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Auditor-General for Australia



19 December 2022

Mr Tony Zappia MP  
Committee Chair  
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water  
By email: [northernaustralia.joint@aph.gov.au](mailto:northernaustralia.joint@aph.gov.au)

Dear Mr Zappia

#### **INQUIRY INTO PLASTIC POLLUTION IN AUSTRALIA'S OCEANS AND WATERWAYS**

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) presented the following performance audit report to the Parliament that you may find relevant to the above inquiry.

- Auditor-General Report No. 4 of 2022–23 [Australian Government Implementation of the National Waste Policy Action Plan](#)

Information about what the audit assessed, concluded, and recommended is attached on pages 2-4 of this letter. The audit report is available online at [anao.gov.au](http://anao.gov.au).

Should the Committee require further information in relation to this matter, the ANAO would be pleased to provide a briefing at a time convenient to you or appear as a witness at a hearing.

To arrange a briefing, please contact our External Relations team [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Grant Hehir

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**Auditor-General Report No. 4 of 2022–23 Australian Government Implementation of the National Waste Policy Action Plan** examined the effectiveness of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) implementation of the National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019 (NWPAP).

To form a conclusion against this objective, the following high-level audit criteria were adopted.

- Have fit-for-purpose planning and governance arrangements been established?
- Is the plan being implemented effectively?
- Are monitoring and reporting arrangements effective?

The audit focused on the department's implementation of the Australian Government's commitments under the NWPAP, including coordination arrangements with state and territory governments and other stakeholders. The audit did not examine the delivery of actions under the NWPAP that are being led by state, territory or local governments, business sectors, and industry bodies; the effectiveness of initiatives or projects listed in the NWPAP; or the delivery of other waste-related initiatives that are not part of the NWPAP.

The audit concluded that:

- Australian Government implementation of the NWPAP is partly effective. While progress has been made since the implementation of the previous National Waste Policy in establishing an action plan to guide the achievement of outcomes, the department's implementation has not yet met the intent of the action plan. Risk management is not effective and the effectiveness of implementation and coordination of NWPAP actions is limited by the lack of defined scope and deliverables for each action.
- The planning and governance arrangements established for the implementation of the NWPAP are largely fit-for-purpose. The development of the NWPAP was partly evidence-based. Scope or deliverables for each action were not established or agreed during the development of the NWPAP, which has impacted the implementation and coordination of actions as well as progress monitoring and reporting. Governance and oversight arrangements have been established and are largely effective. The department has established effective stakeholder engagement arrangements for the implementation of the NWPAP.
- The implementation and coordination of the NWPAP is partly effective. The department is unable to demonstrate that it is effectively supporting the management of risk to the implementation of the NWPAP and is not effectively managing or overseeing risk for the implementation of Australian Government-led actions. The lack of agreed scope or deliverables for each action listed in the NWPAP makes it difficult for the department to accurately determine implementation progress. The effectiveness of the department's planning and coordination activities for the implementation of the NWPAP has been reduced by lack of consensus on how jointly led actions will be delivered. Shared risks are not being considered or managed.
- The effectiveness of monitoring and reporting arrangements established by the department is limited by the lack of agreed scope or deliverables for NWPAP actions against which progress can be assessed. Reports to the governance body do not differentiate between risks, issues, proposed mitigations and general comments. Reported issues are not considered or addressed by the governance body. There are arrangements in place to publicly report on the progress of the NWPAP

targets through the biennial National Waste Reports, with work underway to improve data quality for national waste reporting.

The report included the following recommendations:

**Recommendation No.1**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water:

- a. propose and coordinate the development of processes to manage risk to the implementation of the NWPAP; and
- b. develop guidance for action-leads to ensure consistency of reporting and escalation of risks to the implementation of NWPAP actions.

**Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation No.2**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water develop risk management processes to ensure that risk is:

- a. managed for Australian Government-led actions;
- b. coordinated across Australian Government action-leads; and
- c. managed within the context of the implementation of the NWPAP and the achievement of its objectives.

**Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation No.3**

As part of coordinating the development of processes to manage risks for the NWPAP, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water:

- a. establish processes to manage shared risks identified for Australian Government-led actions; and
- b. propose and coordinate the development of processes for the management of shared risks for jointly led actions.

**Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation No.4**

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water:

- a. finalise a performance monitoring and evaluation framework for Australian Government-led actions, including establishing arrangements for results of performance monitoring activities to be used to manage implementation issues and inform decision-making; and
- b. propose and coordinate the development of processes to ensure that issues reported and raised with governance bodies are addressed.

**Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation No.5**

To support the measurement of progress of implementation, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water:

- a. coordinate the establishment of agreed scope and deliverables for non-Australian Government-led actions listed in the NWPAP;
- b. establish agreed scope and deliverables for Australian Government-led actions; and
- c. facilitate the review of delivered actions to confirm that each has been completed as intended.

**Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water response:** *Agreed.*