



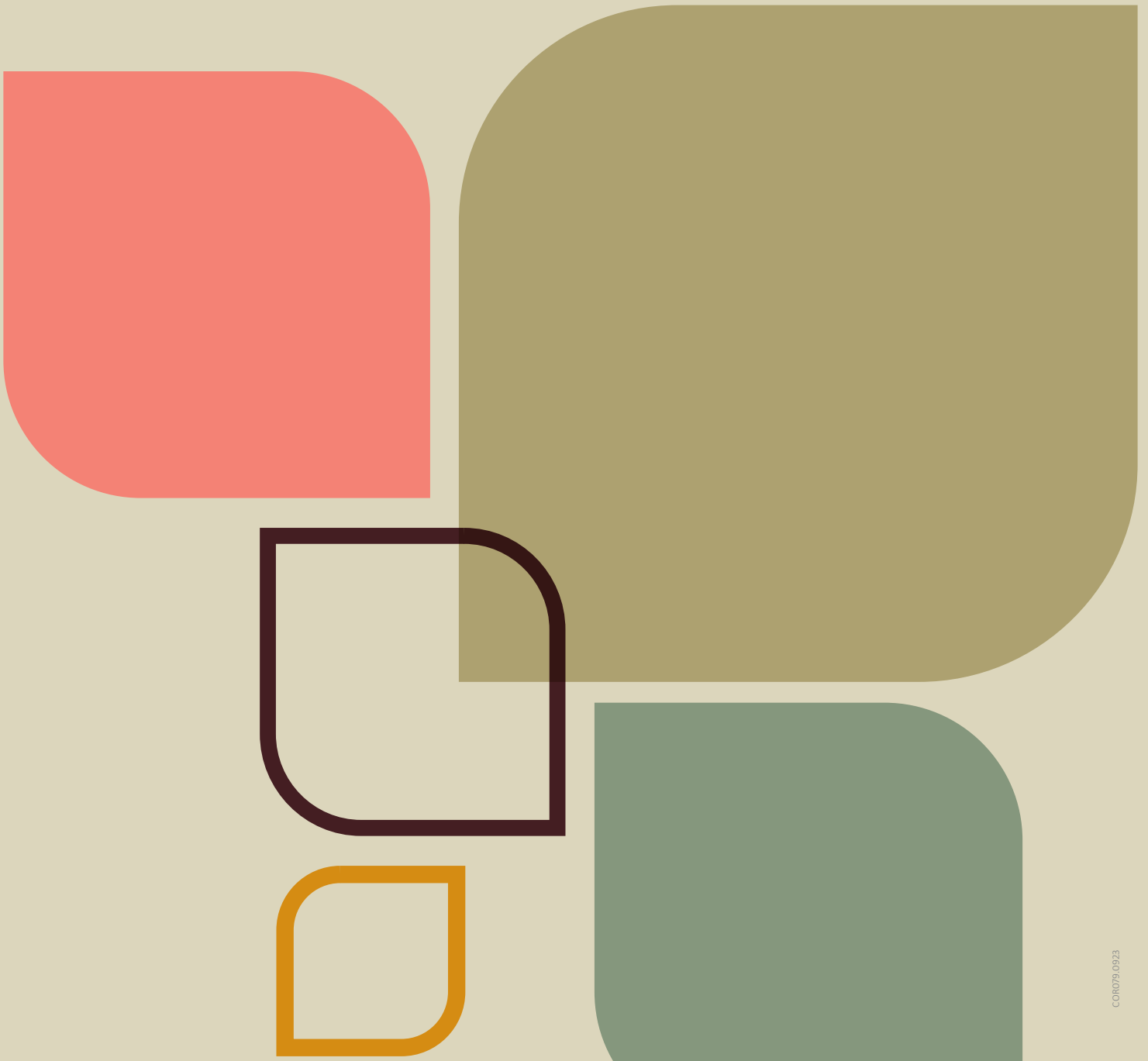
Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Inquiry into Policy and Program Design  
and Implementation

25 September 2023



# Introduction

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Policy and Program Design and Implementation.

## Overview of DAFF

2. DAFF's vision is a ***more sustainable and prosperous Australia through biosecurity, agricultural production, and trade***. The department's purpose is to work together to safeguard and grow sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and forestry for all Australians. The key objectives are:
  - a. **Industry growth** — support industry to grow toward a \$100 billion agriculture, fisheries, and forestry industry by 2030 amid changing global market conditions.
  - b. **Biosecurity** — strengthen our national biosecurity system to provide an appropriate level of protection to Australia's people, our environment and economy from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow.
  - c. **Resilience and sustainability** — Increase the contribution agriculture, fisheries and forestry make to a healthy, sustainable and low emissions environment.
3. DAFF has a broad and diverse range of policy and program responsibilities supporting agriculture, fisheries and forestry production and international trade and market access, and significant regulatory responsibilities across exports, biosecurity, illegal logging, and agricultural levies.
4. We provide regulatory services for many parts of the economy through our regulatory activities for imports and exports. Our staff work on policy, on-ground programs, regulation, economics, science and research, international negotiations, trade and managing operational programs. The department is a critical part of industry supply chains, facilitating trade and market access for many of Australia's products. The department also advises on policies and helps farmers and rural commodities deal with drought.



# Our approach to policy and program design and implementation

5. The Department's responsibilities intersect with a range of nationally significant economic and national security issues. This includes:
  - **Strategic importance to the economy** — DAFF is a major border agency, playing a key role in regulating exports and imports across different parts of the economy and is central to the efficiency and resilience of Australia's supply chains
  - **Role in the shift to a net zero economy** — Agriculture accounts for 55% of Australia's land use, 24% of water extractions, and 15% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions
  - **Trade and investment** — 70% of Australia's agricultural production is exported and accounts for 12% of the value of our total exports
  - **Relationships in the Asia-Pacific** — Australian agriculture supports the food security of our immediate region
  - **Growth and prosperity of regional Australia** — fisheries and forestry employs 239,000 people nationally and underpins the prosperity of regional Australia
  - **Generating economic opportunities for First Nations people** — given our shared interests across our land, water, and sea country, particularly across northern Australia
  - **Critical role in national security** — we protect Australia from biosecurity risks which could cause a range of negative impacts including cost and availability of food, lost income, supply chain disruptions, and associated social and health and welfare impacts for farmers and the broader community.
6. In undertaking our role to design policy and programs and implement effectively (whether this be for our regulatory responsibilities or policy and program areas), we engage broadly across government and the community, including with:
  - Commonwealth, state and territory government ministers and their departments and agencies
  - primary producers, importers and exporters
  - industry peak bodies
  - Indigenous Australians
  - natural resource managers
  - universities and research organisations
  - overseas governments
  - international partners

7. Our approach to program and policy design is multi-faceted. We aim to both deliver and mature our capability, informed by strong engagement with our stakeholders, other policy and program specialists, and the community based on the following:
  - Taking a risk-based and data-driven approach with respect to our regulatory responsibilities
  - Working in an agile way to deliver high quality, integrated and forward-looking policy advice, including demonstrating strategic policy leadership to proactively shape outcomes in relation to the role of agriculture in the economy and society
  - Building and maintaining strong subject matter expertise across a range of areas including biosecurity, fisheries, forestry, and agricultural economics
  - Continuing to strengthen our capability, including through foresight and horizon scanning
  - Drawing on scientific and research communities in the APS and elsewhere to help shape program and policy design
  - Ensuring a strong evidence base for decision-making through better leveraging existing data, and building the capability of our people to apply data in policy and decision-making.
  - Building digital and technology capabilities and solutions to support our delivery of policy and programs
  - Continuing to find innovative ways of working
  - Embedding First Nations considerations across our policy, program and regulatory responsibilities
  - Building our capability to effectively monitor and evaluate our performance.

## Response to ANAO audits

8. Audit No. 6 (2022-23) Implementation of the Export Control Legislative Framework- the Auditor-General made five recommendations relating to: risk management; assurance activities; policies and processes; and benefits management.
  - a. The department has agreed to all five recommendations.
  - b. Implementation plans have been developed for all five recommendations and are all on track to be implemented within two years of the report being tabled in Parliament.
9. Audit No. 17 (2022-23) Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's cultural reform- the Auditor-General made four recommendations relating to: establishing the direction for reform; monitoring of reform activities; establishing fit-for-purpose performance criteria; and establishing a framework for regular review of reform.
  - a. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry agreed to all four recommendations.
  - b. The department is developing an action plan in response to both this audit and the recent Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) Capability Review.

# APSC Capability Review

10. The APSC undertook a Capability Review of the department that assessed the department's ability to meet future objectives and identify organisational capability gaps and opportunities to address them, including taking into consideration our resourcing arrangements.
11. The APSC has publicly released their final report, with the department due to provide an action plan in late 2023. The department's action plan is likely to include the development of one forward work program to cover these and the Culture review recommendations.
12. The action plan will also incorporate recommendations and findings from prior and other reviews undertaken, including, but not limited to, APS Census, and the ANAO audits listed above.
13. The department is currently implementing a refreshed Enterprise Performance & Reporting Framework, to uplift the department's capability in terms of performance monitoring and reporting.

## Conclusion

14. DAFF welcomes the Inquiry into Policy and Program Design and Implementation and looks forward to reviewing any recommendations that can further strengthen our governance arrangements and maturity to respond to these and future reviews.

