ARC 2026 Census Action Plan

Australian Government
Australian Research Council

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) conducts the Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census. Through this confidential survey, APS employees share their attitudes and opinions on workplace issues. Drawing on staff feedback, the ARC's Census Action Plan outlines the actions we will take in response and how we intend to improve our employee experience of working at the ARC. The plan matters because our people's experiences shape how effectively we work together and deliver our responsibilities. In 2025, we committed to acting on staff feedback through the ARC Census Action Plan, with a focus on communication, leadership, inclusion and wellbeing. Since then, we have taken practical steps across each priority. These actions provide a foundation for further improvement, and we remain committed to listening to staff, being transparent about progress which have informed our 2026 Plan.

2026 CENSUS SNAPSHOT

Employee Engagement
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- 2 from 2025

Leadership Immediate Supervisor
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- 2 from 2025

Leadership SES Manager
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- 1 from 2025

Speak up culture
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Communication and Change
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- 3 from 2025

Wellbeing policies and support
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- 7 from 2025

Enabling Innovation
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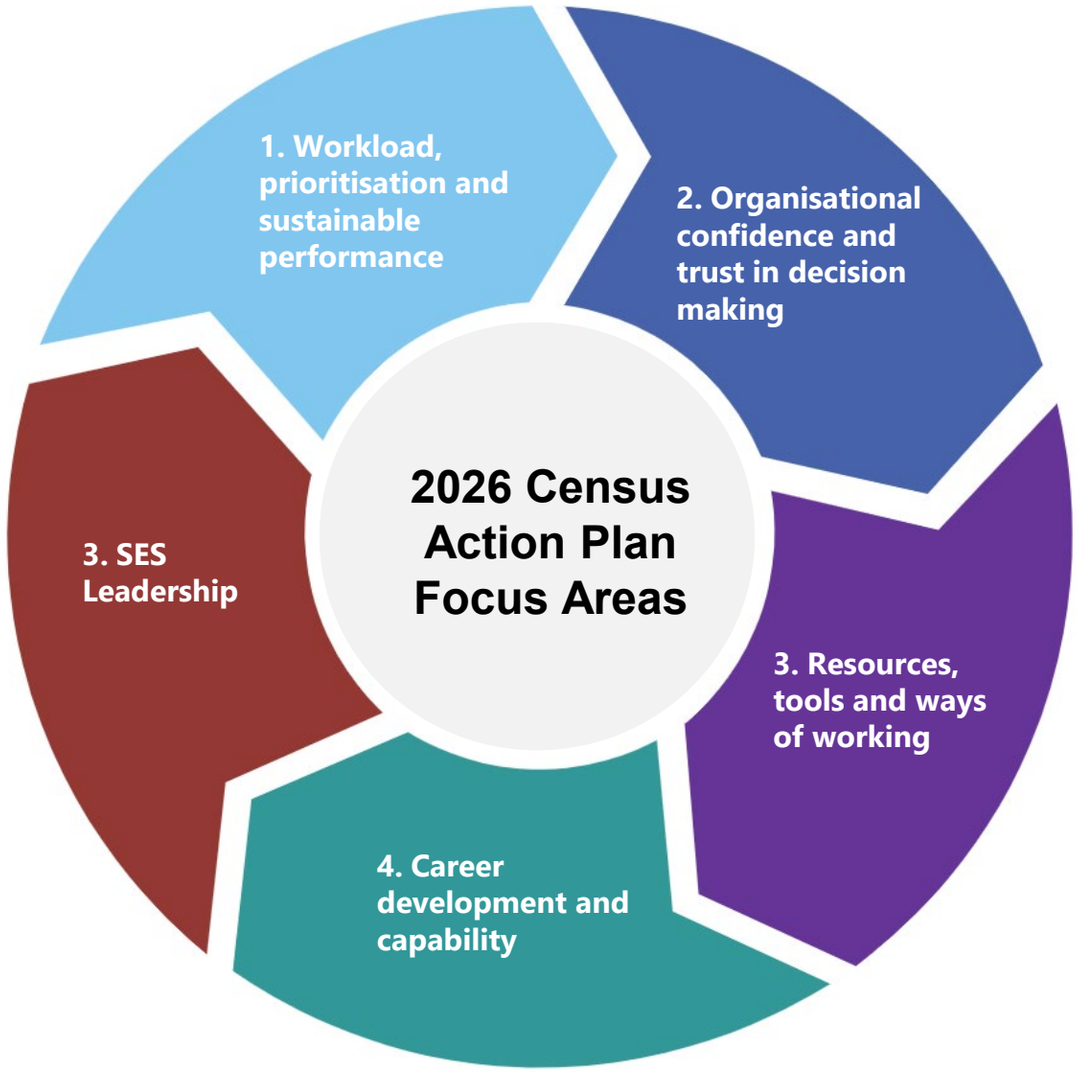
- 1 from 2025

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM OUR PEOPLE

Our people told us that sustainable workloads, trust in decision-making, effective tools and systems, career development opportunities, and strong leadership are critical to creating a positive employee experience. These insights have shaped our priority focus areas and actions for 2026. Our commitment to our people is that we will connect our actions to staff feedback, explain significant decisions and trade-offs, show what has changed as a result, and adapt our approach transparently when evidence or circumstances change.



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Workload, prioritisation and sustainable performance



WHAT WE HEARD
Workload, competing priorities, staffing gaps and short timeframes can impact wellbeing and sustainable performance. Our people want capacity and resourcing considered alongside prioritisation.

WHAT WE WILL DO
- Build workforce capacity and critical capability into business planning and budgeting processes which are reviewed by SLG.
- When demand exceeds capacity, teams, with the support of their Branch Manager make and record a decision to resource, redistribute, reprioritise, reduce, defer or stop work.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing wellbeing policies, supports and resources and make targeted improvements in response to staff feedback and identified needs.
- Assess workload and capacity risks across the ARC and implement targeted actions where sustained workload pressures or psychosocial risks are identified.

OUTCOME
Workload and priorities are better aligned with capacity, with clear decisions about what will be resourced, reduced, deferred or stopped.

ACCOUNTABLE
- Senior Leadership Group, Chief People Officer

Organisational confidence and trust in decision making



WHAT WE HEARD
Our people want earlier and more meaningful consultation, greater transparency and visible evidence that feedback leads to action. More communication alone is not the same as genuine transparency and follow-through.

WHAT WE WILL DO
- Show how staff feedback informs significant decisions through a consistent “You said, we heard, we decided” approach.
- Provide regular workforce and staffing updates, including significant workforce changes, recruitment and resourcing decisions affecting staff.
- Improve transparency of significant SLG and Board decisions, including relevant context, impacts and next steps.
- Provide regular updates on organisational change, Organisational Review actions and Census commitments, including what has changed and why.
- Continue regular CEO and leadership engagement, supported by the People Committee as an ongoing mechanism for staff voice and feedback.

OUTCOME
Our people have greater confidence in organisational decisions, change processes and the ARC will follow-through on feedback.

RESPONSIBLE
- Senior Leadership Group

Resources, tools and ways of working



WHAT WE HEARD
Our People need improved tools and systems and less unnecessary administrative burden, duplication and complexity. Technology should support work, streamline process and automate where appropriate, to reduce organisational complexity.

WHAT WE WILL DO
- Identify and address the tools, systems and process barriers within each Branch that have the greatest impact on effective work while preserving necessary assurance, accountability and compliance.
- Progress RMS improvements and remove unnecessary duplication and administrative burden.
- Educate our people on the safe and effective ways to adopt AI tools to support efficiency.
- Review and consider SES governance and clearance processes. Remove duplication where possible and practical to do so, while preserving necessary assurance, accountability and compliance.

OUTCOME
Our People have practical tools, effective systems and simpler ways of working that reduce avoidable effort without weakening assurance or accountability.

RESPONSIBLE
- Senior Leadership Group

Career development and capability



WHAT WE HEARD
Our people want more accessible and useful learning, clearer development pathways, mobility, acting and project opportunities, and greater transparency around how to access learning opportunities.

WHAT WE WILL DO
- Implement an internal Mobility Register for mobility, acting and project opportunities.
- Develop a clear and transparent approach to how our people can access individual learning opportunities.
- Introduce a bi-monthly learning newsletter to increase awareness of and access to learning resources, development opportunities and practical capability-building support.

OUTCOME
Our people have clearer and more equitable access to a range of learning and development opportunities, from on-the-job experience and mobility to collaboration, knowledge sharing and formal learning.

ACCOUNTABLE
- Senior Leadership Group, Chief People Officer

SES Leadership



WHAT WE HEARD
Our people want a more cohesive, transparent, accountable and accessible SES, with clearer priorities and stronger collective leadership..

WHAT WE WILL DO
- All SES undertake 360-degree feedback that will inform development opportunities.
- Embed the APS Secretaries' Charter of Leadership Behaviours within ARC SES leadership practices, with the SES agreeing how the behaviours will be demonstrated collectively and reviewing progress against these commitments.
- Introduce a monthly EOI opportunity for an APS employee to observe an SLG meeting, providing greater visibility of SLG decision-making and sharing their experience with staff through ARC Buzz.

OUTCOME
Our people experience a more aligned, accountable, visible and inclusive SES, demonstrating strong stewardship through clearer direction and more consistent leadership.

ACCOUNTABLE
- CEO, DCEO and all SES Leaders.

HOW WE WILL REPORT PROGRESS

DELIVERY	Bi-monthly reporting to SLG on what we have delivered and progressed against each priority.
IMPACT	Regularly communicate with our people what has changed because of the action we have taken.
RESULTS	Monitor shift in employee sentiment through regular pulse check surveys.
FEEDBACK	Through the People Committee, monitor what our people are telling us about how we are responding.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

DELIVERY	Our commitments are implemented and embedded into ongoing ways of working, with evidence showing what has been delivered and the difference it is making.
IMPACT	Our people share with us that they have experienced improvements across all five priority areas.
RESULTS	Improvement is made across all APS Employee Census indices in 2027.
FEEDBACK	Employee feedback shows increased confidence that staff are heard, their feedback influences decisions and they can see what has changed as a result.