



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Strategic Plan—2022-2025

Office of the Legislative Assembly

1. Clerk's overview and background

The Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory gives a democratic voice to the will and aspirations of almost half a million ACT residents at the territory and local government levels.

It also considers and passes legislation and holds executive government to account.

The Office of the Legislative Assembly supports and advises the Assembly, its committees, and its members in fulfilling these functions and how we do that work can have significant impacts on the overall governance of the Territory.

Since the advent of COVID-19, the way in which we have provided our services has changed.

We have spent less time in Assembly workplaces and more time working from home. We have used online tools to collaborate and to keep in contact with our colleagues and our clients.

These arrangements have come with their own challenges. We have seen less of each other in person. Our team structures and sense of connection to one another in service of a common enterprise have been tested.

The Office has also had to contend with other changes in how we go about delivering our services.

The Office continues to implement changes arising from Dr Rosemary Laing's review of the committee support function, a number of digital Assembly initiatives have progressed, and we have improved key HR and finance systems to streamline and simplify processing tasks.

Work on these and other reform initiatives will continue.

This plan, for the period 2022-2025, sets out three simple priorities:

- **Our people and culture**
- **Enhancing communication, processes, and systems**
- **Institutional and organisational strengthening/resilience**

Under each of these priorities, a number of strategies have been identified based on feedback provided by staff strategic planning work groups and the 2021 survey of MLAs.

Unsurprisingly, the Office's key objective (which is based on our statutory function), and our values have remained the same.

I wish to thank all staff for their work in considering the strategic direction of the Office and how we are going to make the most of the next four years.

I'd particularly like to thank those staff who played a leadership role in arranging staff meetings, collating input, and discussing their findings with the Office's Executive Management Committee. This work was central to the development of the plan.

I look forward to working with staff to build on our existing achievements and to shape the Office as a strong, independent organisation that provides a high level of service to the ACT Assembly, its committees, and its members.

Tom Duncan
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

November 2022

2. Our objective

Headed by the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the Office supports the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory. The Assembly is responsible for considering and passing laws, holding executive government to account, and representing the people of the ACT.

Our primary objective is to fulfill the Office's statutory function as set out in the *Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) 2012 Act* (the OLA Act) as follows.

- Information and communication technology services
- Library services
- Parliamentary education and engagement services
- Payroll, entitlements and HR advice and support services
- Records and information management services on behalf of the Assembly and the Office

'The Office of the Legislative Assembly has the function of providing 'impartial advice and support to the Legislative Assembly, committees, and Members of the Legislative Assembly'.

Each of us working in the Office does something important to fulfill this objective. We provide:

- Advice and support to MLAs to facilitate their participation in chamber and committee proceedings
- Attendant, security, mail services
- Broadcasting and recording services
- Building and facilities management services
- Financial management services
- Hansard and transcription services

3. Our values

In working towards fulfilling our primary objective of supporting the Assembly, its committees, and its MLAs, we are guided by and make decisions within a values framework.

Our values are the principles that we believe in and that steer us towards doing right by the Assembly as an institution and by all of those who we work with.

Independence and impartiality

- We value the principles and guidelines embodied by the *Latimer House Principles* as a clear statement of the best practice operation of, and relationship between, the three branches of government, including the principle that:

*Parliament
should be
serviced by a
professional
staff
independent of
the regular
public service*

- We value the checks and balances embodied in the ACT's form of government and the separation of powers between the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches.
- This helps us provide advice and support to the Assembly and all its members without fear, favour, or bias.

Professionalism

- We value our professional relationships with MLAs, their staff, members of the ACT community, the public sector, and the wider community of parliaments.
- We are conscientious, knowledgeable, and prudent in doing our work.

Respect

- We show respect in all of our professional relationships.

Honesty and Integrity

- We are honest and stand up for our values in all of our dealings.

Transparency

- We are open about how we perform our roles and the decisions we make.

4. Priorities and strategies

This section of the plan draws heavily on the input provided through staff working groups that were asked to consider the big challenges and issues facing the Office. It sets out three priorities:

1. **Our people and culture**—ensuring that we have a happy, healthy, safe workplace in which our staff are valued and where respect, collegiality and teamwork give us a sense of common purpose in contributing to the important work that we undertake on behalf of or supporting the legislative branch of government in the ACT.
2. **Enhanced communication, processes, and systems**—ensuring we challenge the status quo and think innovatively about how we communicate and the processes and systems we use to perform our work with a focus on integration, process improvement and efficiency across the organisation.
3. **Institutional and organisational strengthening/resilience**—ensuring the independence the Assembly, its committees, and the Office and the democratic functions that they perform.

Against each priority are several strategies which speak to how we might best be able to achieve our priorities. More detailed proposals, drawn from staff group work on the plan, EMC discussions, and feedback through the survey of members are listed under the ‘What this will look like’.

We should be able to look back in 2025 and see that these and other initiatives have been successfully completed.

Priority 1 — Our people and culture		
Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
a) Effectively manage health and safety risks (particularly COVID-19 related risks), including psychosocial and mental health and wellbeing challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health, safety and wellbeing members, staff, and visitors to the precincts is of paramount importance. • The advent of COVID-19 has meant that we all have had to be even more vigilant in ensuring that we have the right systems, policies, and behaviours in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building organisational capability and strengthening WHS awareness through training for PCBUs, Office Holders and workers. • Promoting understanding of PCBU responsibilities. • Continuing to support the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure and the Assembly’s Health and Safety Committee in considering Assembly WHS risks and strategies for effective management (i.e. eliminating or minimising risks).

Priority 1 — Our people and culture

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
	<p>to ensure everyone’s health and wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These challenges will continue over the next four years and by keeping informed about changing health and safety issues and using effective communication and staff consultation, the Office will continue to play its part in managing these risks effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing provision of tools and resources to support mental health and wellbeing with a focus of reducing isolation and increasing connection to one another in the workplace. • Adapting policies and procedures to enable safe and productive hybrid working arrangements. • Keeping abreast of whole-of-public-sector arrangements for dealing with COVID and associated WHS risks.
b) Celebrate and acknowledge achievements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a staff member or a team are responsible for a significant achievement, it is important to demonstrate that the Office values that contribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering appropriate reward and recognition strategies that the Office can adopt to celebrate individual and team achievements (e.g. innovation, leadership, project completion, overcoming obstacles etc).
c) Effectively manage individual and team workloads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable and reasonable allocation of workloads ensures that we are not working beyond capacity and that we facilitate work/life balance. This is an end in itself. • When workloads are managed effectively, productivity, staff satisfaction and the quality-of- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing processes for ensuring that workloads are reasonable and equitable (e.g. using team meetings and more structured analysis to allocate work, to listen to concerns, and to plan ahead for peaks and troughs). • Identifying opportunities and pathways to attract and build an agile workforce to better respond to operational needs.

Priority 1 — Our people and culture

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
	service delivery are also enhanced.	
d) Identify and develop required staff skills, knowledge, and experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical to recruitment/attraction and retention, building corporate knowledge and viable career pathways. • While the Office already uses surveying, performance and development processes and other consultation techniques to examine unmet need in relation to professional development, there is an opportunity to use new systems to better understand education and training gaps and to develop targeted responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying opportunities where cross-training within and between teams to contribute to business continuity and staff development outcomes. • Using the online performance and development platform to identify general (across the Office) and specific (individual staff) development opportunities. • Ensuring that required skills, knowledge, and experience are considered as part of any job design/redesign and development of selection criteria. • Developing and strengthening staff capabilities by providing opportunities for staff to perform roles with additional duties and/or in different areas of responsibility. • Providing shadowing and mentorship opportunities. • Participating in interparliamentary organisations, conferences, and events. • Considering how to provide opportunities for staff to make lateral moves between sections/branches as well as vertical movements within a branch or section (broadening procedural and parliamentary knowledge across the organisation).

Priority 2 — Enhancing communication, processes, and systems

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
<p>a) Consult and share information ‘up and down’ and ‘sideways’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication means we each have the information that we need to perform our roles, that we have an opportunity to contribute to discussions about significant decisions that affect us, and to have decisions explained clearly. • Effective consultation means that decisions can be informed by staff who have deep operational knowledge of particular tasks and functions. • It means that the left hand and the right hand know what each other are doing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing informational seminars that provide opportunities for knowledge sharing. Q&A with EMC, managers, and staff (rotating facilitator Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Executive Manager, Senior Directors) 2 x each year. • Introducing requirements for regular section level meetings (at least monthly). • Providing short summary of monthly EMC meetings to go to all staff. • Using all staff emails, intranet, regular section/team meetings, other online platforms to share ideas and seek feedback on key issues that affect staff, policies and how we go about delivering our services. • Establishing staff-led cross-sectional groups to share information, develop connections, and develop greater awareness about what is happening across different parts of the organisation and evaluate implementation of the strategic plan. • Continuing the ‘Staff suggestions box’ deployed at the Assembly and North buildings.
<p>b) Encourage collaboration between and among teams/sections in a new ‘hybrid’ model of work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, COVID-19 has complicated how we interact with one another as both individuals and as teams. It has affected how we maintain authentic working relationships that foster human connection and common purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing/adopting hybrid/flexible working policy. • Implementing cross-sectional project teams wherever possible. • Using online/digital tools (including the features of the existing DDTS software offerings) to facilitate collaboration and teamwork. Document sharing / real-time editing and collaboration.

Priority 2 — Enhancing communication, processes, and systems

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can help address potential business continuity issues when some staff become temporarily unavailable or leave the organisation. 	
<p>c) Wherever possible, develop business processes and systems that are integrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and processes used by the Office or by members should work seamlessly (i.e. 'talk' to one another), reduce duplication of effort and be based on consistent design principles that make intuitive sense to users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that specification and business analysis is based on thorough analysis and business requirements across the Assembly/the Office following appropriate consultation. • Ensuring user acceptance testing is performed by end users including MLAs, staff from different parts of the Assembly/the Office. • Examining opportunities to integrate key business systems from across the Office/Assembly. • Examining ways to ensure appropriate coordination of website content (decentralised versus centralised). • Developing appropriate documentation and governance arrangements (policy and template) for projects over a certain value (e.g. \$10k), which address elements such as risk, scope, time, cost, quality, risk, communications, staffing and procurement.
<p>d) Break down remaining barriers/silos between sections/branches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists in integrating and unifying the Office and working together with a sense of common purpose. • Assists in business continuity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular whole of OLA meetings. • Developing opportunities for formal/informal interactions between areas. Including, promoting staff involvement in social club activities.

Priority 2 — Enhancing communication, processes, and systems

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing office staff (including staff from non-procedural areas) in their understanding of the broader context in which the Office operates (separation of powers, parliamentary processes, and practices etc).

Priority 3 — Institutional and organisational strengthening/resilience

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
<p>a) Promoting greater understanding about the separation of powers / parliamentary privilege (internally and further afield).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are democratic, constitutional, and parliamentary principles that make this important. Staff indicated that they valued the Office's independence from the ACT Executive/regular ACT Public Service and saw particular value in the unique role that we all play in supporting the legislative arm of government in the Territory. Parliamentary privilege is one of the means by which the Assembly and its committee are protected from improper interference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using 'Assembly aberrations' to discuss these issues. Considering developing workshop/discussion groups (open to all MLAs and staff) to explore these topics. Considering opportunities in the Office's public sector programs to explore these topics in more detail.

Priority 3 — Institutional and organisational strengthening/resilience

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
b) Maintaining awareness of potential legislative change to make the separation of powers and the independence of the Office clearer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 3 a) above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering legislative, policy changes that might be required.
c) Examine (within the confines of the merit principle) mechanisms for succession planning and internal skills development to facilitate organisational changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds resilience and supports business continuity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development and training. • Shadowing opportunities. • Development of manuals and training materials.
d) Consideration of resourcing requirements in light of the wide range of functions and workload pressures confronting the Office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If resources are insufficient to perform statutory and other functions, there may be reduced or degraded service levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering new ways to develop and communicate budget requirements through the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure. • Reviewing unmet need/resource pressures across the organisation and identify where capacity constraints may lead to the limitations in service provision. • Ensuring that staff are able to/do take appropriate leave/flex to maintain physical and mental health.
e) Remove any barriers to achieving greater organisational diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity is a value in and of itself. • Diversity in viewpoints, skillsets and staff backgrounds helps guard against 'groupthink' or 'we've always done it that way' thinking. • Diversity can promote innovation and continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling inclusive behaviours and ensuring unreasonable or unlawful behaviours such as bullying, sexual harassment and direct and indirect discrimination are dealt with promptly. • Working collaboratively to capture the diverse views of our staff, to bring forward ideas, build relationships, share knowledge etc. • Removing barriers to participation / ensure reasonable adjustment.

Priority 3 — Institutional and organisational strengthening/resilience

Strategy	Why?	What this would look like
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Considering how to leverage off/apply government programs and initiatives that aim to promote diversity.