



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture

People Strategy 2019 to 2023



Foreword

Our changing world creates opportunities to improve the way we work. We are committed to building a strong organisational culture that is accountable and aligned, collaborative and integrated, and future oriented. We continue to work to increase, improve and maintain markets, encourage agricultural productivity and support sustainable high-quality natural resources. We want to ensure that we have the right skills and tools to promote a positive workplace culture where we can successfully deliver our business objectives.

The *People Strategy 2019 to 2023* articulates our vision for a workforce that is ready for the future. Through this strategy, we will continue to support the achievement of a shared purpose and vision of what is important to us and the communities we serve.

To develop our strategy, we spoke to staff around Australia. We asked you how you see our cultural attributes coming to life in our everyday work. We wanted to understand what was working well and where we could do better. This strategy identifies the priorities and actions for the next 4 years to ensure we have the tools, support and skills to continue to deliver our important work.



Our roles are diverse and cross geographical boundaries. Our people work in offices, airports, mail centres, shipping ports, laboratories and abattoirs. We are located in regional centres, rural communities and capital cities in Australia, and around the world. Our talented and diverse workforce has a proud history of achievement.

To support Australia's agricultural sector in an increasingly competitive global industry, our people need to be ready and willing to respond. Our culture will guide our decisions and actions and will position us to be future ready. We'll do this together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Daryl Quinlivan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daryl Quinlivan
Secretary
Department of Agriculture

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Introduction

Our role

We support Australia's multi-billion dollar agricultural sector, which employs hundreds of thousands of people. We inspect imported products arriving in Australia to ensure they are free from dangerous pests and diseases that could harm Australian agriculture or damage our environment. We help our stakeholders understand our regulatory requirements and monitor compliance. We also work with agricultural producers to inspect our exports to confirm they comply with international regulations. This enables us to sell our high-quality goods overseas and support local producers, adapt to changing consumer expectations and provide Australians with a better quality of life.

We provide policy advice to the Australian Government and provide financial grants and drought assistance to help Australian farmers sustain our agricultural industry. We also seek input from the Australian community on new policies and programs through public consultation. We research and analyse issues affecting farmers and rural communities and identify risks to our natural resources. We collect and evaluate data to predict issues that may impact our agricultural sector.

A changing environment

Increasing international trade, improved workforce diversity and a shift towards the personalisation of support are changing the way we work.

Growth in the Indo-Pacific region is increasing the number of passengers travelling through airports and seaports. We are expanding the range of countries who export goods into Australia, requiring an update to our risk profiles. Technology is enabling smaller businesses to access global trading opportunities. Consumer preferences are changing, requiring a flexible regulatory function.

New ways of working

Flexible working arrangements are becoming more common. We want to continue being a diverse, multigenerational workforce committed to professional development and a culture of lifelong learning. We want to invest in capability, while supporting employees looking for mobility.

Our personal and professional lives are changing through automation and artificial intelligence:

- › The time spent on manual activities such as data entry is reducing.
- › We are accessing more information online rather than relying on hard copy documents.
- › We have access to a wealth of information.
- › Technology is improving our ability to process and assess large volumes of data, offering evidence-based insights and solutions to emerging challenges.

Empathy, creativity, leadership skills and our ability to collaborate are complementing our use of technology to improve performance. We need to adapt the way we approach tasks as we integrate new technology in the workplace and protect the security of our information. We need to support our stakeholders and provide advice that meets their needs. The future Australian Public Service needs to be flexible, adaptable, and able to plan ahead and work together to resolve complex challenges.

Our strategic focus

The *People Strategy 2019 to 2023* will link to other strategic plans to build employee capability, meet future workforce requirements and support a diverse and inclusive workplace (Figure 1). The cultural attributes identified in this strategy will support our ability to implement these plans and ensure our actions align to a shared purpose.

FIGURE 1 Corporate planning and reporting framework

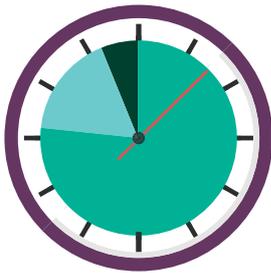


Our people

APPROXIMATELY
5,000 EMPLOYEES



ATTENDANCE TYPES



5.9% ■ Casual
17.2% ■ Part time
76.9% ■ Full time

DIVERSITY



51% of the workforce are women



46% of EL2 and SES leaders are women



1% of employees identify as LGBTIQ



2% of employees identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

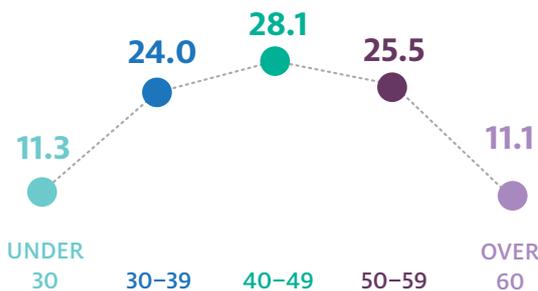


2% of employees have a disability



6% of employees are from non-English speaking backgrounds

AGE GROUPS (%)



JOB FAMILY



LOCATIONS



Our culture

Our culture defines our department. Our individual and diverse attributes are united by our shared commitment to being accountable and aligned, collaborative and integrated, and future oriented.

Accountable and aligned

We create a sense of community and common purpose by understanding how our department operates and what our main priorities are. We seek and provide regular feedback, set goals and ask ourselves if the work we do aligns with our objectives and the needs of the business.

We monitor our performance and recognise outstanding achievements. We take pride in the important work we do.

We act with integrity, address emerging risks and take personal responsibility for workplace safety.

Collaborative and integrated

We develop networks and relationships, participate in peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing to improve our skills and experience.

We promote a workplace culture that values diversity of thought and healthy debate. We champion clear communication, openness and achieving our goals together. Our inclusive workplace encourages us to bring our authentic selves to work and share our perspectives.

We work together to manage emerging challenges. We assist each other, consult and provide feedback to ensure our work is integrated and we learn from past experience.

Future oriented

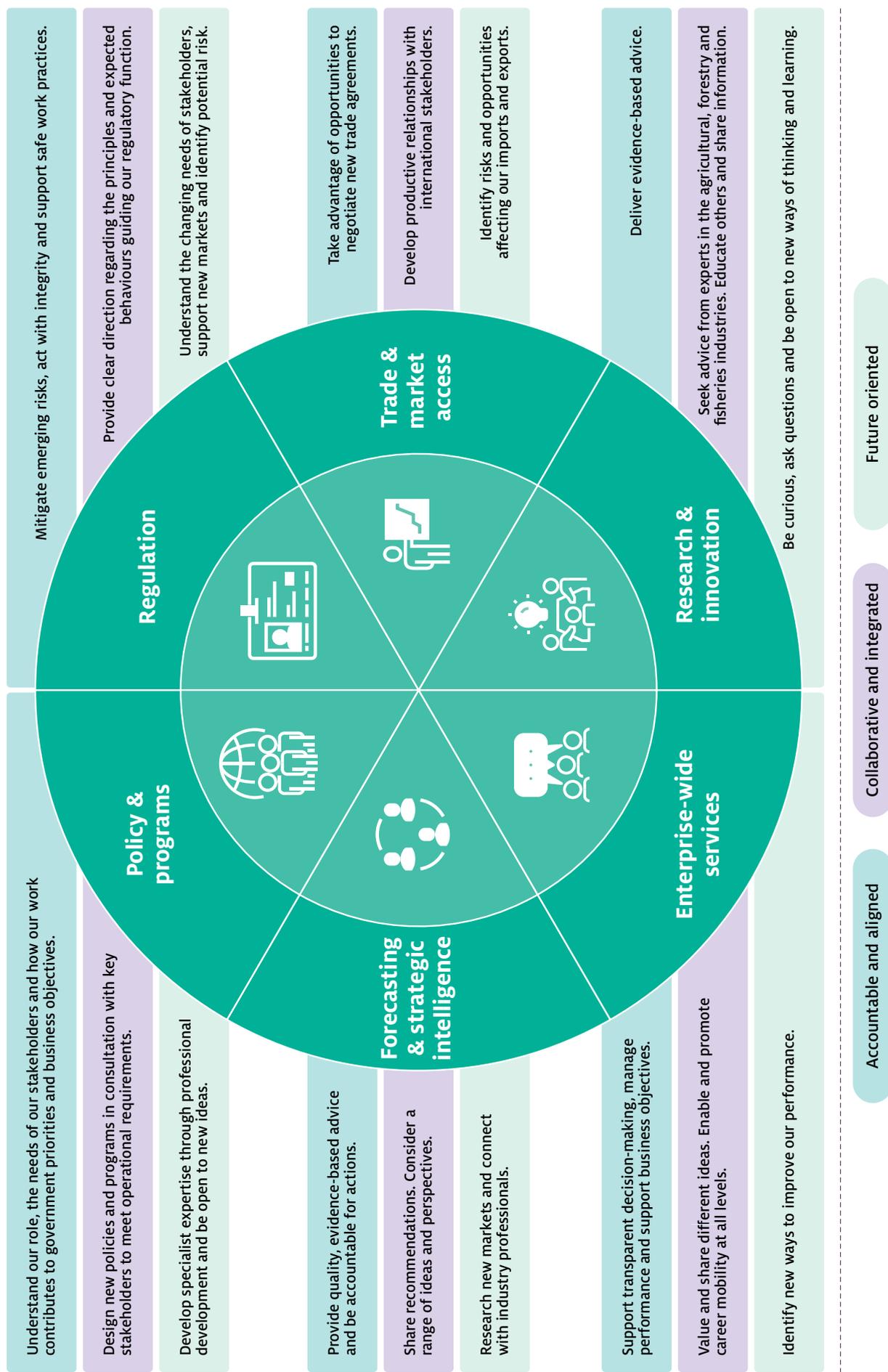
A workforce that is professional, curious and flexible is key to any plan for the future. We meet emerging challenges with confidence, ask questions, plan ahead and look for opportunities to improve the way we do things.

We drive a culture of excellence, productivity and innovation.

Our workforce

Our strategy focuses on embedding our cultural attributes into everyday work practices. Being accountable and aligned, collaborative and integrated, and future oriented will help us deliver the core functions outlined in the *Corporate Plan 2019–20*. Figure 2 shows how we can embed our culture across each business function.

FIGURE 2 Our cultural attributes in practice



Accountable and aligned

To build and maintain trust we take ownership of our roles and actions. We approach our work with integrity and transparency and align ourselves with our department's objectives. We engage with risk openly and honestly.

We invest in capability and performance to deliver our goals and reinforce our reputation as an organisation of excellence.

Accountability

Our work supports the Australian Government, consumers, travellers, industry, agricultural producers and the broader community. Australians expect us to operate with integrity and be accountable for our actions. We are responsible for understanding how our work enables the department to increase the value of agricultural trade and support the agricultural sector. We consider the consequences of our actions and mitigate risks to biosecurity, trade and exports, and access to markets.

We identify the goals we are working towards and understand how our work contributes to our shared purpose. A strong understanding of our purpose instils a sense of identity, shapes our priorities and helps us work better together.

Clear expectations

We strengthen our regulatory posture by being clear about expected behaviours and the principles we follow when developing and administering regulation:

- › We are responsible for understanding our obligations to act with integrity.
- › We recognise risks to our integrity that include security, fraud, corruption and unacceptable behaviour.
- › We are respectful, operate ethically and are committed, accountable and impartial. We rely on these values to make decisions and instil trust that we will deliver high-quality support.
- › We audit, carry out inspections and develop business continuity plans to ensure we are prepared to meet future challenges.
- › We identify and understand risk to enable us to operate in complex environments and take advantage of new opportunities to improve and innovate.

Acting safely

We contribute to a safe, inclusive and supportive workplace by acting with integrity and transparency. Our work, health and safety incident reporting mechanisms support continuous improvement and safe work practices. We are responsible for workplace safety and adopt a multidisciplinary approach to developing risk mitigation strategies. Managing employee wellbeing and promoting physical and psychological safety in the workplace are core objectives. As our business environment changes, the safety of our people continues to be a priority.

Managing performance

We sustain a high-performing workplace culture through effectively managing and supporting our people and taking responsibility for achieving team objectives.

We are supported to perform at our best by having clear expectations, opportunities for development and being recognised for exceptional performance. We have regular informal conversations and participate in annual performance cycle reviews to evaluate our progress and development.

We celebrate our achievements and deliver high-quality advice and support through a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Our priorities

- › Strengthen our regulatory posture by providing clear direction on the principles and expected behaviours guiding our regulatory function.
- › Strengthen our performance management practices to encourage continual learning and growth of individuals and leaders.
- › Maintain a safe and supportive working environment.
- › Review external departmental branding for consistency.
- › Support the selection of high-calibre candidates.
- › Provide new starters with a comprehensive workplace induction and orientation.
- › Align our recognition activities to the cultural attributes articulated in our culture statement.

Committed to improving the way we operate

As part of our regulatory function, our biosecurity officers conduct inspections of products arriving in Australia to prevent pests and diseases from entering the country and harming our agricultural industries and natural environment. Different types of products require different kinds of inspections.

As part of the Biosecurity Workforce Knowledge Sharing Project, teams across the Enabling Services Group partnered with Biosecurity Operations Division to film inspections using GoPro devices.

This enabled the officers to record tasks as they occur, demonstrating what to do in accessible, bite-sized learning videos that can be incorporated into peer-to-peer learning material.

Video recording equipment for officers is now available in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra.

This initiative provides another mode of learning for biosecurity officers and is an example of how we can work together across teams to achieve quality outcomes for the department.

Collaborative and integrated

To achieve and succeed together we cooperate, communicate and share. We practise inclusiveness to make the most of our resources and the rich diversity of our workforce. We look at our department as a whole and identify ways we can work better together.

Engaging our stakeholders

Our people work together to develop fit-for-purpose policies and programs supporting a variety of stakeholders to build and sustain Australia's agriculture sector.

We represent the views of the Australian Government, producers, industries and consumers at international trade forums. We negotiate with external stakeholders to expand our trade markets and grow Australia's agricultural sector.

Engaging with stakeholders during policy and program development helps us deliver practical solutions to meet user needs. Regularly communicating with colleagues and making new connections enables us to consider a cross-section of perspectives and make informed decisions.

Practising inclusion

We are working towards a shared purpose through a collaborative, high-performance culture. We respect individual contributions and encourage the sharing of new ideas and perspectives.

We are an inclusive workplace that values cultural and linguistic diversity, gender diversity, people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) and people with disability. This encourages each employee to bring their authentic self to work. Teams who work on tasks and develop solutions together benefit from each member's unique insights. Different perspectives improve a team's collective performance and lead to better decisions.

Integrating our teams

We have a broad range of talent and expertise. Each employee brings a unique background, set of skills, perspective and experience to what we do. Teams share knowledge through cross-skilling or providing shadowing opportunities. We are knowledgeable and experienced because of our people. By collaborating with other teams, we listen and learn from each other.

As our workforce changes and we become more mobile, our collaborative culture helps us develop creative ways to connect and work together. Our inclusive workplace encourages us to share ideas and improves our ability to deliver high-quality advice and solve problems.

Our priorities

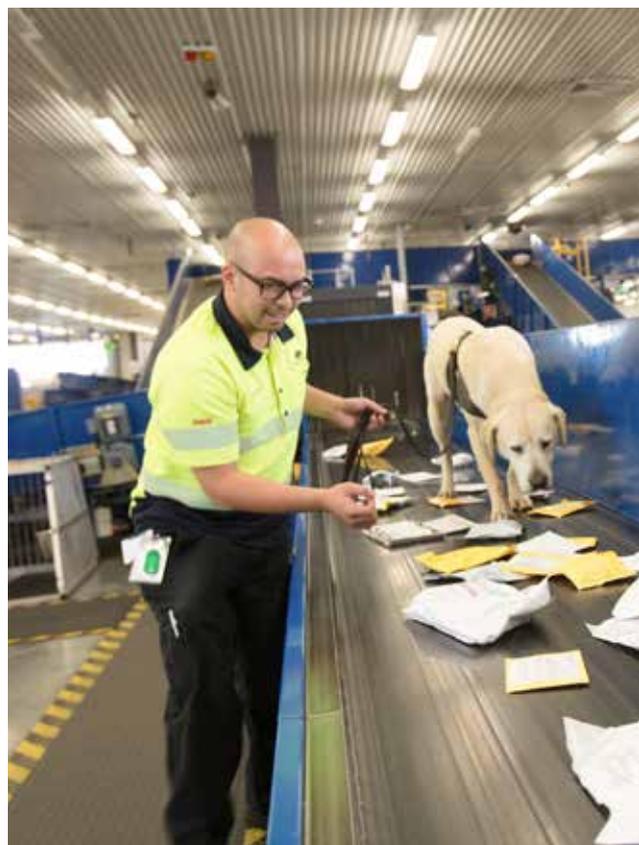
- › Improve information sharing and accessibility.
- › Improve availability of collaborative spaces.
- › Support inclusive workplace behaviours through networking and mentoring opportunities.
- › Develop an online task-sharing platform.

A collaborative approach to task sharing and professional development

Each of us has the power and the responsibility to create change. A group of staff noticed that when they had capacity to take on more work, they were unable to connect with colleagues in other teams who needed assistance. They contemplated developing a platform to match teams needing assistance with employees who could volunteer to help and develop skills in a new area.

When the department announced the 2018 Ideas Challenge, the group took the opportunity to submit their idea, named the Hive, to the competition. To test the concept, the team built a temporary prototype and piloted it across a division.

Managers can now use the temporary prototype to post short-term projects on a task list and invite other employees to assist. By thinking collaboratively about their capacity and development, the Hive team were able to design an innovative way for the department to manage the development of employees, improve productivity and build professional networks.



Future oriented

To move forward we lift our gaze over the horizon. We are innovative, curious, flexible and open to change and opportunity. This means embracing challenges, and thinking about the future and its great possibilities.

Continuous growth and learning

Global trends are changing the way we work to support the agricultural sector. We need to operate quickly and be aware of changes in our external environment, develop risk mitigation controls and build surge capacity. We require a detailed understanding of international regulations and markets to accommodate an increased demand for agricultural exports.

Advances in technology create opportunities to review the way we do things. We need to understand technological advancements in the agricultural sector and connect with industry professionals. We need to provide quality advice, informed by greater public engagement and research. A culture of continuous learning will help us build the skills we need to meet future challenges.

Professionalisation

Professional development opportunities improve our specialist skills and deep expertise. We need to ensure our skills match changing job requirements. Training delivery will be varied to help us use technology, learn new information and improve our performance. A commitment to professionalising our workforce will enable us to deliver quality guidance and sustain a high level of performance.

Our multigenerational workforce will become more diverse. We will adopt a flexible approach to managing employees with varied experiences and skills. Flexible working arrangements and new technology continue to provide us with options to transform the way we work.

Planning ahead

Machine learning will enable us to process large data volumes and use this information to anticipate future scenarios and develop evidence-based solutions. Machine learning allows IT systems to continually improve through the accumulation of data and experience. Access to reliable data ensures we can make evidence-based decisions and manage biosecurity risks. We will continue to work towards using analytics technologies to evaluate the large volumes of data we collect from external sources and business operations.

We need to operate proactively to identify new risks and meet the needs of emerging export markets. We need to plan strategically, consider new research and be aware of changes affecting our areas of expertise. We need to anticipate and quickly respond to emerging issues to protect our agricultural industry.

Practice leads are nominated SES officers who oversee each of our key functions. They will continue to support capability development, enhance integration and collaboration across our divisions, encourage innovation, identify priorities and develop practical solutions to address emerging challenges.

Our managers need to be open to new ideas and help our people prepare for future requirements. We need to succession plan and develop strategies to retain our corporate knowledge and expertise. Our people will be empowered to become leaders in their field and feel comfortable and encouraged to share their views.

Our priorities

- › Allocate appropriate time and resources to forecast future requirements.
- › Build manager capability through leadership development.
- › Provide career development and mobility opportunities.
- › Continue to build a department-wide innovation culture.

Working with industry to resolve complex challenges

Our Plant Innovation Centre at the national Post-Entry Quarantine facility centre at Mickleham, Victoria is the first of its kind in the department and enables us to conduct innovative, operationally focused plant biosecurity trials in-house.

The centre primarily receives funding from Biosecurity Plant Division and Biosecurity Operations Division, but also has projects that are externally funded through bodies such as the not-for-profit research and development corporation, Hort Innovation.

One project currently underway is the development of a single test for all plant viruses, removing the need for biosecurity officers to conduct multiple tests for individual viruses.

The project requires scientists from the Plant Innovation Centre to work closely with a range of external scientists from the Queensland University of Technology, Agriculture Victoria and the New Zealand Department of Primary Industries as well as other biosecurity stakeholders such as importers and growers.

Our professional connections with academia, international producers and research institutions are central to developing innovative solutions that will save time and money in the future.



Our path to being future ready

We have identified priorities that support each of our cultural attributes. We will work towards these priorities over the next 4 years to ensure our people are supported to deliver our important work.

Purpose

We work with national and international governments and industry to grow the value of agricultural trade and reduce risk to Australia's agricultural sector.

Priorities

Accountable and aligned

- › Strengthen our regulatory posture by providing clear direction regarding the principles and expected behaviours guiding our regulatory function.
- › Strengthen our performance management practices to encourage continual learning and growth of individuals and leaders.
- › Maintain a safe and supportive working environment.
- › Review external departmental branding for consistency.
- › Support the selection of high-calibre candidates.
- › Provide new starters with a comprehensive workplace induction.
- › Align our recognition activities to the cultural attributes articulated in the department's culture statement.

Collaborative and integrated

- › Improve information sharing and accessibility.
- › Improve availability of collaborative spaces.
- › Support inclusive workplace behaviours through networking and mentoring opportunities.
- › Develop an online task-sharing platform.

Future oriented

- › Allocate appropriate time and resources to forecast future requirements.
- › Build manager capability through leadership development.
- › Provide career development and mobility opportunities.
- › Continue to build a department-wide innovation culture.

Monitoring and review

The *People Strategy 2019 to 2023* is supported by an action plan, which will be iteratively reviewed and adapted during the reporting period to ensure actions remain relevant and aligned with department priorities. Quarterly progress updates will be provided to the People, Safety and Culture Committee.



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