



CORPORATE PLAN 2017–18 TO 2020–21

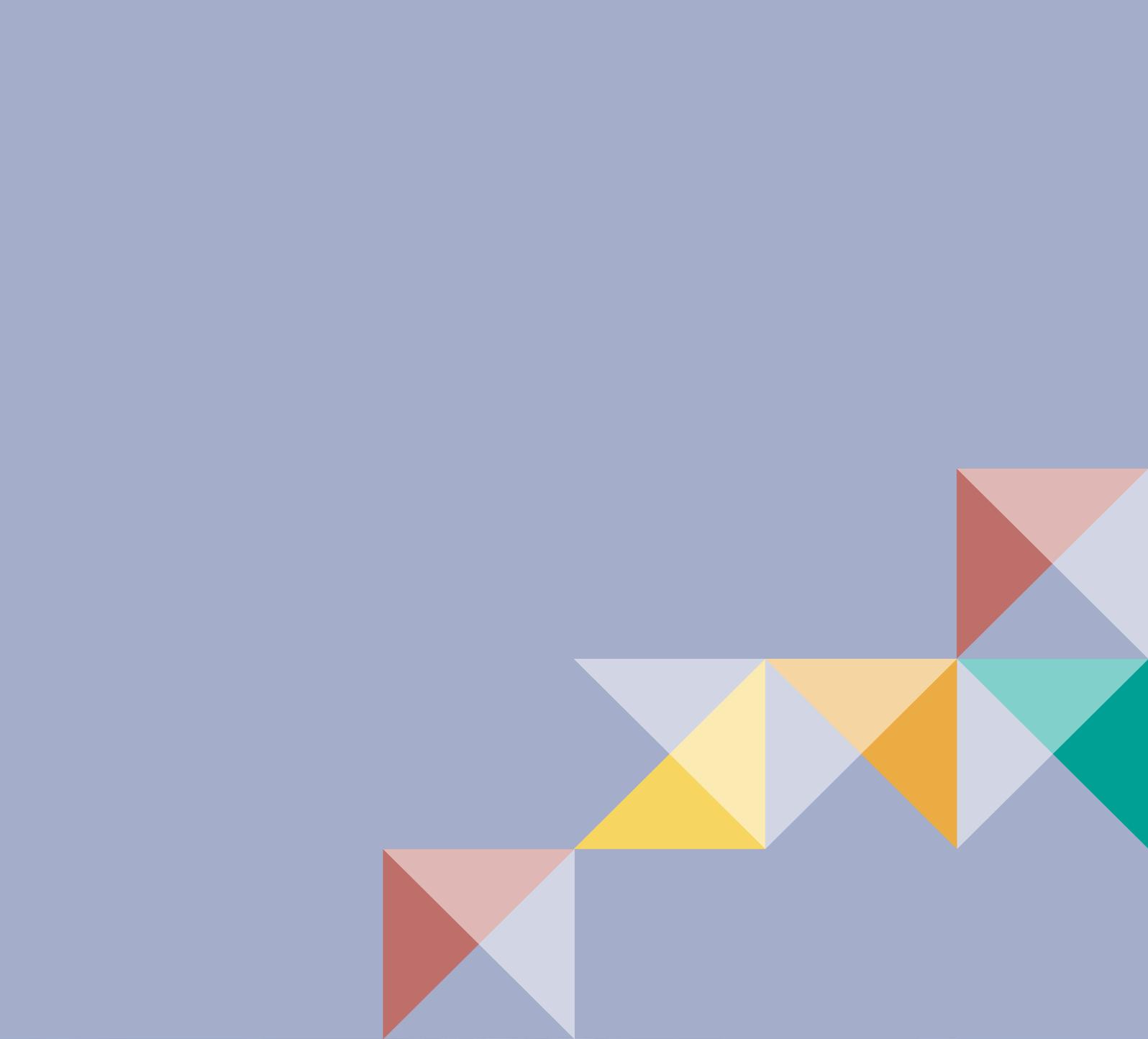






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FOREWORD

We understand the value of official statistics to key decisions in Australia, by governments, but also by business, individuals and households. For over 110 years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has contributed to the wellbeing of Australians by providing high quality statistical information.

We are working to achieve greater use of our statistical information, contributing to informed decision making by governments, business, households, and the community, while naturally protecting the confidentiality of the sensitive information provided to us by households and businesses.

It is critical that the ABS can provide our stakeholders with statistics and data in which they can have confidence. It is important to ensure continued delivery of trusted, world-class statistics, and provide information required to drive innovation and to meet the information needs of today's dynamic economy and changing society.

With the inevitable challenges of limited resources, expanding user demands, and keeping ahead of the variety of measurement requirements within a dynamic economy, society and environment, we will need to make difficult choices around our priority statistics and respective effort.

One way for us to better deal with these challenges is to transform our business, progressing further efficiencies through step change in what we do while also carefully managing the key risks around the quality of our core statistics. I expect 2017–18 to be challenging as we move this transformation of our business from the development phase into a new phase of integration.

As the Accountable Authority of the ABS, I am pleased to present the Corporate Plan 2017–18 which covers the period 2017–18 to 2020–21, in accordance with the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

I encourage you to take the time to gain a fuller understanding of the strategic directions of the ABS.

David W. Kalisch
Australian Statistician





ABOUT THIS PLAN

The ABS Corporate Plan 2017–18 outlines our priorities and goals for 2017–18 and the outlook for the forward estimates period until 2020–2021. As required under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, this plan is relevant to ABS day-to-day operations and defines how we will measure performance. It is the central component of the ABS planning and performance framework. It will be monitored internally throughout the year, reported upon publicly in the ABS Annual Report, and updated annually.

ABOUT THE ABS

1. OUR PURPOSE

The ABS purpose is to inform Australia's important decisions by partnering and innovating to deliver relevant, trusted, objective data, statistics and insights.

2. OUR ROLE

As the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and provider of statistical services to the states and territories, the ABS seeks to deliver the most public value we can from the resources we receive through:

- providing the statistical information that Australia needs
- responding to the changing information priorities of our stakeholders
- enhancing the ways that we interact with our stakeholders
- developing and maintaining community trust, which is fundamental to our ability to collect high quality information
- enabling effective and safe use of our statistics
- coordinating and advising official bodies on statistics, including developing, and ensuring compliance with, statistical standards
- fulfilling our role as an Accredited Integrating Authority
- building our capacity to take advantage of opportunities, such as advances in technology, big data, and use of administrative information for statistical purposes
- ensuring cost-effective operations, including better utilising existing information, collecting information more efficiently, streamlining processes, and reducing the impact on those who provide statistical information.



3. OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve our purpose, the ABS is focusing on three priorities to meet Australia's contemporary and emerging statistical needs over the coming years:

- providing high quality official statistics
- transforming the ABS for the future
- delivering new statistical solutions to maximise the value of public data.

Our highest priority is to deliver high quality official statistics. To ensure that we can deliver relevant, trusted, objective statistics, we are transforming the ABS and partnering with our stakeholders to innovate, develop and implement new statistical solutions.

4. OUR VALUES

In delivering our services to the community, we uphold the Australian Public Service Values.

- **Impartial**—we are apolitical and provide the Australian Government with frank, honest and timely advice which is based on the best evidence available.
- **Committed to service**—we are professional, objective, innovative and efficient. We work collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and Government.
- **Accountable**—we are open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of ministerial responsibility.
- **Respectful**—we respect all people, including their rights and heritage.
- **Ethical**—we demonstrate leadership, are trustworthy and act with integrity in all we do.

5. OUR STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Maintaining the trust and support of governments, business, and the community is critical for the ABS to achieve its purpose. We will accomplish this through partnering with our stakeholders to innovate and deliver relevant, trusted, and objective statistics. We will also seek to preserve the ongoing trust of our survey respondents and data providers by continuing to maintain the secrecy of the information provided to us, as required by the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, while also ensuring that we meet the additional requirements of the *Privacy Act 1988*. We will also work with our government and business stakeholders to reduce respondent burden by more effectively using the wealth of existing government and non-government information to more efficiently deliver insights.

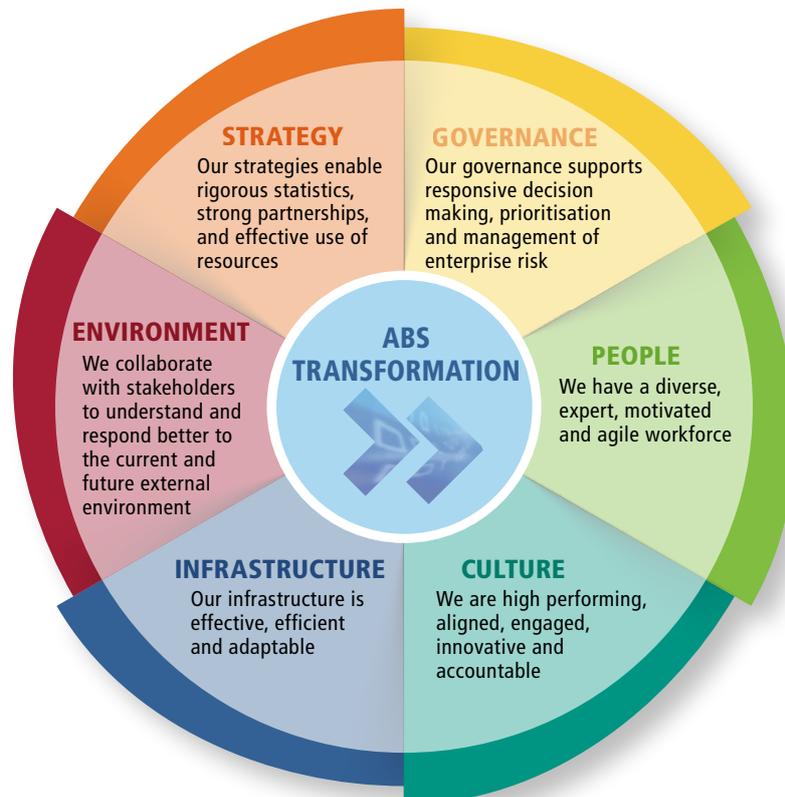


As part of the Treasury portfolio, the ABS maintains a close relationship with the Department of the Treasury and the responsible Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack MP, Minister for Small Business, while acting independently and objectively to provide official statistics and exercise our legislative powers¹. The Statement of Expectations for the ABS outlines the Australian Government’s expectations of us as we carry out our functions². To support us in this role, the [Australian Statistics Advisory Council \(ASAC\)](#) is the key advisory body to the Minister and the ABS. ASAC provides valuable input into our statistical functions and the ABS Forward Work Program.

We will continue to strengthen our partnerships to ensure that we are able to effectively meet Australia’s increasingly complex information needs. To guide us in partnering with our stakeholders, the ABS released its Engagement Strategy in 2015, prioritising engagement by making it a central pillar of our organisational culture. The ABS Engagement Strategy at Appendix B is based on the premise of mutual respect and mutual benefit through a shared vision, shared benefit and shared solutions. It uses three simple principles to underpin the way we engage, build and maintain relationships. The principles are: understand, nurture, and collaborate.

6. OUR TRANSFORMATION GOALS

We are implementing a wide reaching transformation agenda to enable the ABS to achieve its purpose and ensure that we are a high performing organisation. The transformation agenda encompasses six facets of environment, strategy, governance, people, culture, and infrastructure.



¹ See Appendix A.

² See the [ABS Statements of Expectations and Intent on the ABS Website](#).



7. OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

We are operating in a rapidly changing information environment and the ABS must continuously adapt and respond to changes in stakeholder needs, government policy, and priorities. The Australian Government has a broad data reform agenda and is committed to maximising the use and value of public data as a national resource for the benefit of the Australian people. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives to optimise the use of public data while recognising that community trust will be vital to reforms to Australia's data system. To do this, the ABS will work collaboratively with the public sector and business to better utilise existing data resources to improve efficiency and reduce red tape for business and the community.

The Government expects³ the ABS to be the main provider of Australian statistics used in the development and implementation of public policy and for a range of purposes by business, non-government organisations and the wider community. It also expects the ABS to exercise leadership of Australia's national statistical system by overseeing the quality of official statistics and working in partnership with other countries and international organisations on statistical matters, including ensuring consistency with internationally accepted frameworks. To meet these expectations, the ABS will deliver high quality, and objective official statistical solutions and improve the accessibility, timeliness and relevance of Australia's statistical information.

The continued trust and support of providers is critical to the ABS. The ABS intends to strengthen its relationships with the providers of this data, including Australian households, business and governments to ensure that it is able to perform its statutory functions well. The ABS protects the confidentiality of information provided and respects the contribution made by data providers while seeking to minimise the burden placed on them.

In the 2017–18 Budget, the Government funded the Data Integration Partnership of Australia (DIPA) as a coordinated Australian Public Service-wide investment to maximise the use and value of the Government's data assets through data integration. Through DIPA, the Government is enhancing data assets and analytical capability to deliver better policy outcomes and better targeted and more effective services. The ABS is the primary Accredited Integrating Authority for the DIPA, and has been funded \$37.7 million over three years to work collaboratively with data custodians to produce enduring linked data assets which combine high value data sources to better support policy development, while maintaining security and privacy of information.

³ See the [ABS Statements of Expectations and Intent on the ABS Website](#).



8. OUR CAPABILITY

The ABS is required to maintain capability across varied disciplines to ensure greater use of our statistics to inform decision making. Over the term of this plan, we are consolidating and enhancing our capability to keep pace with the changing needs of stakeholders and to ensure future sustainability. Our capability will be enhanced in the following key areas:

- investing in infrastructure to enhance our ability to deliver statistical solutions, enabling us to exploit new opportunities and better meet the evolving needs of users
- enhancing our statistical capability by redesigning our statistical collections, methods, products and services in order to deliver a more sustainable statistical program
- increasing our data integration capability and capacity
- building organisational engagement capability and embedding relationship management as a core part of ABS business
- placing greater prominence on contemporary risk management, including statistical risk
- improving governance arrangements to support positive cultural change, innovation and effective risk management
- implementing a Workforce Strategy, with regularly updated People and Culture Action Plans, to build our capacity
- aligning our staff profile and structure to support a rationalised and responsive work program delivered by an agile, innovative, productive and skilled workforce
- enhancing our skills in identifying and managing privacy issues
- capitalising on contemporary ways of working and our geographic diversity
- implementing improved skills and methods to effectively communicate, market and promote our statistics, information and insights.



9. OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY OFFICIAL STATISTICS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY OFFICIAL STATISTICS
PLANS/STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Statistical Forward Work Program with input from key stakeholders. • Engage with strategic advisory groups, such as the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, the Population and Social Statistics Advisory Group, the Economic Statistics Advisory Group, and other key stakeholders. • Engage with technical reference groups to develop our work program in specific areas. • Manage the delivery of the work program using a risk management framework.
KEY GOALS 2017–18	<p>Our key goals for 2017–18 are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver the agreed ABS Statistical Forward Work Program in accordance with the ABS Data Quality Framework and the ABS release schedule • collect statistical information, as directed by the Minister • deliver key economic and social indicators to support policy formation, macroeconomic decision making, and outcome reporting (e.g. education outcomes) • improve the relevance of statistical outputs by driving innovative solutions, ensuring compliance with standards and improving coverage and coherence (e.g. Labour Accounts) • work collaboratively with stakeholders to improve analytical capability and capacity, and take advantage of data development opportunities (e.g. Consumer Price Index) • build and maintain strong relationships with data providers in business and households • transition to use new statistical tools and approaches and create new opportunities for statistical output • support international statistical development • remake the Statistics Determination that governs the release of certain statistical information.
KEY GOALS OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS	<p>Our key goals from 2017–18 onwards are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a more coordinated business and population survey program • transition existing business and household surveys to the new ABS statistical infrastructure, processes, and tools • implement innovative approaches to maintain and enhance the existing suite of economic statistics • drive the use of data integration approaches to supplement surveys and administrative data collections.
PLANNED PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making by governments, business and the community is informed by high quality ABS statistical information. • ABS statistics are widely used.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: TRANSFORMING THE ABS FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	TRANSFORMING THE ABS FOR THE FUTURE
PLANS/STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ABS Workforce Strategy. • The ABS Communication Strategy. • The ABS Engagement Strategy. • The Internal Communication Strategy for ABS Transformation. • The Statistical Business Transformation Program.
KEY GOALS 2017–18	<p>Our key goals for 2017–18 are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement the ABS Relationship Management Plan, People and Culture Action Plan 2017-18, Internal Communication Strategy for ABS Transformation 2017-18, and ABS Communication Strategy • improve our workplace flexibility and productivity • update our risk management and privacy frameworks, policies, and processes • complete the development of key statistical infrastructure to enable the ABS to better manage data, metadata and workflows across all aspects of a statistical cycle • deliver re-engineered data collection capabilities, with an emphasis on enhanced online data collection capabilities • improve data dissemination capabilities, including machine-to-machine access to ABS data • deliver automated data processing capabilities and enhanced data analysis capabilities • prepare to on-board the first statistical programs to the new ABS statistical infrastructure, such as the Economic Activity Survey.
KEY GOALS OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS	<p>Our key goals from 2017–18 onwards are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve key partnerships, based on research and feedback • build public trust and social licence, and raise awareness and use of ABS statistical information • reshape our workforce capability (including leadership), build a high performing culture, improve our diversity, and develop a new workplace health and safety and rehabilitation strategy • deliver the Statistical Business Transformation Program to reduce the cost of our operations, reduce the risks to our statistical activities and reduce the impact of ABS data collection activities on the public.
PLANNED PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ABS builds the capability of staff, driving cultural change and improving performance. • The ABS Statistical Business Transformation Program milestones continue to be implemented according to agreed timeframes.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: DELIVERING NEW STATISTICAL SOLUTIONS TO MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF PUBLIC DATA

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	DELIVERING NEW STATISTICAL SOLUTIONS TO MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF PUBLIC DATA
PLANS/STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building public awareness, trust and support about the use of data, through increased stakeholder engagement on the value and security of data integration. • Leading technical support for Data Integration Partnership for Australia⁴(DIPA) to provide integrated data assets and support access to data by Analytic Hubs. • Delivering new statistical insights using integrated data and/or modelling techniques. • Improving ABS efficiency and reducing respondent burden through greater use of administrative data and/or integrated data.
KEY GOALS 2017–18	<p>Our key goals for 2017–18 are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to work with partners to make better use of existing public data for policy analysis, research, and statistical purposes through the DIPA by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – delivering high priority data assets for DIPA and providing appropriate access to analysts – expanding the utility of existing key integrated data assets to provide new public policy insights from the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project⁵, Business Longitudinal Analytical Database Environment, and Linked Employer-Employee Database data assets – continuing to ensure safe and secure access to integrated data assets for statistical and research purposes across government and the research community. • maximise the value of 2016 Census data, by releasing the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset updated with 2016 Census data – updated Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset.
KEY GOALS OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS	<p>Our key goals from 2017–18 onwards are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to whole-of-government initiatives aimed at improving and safely using public data • continue to co-design statistical solutions which provide new statistical insights • improve quality and/or efficiency of ABS data collection methodologies • reduce direct collection of information through enhanced use of administrative data.
PLANNED PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ABS creates new statistical solutions, in collaboration with stakeholders, to deliver the information needed for research, policy, planning and targeting of government services, and evaluation.

⁴See the [ABS website](#) for further information.

⁵See the [ABS website](#) for further information.



10. MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RISK MANAGEMENT

As the Accountable Authority for the ABS, the Australian Statistician has a duty to establish and maintain systems relating to risk and control under Section 16 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. As the ABS is going through a significant transformation program around various fronts such as infrastructure, culture, capacity and capability, risk management becomes even more crucial. The ABS is seeking to implement effective and integrated risk management and processes combined with a cultural awareness where risk management is integral to achieving organisational and personal objectives and managing change effectively.

The ABS risk management framework aligns with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and is subject to ongoing improvement. The framework provides a mechanism for monitoring and identifying risk exposure and the emergence of new risks. It also articulates tolerances for risks and actions required when risks reach certain levels.

The ABS key risks relate to the quality, timeliness and usability of our statistics. We have a strong focus on managing statistical risk (for example, lack of coherence between published statistics, or breaks in time series). In recent years, the ABS has prioritised statistical risk management. A more rigorous and pragmatic framework now applies to statistical risks and will continue to be refined in 2017–18.

The ABS also has put in place processes to ensure effective management of risk during this period of transformation. The Transformation Program, of itself, both mitigates risks and generates new risks that need to be actively managed. The ABS is actively managing both risks and issues associated with the Statistical Business Transformation Program. This will continue in 2017–18 and over the life of the Program.

Another area of continuing risk management focus for the ABS is protecting the secrecy and privacy of our statistical information, which is vital to sustaining community trust fundamental to our ability to collect high quality information. The ABS has already implemented a model for determining trusted access to detailed information, using the [Five Safes](#)⁶ approach to assess disclosure risks. The Five Safes approach is adapted from international best practice and recognises that mutual benefits flow from enabling greater access to public information in a reliable and safe manner. In 2017–18, with the introduction of new privacy requirements for Australian Public Service entities, the ABS will be updating its processes to ensure that management of privacy is a key focus for the ABS and that independent Privacy Impact Assessments are conducted whenever there are significant changes to personal information handling practices.

⁶See the [ABS website](#) for further information.



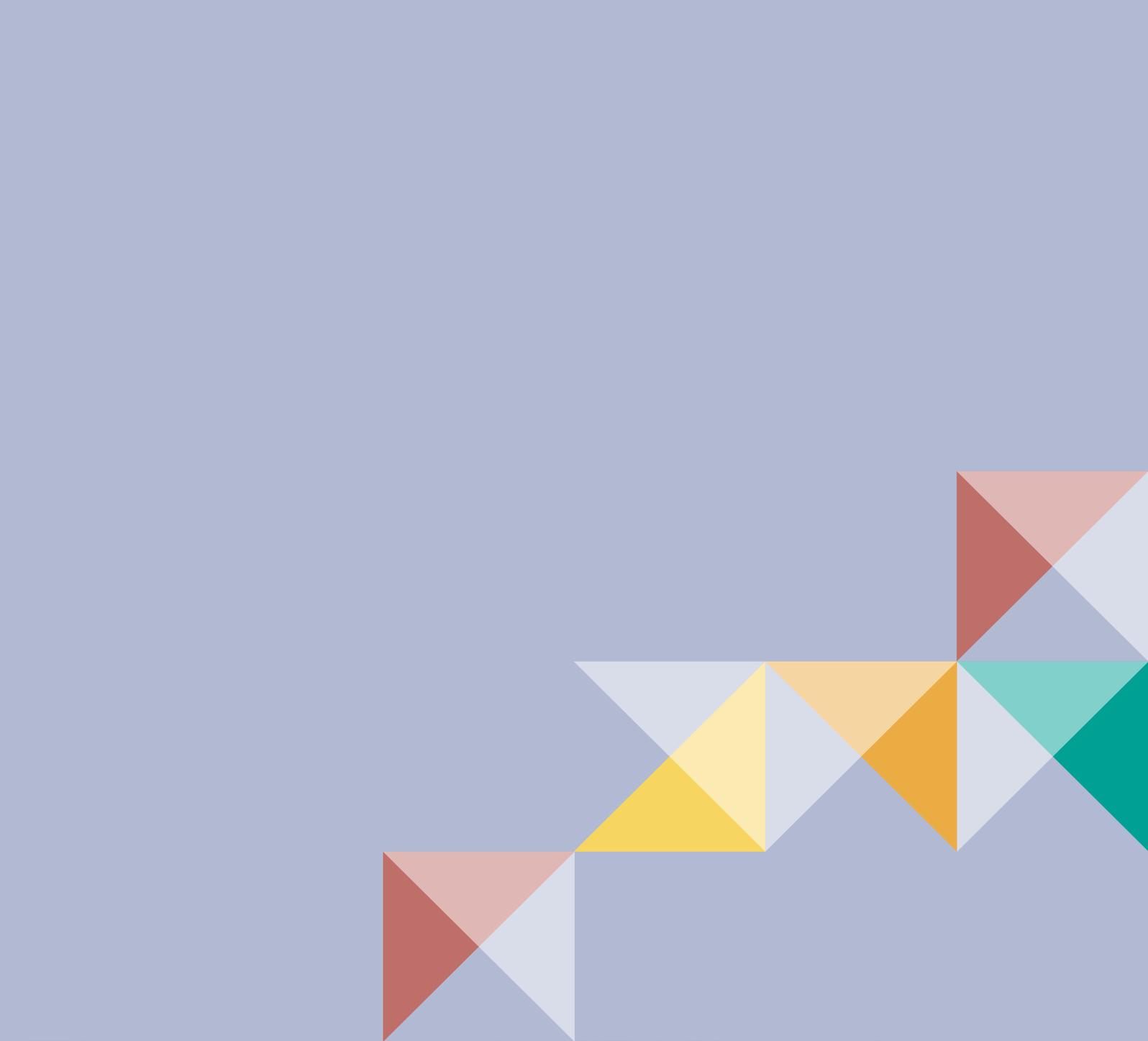
PERFORMANCE

The ABS 2017–18 performance criteria demonstrate how we are achieving our purpose through delivering on our three strategic priorities. These measures will evolve over time, reflecting ongoing changes in our operating environment. We report against these measures in the Annual Performance Statement in our [Annual Report](#).

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUR PLANNED PERFORMANCE	HOW WE WILL MEASURE THIS	OUR 2017–18 TARGETS
1. PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY OFFICIAL STATISTICS.	Decision making by governments, business and the community is informed by high quality statistics.	Assessment of key ABS statistics against international and national standards.	1.1 ABS statistics meet target standards.
		The two yearly Stakeholder Relationship Health Assessment. Stakeholder case studies.	1.2 Key stakeholders are satisfied with the quality, timeliness and range of our statistics.
	ABS statistics are widely used.	Website usage, number of new agreements with other entities, use of Datalab, consultancy revenue. The two yearly Stakeholder Relationship Health Assessment. Stakeholder case studies.	1.3 The uptake of ABS statistics increases each year, including stakeholders reporting increased usage of ABS statistics, data and insights in their work.
2. TRANSFORM THE ABS FOR THE FUTURE.	The Statistical Business Transformation Program (SBTP) continues to be implemented to agreed timeframes.	Gateway review.	2.1 SBTP achieves mid-point deliverables as assessed by the Gateway review.
		SBTP Transition Plan performance reports.	2.2 Pioneer statistical collections are transitioned to SBTP capabilities.
	The ABS builds the capacity and capability of staff, driving cultural change and improving performance.	ABS People and Culture Action Plan performance reports.	2.3 People and Culture Action Plan actions are implemented.
		ABS Workforce Strategy performance reports.	2.4 The ABS Workforce Strategy is developed and implementation has commenced.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITY	OUR PLANNED PERFORMANCE	HOW WE WILL MEASURE THIS	OUR 2017–18 TARGETS
<p>3. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT NEW STATISTICAL SOLUTIONS TO MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF PUBLIC DATA.</p>	<p>The ABS creates new statistical solutions, in collaboration with stakeholders, to deliver the information needed for research, policy, planning and targeting of government services, and evaluation.</p>	<p>Number of new agreements with other entities, use of Datalab, number of secondments, consultancy revenue.</p>	<p>3.1 Stakeholders seek out the ABS to undertake statistical activity and collaborate.</p>
		<p>Stakeholder case studies.</p> <p>Datalab access.</p>	<p>3.2 The use of ABS microdata increases.</p>
		<p>The two yearly Stakeholder Relationship Health Assessment.</p> <p>Stakeholder case studies.</p>	<p>3.3 Stakeholders agree ABS adds value to their business.</p>





APPENDIX A: ENABLING LEGISLATION

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* and the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* are the principal pieces of legislation that set out the primary functions, duties and powers of the ABS.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* establishes the ABS as an independent statutory authority, with Section 6(1) describing the six functions of the ABS as being to:

- constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and provide services for the state and territory governments
- collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information
- ensure coordination of the operations of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information
- develop standards for statistics and ensure compliance
- give advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics
- provide liaison between Australia, other countries and international organisations on statistical issues.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905*:

- empowers the Australian Statistician to collect statistical information on a broad range of demographic, economic, environmental and social topics
- enables the Australian Statistician to direct a person to provide statistical information, in which case they are legally obliged to do so
- requires the ABS to publish the results of these statistical collections
- places a life-long obligation on all ABS officers to maintain the secrecy of information collected under the Act, and provides harsh penalties for those who fail to do so.

Section 13 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides for the Minister to make determinations providing for the disclosure, with the approval in writing of the Statistician, of information included in a specified class of information furnished in pursuance of that Act. The Statistics Determination is such a determination and provides for the release of a very restricted range of information under special circumstances.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* also provides for Regulations relating to the creation of a variety of matters to assist the Statistician in performing his functions. These are contained within the Census and Statistics Regulation.

The ABS is governed by the *Public Service Act 1999*, the principal Act governing the establishment and operation of, and employment in, the Australian Public Service; and is subject to requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*.

APPENDIX B: THE ABS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

BENEFITS

Shared understanding of information needs

Strong partnerships that deliver statistical solutions and capability

Reduced duplication of effort

Opportunities for innovation and improvement

Improved management and use of public information

Our work is valued by our partners

HOW DO WE DO IT?

We seek to understand the current and future policy landscape. We listen to our stakeholders to understand their pressures, priorities and pain points. We invite input into our work program to ensure we remain responsive.

OUTCOME: SHARED VISION



We commit to ongoing open relationships. We care about our partners and seek to develop an environment ripe for innovation. We recognise that others play a significant role in Australia's statistical system.

OUTCOME: SHARED BENEFIT

We work together with partners on purposeful ways to inform understanding and action on complex issues and improve Australia's statistical system.

OUTCOME: SHARED SOLUTIONS

