safety

The road safety program makes travel safer through coordinating a national strategic approach to improving road safety and working to make vehicles safer for all road users.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Advise on and deliver better road safety.	7
Regulate the first provision of road vehicles to the Australian market.	8
Supporting a safe and accessible transport system.	9

Performance results

Performance measure 7	Progress of the implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy 2021–30 (the Strategy) through delivery of the Australian Government’s commitments under the National Road Safety Action Plan 2023–25
Target	Progress on the implementation of Australian Government actions is accepted by Infrastructure and Transport Ministers, as reported through the National Road Safety Annual Progress Report
Methodology	The department coordinates updates to the annual progress report on road safety reporting through consultation with other agencies within the Intergovernmental Steering Committee established under the Action Plan. The department verifies all responses and aggregates them into an internal report for consideration by the Infrastructure and Transport Ministers’ Meeting (ITMM). The ITMM determines how and when the report is publicly released.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.49 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.56
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Road and Vehicle Safety Division
Limitations	The department reported on data available from June to December 2023 as the ITMM reports in December each year. Data for January to June 2024 will become available in December 2024. This will be provided in next year’s reporting. For following years, the department is updating its processes to enable reporting over a full financial year of data.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24.

All Infrastructure and Transport Ministers agreed to publicly release of the National Road Safety Annual Progress Report 2023 in an out-of-session vote, in May 2024. The report was released on 17 May 2024 and is available at www.roadsafety.gov.au.

Analysis

This is the first year a National Road Safety Annual Progress report has been delivered. This outcome reports on Australian Government efforts to achieve departmental priorities under Outcome 2, specifically through supporting a safe and secure transport system through infrastructure investment; particularly under Program 2.2: Road Safety. This report will support the Australian Government to deliver safety policies and programs that make travel safer through coordinating a national strategic approach to improving road safety and working to make vehicles safer for all road users.

The department coordinates whole-of-Australian Government implementation of the Action Plan, as well as the National Road Safety Annual Progress Report. While the department has the responsibility for the majority of Commonwealth actions, a number of other Commonwealth agencies contributed to the delivery of Action Plan Commitments in 2023, including Comcare, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the National Transport Commission. The contribution of these agencies is reported through the National Road Safety Annual Progress report.

Performance measure 8	
Administration of the Road Vehicle Standards (RVS) legislation	
Target	a. 100% of applications are decided within legislative timeframes b. 75% of voluntary recalls are published within the service level agreement of seven days
Methodology	Analysis and verification of application, or recall lodgement dates, and decision or recall publication dates.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.49 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.57</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target substantially met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Road and Vehicle Safety Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was substantially met in 2023–24.

Target a. Result: 99.97% of applications were decided within legislative timeframes

Target b. Result: 66.67% of voluntary recalls were published within the service level agreement of 7 days. This represents a result of 89% against target b.

Analysis

Target a.

In 2023–24 99.97% of applications were decided within legislative timeframes. Assessments within legislated timeframes allow for provision of road vehicles to the Australian market in a timely manner ensuring competition and choice in the motor vehicle industry.

Administrative errors can result in applications not being work flowed through the system correctly and applications not being assessed within timeframes. Updates to the department's Road Vehicle Regulator (ROVER) software during the reporting period has reduced these errors.

To limit the likelihood of future administrative errors training, standard operating procedures and quality assurance processes are in place. The department will continue to implement process improvements and training to minimise errors and ensure all applications are assessed in a timely manner.

Target b.

In 2023–24 66.67% of voluntary recalls are published within the service level agreement of 7 days. This represents a result of 89% against target b. of this performance measure. By publishing recalls as soon as practicable, the department ensures that the Australian public can access vehicle safety information from a centralised government website. This will improve safety outcomes.

The timeliness of recall publications is heavily dependent on suppliers providing responses within 7 days. This is sometimes influenced by the Australian supplier needing to liaise with overseas corporate headquarters and legal representatives.

All supplier representatives who manage recalls will need Authority to Act going forward. This may improve communication efficiency and publication timeframes by enabling better use of the ROVER messaging system. The department will continue to work with industry and raise awareness of the importance of publishing recalls promptly and improve responsiveness to the department.

Performance measure 9	Delivery of non-infrastructure road safety grants programs to support the implementation of the National Road Safety Action Plan 2023–25
Target	Non-infrastructure road safety grants programs support the priorities of the National Road Safety Action Plan 2023–25 and are delivered in line with the terms of individual grant agreements
Methodology	Verification of initial payments being made in line with executed grant agreements for projects which align with the National Road Safety Action Plan 2023–25.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.49
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Substantially met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Road and Vehicle Safety Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was substantially met in 2023–24.

In 2023–24, 22 out of 23 proposed grant agreements (96%) were executed for projects under the first two funding streams (Community Education and Awareness and Vulnerable Road Users) of the *National Road Safety Action Plan 2023–25* (the Action Plan). One grant agreement has not yet been executed and its project not commenced due to ongoing negotiations. Initial payments totalling approximately \$1.5 million were made on 19 of the 22 executed grant agreements (86%). The remaining 3 grantees had not yet provided invoices in time for payment in the 2023–24 year.

Analysis

The National Road Safety Action Grants Program (the program) supports 5 key areas of activity critical to reducing deaths and serious injuries on Australia's roads as identified in the Action Plan:

- > Community education and awareness (including workplace safety)
- > Vulnerable road users
- > First Nations road safety
- > Technology and innovation
- > Research and data.

The program was established in 2023–24, with project activity required to be completed by 31 January 2026, with program completion due by 30 June 2026. This program supports the Australian Government's implementation of the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021–30* by delivering key non-infrastructure commitments in the Action Plan.

In 2023–24 no grant agreements were executed for projects under the remaining three funding streams as applications were still being assessed. In future reporting, this measure will assess grantee project delivery based on progress reports to determine alignment with outputs detailed in individual grant agreements.

Program 2.3: Air Transport

The air transport program facilitates investment in aviation infrastructure, ensures the aviation industry operates within a clear and robust regulatory framework, and provides Australian businesses and consumers with access to competitive international and domestic air services, as well as access to regional and remote areas.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Lead the design of the Western Sydney Airport flight paths.	10
Manage domestic aviation programs and regulation.	11, 12, 13, 14
Administer effective domestic aviation safety policy.	15
Supporting a safe and accessible transport system.	12, 15

Performance results

Performance measure 10	Development and Environmental Assessment of Preliminary Flight Paths for Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport (WSI)
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Release of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for WSI's preliminary flight paths — September/October 2023 b. Release of the Public Submissions Report — March/April 2024, subject to further planning and decision by Minister
Methodology	Assessment and verification of department records, including governance groups meeting minutes, the Project Management Plan for the airspace design process and reporting for the environmental assessment package.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.50 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.60</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target partially met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target partially met.
Divisional owner	International Aviation Technology and Services Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

Overall, the target for this performance measure was partially met in 2023–24.

Target a. This target was met as the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport's (WSI) preliminary flight paths was released on 24 October 2023.

Target b. This target was not met as the Public Submissions Report was not released in March/April 2024. This was due to the high volume of public submissions received by the department.

Analysis

The department allowed for a public exhibition period of 67 business days following the release of the draft EIS on 24 October 2023. This provided the community with sufficient time to respond to the preliminary flight paths and their associated environmental impacts, as outlined in the draft EIS. The department received 8,477 submissions on the draft EIS. In comparison, the 2016 EIS for Western Sydney Airport received 4,975 public submissions. Due to the high number of submissions received, the Public Submissions Report is still being finalised and scheduled for release with the final EIS to take place in Quarter 4 of 2024. On 13 May 2024, the department released a brochure summarising the high-level issues raised in submissions.

Though the EIS project program schedule initially indicated that a draft Public Submissions Report would be ready for release by April 2024, the department is now planning for its release in the 2024–25 reporting year. We have adjusted our forward targets as a result.

The department was supported in its work by numerous other agencies including; Airservices Australia (Airservices), Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Department of Defence (Defence), and WSA Co Limited (WSA Co).

Airservices and CASA are co-referrers of the Plan for Aviation Airspace Management (i.e. the preliminary flight paths for WSI) to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water under section 160 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Airservices, CASA, Defence and WSA Co are assisting the department in finalising the Public Submissions Report.

The delay of the draft Public Submissions Report has had no impact on the EIS publication timeline. The final EIS, which will include the final Public Submissions Report, is still scheduled for publication at the end of 2024.

Performance measure 11	Percentage of master plans and major development plans processed for federally leased airports within statutory timeframes
Target	100% of master plans and major development plans assessed and submitted to Minister with sufficient time for consideration with statutory timeframes in each financial year
Methodology	All master plans and major development plan submissions and the decisions are recorded through Parliamentary Document Management System (PDMS) and include statutory timeframes.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.50 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.61</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Domestic Aviation and Reform Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24.

All master plans and major development plans were considered by the minister within statutory timeframes under the *Airports Act 1996* (the Act).

Analysis

The statutory timeframe to process master plans and major development plans for federally leased airports is within 50 business days as specified in the Act. During the 2023–24 financial year, the department processed 100% of master plans and major development plans within the statutory timeframes.

The department assessed 3 master plans and 3 major development plans in 2023–24 in advance of a decision to approve, or refuse to approve, by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. Master Plans for Archerfield Airport, Townsville Airport and Moorabbin Airport were assessed by the department within statutory timeframes. Major development plans for the Brisbane Airport Domestic Terminal Building P2 Car Park Extension, Canberra Airport 3 Wellington Place, and Perth Airport’s Woolworths Distribution Centre Expansion were similarly assessed by the department within the statutory timeframes.

The minister made decisions on all draft master plans and major development plans within the statutory period. None of the plans were automatically deemed approved in 2023–24. The minister was provided with information to support their decision about whether to approve or refuse to approve master plans under section 81 of the Act and major development plans under section 94 of the Act.

Ministerial consideration of Master Plans and Major Development Plans ensures proposed land-use and developments on airports align with legislative and regulatory requirements, and maintain the safety and efficiency of aviation operations. Detailed assessments against legislated requirements by the department and other agencies, such as Airservices Australia, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water protect the community, general aviation participants, airport users and state and local governments from incompatible or unsuitable developments or land planning decisions.

Performance measure 12	Performance of the Regional Airports Program (RAP) and the Remote Airstrip Upgrade (RAU) program
Target	RAP and RAU projects are completed in line with their funding agreements
Methodology	Analysis of funding agreements, project completion reports, financial payments, and reporting to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources Business Grants Hub.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.50 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.62</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Domestic Aviation and Reform Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. During the 2023–24 financial year, 46 RAP projects and 44 RAU projects were completed in line with funding agreements.

Analysis

Of the 46 RAP projects completed during the 2023–24 year, 12 required variations to extend their original project end date, with 17 of the 44 RAU projects requiring variations to extend the project end date due to impacts from COVID-19, delays in contractor availability and supply chains, cost increases, requirements for scope changes and extreme weather events.

The Australian Government provides funding for the RAP and RAU to deliver improved safety and access to, and for, regional and remote Australian communities. Objectives of the RAP and RAU programs are to:

- > improve safety of aircraft, operators and passengers using regional airports or aerodromes (RAP) and remote and very remote airstrips (RAU) by assisting airport or aerodrome owners/operators to undertake essential works, promoting aviation safety and access for regional or remote communities

- > facilitate improved delivery of essential goods and services such as food supplies, health care and passenger air services
- > meet the operational requirements of aeromedical and other emergency services in the region
- > improve connectivity of Australia's regions to domestic and global market opportunities (RAP only) and complement air services delivery to communities subsidised by the Australian Government Remote Air Services Subsidy (RASS) Scheme (RAU only)
- > support Closing the Gap outcomes.

On 9 May 2024, the Assistant Minister for Regional Development announced an additional 21 projects under Round 10 of the RAU.

In the 2024–25 Budget, additional funding was announced for the RAP and RAU, including:

- > \$40 million to extend the RAP for a further 3 years and to extend the program to assist with the infrastructure required to transition to net zero emissions for example with electric charges or hydrogen storage facilities
- > \$50 million over 3 years to extend the RAU to improve safety of remote airstrips and accessibility for people with disability.

Performance measure 13	Remote Air Services Subsidy (RASS) Scheme performance is indicated by eligible communities in remote and isolated areas of Australia having access to a regular air transport service for the carriage of passengers and goods
Target	All eligible communities are admitted and maintained in the RASS Scheme
Methodology	Analysis of consolidated data from contracts with RASS air operators, and number of ports serviced through the RASS program.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.50 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.63</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Domestic Aviation and Reform Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. One new location (Kalamurina, South Australia) was admitted to the RASS Scheme during 2023–24 and existing locations who chose to receive a service were maintained within the Scheme.

Analysis

Monthly reporting from each air operator for each region confirmed whether a location was serviced or not for each flight service. A location can choose not to receive a service, or may not be serviced due to airstrip condition or weather impact. It is the responsibility of the location to maintain the airstrip in order to be able to receive the service and to provide a report each week that it is safe to land at the airstrip.

Remote aviation services that are not commercially viable, but are essential for the social and economic wellbeing of communities in remote and isolated areas of Australia, were supported with these communities provided with much needed transportation, fresh food, education material, medical/veterinary supplies and/or machinery parts.

Performance measure 14	The number of per-fluoroalkyl and poly-fluoroalkyl (PFAS) investigations commenced at civilian airports
Target	The department has executed contracts with expert contaminated land consultants to undertake per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) investigations at 16 civilian airports
Methodology	Data is collated from the total number of contracts contained in the contract register. For civilian airports to participate in PFAS investigations, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), must be executed prior to commencement. Execution of a contract by a departmental delegate will be the metric to confirm that an airport is under investigation.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.50 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.63</i>
Category	Proxy/Regulatory
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Domestic Aviation and Reform Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in the 2023–24 reporting year. At 30 June 2024, the department is currently undertaking PFAS investigations in relation to 16 airports.

Analysis

As at 30 June 2024, the department has executed contractual agreements with expert contaminated land consultants to undertake PFAS investigations in relation to 16 airports. Procurement of these consultants commenced after the relevant airports had confirmed their intention to participate in the program.

An additional airport initially committed to participate in the program, but subsequently rescinded this commitment prior to a PFAS investigation contract being executed. As such, this airport is not considered to be under investigation.

The Australian Government has committed \$130.5 million over 6 financial years (to 30 June 2027) to undertake detailed environmental investigations to understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination at civilian airports where the Commonwealth has historically provided firefighting services which used PFAS-containing foams.

The department is undertaking the PFAS investigation process in consultation with a range of key stakeholders including (but not limited to) federal, state, and local government entities, environmental regulators, and the airports and their tenants. These stakeholders are regularly consulted and engaged in the delivery of the PFAS investigation process, however the department is solely responsible for project-managing PFAS investigations.

PFAS investigations are long-term technical undertakings which take on average 2 to 3 years to complete, but airports vary significantly in the scope of investigation that may be required. This affects the ability to accurately determine a timeframe for investigation completion at each airport.

In the 2024–25 reporting year, the department will focus on further increasing the number of PFAS investigations commenced at civilian airports. This is intended to be a proxy measure, which will be updated in forward reporting years to reflect the status of investigation outcomes and confirmation of departmental performance in achieving the objectives of the program.

Performance measure 15	Contribute to a reduction in the number of aviation fatalities per 100,000 people for the current year's 10-year average
Target	The current rolling 10-year average aviation fatalities is maintained or reduced
Methodology	Analysis and verification of Australian Transport Safety Bureau air fatalities data with reference to departmental policy advice on air safety.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.51 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.64</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	International Aviation, Technology and Services Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. In 2023, there were 33 aviation fatalities, a rate of 0.12 fatalities per 100,000 people. The 10-year average (2014–2023) was 0.12 fatalities per 100,000 people, unchanged from the previous 10-year average (2013–2022).

Analysis

The availability of safe, efficient and sustainable air services within Australia and internationally is critical to our national interest, and Australia has worked hard to develop and maintain an internationally-respected and mature aviation safety system.

Australia was one of the first countries in the world to implement a State Safety Programme (SSP) and *National Aviation Safety Plan* (NASP). The department is currently finalising Australia's second NASP for release in 2024, which builds on the lessons learned from our inaugural NASP in 2021.

The Australian SSP plays an important role in identifying, monitoring and maintaining the effectiveness of all aspects of our aviation safety performance and objectives. It establishes our key safety principles, structures and processes that underpin our future aviation safety system.

The Australian NASP supports the SSP by setting out clear strategies on how we intend to meet our aviation safety objectives. Both documents are supported by Australia's *National Air Navigation Plan* (NANP) which outlines our current air traffic management system, in addition to the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and industry.

Outcome 3:

Regional Development, Local Government, Cities and Northern Australia



Outcome Statement

Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of Australia's cities and regions including northern Australia, through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through investment in infrastructure and measures that stimulate economic growth; and providing grants and financial assistance.

Purpose: Regional Development

Improving living standards and facilitating economic growth in cities and regions including northern Australia.

Image: Sunset over Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. Credit: Posnov, Getty Images.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 3.1 — Regional Development	-	-	1	-	-
Program 3.2 — Local Government	1	-	-	-	-
Program 3.3 — Cities	-	-	1	1	-
Program 3.4 — Growing a Stronger Northern Australian Economy	1	-	-	-	-
Total	2	-	2	1	-



Image: Regional Community. Credit: DITRDCA

Spotlight

Projects to grow a stronger Northern Australian economy

Pilbara Ports Project

The department continues to work with the Western Australian Government and Pilbara Ports overseeing the implementation of a \$565 million investment to support common-user port infrastructure upgrades at Lumsden and Dampier. These upgrades will unlock supply chain capacity; facilitating industry diversification within the Pilbara. The Lumsden Point development is progressing at Port Hedland with construction of a causeway, and Pilbara Ports awarding major construction contracts for dredging and land reclamation. It is anticipated the common-user upgrades at Port Dampier, which includes construction of the Dampier Cargo Wharf Link Bridge, will commence in 2025.



Image: Courtesy of Pilbara Ports Port Hedland, WA

These major projects are delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement — Infrastructure Schedule. The first 2 milestone payments under the Schedule were completed successfully in 2023–24.

Central Australia Plan Community Infrastructure Package

The department is working with the Northern Territory Government, Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller and MacDonnell and Central Desert Regional Councils to identify in-need community infrastructure projects as part of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)-managed Central Australia Plan.

In 2023–24, the first tranche of projects within the Central Australia Plan Community Infrastructure Package (the Package) commenced (9 projects representing \$5.2 million), and in 2024–25, the second tranche of projects was announced (23 projects representing \$28 million). The Package, based on advice from the Central Australia Plan Aboriginal Leadership Group, will support the delivery of community infrastructure that provides a range of social and economic benefits by improving community amenities and liveability in Central Australia.

The Package is delivered through a Federation Funding Agreement — Infrastructure Schedule. To date, all Tranche 1 projects are underway benefitting 9 communities within Central Australia.

Program 3.1: Regional Development

The regional development program supports regional development and local communities through regionally focused stakeholder consultation and engagement, research, policy development and program delivery activities to create jobs, drive regional economic growth and build stronger regional communities.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Deliver programs to support regional development and local governments.	17

Performance results

Performance measure 17 ⁸	Establishment and implementation of the regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP) within agreed timeframes
Target	Program is opened and funding committed and expended under rPPP within agreed timeframes
Methodology	Data is available from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources Business Grants Hub (Business Grants Hub) on establishment and implementation of the program. This is supported by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government's media release opening the rPPP, accompanied by the Program Guidelines, on 23 August 2023. An initial 6 successful projects were announced in the Minister's media release on 16 May 2024.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.57 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.73
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target partially met.
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24
Divisional owner	Partnerships and Projects Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

8 This performance measure was amended in the 2024–25 PBS, however further review found it was correctly published in the 2023–24 Corporate Plan. Reporting is against what was published in the 2023–24 Corporate Plan.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was partially met in 2023–24. The rPPP provides funding between \$500,000 and \$50 million across 2 streams to state and territory governments and entities, local government entities, incorporated not-for-profit organisations and regional universities to support both precinct development proposals and the delivery of construction-ready precinct projects across regional, rural and remote Australia. On 16 May 2024, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, announced an initial 6 successful projects following their consideration of the first batch of assessments under the rPPP. These projects have been announced but not yet financially committed, therefore a partially met result has been recorded. At 30 June 2024, a second batch of applications was under assessment by the department.

Analysis

Six projects were approved for funding in May 2024 totalling \$35.17 million. At 30 June 2024, successful applicants had not yet entered into formal funding arrangements. Funding is expected to be expended in the 2024–25 financial year. The budget of \$100 million in 2023–24 was moved into 2024–25 through a 'Movement of Funds' process. A second batch of applications is under assessment by the department, with further applications being packaged by the Business Grants Hub for assessment by the rPPP's Independent Expert Panel. The department is progressing consideration of funding arrangements for successful projects.

Delivery of the rPPP in 2023–24 and beyond will contribute to the *Regional Investment Framework*. Subject to the nature of applications received, implementation of the rPPP, and delivery of a greater number of precinct development plans and precinct infrastructure projects across regional and remote Australia, will contribute to other Australian Government policies and priorities, such as social and affordable housing, the National Cultural Policy and the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

Program 3.2: Local Government

The local government program supports regional development and local communities through delivery of policy advice to the Australian Government and financial assistance to local governments to strengthen local government capacity and better support local communities.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Deliver programs to support regional development and local government.	19

Performance results

Performance measure 19	Financial assistance is provided to local government in accordance with the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 consisting of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a general-purpose component which is distributed between the states and territories according to population (i.e. on a per capita basis) b. an identified local road component which is distributed between the states and territories according to fixed historical shares
Target	Funding is provided on time and aligned with the budget appropriation
Methodology	Analysis of the department's Regional Development and Local Government Division Central Data Store, the Financial Management System and the Department of Industry, Science and Resources Business Grants Hub.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.59 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.76
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met
Divisional owner	Regional Development and Local Government Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. In 2023–24, the Australian Government provided \$2.8 billion in untied funds under the Financial Assistance Grant Program. This included an early payment of 85%, or \$2.78 billion, of the 2024–25 estimated entitlement (\$3.3 billion) to ensure councils had funds ready to deliver the services we all rely on.

Analysis

All quarterly payments for 2023–24 were made in accordance with section 9(3) and (4) of the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. On 28 June 2024, the Australian Government announced an 85% bring forward payment of the estimated 2024–25 Financial Assistance Grant entitlement be made to assist councils to deliver services. The bring forward payment of \$2.78 billion was made to states and territories on 28 June 2024. The Financial Assistance Grant Program supports the Australian Government’s objective of providing financial assistance to local governments to strengthen local government capacity and better support local communities.



Image: Public playground, Hobart, Tasmania. Credit: DITRDCA

Program 3.3: Cities

The cities program supports the development of more liveable and productive cities through programs and policies that support jobs and economic growth, manage population pressures and reduce congestion.

Key activities

Key activity ⁹	Performance measure
Advise on and deliver commitments to enhance Australia's cities and towns.	20, 21

Performance results

Performance measure 20	Establishment and implementation of the urban Precincts and Partnerships Program (uPPP) within agreed timeframes
Target	Program is established within agreed timeframes in preparation for grant funding which will commence from 2024–25
Methodology	Data is available from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources Business Grants Hub (Business Grants Hub) on establishment and implementation of the Program. This is supported by the Minister's media release of 16 May 2024 releasing a Forecast Funding Opportunity for the Program.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.60 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.78</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target partially met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Partnerships and Projects Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

9 The key activities have been updated from the *DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24* to better reflect the work under Program 3.3: Cities.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was partially met in 2023–24. Following program design, on 16 May 2024, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government released a Forecast of Funding Opportunity to establish the uPPP which outlined the forecast program objectives, along with information on eligibility and the expected application process. At 30 June 2024, the program guidelines were not yet publicly released.

Analysis

The uPPP is a new program and was in the planning and design phase throughout 2023–24. The Program design was subject to agreement across government and early indicative timeframes were extended while we worked collaboratively with other government departments, including the Business Grants Hub in the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, to establish arrangements for the uPPP.

Following program design, the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government announced a Forecast Funding Opportunity on 16 May 2024, including information on program objectives, eligibility and the expected application process. The uPPP opened on 29 July 2024, consistent with commencement of funding for the Program in 2024–25. The uPPP will progress through implementation in the 2024–25 financial year.

Establishment of the uPPP delivers the department's purpose under Program 3.3: Cities, including driving Commonwealth urban policy and transport priorities and supporting the development of more liveable and productive cities.

Performance measure 21	Establishment and implementation of the Thriving Suburbs Program to support investment in community infrastructure
Target	Program is established within agreed timeframes in preparation for grant funding which will commence from 2024–25
Methodology	Provision of published guidelines, policy approval and statutory approvals.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.60 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.79</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target not met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Regional Development and Local Government Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was not met in 2023–24. In late-2023, the Thriving Suburbs Program was placed on hold while broader government decisions were made regarding program delivery.

Analysis

The Growing Regions Program complements the Thriving Suburbs Program (the program), with the second round of Growing Regions also placed on hold while broader government decisions are made regarding program delivery.

In early-2024, the government began exploring a state-based program delivery model to better collaborate across governments and incorporate more localised management of government grants. This work is evolving and will impact on future grant delivery.

The department has worked in collaboration with Australian Government central agencies and state and territory governments on a state-based program delivery model.

Reshaping the program's delivery model has strengthened program design and delivery processes, which will further contribute to the department's purposes under Outcome 3. This delivery model aligns the Program to the National Urban Policy to deliver place-based investment and promote sustainable growth that enables communities to thrive.

The program opened on 27 July 2024 with project funding to successful proponents to be announced in late-2024.

Program 3.4: Growing a stronger northern Australian economy

Our North, Our Future: 2021–2026 — Targeted Growth is the government's current 5-year strategic plan for developing Northern Australia. From 2021 to 2026, the Australian Government will invest in transformational and enabling projects through a whole-of-government approach, in partnership with state and territory governments.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Progress key initiatives and monitor whole-of-government implementation of the Northern Australia agenda.	22

Performance results

Performance measure 22	Percentage of Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) proposal notices processed for Ministerial consideration within statutory timeframes
Target	100% of proposal notices received within the financial year are processed within statutory timeframes
Methodology	Analysis of register of proposal notices processed within 21 days and/or the legislatively extended 60-day period.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> , p.61 and <i>DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24</i> , p.81
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Partnerships and Projects Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. In 2023–24, the department processed 100% of the proposal notices it received within statutory timeframes, thereby assisting consideration by the Minister for Northern Australia of the investment decisions taken by NAIF during the year. This outcome supports Program 3.4: Growing a Stronger Northern Australian Economy, by providing infrastructure financing to the states and territories and other entities.

Analysis

The department supports the Minister for Northern Australia to administer the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act 2016*. As part of this work, the department's Secretary (or delegate) is a member of the NAIF Board and has prior visibility towards potential NAIF investment decisions. In 2023–24 the department enabled NAIF to deliver its increased funding of \$7 billion in the north and to its expanded Indian Ocean Territories remit. The department delivered the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring NAIF's investments benefit local communities and create new jobs across the north. In 2023–24 the department achieved a number of key milestones, including:

- > issuing an addendum to the NAIF's Statement of Expectations and requesting NAIF earmark \$500 million for projects that support the *Critical Minerals Strategy 2023–2030*
- > issuing the *Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Investment Mandate Direction 2023* — focusing the NAIF's investments on benefitting communities
- > facilitating ministerial consideration of proposal notices to the value of \$580 million in investment decisions
- > supporting NAIF to commit more than \$4.4 billion of its \$7 billion appropriation to finance 33 projects, expected to generate around 18,400 jobs in Northern Australia and \$33.8 billion in public benefit.

The department will seek to continuously improve processing of proposal notices.

Spotlight

A refreshed Northern Australia policy agenda

The department supports the Minister for Northern Australia by overseeing the government's Northern Australia policy agenda to achieve sustainable and resilient northern economic and social development.

Through the 2023–24 Budget, the government committed to a refresh of the 2015 *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*. To inform the refresh, the department engaged with more than 700 stakeholders to gain a contemporary understanding of their views on priorities, challenges and opportunities for Northern Australia. Engagement included:

- > one-on-one sessions with key stakeholders
- > virtual sessions — 9 sessions were held with over 200 participants
- > on-ground sessions — 39 sessions were held with key local organisations to understand place-based variances
- > an online survey with over 500 respondents.

Under these 4 pillars, the department engaged with key partners, First Nations organisations, businesses, industry representatives and peak organisations, academia, community organisations and all levels of government.

Stakeholder engagement informed the development of a new action plan. Building on the 2015 *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, the *2024–2029 Northern Australia Action Plan* (the Action Plan) will set out a refreshed policy agenda for northern Australia. The Action Plan was launched by the Minister for Northern Australia on 26 August 2024.

The department works with northern jurisdictions through the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum which meets bi-annually and manages the Northern Australia Grant Programs (NAGP), supported by Department of Industry, Science and Resources' Business Grants Hub. In total, 30 grants valued at \$79.6 million were awarded across a range of sectors in 2022 with \$24.1 million in payments for individual grants in 2023–24.

Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group

The department supports First Nations economic participation including through the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group (IRG). The IRG comprises 8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who are appointed for their business acumen and grass-roots economic development experience. The IRG advises the Minister for Northern Australia and the Minister for Indigenous Australians on practical actions to improve the prosperity of Indigenous Australians in the north. The IRG meet quarterly. In 2023–24, meetings were held in Darwin, Canberra, Mount Isa and Alice Springs.

Key accomplishments in 2023–24 include: 6 submissions to government inquiries and 9 consultations across the following topics:

1. **Economic Development:** IRG have consulted with the National Indigenous Australians Agency on reforms to the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program, Indigenous Procurement Policy, and the *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities*. They also appeared at the House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee inquiry into economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians, and have advocated for stronger procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses with other Commonwealth agencies.
2. **Infrastructure and Resource Contribution:** IRG made several submissions to the inquiry into the Implications of Severe Weather Events on the National Regional, Rural and Remote Road Network. This concluded with virtual representation by IRG members at the House Representatives Standing Committee.
3. **Digital Infrastructure:** IRG made a submission to the *Initial Data and Digital Government Strategy*. The IRG have consulted and continue to consult with the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group to advise government on changes to digital infrastructure for Indigenous business and community.
4. **Collaboration and Policy Influence:** IRGs suggestions have been incorporated into the Northern Australia agenda, helping to facilitate the shift towards economic empowerment and self-governance for Indigenous communities.

The department provides secretariat support to the IRG including coordination and logistics as well as supporting their participation in and submissions to government consultations and inquiries.

Accord Review

The Northern Australia Indigenous Development Accord (the Accord) is an intergovernmental framework for progressing Indigenous economic development in northern Australia. The parties to the Accord include the Prime Minister, the Premiers of Queensland and Western Australia and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

The department commissioned the first triennial review of the Accord in 2023. The review assessed progress against the objectives of the Accord, and determined if the Accord remained an appropriate mechanism for progressing First Nations economic development in northern Australia. The review was finalised in March 2024.



Image: Sunset aerial view of sea and landscape, Jervis Bay, Australia. Credit: Noelia Ramon-TellingLife, Getty Images. Also seen on page 101.

Outcome 4: Territories



Outcome Statement

Good governance and service delivery in the Australian territories including through the maintenance and improvement of the laws and services for non-self-governing territories, and the overarching legislative framework for self-governing territories.

Purpose: Territories

Providing governance frameworks and services to support communities in the territories.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 4.1 — Services to Territories	2	-	-	-	-
Total	2	-	-	-	-



Image: Point Perpendicular and Jervis Bay, NSW. Credit: Peter Harrison, Getty

Program 4.1: Services to Territories

The services to territories program provides good governance and service delivery in the Australian territories, including through the maintenance and improvement of the laws and services for non-self-governing territories, and the overarching legislative framework for self-governing territories.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Ensuring governance and legislative frameworks are fit for purpose to support delivery of services and programs to Australia's non-self-governing territories.	23
Provide essential infrastructure, fund and deliver services to residents of the external territories (Norfolk Island and the Indian Ocean Territories) and the Jervis Bay Territory.	24

Performance results

Performance measure 23	Evaluation of legal and governance arrangements in the territories to continue to administer essential services
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25</i> , p.65 ¹⁰ and <i>DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24</i> , p.86
Category	Policy advice
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Territories Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

10 The performance measures and target have been amended from the and *DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24* by the current year information published as part of the *ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25*. Amendments enable the department to assess its performance of the work it controls and delivers.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sampled policy advice was 3.57 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 7 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department’s internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 7 pieces. This provides the department with a confidence interval of 100% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

The department facilitated fit-for-purpose legal and governance frameworks in the territories to continue to deliver essential services and infrastructure to non-self-governing territories in 2023–24. The department enabled our partners to deliver essential services via policy advice to the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories on subject matter relating to:

- > amending the applied Aquatic Resource Management Act 2016 (WA) to maintain current fisheries arrangements in the Indian Ocean Territories
- > remaking the *Jervis Bay Territory Rural Fires Rule 2014* before the current instrument sunsets
- > modernising telecommunications on Norfolk Island.

The department will continue to develop policy advice regarding legal and governance arrangements to territories in 2024–25.

Performance measure 24	Advice on delivery of essential infrastructure and services, such as, health and education to non-self-governing territory communities
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.65 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.87</i>
Category	Policy
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Territories Division
Limitations	The department identified and removed further exclusions from its population after random sampling processes had concluded. In response, the department lowered its confidence interval from 90% to 89% to account for a reduction in the sampled population. The department accepts a minor increase to our margin of error to uphold the integrity of our assessment processes.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sample policy advice was 3.9 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 22 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department's internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 30 pieces. This provides the department with confidence interval of approximately 89% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

The department continued to make the delivery of essential services available to Australia's non-self-governing territories in 2023–24. The department ensured services were able to be delivered via service delivery arrangements and contracts with state, local and private partners. The services the department makes available are demand-driven and reflect the work we undertake to provide health, education and corrections services to the Indian Ocean Territories, Norfolk Island and Jervis Bay Territory.

In 2023–24, the policy advice developed by the department facilitated the delivery of essential services and infrastructure across the non-self-governing territories with minimal disruption. For example, the department developed policy advice to support the delivery of essential services including:

- > energy bill relief to residents and businesses in the non-self-governing territories
- > Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaption Plan for Cocos (Keeling) Islands
- > updating the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme for the Indian Ocean Territories.

The department enabled the delivery of essential services in collaboration with varied and numerous federal, state and private sector partners.

Image: Narrabri radio telescope at dusk with blue and pink sky with clouds, Australia.
Credit: Mikulas1, Getty Images. Also seen on page 107.



Outcome 5: Communications Connectivity



Outcome Statement

Promote an innovative and competitive communications sector through policy development, advice and program delivery, so all Australians can realise the full potential of digital technologies and communications services.

Purpose: Communications Connectivity

Enabling people in Australia to connect to effective, safe communications services.
Enabling investment in communications technologies, for inclusiveness and sustainable economic growth.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 5.1 — Digital Technologies and Communications Services	5	-	-	-	-
Total	5	-	-	-	-



Image: NBN FTTN installation. Credit: DITRDCA

Program 5.1: Digital Technologies and Communications Services

To provide an environment in which all Australians can access and benefit from digital technologies and communications services, supporting inclusiveness and sustainable economic growth.

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Provide advice to the government on, and deliver, communications programs, including in regional and remote Australia.	25, 26
Providing effective and inclusive communications services and technologies.	27, 29
Protecting Australians through effective management of classification frameworks.	30

Performance results

Performance measure 25	Total amount of new and improved mobile coverage delivered through the Mobile Black Spot Program and the Peri-Urban Mobile Program
Target	For each program ≥ 90 per cent of total contracted coverage (i.e. the combined total of new and improved handheld coverage) is delivered by assets for which asset completion reports are received and approved in the financial year
Methodology	Analysis and assessment of program contracts, funding recipient progress reports, and asset completion reports (ACRs).
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.72 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.92
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Communications Services and Consumer Division
Limitations	The Peri-Urban Mobile Program is in the initial stages of implementation. The department did not report on this program as part of the result as asset completion reports are not expected to be received until the 2024–25 reporting year.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24.

During 2023–24, a total of 8,355 km² of new handheld mobile coverage was delivered from 55 base stations funded under the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) for which asset completion reports were received and approved in the financial year. This result exceeded the total contracted metric by 26%. A total of 5,699 premises received new handheld mobile coverage from these assets, which exceeded the total contracted metric by 19%. The Peri-Urban Mobile Program (PUMP) is in the early stages of implementation with its first base station completion expected in the 2024–25 reporting year.

Analysis

The department closely manages the administration of grant funding agreements with mobile providers to ensure contracted coverage outcomes are achieved. The funding agreements include provisions that require mobile industry grantees to seek approval for any variations to contracted handheld mobile coverage that would reduce the outcome below 90% of the contracted metrics, such as cases where a base station cannot be built at the contracted location for reasons beyond the direct control of the mobile industry grantee.

There are some cases where a base station could not be built as planned, resulting in a decrease in coverage. However, there are many more cases where a change in location and the technical configuration of a base station to optimise coverage outcomes has resulted in an increase in contracted coverage metrics — the department exceeded its 2023–24 MBSP target for this reason.

As at 30 June 2024, a total of 1,133 new mobile base stations have been delivered under the MBSP. These base stations have delivered over 181,000 km² of new handheld coverage, including to more than 132,000 premises.

This increase in mobile coverage benefits people who live, work and travel in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. An increase in coverage provides connectivity for these Australians to keep in contact with family and friends, conduct business that contributes to economic growth and sustainability, and provides a public safety benefit for access to emergency services during natural disasters and emergency situations.

This performance measurement of the department's performance ensures mobile industry grantees are maximising mobile coverage outcomes across Australia and the delivery of quality service and localised coverage improvements in peri-urban areas. This work is consistent with the objectives of the programs to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia and to improve mobile phone reception in peri-urban fringe areas of Australia's major cities.

The department will continue to closely manage the implementation of both the MBSP and PUMP. While some earlier MBSP rounds are expected to reach completion by the end of the 2024–25 financial year, there are newly contracted rounds under the MBSP which are in the initial stages of implementation.

Performance measure 26	Number of new and improved contracted outcomes delivered through the Regional Connectivity Program and connecting Northern Australia
Target	≥90% of total contracted outcomes (i.e. new and improved coverage, or relevant key service improvement metric) are delivered by assets for which completion reports are received and approved
Methodology	Analysis and assessment of program contracts, funding recipient progress reports, and Asset Completion Reports (ACRs).
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.72 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.93</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	Not applicable. This was a new performance measure for 2023–24.
Divisional owner	Communications Services and Consumer Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The performance result was 169% against the target of ≥90%. During 2023–24, over 37,000 km² of coverage was delivered from 137 assets for which asset completion reports were received and approved. This exceeded the total contracted coverage metric by 69%.

Analysis

The target was met as funding recipients delivered assets that largely exceeded their contracted coverage outcomes. The department faced challenges with progress against the contracted timeframe for assets yet to be completed as at 30 June 2024, however extensions were granted to funding recipients with all assets and consequent projects to be delivered in full by December 2024.

Mobile programs being delivered concurrently may provide additional coverage to rural, regional and remote Australia. This outcome achieved improved connectivity in rural, regional and remote Australia and improved access to communications services. Mobile programs being delivered concurrently may provide additional coverage to rural, regional and remote Australia.

Australians continue to have access to essential services and strengthened regional connectivity that are unable to be addressed by commercial investment alone.

The continued monitoring of delivery against contracted outcomes is essential, while working with funding recipients to ensure that delays in delivery can be identified and addressed promptly in support of this aim.

Performance measure 27	Provision of the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) services
Target	In each financial year, commercial free-to-air satellite television services are provided in accordance with the legislative and contractual arrangement
Methodology	Analysis of quarterly KPI grantee reports and assessment of records in the internal register.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.72 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.94</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Communications Services and Consumer Division
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The commercial free-to-air satellite television services were maintained in accordance with the legislative and contractual arrangements, including meeting the on-air availability requirement.

Analysis

Quarterly reports from the regional commercial television broadcasting consortiums and Optus show that there was no service downtime. There were no complaints from viewers about the availability of the services provided.

The outcome of the department’s work under the measure has achieved significant impacts. Since the digital switchover in 2010, the Australian Government has subsidised the costs of commercial free-to-air television channels on the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) platform. VAST provides a satellite safety net service for viewers in terrestrial television blackspots.

Around 260,000 Australian households, largely in regional and remote areas, rely on VAST direct-to-home services. Without government funding these Australians would no longer have access to a commercial free-to-air television broadcasting service. The continued availability of the VAST free-to-air satellite television safety net service benefits viewers, particularly in remote and regional Australia who are unable to access terrestrial transmissions due to remoteness or terrain.

Television is important to our communities and their residents — it builds connectivity, facilitates cultural expression and social inclusion, provides access to educational resources and the arts, and provides entertainment, particularly to the elderly. It is also an important source of news and advice, including during emergencies and natural disasters.

In 2023–24, the department simplified forward contractual agreements for Eastern and Western VAST to ensure they are clearer and more direct, and to ensure commercial free-to-air satellite television services are provided in accordance with legislative and contractual arrangements.

The department also simplified the existing payment arrangements to improve flexibility and ensure funding flows as quickly as possible to Eastern Satellite Broadcasters Pty Ltd and WA Satco through an arrangement with the Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub in mid-August 2024 to June 2031. This arrangement has a supplementary aim to ensure future reporting is completed in a timely manner.

Additionally, through the Communications and Legislation Amendment (Regional Broadcasting Continuity) Bill 2024, the government is making it easier for Australians to access television services over the VAST safety net where terrestrial broadcasts are not available.

Performance measure 29	Access to communications for people with a disability, indicated through: a. National Relay Service (NRS) performance b. Audio Description (AD) implementation by the national broadcasters¹¹ c. Broadcaster Captioning compliance¹²
Target	Reporting in each financial year indicates access is maintained or improved: a. NRS: Provider meets or exceeds contractual service levels b. Audio description: National broadcasters provide more than 30 hours per week, on average, of audio described content c. Captioning: Broadcasters meet or exceed statutory captioning obligations.
Methodology	Analysis and assessment of monthly and quarterly provider performance reports and Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) annual captioning compliance report.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.73 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.96
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target substantially met.
Divisional owner	Communications Services and Consumer Division
Limitations	Captioning data from 2022–23 has been included against this performance measure as ACMA annual captioning compliance reports are published each December for the prior financial year. Data for 2023–24 will be included in the 2024–25 Annual Performance Statement against this performance measure.

11 This is a narrated sound track provided by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Special Broadcasting Service for specific TV programs to provide accessibility to blind or vision impaired people.

12 This is a legislative requirement for all broadcasters for deaf and hearing-impaired people. There are different obligations for free to air broadcasters and pay TV. ACMA is the regulator for these obligations and releases compliance data every year.

Analysis of performance

Overall, this performance measure was met in 2023–24.

Target a. Met: National Relay Service provider met contractual service levels.

Target b. Met: National Broadcasters provided more than 30 hours per week of audio described content.

Target c. Met: Broadcasters met statutory captioning obligations.

Analysis

The department supports the provision of a number of media amenities which collectively maintain and improve access to communication services for people with disabilities.

Target a. National Relay Service

The National Relay Service provider is required to meet performance indicators specified in the contract for the service. The provider is required to report its performance on a monthly basis. Performance is measured in relation to call answer times. The provider consistently met these performance requirements.

Target b. Audio description

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported that it provided an average of 101 hours per week of audio described content during 2023–24. The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) reported that it provided an average of 181 hours per week of audio described content during 2023–24. The target of 30 hours per week for each broadcaster was well exceeded.

Target c. Captioning

Free-to-air TV broadcasters are required to caption 100% of all programs on their main channels between 6 am and midnight under section 130ZR of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act). Compliance results are required to be reported to ACMA in accordance with section 130ZZC of the Act. In 2022–23, all free-to-air TV broadcasters provided captions on over 99.9% of programs. All failures to deliver 100% captioning levels were attributable to unforeseen technical difficulty and explained in accordance with the requirements at section 130ZZAB of the Act.

Table 5.1.1: Specific percentage ranges for each licensee within the network in 2022–23

Licensee	2022–23 percentage range
ABC	99.98% to 99.99%
SBS	99.94% to 99.97%
Seven Network	99.97% to 99.98%
Network Ten	99.98% to 99.99%
Nine Network Australia	99.94% to 99.95%
Prime Television	99.95% to 99.99%
Southern Cross Austereo	99.95% to 99.99%
WIN Media	99.93% to 99.99%
Imparja	99.93%

Subscription TV broadcasters are required to comply with different annual captioning targets that apply to 9 distinct categories of programs. The targets, which increase each year, are set out in section 130ZV(2) of the Act.

Table 5.1.2: Captioning targets for 2022–23

Category	2022–23 captioning target
Category A STV movie service (1st to 6th movie channel)	100%
Category B STV movie service (7th movie channel — if nominated)	95%
Category C STV movie service (8th and more movie channels — if nominated)	85%
Category A STV general entertainment service (1st to 18th general entertainment channel)	95%
Category B STV general entertainment service (19th to 34th general entertainment channel if nominated)	85%
Category C STV general entertainment service (35th or more general entertainment channel if nominated)	65%
STV news service	55%
STV sports service	55%
STV music service	45%

Most licensees (Foxtel Cable Television, Optus Content and Telstra TV) reported that they had met or exceeded captioning requirements in the Broadcasting Services Act in all categories in 2022–23. Foxtel and Telstra TV reported that one channel, TRT World did not meet captioning requirements in 2022–23. In September 2022, the channel was removed from the platforms.

Performance measure 30	Classification decisions are published in line with legislative requirements
Target	100% of relevant classification decisions made by the Classification Board and Classification Review Board are published on the National Classification Database (NCD)
Methodology	Analysis of data stored in the department's online Customer Relationship Management System Online System for Classification Administration (OSCA) and data published on the NCD.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.73 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.97</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met (performance measure no longer focuses on timeliness).
Divisional owner	Online Safety, Media and Platforms
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24 with approximately 97% of relevant classification decisions made by the Classification Board and Classification Review Board published on the NCD based on a sample review. A sample of 860 decisions was reviewed from a total of 393,279 decisions. The proportion of decisions not published may have been higher in the total population than this result indicates noting the relatively small size of the sample. The sample review of decisions found that 5.1% of IARC decisions were not published and 1.8% of non-IARC decisions were not published. Total decisions not published on the NCD in this sample was 3%.

Analysis

Publishing of classification decisions assists Australians to make informed choices about suitable content to view or play for themselves or those in their care. The publishing of classification decisions on the NCD is contingent on government IT systems and external stakeholder IT systems working as intended. Internal and external IT system issues can affect the receipt and transfer of classification decisions for publication.

As part of the quality assurance process, analysis of sample data showed a small number of classification decisions were not published on the NCD. Internal and external IT system issues can affect the receipt and transfer of classification decisions from OSCA to the NCD (the NCD is a website hosted on Government Content Manager System (GovCMS) and managed by Department of Finance).

The department has procedures in place to investigate and resolve any issues with OSCA, Application Programming Interfaces and GovCMS as they arise to ensure classification decisions are received, transferred and published on the NCD. For any identified cases of decisions not published on the NCD, the department works with the Department of Finance and classification tool owners to investigate and resolve the issue. The department is currently engaging with the GovCMS team to investigate opportunities for additional data validation processes. This will include consideration of provisions for ongoing quality assurance activities with data checking. In addition, where any system errors are identified, the department records a log of works to be investigated for consideration of system improvements as part of a process of continuous improvement.



Image: NBN Satellite Ground Station Bourke storm. Credit DITRDCA



Image: Australian Youth Orchestra, Momentum Ensemble. Credit: Alastair Bett.
Also seen on page 119.

Outcome 6: Creativity and Culture



Outcome Statement

Participation in, and access to, Australia's arts and culture through developing and supporting cultural expression.

Purpose: Creativity and Culture

Supporting sustainable and inclusive creative and cultural sectors, and protecting and promoting Australian content and culture.

Performance Snapshot

Program	Target met	Target substantially met	Target partially met	Target not met	No target
Program 6.1 — Arts and Cultural Development	4	-	1	-	2
Total	4	-	1	-	2



Image: Live music keyboards. Credit: DITRDCA

Program 6.1: Arts and Cultural Development

To provide an environment in which all Australians can access and benefit from creative experiences and culture, supporting inclusiveness and growth in Australia's creative sector, and protecting and promoting Australian content and culture

Key activities

Key activity	Performance measure
Protecting and promoting Australian content.	31
Deliver policy and programs that support the cultural and creative sectors and enable all Australians to access and participate in cultural and creative activities.	32, 33, 34
Deliver policies and programs to support Australian cultural heritage, including Indigenous cultural heritage, arts, languages and repatriation.	35, 36, 37

Performance results

Performance measure 31	Effectiveness of the current Australian content framework
Target	Policy advice is high quality, timely and evidence based
Methodology	Policy advice is assessed and scored against criteria, by an internal panel, to determine quality, timeliness and evidence base.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.78 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.103</i>
Category	Policy
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	New performance measure (significantly amended from 2022–23).
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. The total average score of the sampled policy advice was 3.5 out of 5 meaning advice was quality, timely and largely evidence-based.

A total of 6 pieces of policy advice were assessed by the department’s internal strategic policy review panel, from a total population of 6 pieces. This provides the department with a confidence level of 100% that its result is representative of the total population.

Analysis

In 2023–24, the department briefed the government, in consultation with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), on the effectiveness of the Australian content framework when compliance results were released. The department relied on Australian content data and compliance results to inform policy advice to government on Australian content obligations, including the development of a future Australian content framework for subscription video on demand services.

ACMA has statutory requirements to collect, collate, verify and publish Australian Content Standards compliance data that is used to brief the government on the effectiveness of the content framework. The department also uses this data to inform policy advice to the government on Australian content obligations.

An effective Australian content framework means that Australians can benefit from creative experiences and culture, supports inclusiveness and growth in Australia’s creative sector and protects and promotes Australian content and culture.

The department will continue to provide high-quality, timely and evidence-based policy advice on the effectiveness of the Australian content framework to government. In the event that an Australian content framework for subscription video on demand services is legislated, the department will report on its effectiveness.

Performance measure 32	Progress against the development, release and implementation of the Arts and Disability Associated Plan
Target	The Arts and Disability Associated Plan is released
Methodology	Analysis of departmental records including: briefings and advice to government, public communiques, stakeholder meeting minutes and draft Associated Plan. Records are assessed to measure the development and release stage of the Arts and Disability Associated Plan.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.78 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.104
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target partially met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target not met.
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was partially met in 2023–24. In January 2023, the Australian Government committed \$5 million for implementation of a new Arts and Disability Associated Plan under the National Cultural Policy — *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* (Revive).

In 2023–24, the *Arts and Disability Associated Plan* (Associated Plan) was substantially drafted, as informed by significant Commonwealth and stakeholder consultation activities in the second half of 2023. Graphic design services supporting the Associated Plan have been secured, and communication activities focused on the launch and implementation of the Associated Plan are in development.

Analysis

In 2023–24, the department has improved on its 2022–23 results with demonstrated progress against the development, release and implementation of the Associated Plan.

The Associated Plan will be a supporting document for both *Revive* and *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (ADS). In 2023–24, the department has worked in partnership with Creative Australia to develop the Associated Plan, building on the clear opportunity to leverage combined funding and policy responsibilities in the arts and disability space, and identify the shared future priorities and investment opportunities to lift participation by people with disability in arts and cultural life.

In 2023–24, the Associated Plan has been further developed in the context of significant, broader disability policy reform across the Commonwealth, in particular the outcomes of the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*, the 2023 Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and pending reforms to Disability Employment Services. This working environment has provided the opportunity for the department to engage closely with relevant Commonwealth agencies to better understand the impacts these reform processes may have on the arts and disability sector in the context of developing the Associated Plan.

An all-jurisdictions Arts and Disability Intergovernmental Working Group has also been established, under the auspices of the Cultural Ministers Meeting, to increase intergovernmental engagement on disability and inclusion matters in the arts and culture sectors, and in regards to the implementation of the Commonwealth-only Associated Plan. The Working Group is expected to convene for the first time in the second half of 2024.

Creative Australia and the Department of Social Services has contributed to performance against the measure. Ongoing engagement and consultation with the Department of Social Services and Creative Australia will ensure the final Associated Plan supports the Minister for the Arts to meet shared responsibilities for delivery of outcomes under the ADS, as well as the *Revive* principles of access, equity, participation and representation in arts and cultural activities for all people in Australia.

The Associated Plan is expected to be finalised and released in 2024.

Performance measure 33	Number of students completing courses at national performing arts training organisations
Target	≥900 students in each calendar year
Methodology	Analysis and evaluation of data sourced from bi-annual reports completed by 7 national performing arts training organisations. The department verifies the reliability, consistency and completeness of the data in line with standard operating procedures
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.78 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.105
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Unable to make an assessment ¹³
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. Under the National Performing Arts Training Program, 1,113 students graduated or completed courses in their chosen field in the 2023 calendar year with the 7 organisations funded under the Program.

Analysis

Across the 7 funded national performing arts training organisations (ATOs), 1,113 students graduated or completed courses in their chosen field in the 2023 calendar year. This result is similar to the number of students reported for the 2022 calendar year, which reflected unverified results of 1,187 student graduations or course completions.

The performance measure assesses data sourced from 7 ATOs funded under the National Performing Arts Training Program:

- > Australian Ballet School
- > Australian National Academy of Music
- > Australian Youth Orchestra
- > Flying Fruit Fly Circus
- > NAISDA Dance College
- > National Institute of Circus Art
- > National Institute of Dramatic Art.

The number of students who graduate or complete courses with the ATOs is a robust measure of the outcome of the government's investment in these organisations. Exceeding the target demonstrates the National Performing Arts Training Program is successful.

¹³ In the 2022–23 Annual Report, the department reported that 492 students successfully completed courses at national performing arts training organisations against the equivalent measure. This figure referred only to accredited courses. For comparative purposes (using the 2023–24 performance measurement methodology) this figure increases to 1,187 when referring to all courses offered by these organisations.

Investing in Australia's ATOs supports the government to achieve its arts and culture policy objectives by promoting artistic excellence and development for artistic freedom through support for the provision of training opportunities across a range of performing art forms, and by aligning with the policy outcomes of the National Cultural Policy, Revive.

In May 2023, as part of the 2023–24 Budget announcement, the Australian Government committed to a one-year uplift operational funding for the ATO's and a financial sustainability review to inform government investment in the organisations.

Following the review, in May 2024, as part of the 2024–25 Budget, the government announced a significant funding uplift to support the ongoing financial viability of the ATOs.

While funding is provided to the ATOs to address the areas of greatest need first, including immediate staffing pressures and to safeguard the delivery of their core courses, the uplift will eventually allow for the ATOs to expand their training offerings. The department will monitor this growth closely and adjust the target as necessary.

Performance measure 34	Number of payments made to claimants (including authors, illustrators and publishers) through lending rights
Target	≥17,000 payments to claimants in each financial year
Methodology	Analysis and evaluation of annual surveys provided to the department by lending libraries. Payments are calculated on the number of copies of books estimated to be held in Australian lending libraries.
Source	ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.78 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.106
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. In 2023–24, 18,147 Public and Educational Lending Right payments were made, against a target of more than 17,000 payments for the year.

Analysis

2023–24 was the first year that payments for ebooks and audiobooks were made. The announcement of the inclusion of digital formats, and the high profile of Revive, the National Cultural Policy, more generally, prompted a significant increase in claims from creators and publishers for ebooks, audiobooks and various print formats. This resulted in more than 30,000 claims (an increase of 272% from the previous year). Surveying digital holdings in libraries required new relationships with digital book vendors and working with digital holdings data, adding further time and complexity to the annual cycle of work.

The survey for Public Lending Rights (PLR) and Educational Lending Rights (ELR) was conducted much later than in previous cycles.

The introduction of digital holdings into the surveys has allowed additional claimants to participate including digital publishers and digital self-publishers. It will also allow trend data to be collected on the uptake of digital formats across public schools and university lending libraries.

Education Services Australia, a national not-for-profit company owned by the state, territory and Australian Government education ministers delivers the primary and secondary school's portion of the ELR survey.

This outcome delivers on the National Cultural Policy action to 'Modernise and extend the Public and Educational Lending Right schemes to include digital content under the schemes'. The payments made to claimants were for all formats of books, including ebooks and audiobooks.

The department will continue to raise the profile of the Australian Lending Right schemes to increase participation from eligible Australian creators and publishers, as well as lending libraries and library vendors through targeted promotional campaigns and relationship building. The department will also continue to develop survey methodology as digital book holdings increase in the survey, and track the changing way Australians read and consume books through lending rights data and trend analysis.

Performance measure 35	Number of Indigenous Art Centres funded through the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) program
Target	≥80 Indigenous Art Centres in the financial year
Methodology	Analysis and evaluation of grantees 6-monthly milestone reports sourced through the SmartyGrants management system.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.78 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.107</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	Target met
Previous results	2022–23 result: Target met.
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The target for this performance measure was met in 2023–24. IVAIS Program funded 94 art centres during 2023–24. This is 14 additional centres than the target of 80.

Analysis

The outcomes supported by the IVAIS ongoing program are a professional, viable and ethical Indigenous visual arts industry that features strong participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the continued exhibition, critique, purchase and collection of Indigenous visual art nationally and internationally. Indigenous art centres, mostly located in remote or very remote communities, form the infrastructure that provides artists with studio space, materials, art development opportunities, marketing and exhibition support, as well as a range of professional support and services for artists, art centre staff and directors.

Funding is prioritised to achieve outcomes by providing base operational support for Indigenous-owned art centres that provide professional support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in the production, promotion and marketing of their art. This provides opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to develop, extend, market and generate income from their professional art practice, and provides employment and economic opportunities in the visual arts industry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

IVAIS has supported approximately 80 art centres over a number of years. Maintaining this level of funding support to arts centres from IVAIS is important to the Indigenous visual arts industry. Opportunities to support additional art centres not previously supported through IVAIS have been made possible through increases to the annual program appropriation. While increases to the number of art centres funded under IVAIS is a good outcome, challenges include supporting the 80-minimum level of art centres to funding levels that reflect increases to operational and employment costs in remote communities within the available program budget and continual support to additional art centres each year.

Integrity of the IVAIS is maintained by ensuring performance measure results are cross-checked against program management documents including finance and payment reports, forward commitments and modelling. Data in SmartyGrants per activity/record is continually cross-checked against program management documents to ensure results extracted from SmartyGrants are accurate.

Funding and support for Indigenous communities and programs have also been provided by Creative Australia, National Indigenous Australians Agency, Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, state and territory governments, not-for-profits and non-governmental organisations, philanthropists and the private sector.

This outcome aligns with the National Cultural Policy — Revive, specifically by continuing investment in First Nations art centres, as well as pivotal sector organisations, through IVAIS to benefit First Nations communities.

Performance measure 36	<p>Support the repatriation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains (ancestors) and secret sacred objects (objects) through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. new agreements to repatriate ancestors from overseas b. ancestors and/or objects repatriated to their community c. ancestors repatriated to Australia with no known community
Target	No target. Internationally, activities are responsive to international negotiations and community consultations. Domestically, activities are responsive to demand from the funding recipients and community consultations supported through the Indigenous Repatriation Program — Museum Grants (Museum Grants)
Methodology	Analysis and evaluation of data sourced through Final Performance Reports provided by Grantees through SmartyGrants. Data held on ancestors and objects is reviewed to ensure reliability.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.79 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.108</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	No target
Previous results	2022–23 result: No target.
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Not applicable.

Analysis of performance

The department did not set a target for this performance measure in the 2023–24 reporting year.

- Target a.** Two in-principle agreements were reached with collecting institutions in the United States of America and a further 6 formal agreements were secured with collecting institutions in New Zealand (3), the United Kingdom (1), Japan (1) and the United States of America (1).
- Target b.** The department supported the repatriation of 21 ancestors to their Traditional Custodians returned from overseas. Through the Indigenous Repatriation Program — Museum Grants, 73 ancestors were returned to Country.
- Target c.** The department supported the repatriation of 10 ancestors under Australian Government stewardship as their Traditional Custodians were unknown.

Analysis

Internationally, the department continued to progress negotiations with overseas collecting institutions to secure new in-principle and formal agreements to repatriate. The department facilitated 3 handover ceremonies that supported the repatriation of 31 ancestors. Of these, 21 were repatriated to their Traditional Custodians and 10 were repatriated under Australian Government stewardship as their Traditional Custodians were unknown.

The department also worked in partnership with the respective First Nations communities and state museums to support the return to Country of 27 ancestors who had been returned from overseas between 1991 and 2023 and held in temporary care.

Domestically, the department administered the Indigenous Repatriation Program — Museum Grants (Museum Grants), and executed 7 funding agreements to support repatriation activities to enable the return of ancestors and secret sacred objects held in their care to their Traditional Custodians. Through the Indigenous Repatriation Program — Museum Grants, 73 ancestors were collectively returned to Country from 2 museums.

The outcome is consistent with the action in the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy — Revive — which commits to 'Continue pursuing, in a culturally sensitive way, the return of First Nations ancestors and cultural heritage material from overseas, and domestically the return of ancestors and secret sacred objects in Australia's major museums'.

The department will continue, in partnership with First Nations people, to advocate for the voluntary and unconditional return of ancestors held overseas and will work collaboratively with the 8 major Australian museums funded under the Museum Grants and state and territory governments to enhance a collaborative approach to repatriation.

Performance measure 37	Reach of Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) activities (excluding visual arts) that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to express, preserve and maintain their cultures: a. People attending an Indigenous language activity b. People attending an Indigenous arts activity
Target	No target. Results are expected to be variable over time, given the variety of Indigenous languages and arts activities funded through an annual open competitive grant opportunity
Methodology	Analysis and evaluation of six-monthly reporting from grant funding recipients provided through SmartyGrants.
Source	<i>ITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statements 2024–25, p.79 and DITRDCA Corporate Plan 2023–24, p.109</i>
Category	Program
2023–24 result	No target
Previous results	New performance measure — previously reported on the impact of activities to support Indigenous visual arts, languages and culture indicated through the number of Indigenous language centres and Indigenous art centres funded, the number of arts workers employed and artists active with funded art centres. ¹⁴
Divisional owner	Office for the Arts
Limitations	Participation data is available up until 30 December 2023 due to delays in data availability. Data for the second half of 2023–24 will not be available until 30 September 2024 and will be reported in the 2024–25 Annual Report. The data presented below is from the current grant agreements in place with each individual Indigenous language centre (ILC) and Indigenous arts organisation. The majority of these grant agreements commenced in 2022–23. One organisation was unable to report during the specified period.

Analysis of performance

The department did not set a target for this performance measure in 2023–24. Through the ILA Program, the department continued to administer grant agreements in place with 24 ILCs delivering language conservation, revitalisation and sustainability services, and 6 arts organisations creating, promoting and celebrating Indigenous cultural expression through traditional and modern art forms. Throughout 2023–24, 22,577 participants have engaged with funded Indigenous language activities, and 3,462 participants have engaged with funded Indigenous arts activities.

¹⁴ The department was unable to fully report on its result for this performance measure in the 2022–23 Annual Report. This data is now included in Appendix A: Additional 2022–23 Performance Reporting.

Analysis

This outcome is consistent with the action in the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy — *Revive*, which commits to 'Continue support for First Nations peoples to express, preserve and maintain their culture through languages and arts, under the Indigenous Languages and Arts Program'. In 2023–24, the ILA Program invested the entire budget of \$30.281 million through grant funding for 125 community-based activities that supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to conserve, revitalise and sustain their cultures.

Announced in May 2024, as part of the 2024–25 Budget, the government is investing an additional \$53.8 million over 4 years to enhance support for community-led language learning. The funding goes directly to areas identified by *Voices of Country: Australia's Action Plan* for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032, and the Language Policy Partnership national priorities.

The recording of culturally appropriate data and data sovereignty remains a focus of consultation with the Indigenous languages sector represented through the Languages Policy Partnership.

During 2023–24, the ILA program piloted a project in partnership with 3 ILCs to record the number of people attending ILC delivered Indigenous language activity. The approach, including working in partnership with the three ILCs on the design, aimed to have a simple and culturally appropriate tool that could record consistent data over time through the network of 24 ILCs that could be used as one way of demonstrating progress against Target 16 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*¹⁵ — 'Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing'. The department will continue working to support ethically and culturally appropriate data collection as part of the ILA program.

15 Further information is available at: www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets