



Australian Government

Department of Education and Training

Chair

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

jcpaa@aph.gov.au

Secretary

Dr Michele Bruniges AM

EXECUTIVE MINUTE

on

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

REPORT No. 469

Commonwealth Performance Framework:

Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 31 (2015–16) and No. 54 (2016–17)

General comments

The purpose of this Executive Minute is to provide a progress report from the Department of Education and Training (the department) to recommendations made by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) in its Report 469 following the review of the Auditor-General's Report No. 31 (2015–16), Administration of Higher Education Loan Program Debt and Repayments, and the review of Auditor-General's Report No. 54 (2016–17), Corporate Planning in the Australian Public Sector 2016–17.

Response to the recommendation(s)

Recommendation No. 1 paragraph 2.12

The Committee recommends that each of the four audited Commonwealth entities from Audit Report No. 54 (2016–17), Corporate Planning in the Australian Public Sector 2016–17, report back to the Committee on how its senior management team is working to further embed the corporate planning requirements in future planning cycles, to address the audit finding at paragraph 13 of Audit Report No. 54 and with reference to the other 'opportunities for improvement' identified as part of the audit.

Supported. In ANAO's Report No. 54 (2016–17) on Corporate Planning in the Australian Public Sector, the Auditor-General stated, at paragraph 13, that 'more active attention from senior management is required to further embed the requirements in the third cycle of corporate planning'.

Opportunity through learning

The ANAO's Report also identified opportunities for improvement relating to:

- systems and processes for developing the corporate plan;
- the content of mandatory sections of the plan; and
- systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the plan.

Progress to date

Systems and processes

Since the release of the report, the department has implemented systems and processes for the development of the Corporate Plan and its subsequent monitoring and reporting, which has also ensured the senior management team's active attention. This includes:

- gaining early executive engagement through an all executive planning day
- staff consultation on components of the Corporate Plan
- engagement with the department's Audit and Assurance Committee
- quarterly performance reporting process to monitor progress in implementing the Corporate Plan and Portfolio Budget Statement.

These systems and processes were implemented for the development of the department's Corporate Plan 2017–18 and have been further embedded in our corporate planning process for 2018–19.

Content of mandatory sections

As part of the annual corporate planning process, the department identifies areas of the plan which will be the focus of improvement. Following the findings of the ANAO Report the department focused on further embedding the Corporate Plan as the department's primary planning document. This also included the creation of a new single purpose statement "*maximising opportunity and prosperity through national leadership on education and training*", to replace the previous four goals, and a list of enterprise risks being published in the Corporate Plan 2017–18.

The focus for the Corporate Plan 2018–19 has been to enhance the relevance, reliability, and completeness of our performance information, the result of which was published in the Portfolio Budget Statements 2018–19. The department has also undertaken work to describe the cultural traits required to deliver our activities and achieve our purpose.

Recommendation No. 7 paragraph 3.22

The Committee recommends that the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), in consultation with the Department of Finance, the Australian National Audit Office and the Department of Education and Training, conduct a review on whether non-financial performance reporting and evaluation as a training and research discipline requires strengthening, with the APSC to report back to the Committee on progress on this matter.

The department consulted with the Department of Finance and it was agreed that the issues addressed in Recommendation 7 would be covered in the response being prepared by the Department of Finance.

Recommendation No. 10 paragraph 4.5

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training, in responding to Recommendation 4 in Audit Report No. 31 (2015–16), Administration of Higher Education Loan Program Debt and Repayments, consult with the research sector and other interested parties about the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) data they would like to see released and publish as much data as is possible within privacy constraints.

Supported. In addition to implementation progress against Recommendation 4 in Audit Report No. 31 (2015–16), the department has commenced consultation with interested researchers and analysts from the higher tertiary education sector on its HELP data reporting strategy, including exploring ways the department can collaborate with researchers to make information available and engage with researchers to add value to policy. At the same time the department is considering how it can better disseminate statistical information more generally in relation to the HELP programs.

The department also notes that in its discussion leading to Recommendation 10, the Committee raised the issue of sharing of information between the ATO and the Department. A data-link enabling transmission of de-identified data between the two agencies has been established, and there are regular meetings and agreed processes between the agencies to support good risk management and handling of issues.

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Opportunity through learning