



OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETARY  
TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

CORPORATE PLAN

2025-26

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, skies and community.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and to their community leaders, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

As the Accountable Authority I am pleased to present the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General's (the Office) 2025-26 Corporate Plan under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

Consistent with the requirements under subsection 35(1) (b) of the PGPA Act the plan covers the periods 2025-26 through to 2028-29. The plan sets out the Office's objectives, environment and capabilities, the governance, accountability and risk systems in place to support delivery of our outcomes and how we will track our progress.

Cover image: Golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), B. Campbell

## OFFICIAL SECRETARY'S STATEMENT

The Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General (the Office) facilitates the organisation and management of the Governor-General's official duties, management and maintenance of the official households and properties, and administration of the Australian honours system.

Central to each of these functions is a commitment to support the Governor-General fulfill the aspiration she set in her swearing-in speech on 1 July 2024: "to be an optimistic, modern and visible Governor-General, committed to the service and contribution that all Australians expect and deserve from the holder of this Office."

The administration of the honours system will be a particular focus for 2025-26 with the clear goal of reducing the backlog of nominations and reducing the timeframe between nomination and decision by the Council. We will also be working to track nominations including changes in the number of nominations of individuals for an award in the Order of Australia from a wide range of diverse backgrounds.

In addition to the Governor-General's important constitutional, ceremonial and Commander-in-Chief responsibilities, a focus of the Office is enabling the Governor-General to engage with a broad range of the Australian community – both in person and through digital engagement.

In 2025-26 the Office will be prioritising work that supports the Governor-General's commitment to care, in all its forms, including for community and for institutions of government. A particular focus is the Governor-General's priority of increasing awareness of and engagement with civics. An independent review of the Office's operations will further inform ongoing priorities.

Underpinning every facet of the Office's responsibility is a commitment to accountability, transparency and good governance in its work. Moving forward, we will continue to update policies in these areas to ensure we are meeting the expectations of all Australian public sector organisations.



**Gerard Martin PSM**

Official Secretary to the Governor-General

31 August 2025



## PURPOSE

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**The Office was established in 1984, by amendment to the *Governor-General Act 1974*, to support the Governor-General in the fulfilment of her responsibilities.**

The purpose for the Office is the facilitation of the performance of the Governor-General's role through the organisation and management of official duties, management and maintenance of the official households and properties, and administration of the Australian honours and awards system.

The Office achieves this through a single program which comprises three components:

1. Support for the Governor-General
2. Management and maintenance of the official properties
3. Administration of the Australian honours and awards system.



## KEY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT OUR OUTCOME

During the period of this Corporate Plan, the Office will focus on the following key activities to assist the Governor-General to perform her role and to deliver each component of our outcome:

- support the Governor-General to fulfill her official duties, which are constitutional, ceremonial, Commander-in-Chief community-focussed (component 1)
- ensure efficient and effective stewardship of the properties (Government House in Canberra and Admiralty House in Sydney) in accordance with heritage requirements and approved capital works and maintenance programs (component 2)
- administer the Australian honours and awards system, including increasing awareness and understanding of, and engagement with, the Order of Australia (component 3)
- effective governance and management arrangements that underpin transparent and accountable engagement with the Australian community (all components)
- work collaboratively with other government agencies and stakeholders (all components).





## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The Office is a small Commonwealth budget-funded statutory agency with offices located at Government House in Canberra and Admiralty House in Sydney. While it is not part of the Australian Public Service (APS) and employs staff under the *Governor-General Act 1974*, it operates within the Commonwealth public sector and has the same accountabilities and operating environment. Accordingly the Office seeks to operate consistent with the standards of all APS agencies.

The Office's operating environment is shaped by the broader economic, political and social environment. The Office's support to the Governor-General aligns to their focus, particularly: fulfilling constitutional, ceremonial, community and Commander-in-Chief responsibilities. The method and approach to providing this support is shaped by the themes articulated by the Governor-General in her swearing-in speech on 1 July 2024.

In 2025-26, the approach will also be informed by the Governor-General's successful first year – building on a comprehensive and diverse program of events and continuing to engage Australians on the importance of understanding civics.

Central to all activities is a clear commitment to good governance, accountability and transparency founded on compliance with all legislative requirements. The Office will continue to be responsive to the broader environment. This includes ongoing cost pressures relating to managing heritage properties, the use of information technology – in particular rising cyber security costs, governance and compliance requirements and increasing supplier costs. Every effort will be made to achieve more efficient operations. However, the challenges make it likely the Office will not be able to deliver all its outcomes within the current funding available.

### THE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCES

**The official households and properties cover 55 hectares of land and 33 buildings over two properties - Government House in Canberra and Admiralty House in Sydney.**

As Commonwealth owned and controlled places with significant heritage value, both properties were inscribed on the inaugural Commonwealth Heritage List in 2004 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Accordingly, the properties are managed efficiently and effectively, having regard to their heritage values, and to the various functions they perform. The age of both properties combined with their heritage values requires ongoing investment of resources to ensure the Office meets its obligations to maintain the houses for the Australian public.

The properties are utilised for a broad range of purposes; principally to support the delivery of the Governor-General's program but also as offices for staff and residences of the Governor-General.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) recently undertook an audit of the Official Residences. The final report will be published during 2025-26 and the Office will respond to any recommendations, noting ongoing financial restraints.

The Office opens the properties to the public including for open days. The Office also welcomes approximately 18,000 schoolchildren on site each year through the School Tour program to give them an understanding of the property and the role of the Governor-General.



## THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN HONOURS SYSTEM

**The Office is responsible for the independent administration of the Australian honours system.**

The Governor-General is Chancellor of the Order of Australia and similarly approves recommendations for bravery decorations, meritorious awards and conspicuous and distinguished service decorations. In administering the system, the Office (through the Honours and Awards Secretariat) supports the independent Councils and Committee responsible for making recommendations on awards to the Governor-General.

The Office places a high priority on ensuring that the Australian honours system is, and is perceived to be by the Australian community, the pre-eminent way to recognise and celebrate the service and achievements of Australians.

In administering the Australian honours system and realising this priority, the Office is subject to challenges resulting from external factors. These include:

- community expectations
- the volume of nominations, which places demands on current resources and has required the Office to explore initiatives to assist in meeting that demand, and
- government policy – the honours system is responsive to changes in honours policy, regulations and the creation of new awards. This places new demands on staff and budgets, through administration and procurement of insignia.



The average annual volume of nominations for the Order of Australia has more than doubled over the last decade increasing the time between nomination and outcome. Efficiency measures have been put in place to improve processing times; however, the quantity of nominations continues to surpass those that can be actioned. The Office will continue to seek efficiencies through process changes with a view to increasing output. However without access to additional resources, the recommendations of the recent independent review to make significant impacts on the timeliness of outcomes cannot be finalised. Reducing the backlog of nominations and therefore reducing the time between nomination and consideration by Council remains a priority for work by the Office.

The Office continues to work closely with stakeholders to administer the National Emergency Medal for previously declared nationally-significant emergencies. Through ongoing partnerships with stakeholders and community representatives, the Office aims to ensure that the Medal is awarded efficiently and appropriately in response to future emergencies.



# CAPABILITY

## WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

The Office seeks to provide an adaptive, flexible and safe workplace that supports and empowers our people to be innovative, embrace change and work collaboratively to deliver outcomes.

The majority of the Office's workforce is located in Canberra, with a small team based in Sydney. The Office has implemented a new Enterprise Agreement which aligns with pay and conditions arrangements across the Australian Public Service.

The range of functions required of the Office (supporting the Governor-General, management and maintenance of the official properties and administration of the Australian honours and awards system) means the skills and experience of the Office's workforce is diverse. Capability is required to fulfill functions typical of other Commonwealth agencies and also functions less common (including, for example hospitality and horticulture). This diverse range of functions within a small agency, a competitive labour market and a tight fiscal environment make workforce planning an ongoing focus of the Office. The new Enterprise Agreement—a necessary update, being the first since 2015—helps align the Office with the wider APS but may exacerbate budget pressures.

A significant focus in 2025-26 will be operationalising the Enterprise Agreement through policy development and associated capability development activities with staff. This includes prioritising mandatory training around subjects such as work health and safety, fraud and corruption, and records management.

Further, Comcare and Workcover recently undertook reviews, providing the Office with improvement recommendations that will be implemented in 2025-26 where resourcing constraints allow.

In addition to the Office-wide capability initiatives:

- members of the property team undergo specific training including work health and safety (such as working with power tools and working at heights), horticultural skills development, heritage management, and project management training and certification.
- staff in the Honours and Awards branch (specifically case officers) receive tailored, on-the-job training.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) CAPABILITY

The Office is responsible for its own ICT environment and provides systems and services that meet the needs of the Governor-General and staff while ensuring reliability, security, timeliness, control and management of associated risks. While the Office's ICT Systems were significantly enhanced in a digital transformation project that was completed in 2023-24, the increasingly high-risk and complex operating environment means that cyber security capability, in particular, remains a key priority for the Office. To meet the increasing cost of compliance, the Office is investing more of its departmental allocation into this area.

The Office has established a shared services arrangement with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) to provide ICT helpdesk and associated services. Over coming periods, the Office will work with DPS to investigate what other arrangements may be considered with the aim of ensuring systems remain modern, robust and secure in the longer term. Some services are outsourced through commercial arrangements however as with the DPS arrangements the Office maintains control over them.

The Office's ICT framework and resources are managed under the direction of the Management Committee through the Information Technology Sub-Committee (ITSC).



## INFRASTRUCTURE

The Administered Capital Budget funding provided to the Office supports a program to sustain the condition and capability of both Commonwealth heritage listed properties for which the Office has statutory stewardship responsibilities. Planned expenditure under this program is prioritised to meet work health and safety, accessibility and compliance requirements. The Office also allocates Departmental resources and funding to the ongoing maintenance of the properties.

The Office has in place robust practices, procedures and governance to achieve its property management outcomes including:

- Maintaining and publishing the Office's Heritage Management Strategy.
- Maintaining fit for purpose Heritage Management Plans and an internal Property Management Plan that sets out our property management process at a strategic level
- Performing comprehensive project program planning to identify long, medium and short-term capital property requirements, and to prioritise identified Administered Capital projects having regard to:
  - the current and desired condition of all property assets
  - their utilisation, and
  - the functional business needs of the assets, which is captured in the annual Property Works Plan
- Applying risk management principles to property management through the identification of property related risks in the Office Risk Register, the detailed property specific Property Risk Register and individual project risk assessments
- Preparing monthly property performance reporting on financial and non-financial property issues
- Undertaking annual property condition assessments
- Establishing property related service contracts which set out contractor performance requirements, and undertaking formally documented contractor performance reviews.

The Office also has a program in place, under the broad oversight of the Property Sub-Committee, to replace property related departmental assets such as vehicles and mobile plant and equipment to maximise operational effectiveness and support performance objectives.

## COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

The Office works closely with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, its portfolio department, on matters including the Governor-General's constitutional and statutory duties and the Australian honours and awards system (for which the department holds policy responsibility). The Office also works closely with

- the Department of Defence, Australian Defence Force (including directly with the Royal Australian Navy, Australian Army and Royal Australian Air Force) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs in relation to the Governor-General's role as Commander-in-Chief
- the Department of Defence in relation to Defence honours and awards
- the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with regard to international engagement and protocol
- the Department of Home Affairs, Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Federal Police on security matters
- The National Gallery of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Australian War Memorial and the Australian Fund in relation to art showcased in the Official Residences (and on the grounds of Government House and Admiralty House)
- JLL as the Office's Property Services Provider (through the Whole of Australian Government Property Services arrangements established by the Department of Finance)
- The National Capital Authority for all matters relating to Government House covered by the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*
- other government and non-government bodies, including organisations of which the Governor-General may agree to serve as Patron
- The Department of Industry, Science and Resources and the Department of Parliamentary Services with respect to shared service arrangements.





# GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND RISK SYSTEMS

## GOVERNANCE

As a government agency the Office's officials are subject to the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and this, together with the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Governor-General Act 1974*, guides our focus on governance, accountability, transparency and integrity.

The Office undertakes its work within a strong governance framework with a view to our accountability and transparency to the Australian public. To ensure we comply with governance requirements and meet the expectations of our stakeholders we will continue to:

- improve systems for the control and oversight of finances, procurements, projects, and human resources
- maintain strong probity and integrity processes including robust conflict of interest and gift and benefit reporting policies
- conduct awareness-raising activities for all staff and particularly those responsible for the management and allocation of resources and engagement with risk

- include governance and compliance as agenda items at management committee meetings
- ensure resources are directed to the regular review, maintenance and continuous improvement of governance, compliance and accountability mechanisms.

The Official Secretary, in his role as Chief Executive Officer and the Accountable Authority, is accountable for the efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of resources and performance. The Office recognises the need for a high level of accountability and places a strong emphasis on meeting its governance obligations and responsibilities.

The Deputy Official Secretary, assisted by the branch Directors and the Chief Financial Officer, supports the Official Secretary's overall governance responsibilities by facilitating the development of corporate and business plans; establishing policy and accountability frameworks; and managing risk, fraud, legal issues, people, budgets, systems, property, information, and security within the Office.

The Office has established several committees to support the Official Secretary:

- Management Committee (including the Budget Review Sub-Committee, Property Sub-Committee, Information Technology Sub-Committee, and Security Sub-Committee)
- Workplace Consultative Committee (WCC)
- Work Health and Safety Committee (WHS).

The Management Committee comprises the Official Secretary as Chief Executive Officer; the Deputy Official Secretary as Deputy Chief Executive Officer; branch Directors of People and Culture, Property and Projects, Engagement and Communications, Honours and Awards, and the Chief Financial Officer. The group meets twice monthly to monitor performance outcomes and consider strategic issues including emerging or ongoing risks. The Committee assists the Official Secretary to meet his statutory responsibilities under the *Governor-General Act 1974* and the PGPA Act.

The Budget Review Sub-Committee has been implemented to provide more timely and detailed oversight of expenditure and resource allocations in light of the Offices tight fiscal operating environment.

The Property Sub-Committee provides governance oversight of the Property Works Plan, and reports to the Management Committee. The Property Sub-Committee's role is to increase the Management Committee's direct involvement with the Office's property function, further increasing the robustness

of the governance practices and procedures that manage the property function.

Similarly the Information Technology Sub-Committee and Security Sub-Committee operate to provide greater governance and oversight of projects, risks and emerging issues in these areas and to ensure Management Committee is engaged as appropriate.

The WCC, representing all staff of the Office, provides a forum for management and employees to discuss matters affecting the workplace. Meetings of the WCC are chaired by a management representative. The WCC was dormant for most of 2024-25 due to the Office being engaged in bargaining for a revised Enterprise Agreement, which was approved in March 2025. Membership of the WCC has been refreshed and the first meeting was held in August 2025.

The WHS Committee is chaired by the Director, People and Culture. Membership includes management representatives and health and safety representatives from across the Office. The Committee's responsibility is to facilitate discussion and cooperation on work health and safety issues in the workplace.

The Office also has a three-person Audit Committee responsible for providing independent advice to the Official Secretary on the Office's risk, internal control and compliance frameworks and performance and financial accountability. The Audit Committee comprises an independent external Chair and two independent external members.

## RISK

Risk oversight is an integral part of sound management practice and an essential element of good governance. It continues to be a primary focus of importance as the Office proactively plans and manages risk to ensure business continuity and workplace health and safety. The Office actively manages risks associated with its changing physical and cyber security environment to ensure the safety of our people and properties and that our systems remain robust, responsive and secure.

The Office manages risk in accordance with its Risk Management Framework, placing a focus on:

- support for the Governor-General, including:
  - managing internal and external events
  - advising on a broad range of matters
  - developing and executing an effective community engagement program
- the effective stewardship of the official properties
- the effective administration of the Australian honours and awards system
- maintaining and executing efficient and effective management systems, and
- building and maintaining a strong, engaged and capable workforce.

The Deputy Official Secretary performs the role of the Chief Risk Officer. In accordance with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy, the Office regularly reviews its risk management framework, risk register, settings and supporting plans to ensure risks are appropriately identified and risk controls are effectively implemented. Management and mitigation of these risks is further reinforced through the Office’s daily operations and administrative practices.

Strong risk management processes exist and controls are monitored to ensure they remain effective and reviewed for improvement opportunities to further mitigate the potential for risks to impact on the achievement of business objectives.

There are six strategic risks being managed by the Office which are outlined in the following table with their corresponding controls.

Table 1: Strategic Risks and Selected Controls

Strategic Risk	Selected Controls
Failure to provide sound advice on constitutional, policy and contextual matters	Written professional advice sought where required Broad internal consultation with senior management Reference to precedent Management framework and processes
Failure to manage the internal and external events program	Diverse range of engagement options Standard Operating Procedures in place Reference to precedent and experience Liaison with relevant third parties Communications strategy
Failure to manage and maintain the property portfolio	Regular meetings of the Property Sub-Committee Capital projects identified in the Property Works Plan Heritage and Landscape Management Plans Condition Audits and Surveys Compliance programs Building Management Systems
Physical and/or cyber security environment and/ or incident/event affecting the performance of official duties	Specialised armed security services operating 24 hours at both properties, and accompanying the Governor-General for external commitments Cyber Security Strategy, Governance Standards and Frameworks Strict visitor control policy and procedures Business continuity planning and exercises Secure IT gateway and internal firewalls, paired with close engagement with the Australian Cyber Security Centre
Failure to provide adequate research and secretariat support services to the honours advisory councils and committee	Policies, processes and procedures Targeted training (such as the program for developing new case officers) Quality Assurance methodology Targeted recruitment and retention strategies
Failure to maintain a robust governance system and culture and appropriate management systems and practices	Management, governance and compliance frameworks Management Committee, and Sub-Committee scrutiny on processes and outcomes Mandatory training, leadership and development programs Establishment of relevant project teams to meet performance objectives Annual Performance Agreements



## OBJECTIVES

The Office's Performance Management Framework outlines how we will manage, monitor and report performance to ensure we meet our objectives.

As set out in the Government's Portfolio Budget Statements the Office is responsible for the following outcome:

*"The performance of the Governor-General's role is facilitated through organisation and management of official duties, management and maintenance of the official households and properties and administration of the Australian honours and awards system."*

Thus our objective is to support the Governor-General and official activities – this program comprises three components: support for the Governor-General, management and maintenance of the official properties, and administration of the Australian honours and awards system. The key activities to achieve each component and the associated performance targets are outlined in this section.



The Governor-General celebrates Australians of the Year at Government House



Component 1: Support for the Governor-General

Activities	Performance Measure	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27	Target 2027/28	Target 2028/29
Providing advice to the Governor-General; planning, implementing and managing Their Excellencies’ forward program of engagements, and liaising with representatives of governments, related authorities, and community groups. Providing support for Their Excellencies and hospitality services for official functions.	1.1 Stakeholders satisfaction to be assessed	90% or more of stakeholders are satisfied	90% or more of stakeholders are satisfied	90% or more of stakeholders are satisfied	90% or more of stakeholders are satisfied
	1.2 Number of children visiting Government	15,000 <sup>1</sup>	15,000	15,000	15,000
	This measure is to be supported by case studies that demonstrate the types of support provided to stakeholders.				

<sup>1</sup> Reduction expected compared to prior years due to external factors

Component 2: Management and Maintenance of the Official Properties

Activities	Performance Measure	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27	Target 2027/28	Target 2028/29
Providing governance advice and administrative services to the Office, and managing the Governor-General’s official residences, including maintenance of property, equipment and grounds.	2.1 Compliance with Disability Discrimination Act and Work Health and Safety Act legislation in public realm spaces <sup>2</sup>	70% or more of public realm spaces meet requirements	75% or more of public realm spaces meet requirements	75% or more of public realm spaces meet requirements	75% or more of public realm spaces meet requirements
	2.2 Official residences are in appropriate condition for their heritage value and operational role <sup>3,4</sup>	60% or more of property elements in appropriate condition	55% or more of property elements in appropriate condition	50% or more of property elements in appropriate condition	45% or more of property elements in appropriate condition

<sup>2</sup> Whilst it is a goal to have all spaces of all Office managed properties fully meet requirements, resource constraints prevent all public realms paces meeting all Disability Discrimination Act requirements.  
<sup>3</sup> All buildings, equipment and grounds undergo a condition assessment on a minimum annual basis to indicate whether they are maintained at a level appropriate for their use. Each building, piece of equipment and area of grounds is categorised based on their use and heritage significant to determine the appropriate level of maintenance and presentation.  
<sup>4</sup> Change in targets from 2024-25 due to available resource allocation. Re-baselined to reflect outcome of the 2024-25 condition assessments undertaken.

Component 3: Administration of the Australian honours and awards system

Activities	Performance Measure	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27	Target 2027/28	Target 2028/29
Researching and preparing nominations for consideration by the Council for the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations Council and the National Emergency Medal Committee.	3.1 Assessment of the Councils’ and Committee’s satisfaction	90% or more of respondents indicate expectations were met	90% or more of respondents indicate expectations were met	90% or more of respondents indicate expectations were met	90% or more of respondents indicate expectations were met
Providing secretariat support to the Australian honours advisory bodies.					
Undertaking the administrative tasks associated with the approval of recipients in the Australian honours system and subsequent announcement where applicable.					
Procuring Australian honours insignia, warrants and investiture items.					
Complying with governing instruments within the Australian honours system, including the facilitation and approval of changes.	3.2 Assessment of compliance with governing instruments <sup>5</sup>	100% of recommendations made are compliant with governing instruments	100% of recommendations made are compliant with governing instruments	100% of recommendations made are compliant with governing instruments	100% of recommendations made are compliant with governing instruments
Undertaking promotion and community engagement activities to increase awareness of, and engagement with, the Order of Australia.					

<sup>5</sup> Recommendations are made to the Governor-General for consideration and approval and have been done in accordance with the associated regulations. Recommendations include approvals for awards to recipients, terminations or cancellations of awards or appointments to the advisory bodies

# APPENDIX

## LIST OF REQUIREMENTS

This corporate plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of:

- Subsection 35(1) of the PGPA Act; and
- The PGPA Rule 2014.

The table details the requirements met by the Office’s Corporate Plan and page number for each requirement

Requirement	Pages/s
Introduction	3
Statement of Preparation	2
Reporting period for which the plan is prepared	2
Reporting periods covered by the plan	2
Purpose	4
Key activities	5
Operating context	6-13
Environment	6
Capability	10
Cooperation with others	13
Risk oversight and management systems	14-17
Performance	18-21



The Governor-General presenting the Victoria Cross for Australia to the family of the late Private Richard Norden VC