

Submission from the Director of National Parks to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA)-Inquiry on Auditor-General's report No. 31 (2016-17)
Corporate Planning in the Australian Public Sector

Parks Australia has a very diverse workforce, across remote and metropolitan centres, with a range of roles from seasonal rangers and scientists to strategic policy planners. Our corporate plan allows a consistency of purpose and strategic direction across the range of very different operating environments represented in six national parks, 58 marine reserves and the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The Corporate Plan has been adopted and fully integrated as the primary planning document for the DNP and for Parks Australia, the division of the Department of the Environment and Energy that assists the DNP. All result areas in the plan, together with business as usual activities, are reflected in operational plans for each relevant park and section of Parks Australia. Allocation of activities to deliver the outcomes in the operational plans are in turn reflected in individual performance agreements with my staff. The priorities identified in the corporate plan are similarly prioritised in the agency's budget development.

We acknowledge our relationships with traditional owners, neighbours, other land managers and scientific and commercial partners will be the key to our success. In this respect, the DNP Corporate Plan has become a key document that communicates to our stakeholders the essential commitments, vision and strategic direction of the DNP.

In the 2016 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) review of public entities corporate planning the Director of National Parks (DNP) Corporate Plan 2015-2019 was rated as *fully mature* for:

- the corporate plan being established as the entity's primary planning document used for managing the business; and
- clearly demonstrated sound processes for developing the plan.

The DNP Corporate Plan 2015-2019 was rated as *partially mature* for the systems and processes outlined for monitoring the implementation of the corporate plan, specifically "systems and processes to monitor the plan were in place but not fully operating".

The ANAO audit further recommended that all public entities, in developing their corporate plans, consider the key challenges and risks faced by the organisation and transparently present key information.

In developing the DNP Corporate Plan 2016-2020, key learnings and opportunities for improvement implemented by the DNP include:

- strengthening the position of the DNP corporate plan as the primary planning document for the Division by:
 - providing more detailed description of expected results and clearly outlining where the accountability lies for each result area throughout the plan; and
 - increasing staff awareness and understanding of the role of the corporate plan in agency management. This has resulted in the goals of the corporate plan being clearly linked through section annual operations plans and individual staff performance agreements.

- ensuring that risks and key organisational challenges are considered and incorporated in the plan by:
 - a risk mapping and elicitation exercise by the DNP Executive Board during the corporate plan development phase to ensure that risks and challenges are adequately addressed within the corporate plan;
 - including a description of key agency risks in a section of the plan titled 'Risk Management Framework'.
- Improving our processes for monitoring the implementation of the corporate plan by:
 - continuing to develop and articulate clear, measureable indicators (with associated baselines) to monitor performance against each goal of the corporate plan, to improve on the 2015-2019 plan where many indicators were still under development;
 - ensuring that individual sections report against their respective indicators regularly at the monthly meeting of the DNP Executive Board, including through dashboard and traffic light reporting;
 - conducting a comprehensive mid-year review of the whole of agency progress towards the objectives outlined in the corporate plan, and to address issues preventing the completion of the those objectives.

Additionally, the DNP will update relevant performance indicators in the Portfolio Budget Statement to ensure they more closely align with the goals of the DNP corporate plan.

The DNP is committed to continued refinement and improvement of our future corporate plans, as the core planning document, a core communication product, and the basis for non-financial performance reporting for the agency.