

2024 APS Employee Census Action Plan

AUSTRAC continued to have high engagement from employees in our 2024 APS Employee Census survey. This valuable feedback has been analysed and reviewed by our executive leadership group who have endorsed this action plan.

Four key themes emerged from the Census results, and a focus on these will improve our operating environment, particularly through an expected period of growth and reform. The identified themes are **technology innovation**, **process improvement**, **leadership collaboration** and **professional development**.

Theme 1 – Technology Innovation

Agency growth presents greater risks and opportunities for identifying new ways of working, maximising efficiencies and implementing technology improvements. As we mobilise a digital strategy it will be important that we drive a culture of innovation to keep pace with change and continuously review our systems and processes to ensure they are fit for purpose.

You told us

Two thirds of the agency said that the **technology in our agency was a barrier to performing at your best** to a somewhat or great extent. Only 54% of the agency said that **their workgroup has the tools and resources needed to perform well**. 30% of the agency said that the most important positive change for the future is **improving our technology and digital environment**. You asked for faster upgrades to our tools, better workflows and a consolidation of tools and systems we use for collaboration.

Our Commitment

- We will regularly highlight new technology initiatives and demonstrate how we are adopting innovative digital solutions across the agency, with more information to be provided soon with the launch of our new digital strategy.
- We will encourage innovation by sharing stories of failed initiatives, focusing on lessons learned and how we adapt and move forward.
- We will reward and recognise teams for their contributions to innovation, particularly where it leads to streamlined, automated processes that reduce manual work.
- We will establish regular reviews of progress on new initiatives, incorporating "fail-fast" practices to quickly identify and pivot when needed, and ensuring rapid adaptation to challenges.
- We will maintain and expand Innovation Week to cultivate and sustain a culture of continuous improvement and technological innovation across AUSTRAC.

AUSTRAC is currently developing a **Digital and Technology Strategy** to position AUSTRAC as a world-leading, data-driven digital agency in financial regulation and intelligence.

Theme 2 – Process Improvement

We must improve decision making processes and provide clear messaging regarding our work priorities and performance expectations and decision making mechanisms. Clear planning, performance measurement and risk management processes will be even more important to support decision making as the agency grows in size and complexity.

You told us

Only 35% of the agency are happy with the **decision making layers** established in the agency, a reduction since last year. Your rating for **administrative processes** stayed low at 37%, and 45% of you would like to see a **greater appetite for risk**. These results are even lower at the EL1 and EL2 levels. You have told us that you have **too many competing priorities**, and while noting that **change** is being communicated well, it could be managed better as we move further into a period of reform.

Our Commitment

- We will expand the use of project teams to drive agency priorities, ensuring dedicated project management and change expertise are embedded to partner effectively with business units.
- We will implement clear governance structures to support collaboration between business and technology teams, with a focus on delivering enterprise-wide solutions.
- Mature our agency-wide planning and performance framework: We will develop and enhance a comprehensive planning and performance measurement framework, led by the Governance, Planning and Performance section, to ensure alignment with agency goals.
- We will create branch-specific risk and control plans aligned with the agency's risk appetite and tolerance, enabling agile and informed prioritization of work.
- We will invest in mapping and analysing business processes to identify opportunities for greater efficiency, streamlining workflows, and eliminating bottlenecks.

Theme 3 – Leadership Collaboration

Increasing collaboration and visibility of engagement in activities across leadership levels and functions will improve alignment of work priorities, develop stronger relationships and enhance the building of leadership capability. There must be a focus on providing opportunities for emerging leaders to participate in activities that will enable their growth.

You told us

While your **overall impressions of the SES** has increased, your perception of the **SES working as a team** is still lower, particularly amongst the EL2 cohort. EL2 staff say they are **not inspired to come up with new ways of working** and have the highest number of **barriers to performing well**. Collaboration is also seen to be hindered by concerns brought up in themes 1 and 2, and staff believe that **improving our technology** will improve our collaboration.

Our Commitment

- We will create more opportunities for EL2 staff to shadow and observe SES members during internal committee meetings and external engagements, fostering greater exposure to decision-making and leadership processes.
- We will identify opportunities to lower approval levels, empowering EL2 staff with more decision-making responsibilities to enhance leadership development and accountability and improve succession planning.
- Leaders will be encouraged to fully adopt collaboration tools and regularly assess how their teams use meetings, ensuring they support efficient communication and decision-making.
- Leaders will be encouraged to share key insights and lessons from collaboration experiences, helping to drive continuous improvement in how we work together across AUSTRAC.
- We will build on the success of the 2023 initiative by continuing to focus on clear, transparent communication of the "Why" behind decisions and strategies, ensuring alignment and understanding across the agency. We will also provide clearer communication of EL2 work level standards, giving more consistent workloads and delegations across the agency.

Theme 4 – Professional Development

To ensure that the agency is positioned for the future, and we can provide dynamic and effective learning and development we must transition to a proactive and structured learning model. Agency reform brings risks related to staff knowledge and training that will need to urgently be addressed.

You told us

75% of EL2s have said that their **workgroup does not have the required capabilities**. More relevant learning and development is required with 48% of staff saying that the training they have completed in the last year **has not improved their performance**. Learning and Development was the 5th most requested **improvement for our future**. As we move into this period of reform, 38% of staff **want a better understanding of how these reforms will impact their day-to-day role**.

Our Commitment

- We are introducing a new induction program to ensure all new employees have a positive, consistent, and welcoming experience as they start with AUSTRAC.
- We will set up a dedicated Professional Development section within the People and Business Solutions branch to focus on strategic initiatives, manager capability building, essential learning programs, and the administration of external training opportunities.
- We will continue to grow and strengthen our graduate program, offering valuable entry-level pathways and expanding our talent pipeline.
- We will provide additional development opportunities for the EL2 cohort by expanding mobility options, allowing staff to take on acting roles and move across different sections at the same level to broaden experience.
- Leaders will create targeted opportunities for on-the-job training, enabling staff to build their capabilities both within and across teams in a hands-on, practical way.

A professional development **forward work program** has been endorsed with a **capability analysis** and development of a new **capability framework** underway.