

ACT AUDITOR–GENERAL'S INFORMATION REPORT

ACT Government long-term plans and strategies

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The ACT Audit Office acknowledges and respects their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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PA 24/13

The Speaker
ACT Legislative Assembly
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Dear Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you an Information Report titled 'ACT Government long-term plans and strategies' for tabling in the Legislative Assembly pursuant to Subsection 17(5) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely



Michael Harris
Auditor-General
6 June 2025

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Executive Summary

Long-term plans and strategies are publicly available documents that describe a long-term vision for an area of public sector activity, and in doing so identify policy outcomes or goals and the activities and initiatives that are required to achieve that vision. Long-term plans and strategies are an increasingly common feature of contemporary government.

Achieving the policy outcomes identified in a long-term plan or strategy may be difficult due to challenges that are outside a government's immediate control, such as unexpected changes in political leadership or global health events. However, challenges to the implementation of a long-term plan or strategy can also arise from poor governance, performance and accountability arrangements.

This Information Report seeks to provide the ACT Legislative Assembly, and broader community, with information about the publicly described performance and accountability arrangements in ACT Government long-term plans and strategies.



Key findings

Performance and accountability arrangements

Paragraph

Roles and responsibilities

When they are well understood and documented, roles and responsibilities encourage accountability for the effective and efficient delivery of a long-term plan or strategy and its vision, outcomes and objectives. They also encourage clear lines of reporting, the effective allocation of resources and transparency in funding, regulatory and decision-making responsibilities. 3.16

Of the 55 plans and strategies considered in the review: 3.17

- 39 clearly define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders;
- nine do not define the roles and responsibilities of the parties; and
- seven define the roles and responsibilities partially, or in an unclear way.

Most long-term plans and strategies identify roles and responsibilities for other ACT Government directorates and agencies. These are typically associated with actions and are described at a directorate-level. While the notion of 'shared' or 'collective' responsibility for the delivery of the goals of the plan or strategy is popular, the roles and responsibilities of external stakeholders is discussed in less than half of the plans 3.18

and strategies considered in the review. In many instances, the role of external stakeholders is vague.

Governance and oversight group

Governance and oversight arrangements describe who will coordinate, take responsibility and be accountable for the progress of a long-term plan or strategy. They usually involve decision makers from various areas of government but may also include stakeholders from the community that can provide insights from 'lived experience' on the implementation of a plan or strategy. 3.39

Seventeen of the 55 plans and strategies considered for the review clearly identify a governance or oversight group, such as a steering group or advisory board. Nine of the 55 plans and strategies considered for the review do not provide details of the governance arrangements or describe how the various stakeholders will interact or execute their responsibilities with respect to the plan or strategy. 3.40

Of the 17 plans and strategies that specify a governance or oversight group, overall, the group's responsibilities were described at a high level. The review also noted governance and oversight arrangements that have the potential to create administrative inefficiencies and/or to diffuse accountability – that is, multiple levels of governance for a singular plan or strategy, or policy area. 3.41

Collection of information on progress

Plans and strategies should identify how information is to be collected to help decision-makers and external stakeholders determine whether a plan or strategy is achieving its intended outcomes and objectives over time. While performance information can be from diverse sources, and quantitative or qualitative in nature, it is important that methods to collect it are established early in the life of a long-term plan or strategy. 3.54

Describing how performance information or data will be collected is not a strong feature of the long-term plans and strategies considered in the review. Only 13 of the 55 plans and strategies describe how performance information will be collected, while another 26 do so only partially. 3.55

Evaluation of the plan or strategy

Evaluations are an important means of objectively assessing the effectiveness of a long-term plan or strategy and the actions and initiatives it relies on to deliver its outcomes and objectives. Evaluations assist governance and oversight bodies to make decisions about priorities and resources and help stakeholders to hold directorates to account for progress towards their long-term commitments. Making the results of evaluations publicly available supports these functions. 3.79

The review found a high number of plans and strategies identify the need for an evaluation (40 of 55) but provide insufficient detail on the purpose, nature or 3.80

audience for the evaluation. Of these, just over half don't specify when the evaluation will occur. This is particularly noticeable in the plans and strategies with greatest need for periodic reassessment – that is, those that will operate for 20 or more years.

There is mixed evidence of an evaluation having occurred as and when indicated in the long-term plans and strategies. The review identified four evaluations that have occurred as specified in the plan or strategy, and five instances in which an evaluation was committed to but appears not to have occurred. Making the results of evaluations publicly available increases transparency and accountability. 3.81

Performance reporting to stakeholders

Performance reporting involves collecting, analysing and reporting information that can be used to assess the delivery of activities or initiatives towards the outcomes and objectives of a long-term plan or strategy. To be effective, performance reporting needs to be accurate, timely and provided to stakeholders in a useful way. 3.96

The review found 32 of the 55 plans and strategies include a commitment to performance reporting, while 18 of the 55 do not include such a commitment. Across the 32 that commit to performance reporting, the review found: 3.97

- nine instances of this occurring;
- eight instances of insufficiently detailed reporting, such as a cursory update in an annual report, or partial evidence of the commitment being met;
- six instances where there is no evidence of reporting (where there is otherwise an expectation); and
- nine instances where performance is not yet scheduled to be reported.

The review noted 11 instances of performance reporting through an annual 'report card'. These summarise the status of action items or other indicators associated with the objectives or outcomes of a long-term plan or strategy, and typically draw on data, case studies and visuals to create an overall 'performance story'. 3.98

1 Introduction

Long-term plans and strategies

- 1.1 Long-term plans and strategies are an increasingly common feature of contemporary government.

Long-term plans and strategies

For this review, long-term plans and strategies are publicly available documents that describe a long-term vision for an area of public sector activity, and in doing so identify policy outcomes or goals and the activities and initiatives that are required to achieve that vision.

- 1.2 Long-term plans and strategies serve several important purposes, such as:
- informing stakeholders about how government intends to achieve its vision and how progress towards policy outcomes will be monitored and communicated; and
 - signalling how resources will be allocated in the immediate or longer term.
- 1.3 There can be challenges to achieving the policy outcomes identified in a long-term plan or strategy that are outside a government's immediate control, such as unexpected changes in political leadership or global health events. However, challenges to the implementation of a long-term plan or strategy can also arise from poor, or unclear, governance, performance and accountability arrangements.
- 1.4 Publicly articulating a bold vision and publishing a plan or strategy can be politically expedient in the short term, but long-term plans and strategies must be supported by robust performance and accountability arrangements. Publicly describing the performance and accountability arrangements is an important means of promoting transparency and accountability.

Performance and Accountability Framework

- 1.5 The ACT Government's *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government* (2020) (the Performance and Accountability Framework) outlines performance and accountability principles for ACT Government directorates and agencies. It aims to enforce and support accountabilities and responsibilities set out in the *Financial Management Act 1996*.

1.6 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* states:

The actions and strategies outlined in the framework are designed to:

- improve community outcomes and make sustainable improvements to community well-being;
- enhance government accountability and performance;
- strengthen the relationship and trust between government and the community;
- provide for more efficient and effective government operations; and
- guide continuous improvement and work towards enhanced government performance and accountability, rather than prescribe specific actions.¹

Planning

1.7 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* describes planning as the foundation for effective performance and accountability systems. The Framework identifies that ‘good plans lead and inspire, focus effort and attention, anticipate obstacles, coordinate and prioritise action, and identify clear points of accountability’.²

1.8 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* recognises that good planning is underpinned by sound evidence, robust policy development, concerted engagement with the community and insights from previous performance reviews.

1.9 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* categorises planning into four types:

- direction setting;
- Government strategic planning;
- agency strategic planning; and
- operational planning and resource allocation.

Direction setting

1.10 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* describes direction setting as ‘broad, long-term and aspirational’. According to the Framework, planning at this level ‘relates to the elected Government’s ultimate objective to improve the overall wellbeing of Canberrans, contributing to real and sustainable progress in our health, education, prosperity, social inclusiveness and environment’.

¹ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.7.

² ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.13.

- 1.11 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* notes that the Government has a significant role in leading and coordinating efforts to meet the vision of ‘direction setting’ plans, while individuals, businesses and community groups all contribute to the outcomes of Government’s long-term vision.

Government strategic planning

- 1.12 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* identifies that strategic planning relates more closely to the way in which services are planned and delivered around policy priorities. The Framework states:

Identified strategic priorities define where the Government will focus its attention and effort from a high-level policy perspective. It also requires identification of priority actions and achievements that will contribute to the longer-term goals of Government.³

- 1.13 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* states:

Government priorities may relate to strategies and initiatives, or results defined by associated performance targets and indicators. Government priorities may also be defined in terms of specific services – for example a transport strategy, an education strategy or a social inclusion strategy. The ACT Government’s strategic priorities are articulated in a range of documents which will be situationally focussed depending on the circumstances and vision of the Government, the environment in which the ACT exists and the areas in which Government believes specific strategic direction is required.⁴

- 1.14 It is in this level of planning that long-term plans and strategies that are the focus of this review are typically found.

Agency strategic planning

- 1.15 According to the *Performance and Accountability Framework* ‘agency strategic planning is focused on the individual contribution that each agency makes towards the Government’s priorities, long-term goals and key services’.⁵ The *Performance and Accountability Framework* identifies a need to undertake planning and budgeting that is appropriate to the size of the agency and ensure there is adequate planning for the performance of agency capabilities including human, financial, information, physical assets and ICT.

³ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p. 14.

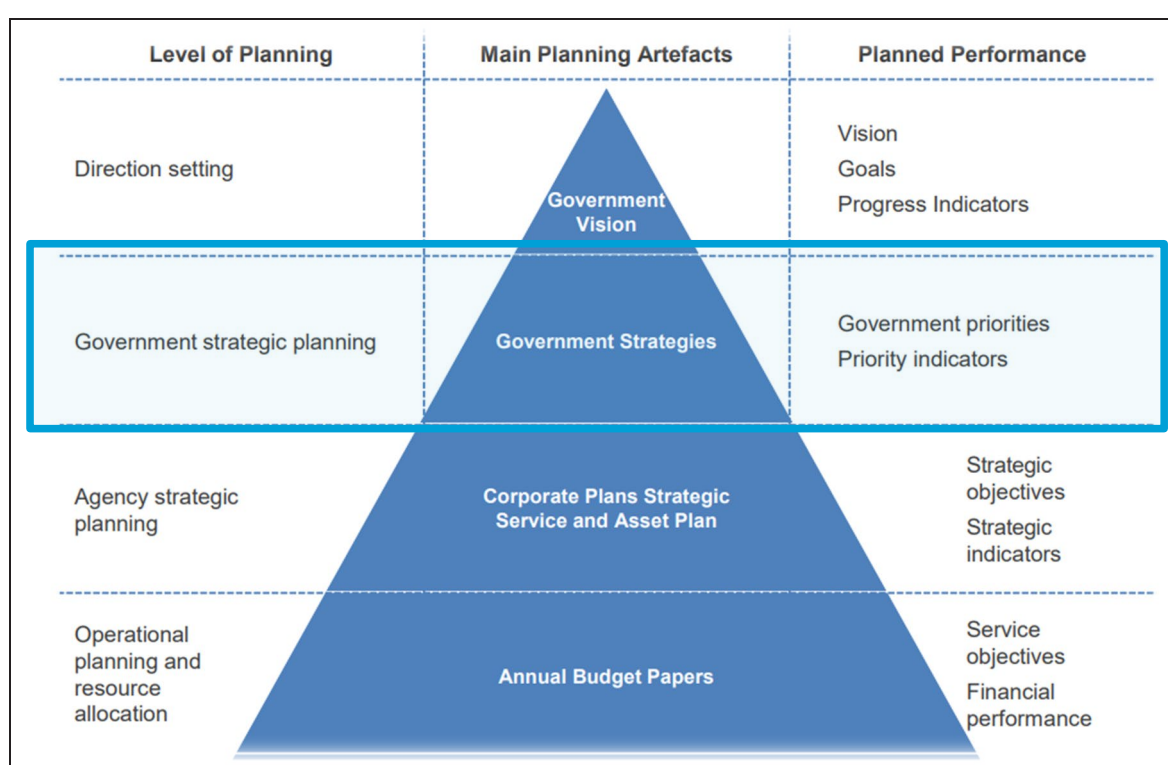
⁴ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.14.

⁵ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.14.

Agency operational planning and resource allocation

- 1.16 According to the *Performance and Accountability Framework* this level of planning is specific, detailed and focused on the near term. It determines agency work programs and how resources will be managed over the year to achieve longer-term agency objectives and government priorities.
- 1.17 The four levels of planning are shown in Figure 1-1. Government strategic planning (second level, highlighted) generally results in the type of long-term plans and strategies that are the focus of this review.

Figure 1-1 ACT Planning Framework



Source: *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government (2020)* adapted by ACT Audit Office.

Review objective and scope

Review objective

- 1.18 The objective of the review is to provide the ACT Legislative Assembly with information about the performance and accountability arrangements described in ACT Government long-term plans and strategies.

1.19 The review considered five aspects of performance and accountability:

- Does the plan/strategy identify roles and responsibilities for implementation?
- Does the plan/strategy identify a governance group?
- Does the plan/strategy identify how information about progress towards its goals will be collected?
- Does the plan/strategy specify how progress will be monitored and evaluated?
- Does the plan/strategy commit to providing performance information to stakeholders?

Review scope

1.20 The review considered performance and accountability arrangements for long-term plans and strategies that articulate the Government's long-term vision for different aspects of public sector administration. The review considered plans and strategies from all directorates that:

- have a duration of five or more years; and
- are current in 2024. (This review did not consider strategies and plans released after August 2024.)

1.21 The review did not consider:

- processes for the development of the plan or strategy;
- whether the objective, vision or policy intent of the plan or strategy is appropriate or correct; or
- whether the goals and targets are appropriate for the plan or strategy.

1.22 The review did not consider:

- internally focused operational plans such as the *Canberra Hospital Master Plan (2021 - 2041)* and workforce related plans, such as the *Mental Health Workforce Strategy (2023-2033)*; and
- plans that are developed for the purpose of fulfilling requirements set out in legislation, such as the *ACT Planning Strategy (2018)* and the *Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (2019-2024)*.

1.23 A total of 55 long-term plans and strategies were identified as being within the scope of the review. These are listed in Appendix A.

Review approach and method

Identification of plans and strategies

- 1.24 A desktop exercise was conducted to identify long-term plans and strategies within scope of the review. This involved a search of:
- directorate websites;
 - directorate annual reports; and
 - websites that provide public information about government activities in a given field, such as climatechoices.gov.au which contains ACT Government activities on climate change.
- 1.25 A draft list of long-term plans and strategies considered in scope was provided to ACT Government directorates to verify the accuracy and completeness of the list. A final 55 plans and strategies were selected for review.

Review method

- 1.26 The review was a desk-top exercise that relied on publicly available information.
- 1.27 The publication of long-term plans and strategies demonstrates a commitment to inform the community and other external stakeholders of the long-term vision for an area of public sector activity and the policy outcomes, goals, activities and initiatives that are required to achieve that vision. Publicly identifying relevant and robust governance, performance and accountability arrangements is a further demonstration of that commitment.
- 1.28 To establish a view of the performance and accountability arrangements, the review relied on:
- information in the long-term plans and strategies; and
 - other supporting documentation publicly available on agency websites, such as action and implementation plans, report cards and evaluations, as well as agency annual reports, where necessary.
- 1.29 Chapter 3 describes the information that was sought and considered in relation to each of the five performance and accountability elements considered in the review.

Plans and strategies and annual reports

1.30 According to the *Annual Report (Government Agencies) Directions (2024)* the primary purpose of an annual report is accountability. The focus of the annual report is to provide information relevant to:

- long-term strategic direction and context;
- performance analysis against short term budget outputs; and
- financial management.

1.31 Where information sought for this review was not evident in the relevant plan or strategy, the directorate's annual report was considered as a possible source of that information. This is noted in this information report where relevant.

Naming conventions

1.32 In a small number of instances, the ACT Government's planning documents are not called a 'plan' or 'strategy' but nevertheless have the same characteristics of a long-term plan or strategy, e.g. they express a vision and include detailed objectives and outcomes. These have been included in the 55 plans and strategies considered in the review.

1.33 Examples of plans and strategies with different titles include:

- *Accessible, Accountable, Sustainable: A Framework for the ACT Public Health System (2020-2030)*;
- *ACT Children and Young People's Commitment (2015-2025)*; and
- *Statement of Ambition on the Arts (2021-2026)*.

Structure of the information report

1.34 The information report has two chapters:

- Chapter 2 provides general observations about the 55 plans and strategies considered in the review; and
- Chapter 3 outlines the findings of the review with respect to each of the five performance and accountability questions the review set out to address.

2 General observations on the plans and strategies

2.1 This chapter provides some general observations about the long-term plans and strategies considered for this review. Observations are made in relation to:

- the characteristics of the plans and strategies;
- how the plans and strategies have articulated a strategic vision, which is supported by:
 - long-term outcomes and objectives;
 - clearly identified actions and initiatives;
 - performance measures and targets; and
- whether and how the plans and strategies have referenced the *ACT Wellbeing Framework*.

Characteristics of the plans and strategies

Duration and end dates

2.2 The duration of the plans and strategies considered for this review varies considerably. Figure 2-1 shows the duration of 49 of the 55 plans and strategies.

Figure 2-1 Duration of strategies and plans



Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

2.3 For the plans and strategies considered for this review, Figure 2-1 shows that:

- they range in duration from five years to 30 years;
- a significant proportion (20) are for a period of ten years; and
- a smaller proportion (8) are for a period of 20 years or more.

2.4 Six of the plans or strategies considered in the review do not explicitly specify their duration:

- *ACT Digital Strategy (2020)*;
- *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020)*;
- *ACT City Plan (2023)*;
- *ACT Social Recovery Framework (2024)*;
- *ACT Infrastructure Plan (2019)*; and
- *Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City (2019)*.

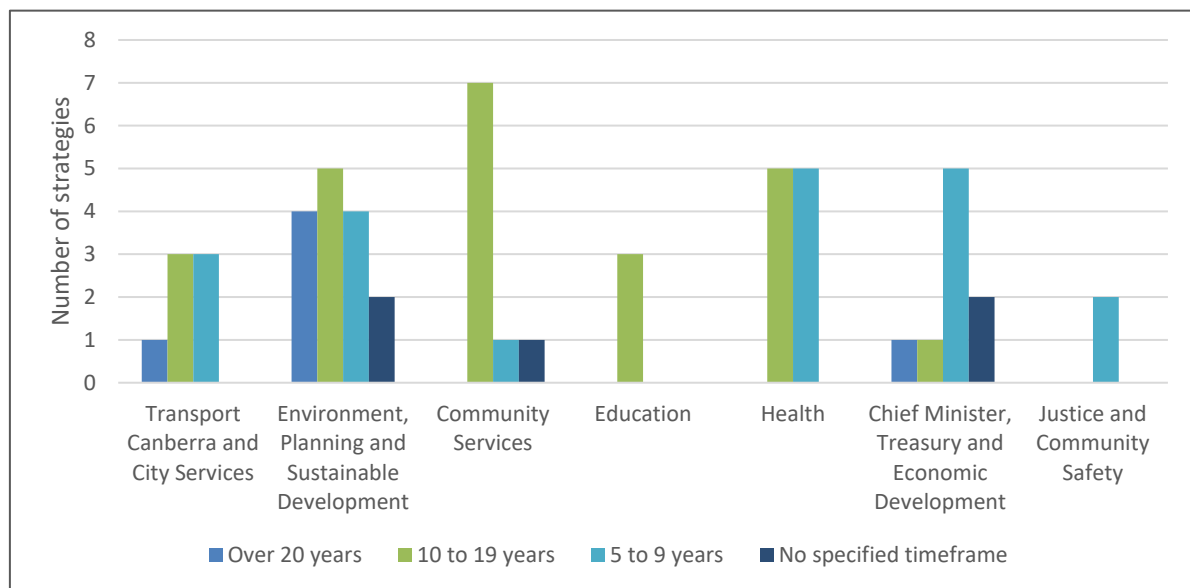
2.5 Despite not specifying their duration, these plans and strategies were considered in the review because they:

- have the same characteristics, such as a vision and long-term goals, as the other plans and strategies considered in the review; or
- otherwise indicate the document will be in operation for some time.

2.6 For example, the *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020)* does not specify its duration, but states that a full review of the plan will be undertaken once it has been in operation for 10 years (thereby indicating long-term intentions). The *ACT City Plan (2023)* similarly does not have a specified end date, but notes its long-term horizon by stating '...the updated City Plan looks to 2040 and beyond...'

Duration of plans and strategies by directorate

2.7 Figure 2-2 shows the overall number and duration of plans and strategies across ACT Government directorates.

Figure 2-2 Duration of plans and strategies by directorate

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

2.8 Figure 2-2 shows that:

- the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) has:
 - the greatest number of long-term plans and strategies currently in operation (13 in total);
 - the oldest strategy (*ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025*); and
 - the longest running plan (*ACT Water Strategy 2014-2044*), which will be in operation for 30 years, with mandatory updates at 10-year intervals to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.
- the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) has the fewest long-term plans and strategies (two in total);
- the Community Services Directorate (CSD) has the largest number of plans and strategies with a timeframe of 10 or more years, including:
 - five plans with a 10-year timeframe;
 - one plan with an 8-year timeframe; and
 - one plan without a specified duration.

2.9 Long-term plans and strategies may be the product of collaboration between directorates. Notably, the *ACT Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029)* was developed by JACS and the ACT Office for Disability in CSD. While a joint responsibility, for the purposes of this review, it was assigned to CSD.

Consultation in the development of plans and strategies

- 2.10 The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* highlights the importance of community feedback in planning processes:

The views of the community – the recipients of government services, and the ultimate beneficiary of government activity – matter a great deal in reviewing, refining, and reprioritising government services.⁶

- 2.11 Consultation with the Canberra community, or experts in the relevant policy field, is explicitly mentioned in over two thirds of the plans and strategies considered for the purpose of this review.
- 2.12 The involvement of academics and experts, such as the Australian National University and CSIRO is more common in plans and strategies prepared by the environment and planning portfolios, for example the *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)* and *Urban Forest Strategy (2021-2045)*.
- 2.13 Community views may be gained through stakeholder reference or working groups that include representatives from advocacy or client groups in their membership, created specifically to help government prepare the plan or strategy. This approach is more prevalent in the community services and health portfolios, for example the *ACT Carers Strategy (2018-2028)* and *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*.

Use of YourSay in the development of the plans and strategies

- 2.14 Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process, which is conducted to gather the concerns, expertise and insights of interest groups, organisations, industry associations or individuals on a certain issue.
- 2.15 YourSay Conversations is the ACT Government digital community engagement platform, by which the Canberra community can have its say on issues that matter to it. It has been available to ACT Government agencies for this purpose since 2016 and is one possible approach to community engagement.
- 2.16 For long-term plans and strategies published since YourSay has been available, feedback received through YourSay was explicitly mentioned in just over a third of plans and strategies. In the other two thirds, a different consultation method is mentioned, for example a reference group was formed, or consultation is not mentioned at all.

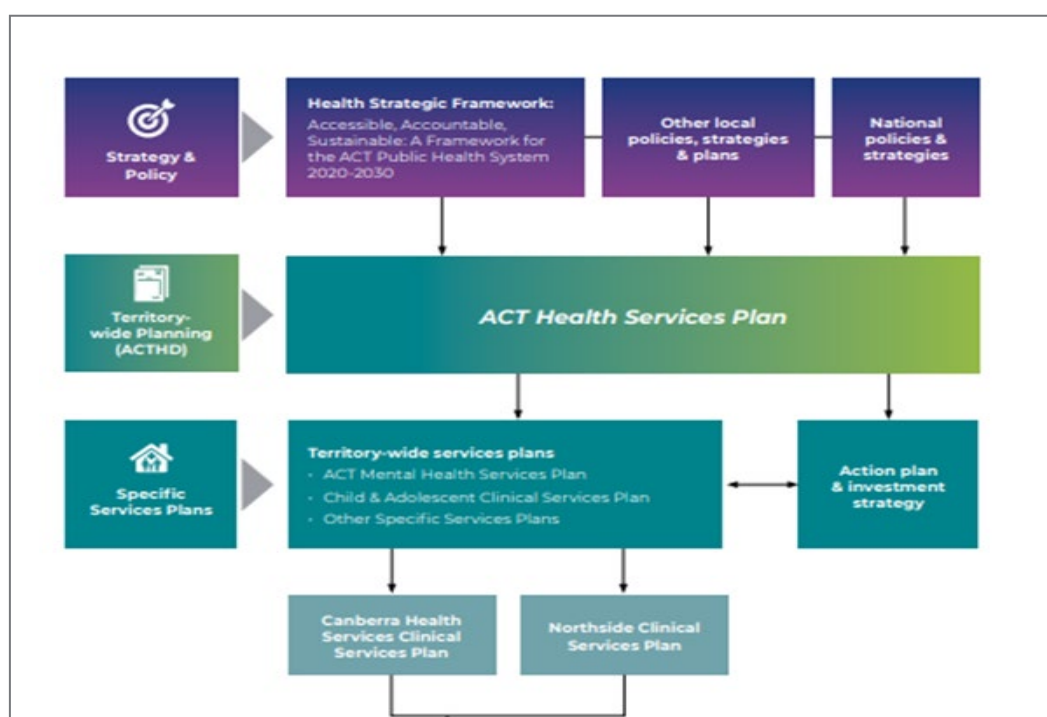
⁶ ACT Government (2020) *Performance and Accountability Framework*, p.23.

- 2.17 It is noted that YourSay may also be used for consultation in the life of a plan or strategy. For example, the *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)* used YourSay in 2024 to seek community contributions for the purpose of refreshing the Strategy.

Relationships between plans and strategies

- 2.18 It is common for long-term plans and strategies to describe themselves as one component of a broader planning framework, which may include:
- other long-term plans or strategies;
 - whole-of-government plans; and
 - national strategies and inter-jurisdictional commitments.
- 2.19 Plans and strategies produced since 2020 typically use visual schematics to help explain the relationship between a plan and the broader framework within which it operates. Two examples are the *ACT Health Services Plan (2022-2030)* and the *Integrated Energy Plan: Our Pathway to Electrification (2024-2030)*, which are shown in Figure 2-3 and Figure 2-4 respectively.
- 2.20 The *ACT Health Services Plan (2022-2030)* is a key deliverable under *Accessible Accountable and Sustainable: A Framework for the ACT Public Health System (2020-2030)*. Its relationship to policies, strategies and other health and services plans is represented in the document as follows.

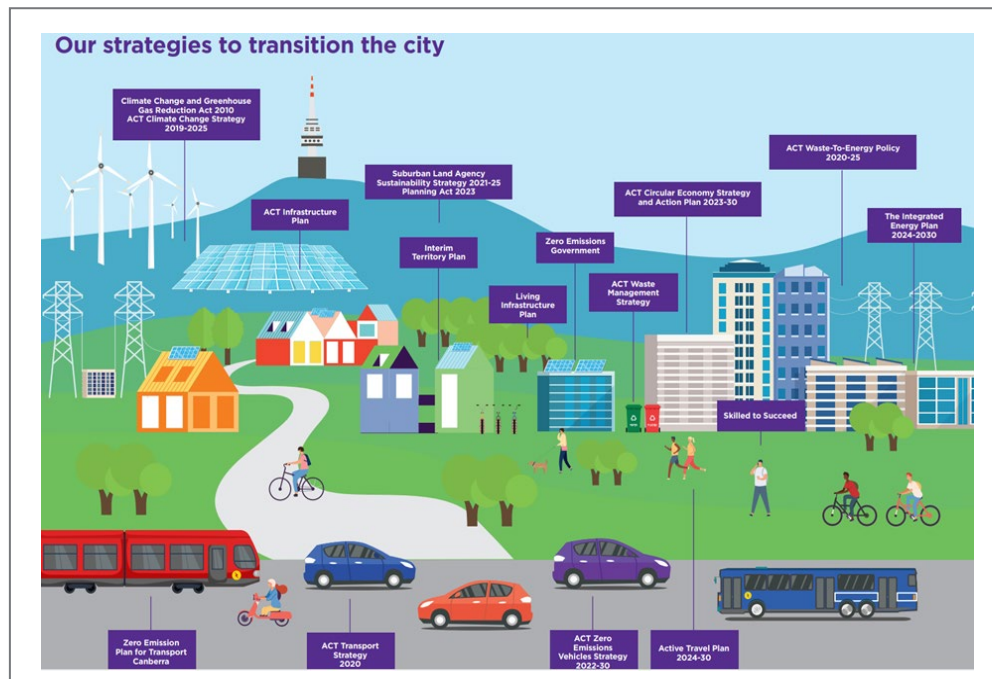
Figure 2-3 ACT Health Services Plan (extract)



Source: *ACT Health Services Plan (2022-2030)*.

- 2.21 The *Integrated Energy Plan: Our Pathway to Electrification (2024-2030)* is a plan for the transformation of the ACT's energy system to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. It is aligned with priorities in the planning, building, transport and waste sectors and references the contribution of 14 other plans and strategies toward achieving this.

Figure 2-4 Integrated Energy Plan: Our Pathway to Electrification (extract)



Source: ACT Integrated Energy Plan (2024-2030).

Performance and accountability measures

- 2.22 The review considered how the plans and strategies articulate a strategic vision, and whether and how this was supported by outcomes and objectives and clearly identified actions or initiatives.

Vision

- 2.23 The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* defines 'vision' as follows:

A government's vision represents the desired effects on, or consequences of, government services on the community over the longer term. The ACT Government's vision is strategic and high level.⁷

⁷ ACT Government (2020) *Performance and Accountability Framework*, p.29.

2.24 All the plans and strategies considered in the review articulate a high level, community or sector wide vision for the long-term. In almost all instances this is explicitly called a 'vision'. Examples include:

- *Inclusive Education Strategy (2024-2034)*
Every child and young person is welcomed, valued, has a sense of belonging and can access quality education designed to meet their needs at their local school.⁸
- *ACT Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy (2022-2030)*
By 2030, the ACT will be a leading jurisdiction in the adoption of zero emissions vehicle technologies and will be on track to meet our target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 at the latest.⁹
- *ACT Cat Plan (2021-2031)*
All cats in the ACT will be owned, wanted and cared for by responsible owners.¹⁰
- *Caring for Dhawura Ngunnawal: A natural resource plan for the ACT (2022-2042)*
A city where nature is valued and treated as an essential element of a prosperous and health society; where people are connected to and value all aspects of nature that provide critical ecosystem services essential for wellbeing.¹¹

Principles

2.25 Many of the plans and strategies considered in the review also include a set of principles. These are usually a list of six to ten short statements that express a concept or set of values that are designed to guide decision making over the life of the plan or strategy.

2.26 The review observed that while the principles predominantly relate to the topic of the plan or strategy (e.g. preschool education, transport infrastructure) some principles feature repeatedly in the 55 plans and strategies. The principles of 'equity', 'inclusion' and 'innovation' are common. The ACT *Climate Change Strategy* (2019-2025) illustrates this (refer to Figure 2-5).

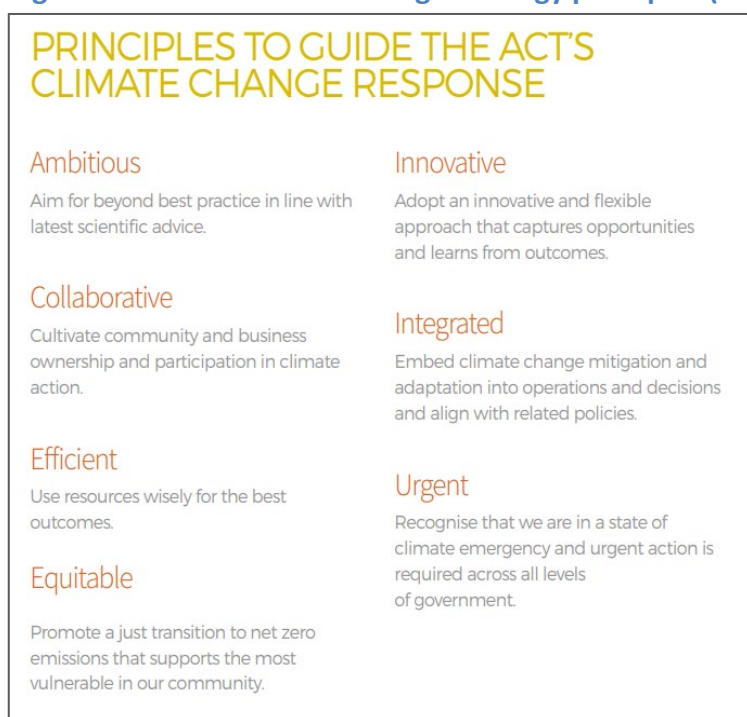
⁸ Education Directorate, *Inclusive Education Strategy: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools (2024-2034)* p.2.

⁹ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy (2022-2030)* p.4.

¹⁰ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Cat Plan (2021-2031)* p.6.

¹¹ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *Caring for Dhawura Ngunnawal: A natural resource plan for the ACT (2022-2042)* p. 36.

Figure 2-5 ACT Climate Change Strategy principles (extract)



Source: ACT Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025) p.18.

Objectives and outcomes

2.27 A long-term plan or strategy should describe its objectives and the outcomes it hopes will flow from achieving those objectives. The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* defines objectives and outcomes as follows:

- objectives - 'the effects or impacts that a government or agency seeks to have on its customers, stakeholders and the community';
- outcomes - 'the impacts, benefits and consequences for the community as a result of the decisions of Government'.¹²

2.28 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* illustrates the difference between objectives and outcomes with a health-related example:

- outcomes - lower rates of lifestyle disease;
- objectives - increased rates of exercise, better nutritional choices; and
- outputs - health awareness programs.¹³

¹² ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.27.

¹³ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.10.

2.29 The plans and strategies considered for this review all describe their intended consequences. However, less than half refer to these as ‘outcomes’ or ‘objectives’. The review observed that:

- 11 plans and strategies specifically refer to outcomes;
- 11 plans and strategies specifically refer to objectives; and
- two plans and strategies explicitly refer to both outcomes and objectives. These are the *Urban Forest Strategy (2021-2025)* and *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)*.

2.30 The review found that more than half of the plans and strategies (31) use other terminology to describe their objectives and outcomes, including:

- ‘strategic themes’, ‘guiding priorities’ and ‘strategic goals’;
- ‘where we want to be’ and ‘what we are working towards’; and
- ‘priority objectives’, ‘missions’ and ‘core propositions’.

2.31 This is illustrated in the *ACT Tourism Strategy (2023-2030)*, which expresses its outcomes and objectives as ‘missions’ and ‘top priorities’. As shown in Figure 2-6 the missions are:

- 1) Develop our city as a global destination;
- 2) Promote Canberra’s strengths and celebrate our distinct character;
- 3) Contribute to the wellbeing of our community; and
- 4) Develop iconic destination experiences.

Figure 2-6 ACT Tourism Strategy (extract)



Source: ACT Tourism Strategy (2023-2030) p.24.

- 2.32 Outcomes and objectives may be documented in an associated action plan or implementation strategy, rather than the plan or strategy itself. For example, the outcomes and objectives for the *ACT Women's Plan (2016-2026)* are articulated in separate action plans.
- 2.33 The review also observed that outcomes and objectives may be used interchangeably. For example, the *ACT Waste Management Strategy (2011-2025)* and the *ACT Transport Strategy (2020-2040)* both refer to objectives and then list the objectives under the title 'outcomes'.
- 2.34 In the 11 plans and strategies that include clear statements of objectives, these were largely consistent with the definition of objectives in the ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* in that they express an intended effect or impact. For example:
- *ACT Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan (2023-2030)* has five objectives, the first of which is to:
Improve care, access and processes for children using ACT public hospitals including seriously unwell children.¹⁴

¹⁴ Health Directorate, *ACT Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan (2023-2030)* p. 10.

- *2025 Major Event Strategy (2017-2025)* has five key objectives, the first of which is to:
Bring to life the essence of Brand Canberra: ensuring major events are confident, bold and ready and enhancing the appeal and reputation of Canberra as an innovation city, a creative city and an arts city.¹⁵
- *Capital of Equality Strategy (2019-2023)* has three objectives, the first of which is:
Fostering understanding and awareness so that barriers to equality can be removed.¹⁶

2.35 In the 11 plans and strategies that identified outcomes, there are clear examples consistent with the definition of outcomes in the ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework*. For example:

- *ACT Sport and Recreation Strategy (2023-2028)* has five outcomes, the first of which is:
Our sport and active recreation sector is innovating to deliver products and experiences that meet community needs.¹⁷
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement (2019-2028)* has 'significant focus areas' each with an outcome. For the significant focus area of 'housing' the outcome is:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have equitable access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing suitable to their needs.¹⁸
- *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)* has three outcomes, the first of which is:
Health catchments and waterbodies: well managed, functioning catchments that provide sufficient clean water for the environment and human consumption, support health waterbodies, and contribute to liveability of the ACT community.¹⁹

¹⁵ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, *2025 Major Event Strategy (2017-2025)* p.6.

¹⁶ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, *Capital of Equality Strategy (2019-2023)* p.4.

¹⁷ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, *ACT Sport and Recreation Strategy (2023-2028)* p.21.

¹⁸ Community Services Directorate, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement (2019-2028)* p.1.

¹⁹ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)* p.27.

- 2.36 However, in some instances the outcomes listed in a plan or strategy could also be read as actions or objectives rather than ‘achieved results’. For example, the *ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (2016-2026)* has 30 outcomes, many of which are activity focused, such as:

The industry has a Workforce Plan to support the recruitment and retention of individuals with skills and ability to meet current and future needs.²⁰

- 2.37 The review also observed a tendency for directorates to express their intended impact in multiple ways in the one plan or strategy. This can cause a level of complexity that makes it difficult to pinpoint in simple terms what the government has committed to.

- 2.38 The *ACT City Plan* (refer to Figure 2-7) has a section called ‘how it all comes together’. EPSDD notes ‘the ACT City Plan has attempted to explain the complex strategic and spatial planning process through a simplified outcome of ‘how it all comes together’’. This is an attempt to assist the reader understand how the document has been structured, with reference to:

- strategic context - setting the scene and plan foundations;
- a vision - eight strategic goals, six themes and 30 priority objectives; and
- precinct directions - precinct character, future desired character and priority directions.

²⁰ Community Services Directorate, *ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (2016-2026)* p.24.

Figure 2-7 ACT City Plan (extract)



Source: ACT City Plan (2023) p.9.

Actions and initiatives

- 2.39 Long-term plans and strategies should specify how the identified outcomes and objectives are to be achieved. This is usually achieved by identifying the actions or initiatives that are expected to achieve the objectives and deliver intended outcomes, i.e. the specific commitments associated with the plan or strategy.

2.40 Actions are typically projects or initiatives that are grouped under an objective or similar expression of a goal or priority. The review identified there was no common approach to the number of actions in a plan or strategy, for example:

- *ACT Health Services Plan (2022-2030)* has 121 action items; and
- *Better Together: A Strategic Plan for Research (2022-2030)* has 10 action items.

2.41 Across the 55 plans and strategies, the review identified no common approach to expressing actions, which can be:

- expressed at a very high level, without further details on how the action is to be progressed, including information about who is responsible, when the action will be delivered and how progress will be assessed; or
- expressed in detail and supported by information about performance indicators, responsible parties and expected timeframes for delivery.

2.42 The following extracts from the *ACT Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025)* and the *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)* illustrate this variability.

Figure 2-8 ACT Climate Change Strategy (extract)



Source: *ACT Climate Change Strategy* p.71.

Figure 2-9 ACT Biosecurity Strategy (extract)

OUTCOME 2: Biosecurity protects the environment and community and contributes to sustainable economic growth			
Actions	Performance Indicator/s	Responsibility	Timeframe Short-term (up to 2 yrs) Medium-term (2-5 yrs) Long-term (> 5 yrs)
2.1 Provide skilled licensing and compliance officers to monitor and enforce biosecurity matters.	Increase in the number of trained officers and resources for undertaking monitoring and compliance activities Monitoring and compliance undertaken and penalties applied as necessary Key areas of non-compliance addressed through education and awareness campaigns (ref: Action 1.6)	ACT Government (EPD & TCSCD)	Short-medium term

Source: ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026) p.35.

2.43 The review identified a clear trend for actions to be discussed in detail in an action plan or implementation plan, rather than in the plan or strategy itself. As shown in Table 2-1, 20 of the plans and strategies considered in the review have supporting action plans.

2.44 Six of the long-term plans and strategies have published multiple action plans, while other plans and strategies foreshadow that they intend to do so at some point in the future. These action plans focus on a period or 'phase' of the plan or strategy. The following two examples illustrate this.

- *Inclusive Education: A disability inclusion strategy for ACT public schools (2024-2034)* will be implemented through three action plans, each of which will address three years of activity. The first of these has been published; and
- *ACT Women's Plan (2016-2026)* has been implemented through three action plans, each of which addresses two priority areas of the Plan. These have already been released.

Table 2-1 Plans and strategies with published action plans

Plan or strategy	Published action or implementation plans
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement (2019-2028)	10
ACT Women's Plan (2016-2026)	3
Set Up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT (2020-2030)	2
The Future of Education Strategy (2018-2018)	2
ACT Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029)	2
ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)	2
ACT Cat Plan (2021-2031)	1

Plan or strategy	Published action or implementation plans
ACT Housing Strategy (2018-2028)	1
ACT Maternity System Plan (2022-2032)	1
ACT Disability Health Strategy (2024-2033)	1
ACT Carers Strategy (2018-2028)	1
Inclusive Education: A disability inclusion strategy for ACT public schools (2024-2034)	1
Health Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan (2020-2025)	1
Next Steps for Our Kids (2022-2030)	1
Capital of Equality Strategy (2020)	1
ACT Sport and Recreation Plan (2023-2028)	1
ACT Road Safety Strategy (2020-2025)	1
ACT Digital Strategy (2020) ('initiatives plan')	1
ACT Tourism Strategy (2023-2030)	1
Best Start for Canberra's Children: The First 1000 Days (2022-2032)	1

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis, based on information from directorates and agencies.

2.45 The use of separate supporting action plans shows evidence of directorates reiterating the overall objectives and outcomes of a plan or strategy, while also providing more detail to stakeholders on the:

- specific action items associated with objectives or other identified priorities;
- timelines for achieving the actions;
- arrangements for measuring and monitoring progress; and
- details on who is responsible for completing the actions.

2.46 Short term action plans support accountability for the success of long-term plans because they encourage directorates to focus on allocating resources, assigning responsibilities and designing appropriate evaluation activities.

Performance measures and targets

2.47 When successfully designed and monitored, performance measures perform the important function of facilitating reporting to the community and other stakeholders of evidence that a plan or strategy is being delivered and making a difference. They also assist directorates and agencies to make decisions about how best to deploy resources to achieve priorities and to examine any variance from expectations.

2.48 The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* explains that:

Performance indicators or measures are the specific criteria or means used to measure performance (most commonly of outputs produced and outcomes achieved). They may be expressed as (but are not limited to) absolute numbers, percentages, ratios, point estimates or ranges. They might also be qualitative in nature.²¹

2.49 Performance measures are more effective when they are:

- relevant – they should address a significant aspect of the plan or strategy's purpose, and provide sufficient information to inform stakeholders about achievements against objectives;
- reliable – they should use and disclose information sources that are fit for purpose, and include a basis or baseline for measurement or assessment; and
- complete – they should provide a balanced examination of the overall performance story and collectively address the plan or strategy's purpose.

2.50 The plans and strategies considered in the review include performance measures that are:

- supported by quantifiable metrics, indicators or targets; and
- unquantifiable statements of intent under headings that describe 'how will we get there?' or 'what will success look like?'

2.51 The review observed that performance targets supported by quantifiable metrics, indicators or targets are significantly less common than descriptive indicators. They appear more often in plans and strategies that concern waste management, climate change and natural resources. Overall, they are not a strong feature of long-term plans and strategies.

2.52 The review notes that the activities described in the long-term plans and strategies may be subject to broader directorate performance and accountability arrangements described in documents other than the plan or strategy itself and which may not be publicly available.

Different approaches to performance measures

2.53 The following two examples illustrate the different approaches to performance measures that are evident in long-term plans and strategies.

2.54 The *ACT Waste Management Strategy (2011-2025)* shows a small number of quantifiable and descriptive performance measures that are supported by measurable targets. They include timeframes and are aligned with clear outcomes and an overarching goal (refer to Figure 2-10).

²¹ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.28.

Figure 2-10 ACT Waste Management Strategy (extract)

ACT WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2011–25				
GOAL: THE ACT LEADS INNOVATION TO ACHIEVE FULL RESOURCE RECOVERY AND A CARBON NEUTRAL WASTE SECTOR				
OUTCOMES	1. Less waste generated	2. Full resource recovery	3. A clean environment	4. Carbon neutral waste sector
TARGET	- The growth in ACT waste generation is less than the rate of population growth. - Reuse of goods expands in the ACT.	- The rate of resource recovery increases: – over 80% by 2015. – over 85% by 2020. – over 90% by 2025.	- ACT leads Australia in low litter and incidents of illegal dumping. - ACT's natural resources are protected and, where feasible, enhanced through waste management.	- The ACT Waste Sector is carbon neutral by 2020: – energy generated from waste doubling by 2020; – waste resources are recovered for carbon sequestration by 2020.

Source: ACT Waste Management Strategy (2011–2025) p.4.

- 2.55 The *ACT Carer's Strategy (2018–2028)* does not include performance measures that are supported by measurable targets. The closest equivalent is captured in the Strategy's *First Action Plan (2021)* as 'areas of success' (refer to Figure 2-11) and through a page of text describing activities in relation to each of its actions (a 'performance story'). The Strategy notes that 'an area for future focus is to improve data collection and reporting...establishing an evidence base for reporting on actions.'²²

Figure 2-11 ACT Carers Strategy (extract)

THEME	OUTCOMES	EXAMPLES
Services and supports	Carers are supported to navigate and access services and supports to maintain their health and wellbeing as they undertake their caring role.	- Delivery of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) specific social support groups for people who are frail aged and their carers. - Co-design of Safe Haven Cafes to provide peer (lived experience) led support for people, including mental health consumers and carers experiencing distress. - Securing of a second cottage respite care facility for people who are frail aged to access day or overnight respite.

Source: *ACT Carers Strategy (2018–2028)* First Action Plan Report (2021) p.10.

- 2.56 Chapter 3 discusses how effectively plans and strategies describe how information will be collected to assess progress on the implementation of the plan or strategy and reporting on associated performance indicators.

References to the ACT Wellbeing Framework

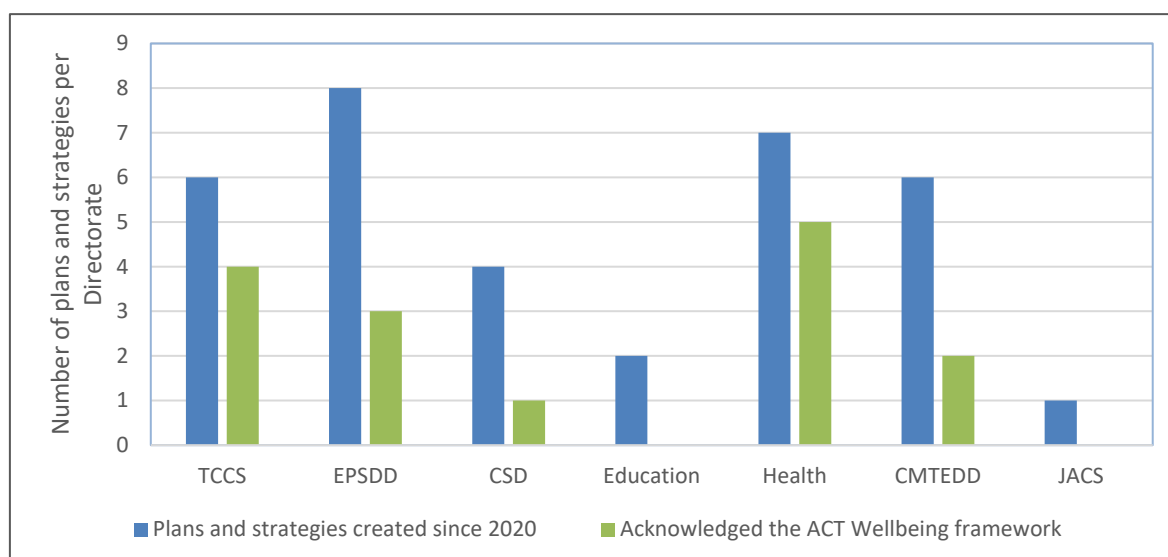
- 2.57 The *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* seeks to influence other Government planning priorities and investment decisions, as the following extract from the *Performance and Accountability Framework* explains:

²² Community Services Directorate, *ACT Carer's Strategy (2018–2028)* p.5.

The ACT Government is committed to using the Wellbeing Framework and the information it provides to inform Government priorities, policies and investment decisions – including through the annual Budget process...this will require embedding wellbeing consideration in government processes and service delivery.²³

- 2.58 The *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* states that it will work in concert with existing operational frameworks in the ACT and will complement these by drawing, where appropriate, from the relevant indicators already embedded in these other strategies.
- 2.59 The *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* is acknowledged in just under half of the plans and strategies considered in the review (and published since the introduction of the *Wellbeing Framework* in 2020). The distribution of these references by directorate is shown in Figure 2-12.

Figure 2-12 Reference to the ACT Wellbeing Framework in plans and strategies



Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

- 2.60 References to the *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* are general and high-level, as illustrated by the following examples:
- *Sport and Recreation Strategy (2023-2028)* notes that the *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* highlights the importance of healthy lifestyle and social connection through participation in sport and other community activities, and that these qualities contribute to our overall personal wellbeing and are an important indicator of a thriving community;
 - *Canberra Region Local Food Strategy (2024-2029)* describes how it will contribute positively to several domains in the *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)*, for example, ecological sustainable food production practices help create a resilient environment and increase the community's connection to nature; and

²³ ACT Government (2020), *ACT Wellbeing Framework*, p.30.

- *The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary Strategy (2050)* links its success to the wellbeing of the community, its volunteers and staff stating ‘we gauge our success and our legacy against the domains and indicators of wellbeing in the *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)*. This will help us understand our impact on the life of Canberrans and Australians’.

2.61 There is little evidence of the *ACT Wellbeing Framework (2020)* being used by directorates as a framework to facilitate measuring performance. One exception is the *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033) First Action Plan (2021)*. The Action Plan lists the Strategy’s long-term outcomes against each of the 12 wellbeing domains. Figure 2-13 illustrates this for *Wellbeing Domain 5: Environment and climate*.

Figure 2-13 ACT Disability Strategy (extract)

ACT wellbeing domain 5: Environment and climate The environment sustains all life now and into the future.		
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	WHAT WE HEARD	ACTIONS WILL FOCUS ON
• People with disability are included in responses to climate change. • People with disability have access to the natural environment.	“Sometimes I feel that climate change initiatives don’t account for how I need to live my life.” “My local park isn’t accessible so I can’t take my kids there to play.”	• Engaging with and acting on the needs of people with disability in responding to climate change. • Ensuring natural public spaces such as parks and nature reserves are accessible to people with disability.

Source: *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*.

2.62 Wellbeing Impact Assessments have recently become a requirement for Cabinet Submissions and Budget proposals and are encouraged at the early stages of policy, program and project development.²⁴ Wellbeing Impact Assessments have not been considered in the review.

²⁴ [Embedding wellbeing - ACT Wellbeing Framework](#)

Ministerial endorsement

- 2.63 The majority of plans and strategies considered in the review include a foreword (or opening statement) signed by the relevant Minister. Forewords usually acknowledge past efforts and new challenges in the policy field, thank external parties for their contribution and provide a 'call to action' for the success of the plan.
- 2.64 The review noted seven plans or strategies that did not have a foreword. In these instances, the plans and strategies were:
- high-level framework documents, such as the *Accessible, Accountable, Sustainable: A Framework for the ACT Public Health System (2020-2030)* and the *ACT Children and Young People's Commitment (2015-2025)*; or
 - operational in nature, such as the *ACT Road Safety Education Strategy (2018-2025)* and the *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020)*.
- 2.65 In nine instances, the foreword is signed by multiple Ministers, or by multiple senior representatives, such as the Minister together with a Chief Executive Officer or Chair of a reference group. For example, the foreword for the *ACT Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029)* is signed by two Ministers and the ACT Attorney-General.

3 Performance and accountability arrangements

- 3.1 This chapter describes the findings and observations of the review with respect to the performance and accountability arrangements in the long-term plans and strategies, including whether and how the plans and strategies have publicly identified:
- roles and responsibilities for implementation;
 - a governance and oversight group;
 - processes for the collection of information about progress towards goals;
 - processes for the monitoring and evaluation of progress; and
 - processes for reporting progress to the community and other stakeholders.

Roles and responsibilities

- 3.2 Clearly identifying roles and responsibilities for the implementation of a long-term plan or strategy, including those of stakeholders, underpins accountability and the effective and efficient delivery of its intended vision, outcomes and objectives. When they are well understood and articulated, well-documented roles and responsibilities support:
- cooperation and coordination;
 - the appropriate use of authority; and
 - the effective use of expertise and resources.
- 3.3 The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* takes a broad view of roles and responsibilities, while noting that Government is responsible for leading and coordinating efforts. It states:
- Government, individuals, businesses and community groups all contribute to outcomes for a Government's long-term vision. Nonetheless, the Government has a significant role and will be committed to leading and coordinating efforts to meet the vision and goals.²⁵
- 3.4 Strong governance arrangements, with clear lines of reporting and distinctions between decision making and advisory roles, are particularly important when multiple areas of government are responsible for the delivery of a long-term plan or strategy. Governance arrangements are discussed later in this chapter.

²⁵ ACT Government (2020) *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.14.

Considerations

3.5 The review considered the extent to which long-term plans and strategies publicly articulate and document roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the plan or strategy. These are discussed in the following sections with reference to:

- stakeholders within government, including other directorates; and
- stakeholders outside government, including with reference to collective or 'shared' responsibilities.

Findings and observations

3.6 Table 3-1 shows the proportion of plans and strategies that articulate and document roles and responsibilities. It shows that, across the 55 plans and strategies:

- 39 clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the parties;
- nine do not define the roles and responsibilities of the parties; and
- seven define the roles and responsibilities partially, or in an unclear way.

Table 3-1 Roles and responsibilities defined

Directorate	Yes	No	Partial/unclear
Justice and Community Safety	1	-	1
Education	3	-	-
Community Services	7	2	1
Transport and City Services	4	2	1
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	10	3	1
Health	8	-	2
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development	6	2	1
Total	39	9	7

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.7 Plans and strategies were determined to have partial or unclear roles and responsibilities when they mentioned stakeholders but were not specific on who these are, or only focused on the responsibilities of the lead agency. In some instances this approach is understandable. For example, *Canberra's International Engagement Strategy (2022-2050)* is largely a promotional document designed for external audiences; it seeks to highlight what the ACT Government (as a whole) will do to realise the Strategy's vision.

Stakeholders within government

3.8 Over two-thirds of the plans and strategies considered in the review describe a role for multiple ACT Government directorates and agencies. This reflects the fact that delivery of a long-term policy vision usually spans multiple government functions (e.g. policymaking, service delivery, coordination and compliance activity) and therefore involves multiple directorates and agencies. For example, the *ACT Circular Economy Strategy (2023-2030)* refers to activities on the part of the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, Canberra Health Services, Suburban Land Agency, Community Services Directorate and the Canberra Institute of Technology, among others.

3.9 This also reflects that some plans and strategies are intended for all areas of government and require all areas of government to take action. For example, the *ACT Women's Plan (2016-2026)* states:

All ACT Government Directorates will be engaged to develop three-year action plans to identify meaningful, effective action to address the overarching priority to advance gender equality in the ACT.²⁶

3.10 The roles and responsibilities of other areas of government are usually described at a high-level. To illustrate, Figure 3-1 is an extract from the *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)*. Multiple entities are assigned as the 'lead' for action items with multiple milestones and broad timeframes. It is acknowledged that further detailed information may be described in subordinate documents.

Figure 3-1 ACT Water Strategy (extract)

Strategy 1: Achieve integrated catchment management across the ACT and region		
Actions	Milestones and timeframes	Lead
Action 1 Strengthen coordination and collaboration for catchment management across the ACT and region.	1.1 Establish new catchment management arrangements (2014) and mechanisms for stronger cross-border collaboration (ongoing): ¹ a. establish a new catchment management coordination group involving representation from ACT Government directorates, NCA, ACTEW Water, NSW Government and community. a. further clarify roles and responsibilities for integrated catchment management in the ACT and region.	EPD/Water CMTEDD, TAMS, HD and JACS/ESA, ACTEW
Action 2 Enhance knowledge and spatial planning for water and catchment	2.1 Develop an integrated catchment management (ICM) plan for the ACT and surrounding upstream catchments to guide land and water management for protection of water quality and water supply: ² a. develop sub-catchment plans for the catchments feeding our major urban lakes, consistent with the overarching ICM plan.	EPD/Water

Source: *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)*.

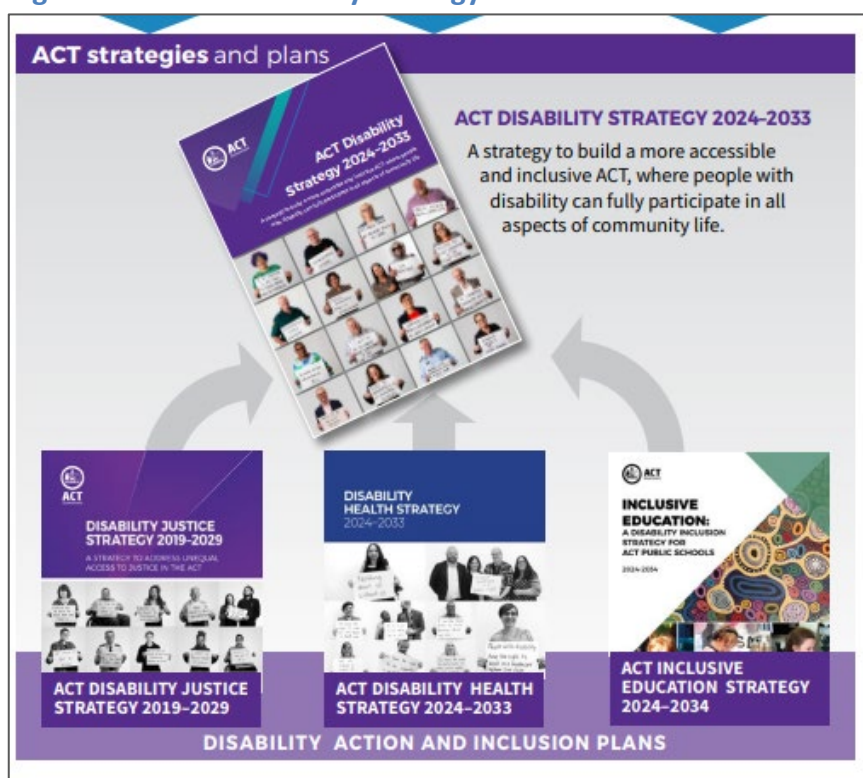
²⁶ Community Services Directorate, *ACT Women's Plan (2016-2026)* p.14.

3.11 The review also observed that some areas of government activity are the focus of multiple plans and strategies. The most striking example relates to disability in the ACT, which is the focus of:

- *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*, which is a whole of government strategy;
- *ACT Disability Health Strategy (2024-2033)*, which is produced by the ACT Health Directorate;
- *ACT Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029)*, which is produced by the Community Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate; and
- *Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for the ACT (2024-2034)*, which is produced by the Education Directorate.

3.12 In this instance, the whole-of-government strategy (the *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*) recognises the other disability-related strategies and provide an illustration of their relationship (refer to Figure 3-2).

Figure 3-2 ACT Disability Strategy extract



Source: *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2030)*.

Stakeholders outside government

3.13 Stakeholders outside the ACT Government are referenced in 20 of the plans and strategies considered for the purpose of the review. External stakeholders are usually described in general terms, such as 'non-government organisation', 'rural landholder', 'local businesses', 'parents' and 'the community'. In the few instances that external stakeholders are distinct

and nameable, they are referred to as such. For example, the *ACT Cat Plan (2021-2031)* refers to the RSPCA.

- 3.14 Most plans and strategies considered for the purpose of the review are not sufficiently detailed in their description of stakeholder roles. As a result, it is unclear what external stakeholders are responsible for, and how their input is going to be communicated, coordinating or reviewed. The *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)* is unusual in that it aligns the responsibilities of its external stakeholders with the Strategy's objectives. Figure 3-3 is an extract that lists the responsibilities of ACT rural landholders and utilities in relation to two objectives.

Figure 3-3 ACT Biosecurity Strategy (extract)

ACT rural landholders	Implement sound farm biosecurity and biodiversity management practices to protect the property from the entry and spread of pests and diseases ⁶ .	Recognise the nature and causes of pest and disease impacts on agriculture and biodiversity. Detect and report notifiable and prohibited pest and disease occurrences. Manage pest and disease problems using appropriate techniques and practices. Cooperate with adjacent land managers to deliver positive pest and disease management outcomes. Provide input to government legislation, policy, regulation and management frameworks. Protect threatened species and communities through implementation of Land Management Agreements.
Utilities	Assist in preventing the spread of pests and diseases	Comply with sound farm biosecurity practices. Notify farm or land manager before entering a rural property or nature reserve. Wash down vehicles prior to entering a property and remain on formed roads.

Source: *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)*.

A shared responsibility

- 3.15 While generally vague on the roles and responsibilities of external stakeholders, the plans and strategies considered for the review commonly refer to a 'shared responsibility' for the achievement of the plan or strategy's outcomes. The plans and strategies note that the realisation of the vision, outcomes and objectives requires many stakeholders, not just government, to work together as partners. The following selection illustrates this:

- *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)*

This Strategy recognises that biosecurity is a **shared responsibility**. Maintaining and improving the ACT biosecurity status is the responsibility of stakeholders such as government, industry,

natural resource managers, land custodians or users, education and research institutions and the community.²⁷

- *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*

Everyone including governments, businesses, and the wide community has an individual, shared and **collective responsibility** to create a more inclusive society for people with disability.²⁸

- *ACT Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan (2023-2030)*

Success and sustainability of the work proposed by the CACSP requires a **commitment to work together**. We must recognise that the children and their families require a connected system and that they are partners in the outcomes achieved. We must recognise that health, education, community services, justice and others must also be deeply engaged in the continuous improvement journey.²⁹



3.16 When they are well understood and documented, roles and responsibilities encourage accountability for the effective and efficient delivery of a long-term plan or strategy and its vision, outcomes and objectives. They also encourage clear lines of reporting, the effective allocation of resources and transparency in funding, regulatory and decision-making responsibilities.



3.17 Of the 55 plans and strategies considered in the review:

- 39 clearly define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders;
- nine do not define the roles and responsibilities of the parties; and
- seven define the roles and responsibilities partially, or in an unclear way.



3.18 Most long-term plans and strategies identify roles and responsibilities for other ACT Government directorates and agencies. These are typically associated with actions and are described at a directorate-level. While the notion of 'shared' or 'collective' responsibility for the delivery of the goals of the plan or strategy is popular, the roles and responsibilities of external stakeholders is discussed in less than half of the plans and strategies considered in the review. In many instances, the role of external stakeholders is vague.

²⁷ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)* p.1.

²⁸ Community Services Directorate, *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)* p.10.

²⁹ Health Directorate, *ACT Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan (2023-2030)* p.22.

Governance and oversight group

3.19 The *Financial Management Act 1996* establishes that the Director-General of a directorate is accountable to the responsible Minister for the efficient and effective financial management of the public resources for which the directorate is responsible.

3.20 The *Financial Management Act 1996* provides that directors-general must manage the directorate in a way that:

- promotes the achievement of the purposes of the directorate;
- promotes the financial sustainability of the directorate; and
- is not inconsistent with the policies of the government.

3.21 Governance and oversight is central to the ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* definition of accountability, which is:

... the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for governance and the obligation to report and justify resulting consequences. The extent to which individuals or organisations are held responsible for achieving particular results and for the management of capability used.³⁰

3.22 For long-term plans and strategies that involve multiple directorates, agencies and other stakeholders, governance and oversight is often achieved through the establishment of a governance and oversight group with specific and explicit responsibilities. Under these circumstances, arrangements should be designed to best serve the long-term needs of the plan or strategy. For example, a governance and oversight group may:

- involve government decision-makers with the authority to decide on the allocation of resources; or
- require representation of stakeholders from the community that can provide feedback and input into the effective implementation of the plan.

3.23 Robust governance and oversight arrangements involving a governance and oversight group:

- need to be supported by clear lines of authority, which enable issues to be escalated and resolved; and
- need to have responsibility for progress towards the outcomes to be clearly assigned, monitored and reported.

³⁰ ACT Government (2020), *Strengthening Performance and Accountability: A Framework for the ACT Government*, p.25.

3.24 Noting the clear and legislated responsibilities of the Director-General, governance groups and oversight groups can assist by providing:

- a coordination and communication mechanism for whole of government and cross-agency plans; and
- oversight and accountability for the plan and its implementation from the perspective of government, a client-group or subject matter expert.

Considerations

3.25 The review considered whether the long-term plans or strategies, or accompanying action or implementation plans, publicly specified a governance and oversight group and if so, provided clear advice on:

- the composition of the governance and oversight group; and
- the role and responsibilities of the governance and oversight group.

3.26 The review notes that activities described in the long-term plans and strategies may be subject to broader directorate governance and oversight arrangements described in documents other than the plan or strategy itself and which may not be publicly available.

Findings and observations

3.27 Table 3-2 shows the number of plans and strategies that:

- clearly set out governance arrangements that involve a governance and oversight group;
- do not set out governance arrangements that involve a governance and oversight group; or
- are unclear about the governance arrangements and the role of a governance and oversight group.

Table 3-2 Reference to governance arrangements involving governance and oversight groups

Directorate	Yes	No	Partial/unclear
Justice and Community Safety	1	1	-
Education	-	2	1
Community Services	5	3	2
Transport and City Services	1	4	2
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	2	9	3
Health	7	3	0
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development	1	7	1
Total	17	29	9

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.28 Seventeen of the long-term plans and strategies considered for the purpose of the review describe the role of a governance and oversight group. Depending on the nature of this role, governance and oversight groups identified in the plans or strategies are variously described as a:

- governance group or oversight committee;
- coordination committee, sub-committee or steering group; or
- partnership board, advisory board or reference group.

3.29 The review also observed that some long-term plans and strategies acknowledge the importance of governance, as well as the involvement of multiple agencies, but do not describe governance arrangements involving a governance and oversight group. For example, under the heading of governance, the *ACT City Plan (2023)* states:

Better planning governance will result in better coordination, implementation and administration of actions and initiatives that seek to elevate the quality of planning and design outcomes across the City Centre. To successfully deliver the City Plan's actions and initiatives, it is essential to foster close collaboration between government directorates promoting a whole of government approach. This includes monitoring and reporting of any outcomes.³¹

3.30 Long-term plans and strategies were considered to have partially described governance arrangements when the role and responsibilities of a specifically identified governance and oversight group was unclear or under-developed. The review identified plans and strategies that:

- refer to directorates with portfolio responsibilities covered in the plan or strategy with no description of how coordination or oversight is to be achieved; and

³¹ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT City Plan (2023)* p.77.

- refer to the involvement of stakeholders both inside and outside the ACT Government with no description of how these stakeholders are expected to interact or oversee their responsibilities with respect to the implementation of the plan or strategy.

Composition of governance and oversight groups

3.31 The governance and oversight groups described in 17 of the long-term plans and strategies considered in the review typically include:

- decision-makers from the directorate identified with specific and explicit portfolio responsibility for implementation;
- decision-makers from directorates relevant to, or with an interest in, the plan or strategy;
- representatives from community and advocacy groups; and
- community members with ‘lived experience’ relevant to the plan or strategy.

3.32 The review identified that some plans and strategies are overseen by multiple levels of governance. This can be positive for the implementation of a long-term plan or strategy, as it facilitates the involvement of several stakeholders with different levels of responsibility and input. However, this can also elevate the risk of administrative inefficiencies in the implementation of the plan or strategy, or lead to conflicting decision-making responsibilities that can weaken accountability.

3.33 The *ACT Digital Strategy (2020)* does not specify governance oversight for the Strategy itself, but lists three bodies involved in ‘building the government of the future’, summarised as follows:

- **Strategic Board** – the Board comprises all Directors-General and other whole of government roles, including the Deputy Director-General Workforce Capability and Governance, and the Deputy Director-General Policy and Cabinet, and the Chief Digital Officer. The Strategic Board meetings are held on a fortnightly basis;
- **Digital Services Governance Committee** - the Chief Digital Officer is the chair of the Digital Services Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Strategic Board. The Committee provides strategic direction, leadership and advice on the development and management of information and technology assets. The Committee comprises representatives from all directorates and meets monthly; and
- **Data Steering Committee** - a sub-committee of the Strategic Board that provides strategic direction, leadership and advice on the development and management of data assets. The Committee comprises representatives from all directorates and meets every six weeks.³²

³² Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (2020) *ACT Digital Strategy*, pp 29-30.

3.34 The review also observed that multiple layers of governance can occur within a sector that is supported by various long-term plans and strategies. This is evident in the disability sector. The four strategies that provide long-term direction in relation to disability policy and services in the Territory (listed below) each have different governance and oversight arrangements and groups:

- the *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)* is overseen by the **Human Services Cluster Inter-Directorate Committee (IDC)** which is made up of Directors-General from the Health Directorate, Community Services Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate and Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate;
- the *ACT Disability Health Strategy (2024-2033)* is overseen by the **Strategic Board Human Services Committee** which is made up of Directors-Generals from the Health Directorate, Community Services Directorate, Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the Education Directorate;
- the *ACT Disability Justice Strategy (2019-2029)* is overseen by the **Disability Justice Reference Group**, which comprises people with disability, representatives from community organisations and ACT Government officials; and
- the *Disability Inclusion Strategy for the ACT (2024-2034)* **does not detail who will be responsible** for governance or oversight of the Strategy.

3.35 Very few plans and strategies include representatives from other jurisdictions on their governance and oversight group. One of the few examples is the *ACT Region Catchment Strategy (2016-2046)* which is overseen by an interjurisdictional coordination body established under the *Water Resources Act 2007* and which is required to report annually to the ACT Minister for Climate Change, Energy and Water.

Governance and oversight roles and responsibilities

3.36 The 17 plans and strategies that specified a governance and oversight group typically also describe the group's responsibilities. This is usually done in high-level terms and/or with reference to an action plan that is expected to provide further detail, such as terms of reference for the governance and oversight group. The following two examples illustrate the responsibilities of a governance and oversight group being set out in more fulsome terms.

- the *ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (2016-2026)* specifies that a Joint Community Government Reference Group will drive implementation of the Strategy and that it will develop a three-year action plan addressing certain priorities (refer to Figure 3-4).

Figure 3-4 ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (extract)

The Reference Group will drive implementation of the Industry Strategy through development of the first three year action plan. The Group will adopt the Industry Strategy as a standing item on their agenda in order to:

- clarify roles and responsibilities within the group regarding the development of an Action Plan,
- outline the timetable and milestones for development of the first Action Plan,
- determine whether Action Plans will be for two- or three-year periods,
- develop structures for continued communication and engagement of the Industry,
- initiate a process for identifying new issues as they emerge, and
- consider processes for feedback and monitoring of implementation of both the Industry Strategy and the Action Plan.

Source: ACT Community Services Industry Strategy (2016-2026) p.27.

- the *ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (2019-2024)* describes the roles and responsibilities of external and internal stakeholders, before describing the membership of its Steering Committee and providing instructions on how it will collect information, liaise with stakeholders and report and monitor the plan's progress (refer to Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-5 ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (extract)

Roles and Responsibilities

The key stakeholders driving the implementation of the ACT Plan have clear roles and responsibilities:

- ACT PHN and ACTHD are the primary commissioners of mental health services in the ACT across the stepped care continuum.
- CHS are responsible for the provision of a range of public mental health services including community, rehabilitation, specialist and inpatient-based services.
- Calvary Public and Private Hospitals are also a key provider of inpatient services.
- Peak bodies advocate for consumers, carers, and the service providers offering services funded through ACTHD and ACT PHN.
- A significant proportion of mental health services are provided through the primary care sector including NGO service providers, general practice, and private clinicians.
- The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing is delivering a cross-government agenda to improve mental health services in the ACT.

Source: ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (2019-2024) p.30.

3.37 The review identified that some long-term plans and strategies describe the responsibilities of stakeholders within a governance framework. For example, the *Digital Health Strategy (2019-2029)* explains how three bodies contribute to the governance of the Strategy:

- the ACT Government for overall health policy and funding;
- the ACT Health Directorate for strategic direction and the outcomes of the Strategy; and
- the Digital Solutions Division (in the Health Directorate) for the delivery of the Strategy's work program.

- 3.38 This example illustrates a focus on the responsibilities, rather than operational dimensions, of a governance and oversight body. This is shown in Figure 3-6.

Figure 3-6 Digital Health Strategy (extract)



Source: *Digital Health Strategy (2019-2029)* p.26.

- 3.39 The review also identified that long-term plans and strategies can simply refer to existing governance, oversight and reporting arrangements. For example, in the *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)*, the condition of ACT water catchments is to be reported in the *ACT State of the Environment Report* and *ACT Water Quality Report*, both of which are produced by the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Using existing governance arrangements, rather than create new arrangements, may be a means to achieve more efficient use of resources.



- 3.40 Governance and oversight arrangements describe who will coordinate, take responsibility and be accountable for the progress of a long-term plan or strategy. They usually involve decision makers from various areas of government but may also include stakeholders from the community that can provide insights from 'lived experience' on the implementation of a plan or strategy.



3.41 Seventeen of the 55 plans and strategies considered for the review clearly identify a governance or oversight group, such as a steering group or advisory board. Nine of the 55 plans and strategies considered for the review do not provide details of the governance arrangements or describe how the various stakeholders will interact or execute their responsibilities with respect to the plan or strategy.



3.42 Of the 17 plans and strategies that specify a governance or oversight group, overall, the group's responsibilities were described at a high level. The review also noted governance and oversight arrangements that have the potential to create administrative inefficiencies and/or to diffuse accountability – that is, multiple levels of governance for a singular plan or strategy, or policy area.

Collection of information on progress

3.43 Collecting accurate information about the implementation of a long-term plan or strategy, and the extent to which it is achieving its outcomes and objectives, supports performance and accountability. The timely collection of relevant and accurate information:

- supports the evaluation of the achievements of the plan or strategy; and in turn
- supports decision-making in relation to the activities and initiatives to be pursued to achieve its outcomes and objectives, the level of resourcing that is needed and the governance and administrative arrangements that are necessary.

3.44 The ACT Government's *Performance and Accountability Framework* describes the measurement of performance as:

... being able to accurately and consistently determine what is being done by an organisation in pursuit of a specified objective, the resources that have been used, and the extent to which those actions have resulted in progress towards an objective.³³

3.45 As discussed in Chapter 2, performance measures can be quantitative or qualitative, provided they are relevant and complete. Information to support an assessment of performance can be varied and diverse; it can include data related to service usage, or client and population surveys, as well as insights and experiences gained from interviews and focus groups, for example.

³³ ACT Government (2020), *Performance and Accountability Framework* p.8.

Considerations

- 3.46 Chapter 2 identified that the long-term plans and strategies considered for the review include performance measures that are:
- quantifiable metrics, indicators or targets; and
 - unquantifiable statements under headings that describe ‘how will be get there?’ or ‘what will success look like?’
- 3.47 Chapter 2 also identified that the performance measures and targets in long-term plans and strategies often include both descriptive and quantitative measures and included extracts to illustrate the different approaches to articulating these.
- 3.48 This part of the report discusses the extent to which long-term plans and strategies publicly describe *how* performance information will be collected. For example, if a strategy establishes outcomes relating to the number of people expected to use a new transport route within a period of time, it should therefore describe how reliable and accurate data about people’s use of the new transport route will be collected over time.

Findings and observations

- 3.49 Table 3-3 shows the number of long-term plans and strategies, by directorate, that describe how information is to be collected to facilitate an effective assessment of its performance measures and, in turn, its outcomes and objectives. Table 3-3 shows that:
- 13 plans and strategies describe how performance information is to be collected;
 - 16 plans and strategies do not describe how performance information is to be collected; and
 - 26 plans and strategies only partially describe, or are unclear about, how performance information is to be collected.

Table 3-3 Collecting information on progress

Directorate	Yes	No	Partial/unclear
Justice and Community Safety	-	-	2
Education	1	1	1
Community Services	1	1	8
Transport and City Services	2	2	3
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	5	4	5
Health	3	3	4
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development	1	5	3
Total	13	16	26

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.50 Describing how performance information or data will be collected is not a strong feature of the long-term plans and strategies considered in the review. Many long-term plans and strategies usefully express a vision and supporting outcomes and objectives, and identify relevant activities and initiatives, but do not set out how information will be collected to provide evidence of the success of these activities and initiatives.

3.51 In many instances, long-term plans and strategies recognise the absence of information and data to measure performance and undertake to rectify this. Such examples were judged to partially describe performance collection arrangements. For example, the *ACT Carers Strategy (2018-2028)* First Action Plan identifies that:

One challenge the Governance Group has identified was **establishing an evidence base** for reporting on actions. As the Strategy progresses, the Governance Group could work more closely with lead agencies to ensure specific data about carers is collected, including how carers use services and how efforts under the Strategy align with outcomes.³⁴

3.52 The *Canberra Region Local Food Strategy (2024-2029)* statement of implementation similarly states:

A key next step for the Strategy is addressing key knowledge gaps through the Agriculture and Food in the ACT data study. **The data collected will be used to develop meaningful and measurable targets for the Strategy's goals.**³⁵

3.53 Some plans and strategies specifically identify the sources of data for measuring outcomes and objectives. For example, the *ACT Tourism Strategy (2023-2030)* has 'visitor economy targets' to measure future success (refer to Figure 3-7). In this example the targets (i.e. the

³⁴ Community Services Directorate, *ACT Carers Strategy First Action Plan (2018-2028)* p.5.

³⁵ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *Canberra Region Local Food Strategy (2024-2029)* p.34.

interim goals and 2030 target) are based on a baseline created by data from national and international visitor surveys, campaign evaluations and other local research.

Figure 3-7 ACT Tourism Strategy (extract)

	Success Measure	Data source	Baseline	Interim goal (2025)	2030 target
Economy	Growth in the size of the visitor economy, as measured by domestic and international visitor expenditure (\$)	National Visitor Survey (NVS) and International Visitor Survey (IVS) — Tourism Research Australia	\$1.7 billion (in the year ending June 2022)	\$3.1 billion	\$4.0 billion ¹
Community	Maintain perception of tourism's positive impact on Canberra	VisitCanberra local sentiment research	87% believe tourism has a positive impact on Canberra	87%	87%

Source: ACT Tourism Strategy (2023-2030) p.23.

- 3.54 In another example, the primary measure of success of the *ACT Active Travel Plan (2024-2030)* is mode share, which is used to compare the use of different types of travel. Under the Plan, an ACT Household Travel Survey is to be undertaken every five years to assess shifts against a baseline across the different modes of travel (refer to Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-8 ACT Active Travel Plan (extract)

Table: Measures of success

Measure	Baseline	When measured
Travel to work	4% bike, 3% walk (2022 HTS)	Every 5-years
Travel to school	32% bike, walk, public transport combined Bike – 5% Walk – 14% Public transport – 13% (2022 HTS)	Every 5-years
Gender balance for cycling trips	33% of journeys to work by bike taken by women (2021 ABS Census)	Every 5-years
Walk Score	40/100 (Suburbs ranging from 15/100 to 95/100)	Walk Score website

Source: ACT Active Travel Plan (2024-2030) p.8.



- 3.55 Plans and strategies should identify how information is to be collected to help decision-makers and external stakeholders determine whether a plan or strategy is achieving its intended outcomes and objectives over time. While performance information can be from diverse sources, and quantitative or qualitative in nature, it is important that methods to collect it are established early in the life of a long-term plan or strategy.



- 3.56 Describing how performance information or data will be collected is not a strong feature of the long-term plans and strategies considered in the review. Only 13 of the 55 plans and strategies describe how performance information will be collected, while another 26 do so only partially.

Evaluation of the plan or strategy

- 3.57 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* describes evaluation as the systematic, objective assessment of the appropriateness, effectiveness and/or efficiency of a policy. Reiterating the ACT Government's *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines* (2010), the Framework calls for agencies to:

- foster a culture of evaluation;
- build evaluation capability (the expertise, systems and structures to conduct evaluations internally);
- plan to evaluate by embedding evaluation into policies and programs and coordinating evaluation activity;
- evaluate strategically by prioritising and scaling evaluation activities, based on an assessment of the size, risk and complexity associated with a program;
- conduct evaluations to a high standard and from an overall perspective of sustainability (social, economic and environmental); and
- make evaluation count, by communicating results and acting on recommendations.³⁶

- 3.58 Evaluations can focus on the delivery of activities and initiatives, or the overall outcomes and objectives of a long-term plan or strategy. Evaluations are more far-reaching than performance monitoring and reporting arrangements, such as periodic report cards, as they facilitate an assessment of the fundamental performance of a long-term plan or strategy with a view to contributing to decisions about the future direction of an aspect of public sector administration.

Considerations

- 3.59 The review considered whether long-term plans and strategies publicly identified:
- a commitment to evaluate the plan or strategy; and
 - a timeframe for conducting the evaluation.

³⁶ ACT Government (2010) *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines*, p.23.

- 3.60 It is acknowledged that various monitoring and evaluative activities, such as trials and customers surveys, can occur in the life of a long-term plan or strategy. For the purposes of this review, the focus was specifically on evaluation reports made publicly available.

Findings and observations

- 3.61 Table 3-4 shows the number of long-term plans and strategies by directorate that included a commitment to undertake an evaluation. It shows that:

- 40 plans and strategies identify a commitment to undertaking an evaluation;
- nine plans and strategies do not identify a commitment to undertaking an evaluation; and
- six plans and strategies identify a partial or unclear commitment to undertaking an evaluation.

Table 3-4 Plans and strategies that identify a commitment to evaluation

Directorate	Yes	No	Partial/unclear
Justice and Community Safety	2	-	-
Education	3	-	-
Community Services	8	1	1
Transport and City Services	5	2	-
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	12	1	1
Health	5	3	2
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development	5	2	2
Total	40	9	6

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

- 3.62 Across the 40 plans and strategies that identify a commitment to undertaking an evaluation, the majority make a simple statement that an evaluation will occur, with minimal detail on:
- the purpose and timing of the evaluation;
 - the type of evaluation and whether the evaluation will be commissioned from an independent group, or conducted in-house; and
 - how the evaluation results will be communicated to internal and external stakeholders.

- 3.63 For example, the *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020)* identifies an intention to:

Develop a monitoring and evaluation program to track the impact of horses on key values and to assess the success of control activities in achieving impact reduction.³⁷

- 3.64 Similarly, the *ACT Road Safety Strategy (2020-2025)* states:

ACT Government monitors and reviews reports arising from the National Transport Commission, Ausroads, national working groups, committees and other road safety bodies to identify any possible measures or initiatives that could be applied in the ACT.³⁸

- 3.65 While for some policy areas it may not be practical to pre-determine evaluative activities, others describe evaluation as a feature of their performance and accountability arrangements and who is responsible for evaluation and the nature and timing of the evaluation arrangements. For example, the *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)* states:

The Biosecurity Coordination Committee (BCC) oversees the Territory's biosecurity governance arrangements and is responsible for implementation, reporting and review of this strategy. The BCC will report on the implementation of the strategy as part of the ACT Government's Annual Report with additional independent reporting by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment every four years.

Interim reviews of the strategy will be conducted annually with a formal review and evaluation every five years. A review will include as a minimum an evaluation of the implementation of the actions based on performance indicators. The strategy will also be reviewed as required to ensure that it is up to date and reflects current legislation, scientific knowledge, technical expertise and management practices.³⁹

- 3.66 Similarly, *Next Steps for Our Kids (2022-2030)* states:

Extensive baseline, mid and post strategy evaluations have fed into the system along the way and strongly influenced the development of *Next Steps*.

What we'll do next...implementing a shared and linked performance management framework, evaluation framework and outcomes framework to identify areas of success and deficiency in the system.

An evaluation framework will be jointly established with community partners to ensure a culture characterised by innovation, continuous improvement and contemporary practices...the Framework will be used to agree on priorities, measure performance and determine corrective action as required.⁴⁰

³⁷ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan (2020)* p.24.

³⁸ Transport Canberra and City Services, *ACT Road Safety Strategy (2020-2025)* p.10.

³⁹ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)* p.31.

⁴⁰ Community Services Directorate, *Next Steps for Our Kids (2022-2030)* p.33, p.37.

3.67 The review identified that several long-term plans and strategies defer planning for evaluation until some point in the future, when an action plan is prepared, for example. It is better practice to plan how outcomes will be monitored and evaluated from the start, and to plan to collect performance information and data throughout the life of a plan or strategy for the purpose of the evaluation.

3.68 As noted in Table 3-4, nine of the 55 long-term plans and strategies considered for the purpose of the review do not commit to undertake an evaluation, while the commitments in another six are partial or unclear. This includes some of the Territory's plans and strategies of longer duration:

- *Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary Strategy (2022-2050);*
- *Urban Forest Strategy (2021-2045);*
- *Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City (2019);* and
- *ACT Children and Young People's Commitment (2015-2025).*

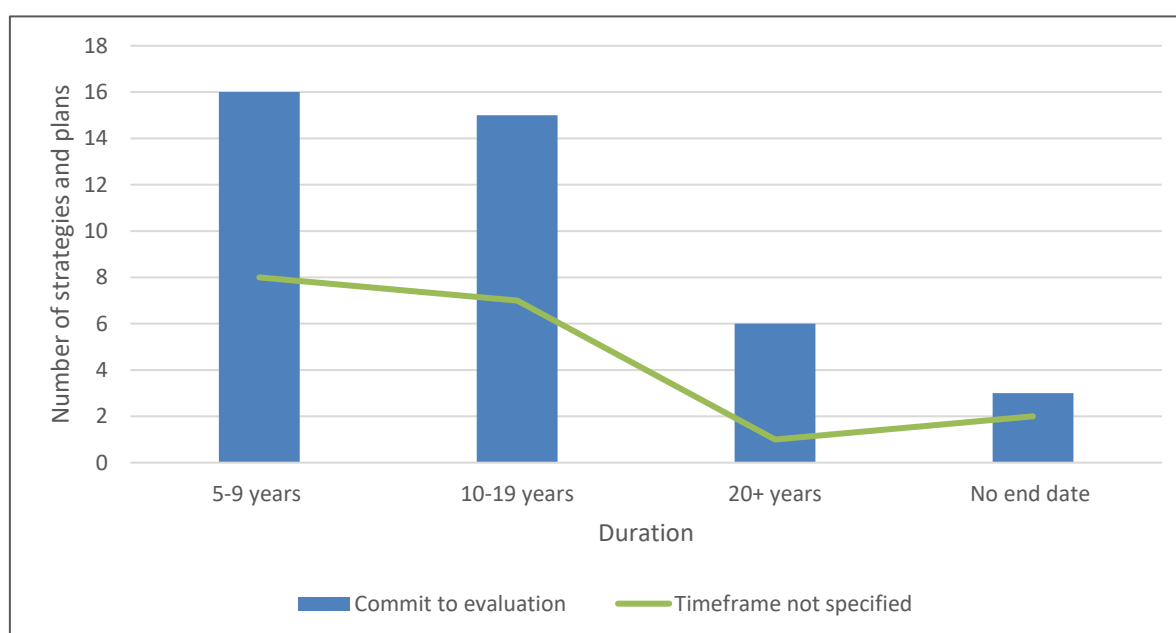
Frequency and timeframes of evaluations

3.69 Reviews and evaluations can occur at any time, and at multiple times, during the life of a plan or strategy. For those long-term plans and strategies considered for this review, evaluations are mentioned as primarily occurring:

- at a mid-point or end-point of the strategy; and
- every 5 years or 10 years.

3.70 However, just over half of the 40 long-term plans and strategies that committed to undertake an evaluation do not specify when the evaluation will occur. As shown in Figure 3-9, this is a feature of the plans and strategies of the longest duration, i.e. those that will operate for 20 or more years. The review observed that:

- half of the plans and strategies of with a duration of five to nine years do not specify a timeframe to evaluate (eight of 16);
- just under half of plans and strategies with a duration of 10 to 19 years do not specify a timeframe to evaluate (seven of 15); and
- few of the plans and strategies of 20 or more years duration specify a timeframe for an evaluation (one of 6).

Figure 3-9 Commitment to evaluate by duration of plan or strategy

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.71 Although the commitment to evaluation is high across the 55 plans and strategies considered for the purpose of this review, many do not specify when this evaluation will occur. The ‘culture of evaluation’ envisaged by the ACT Government’s *Performance and Accountability Framework* and *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines* (2010) has yet to be fully achieved.

Evidence an evaluation has occurred

3.72 Excluding long-term plans and strategies that commenced in 2023 or 2024, as well as those for which a scheduled evaluation is yet to occur, the review sought evidence that an evaluation was undertaken and was publicly available. This evidence was sourced from:

- the relevant directorate’s website; or
- the relevant directorate’s most recent annual report.

3.73 As the review focuses on long-term plans and strategies that are current, it did not seek evidence of evaluations that occur at the conclusion of a plan or strategy. However, of the 40 plans and strategies that identify a commitment to undertake an evaluation, the review found:

- 18 plans and strategies did not specify when an evaluation was to occur, but there was evidence that evaluations did occur for two of these;
- 22 plans and strategies did specify when the evaluation would occur. For these, the review found:
 - 11 that have not occurred, and are not yet required to;
 - five that should have had an evaluation by this time but have not;

- four were due for evaluation in 2024, for which there is no evidence as having been conducted; and
- two evaluations that have occurred as intended.

3.74 In response to the draft information report, several directorates advised that the review's reliance on publicly available information of evaluation may lead to inaccurate conclusions, suggesting that the results of evaluative activity are not routinely made public. Making the results of evaluations publicly available would increase transparency and accountability in public administration and is consistent with the ACT Government's *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines (2010)*. These *Guidelines* states that the policy objectives of evaluation are to, amongst other things:

- 'improve satisfaction with government services and public trust in government'; and
- 'more informed engagement with the community about shared goals and how to achieve them'.⁴¹

Evaluations have not occurred

3.75 The review identified that 11 long-term plans and strategies make a commitment to evaluation and have specified a timeframe for this to occur, but this date has not yet passed. For example, the *ACT and Region Catchment Strategy (2016-2046)* states that a comprehensive review will be undertaken at 10-year intervals, in which case an evaluation can be expected to be undertaken in 2026. EPSDD has advised that this review is underway.

Evaluations should have occurred but there is no evidence of it

3.76 The review identified that five long-term plans and strategies identified a timeframe for an evaluation that has passed. An evaluation may have occurred or be in progress but there was no publicly available evidence of this. This is the case for:

- *ACT Waste Management Strategy (2011-2025)*;
- *ACT Biosecurity Strategy (2016-2026)*;
- *ACT Housing Strategy (2018-2028)*;
- *CBR Cycle Tourism Strategy (2018-2028)*; and
- *ACT Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy (2022-2030)*.

⁴¹ ACT Government *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines (2010)* p.7.

Evaluations to occur in 2024

3.77 The review noted four long-term plans and strategies identify an evaluation will occur in 2024. These are not publicly available and may have been underway at the time of the review. These are:

- *ACT Climate Strategy (2019-2025)*;
- *ACT Health Services Plan (2022-2030)*;
- *International Engagement Strategy (2022-2050)*; and
- *ACT Water Strategy (2014-2044)*.

Evaluations have occurred

3.78 The review found evidence of four evaluations conducted in connection to long-term plans and strategies. These were evaluations of a component of the plan or strategy, such as a first action plan or implementation phase. Only one of the evaluations was conducted by a party external to the ACT Government. These are:

- *Evaluation of the Disability Justice Strategy First Action Plan* (February 2024, external consultant);
- *Future of Education Strategy Implementation Evaluation* (January 2021, Education Directorate);
- *ACT Preventive Health Plan mid-term review* (December 2022, Policy Design and Evaluation Team, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate) ; and
- *Set up for Success: Early childhood strategy for the ACT phase one evaluation report* (June 2023, ACT Government)

3.79 In a small number of instances, evaluation activities are intended to occur as part of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for other plans and strategies. For example:

- progress of Canberra's *Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City (2019)* will be evaluated as part of the evaluation of the current *ACT Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025)*. An evaluation of the *Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025)* commenced in 2024 and is ongoing; and
- the *Future of Education Strategy (2018-2028)* guides all parts of the education system. An evaluation of the first phase of the Strategy notes that it addresses the 'meta level' and that projects have their own evaluations.



3.80 Evaluations are an important means of objectively assessing the effectiveness of a long-term plan or strategy and the actions and initiatives it relies on to deliver its outcomes and objectives. Evaluations assist governance and oversight bodies to make decisions about priorities and resources and help stakeholders to hold directorates to account for progress

towards their long-term commitments. Making the results of evaluations publicly available supports these functions.



3.81 The review found a high number of plans and strategies identify the need for an evaluation (40 of 55) but provide insufficient detail on the purpose, nature or audience for the evaluation. Of these, just over half don't specify when the evaluation will occur. This is particularly noticeable in the plans and strategies with greatest need for periodic reassessment – that is, those that will operate for 20 or more years.



3.82 There is mixed evidence of an evaluation having occurred as and when indicated in the long-term plans and strategies. The review identified four evaluations that have occurred as specified in the plan or strategy, and five instances in which an evaluation was committed to but appears not to have occurred. Making the results of evaluations publicly available increases transparency and accountability.

Performance reporting to stakeholders

3.83 Performance reporting is the process of collecting, analysing and reporting information that shows achievements in the delivery of activities and initiatives towards expected outcomes and objectives. Performance information is important to a range of stakeholders including:

- internal users in directorates and agencies to identify and manage risks, inform funding decisions and support evaluation and continuous improvement; and
- external users in the ACT Legislative Assembly and broader community to inform policy debate and support transparency and accountability.

3.84 To fulfill these aims, performance reporting should be:

- sufficiently informative to provide stakeholders with the detail they need to determine if performance is acceptable and aligned with expectations;
- a fair, balanced and honest account of performance, and not only portray 'success stories';
- released in a timely manner, when it is valuable and relevant to stakeholders; and
- comparable and consistent, so that it is easy for stakeholders to track progress, or delays in reaching performance targets, over time.

3.85 The *Performance and Accountability Framework* does not instruct directorates on the format or frequency of performance reporting for long-term plans and strategies. It states however that performance information should be broadly accessible and tell a 'performance story' by using contextual and explanatory information to communicate what has been achieved.

Considerations

3.86 The review considered whether:

- the long-term plans and strategies publicly identify a commitment to providing public reporting on the implementation of the plan or strategy; and
- there is evidence of performance reporting either on directorate websites or in the annual report.

Findings and observations

Commitment to performance reporting

3.87 Table 3-5 shows the number of long-term plans and strategies that make a commitment to reporting performance information by directorate. It shows that:

- 32 plans and strategies identified a commitment to performance reporting;
- 18 plans and strategies did not identify a commitment to performance reporting; and
- five plans and strategies identified a partial or unclear commitment to performance reporting.

Table 3-5 Commitment to report performance information

Directorate	Yes	No	Partial/unclear
Justice and Community Safety	2		-
Education	-	1	2
Community Services	7	2	1
Transport and City Services	4	2	1
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development	10	3	1
Health	6	4	-
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development	3	6	-
Total	32	18	5

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.88 As shown in Table 3-5, over half of the long-term plans and strategies considered for the review explicitly committed to reporting performance information in some form. This commitment is typically expressed in a section of the plan or strategy that discusses monitoring, reporting and evaluation or 'making it happen'.

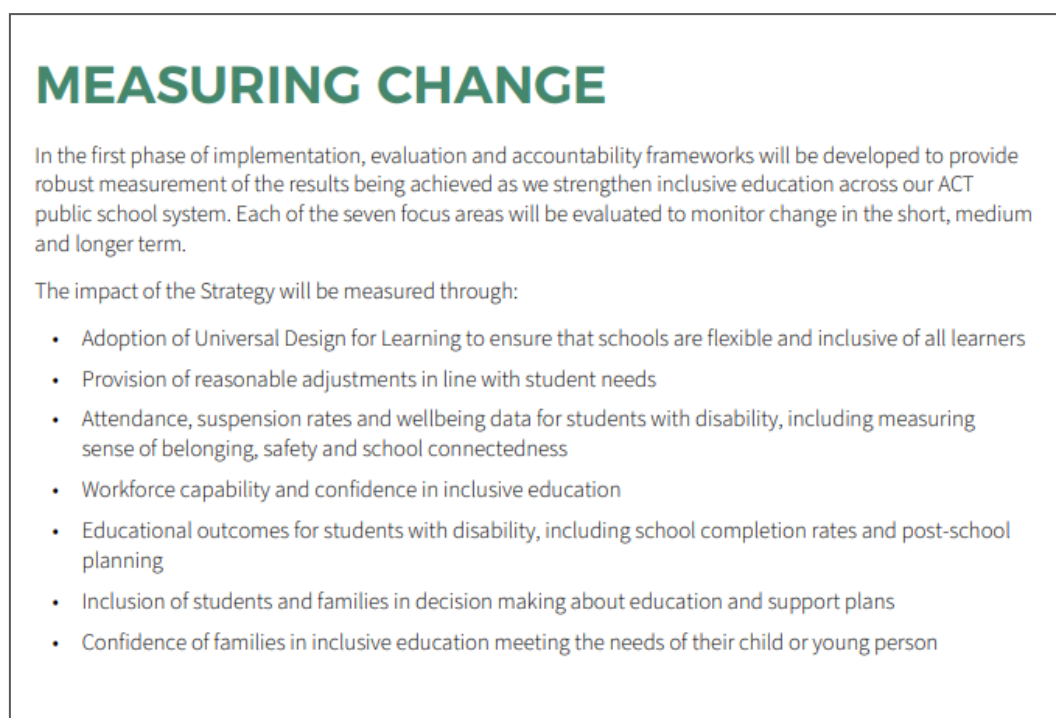
3.89 Across the long-term plans and strategies considered for the review there was inconsistent public commitment to the provision of sufficient, balanced and timely performance

reporting. The review identified 18 plans and strategies that do not commit to performance reporting, including some that are of a long duration. Examples include:

- *Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary Strategy (2022-2050);*
- *International Engagement Strategy (2022-2050);*
- *ACT Circular Economy Strategy (2023-2030);* and
- *Setup for Success: An early childhood strategy for the ACT (2020-2030).*

3.90 Across the 32 plans and strategies that do commit to performance reporting, there are examples of performance reporting being considered within an overall accountability framework. For example, the *ACT Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools (2024-2034)* commits to developing an evaluation and accountability framework to provide ‘robust measurement of the results being achieved’ in the short, medium and longer term. It also specifies how the impact will be measured, as shown in the extract at Figure 3-10.

Figure 3-10 ACT Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools (extract)



Source: *ACT Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools (2024-2034).*

3.91 In general, long-term plans and strategies do not specify the audiences for performance reporting. The review noted four strategies that specify that they will report progress to the ACT Legislative Assembly:

- *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)*

The governance group will review the progress of the action plans every year and report to the Minister for Disability. These reviews will be made publicly available to the ACT community can also monitor progress.⁴²

- *ACT Carers Strategy (2018-2028)*

Lead agencies will contribute to an annual Ministerial Statement or update that will be tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Community Services and Facilities. The Statement will detail activities and efforts undertaken on actions and outcomes under the Action Plan.⁴³

- *ACT Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025)*

Progress towards the Zero Emissions targets will be publicly reported each year in the Minister's Annual Report under the *Climate change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010*.⁴⁴

- *ACT Road Safety Strategy (2020-2025)*

The progress and status of the actions and goals within this Strategy and associated Action Plans will be tabled annually, as a Report Card, in the ACT Legislative Assembly.⁴⁵

Evidence of reporting

3.92 Of the 32 plans and strategies that clearly commit to performance reporting, the review found good evidence of this for 15 of the plans or strategies. This included six plans and strategies that did not commit to performance reporting but for which evidence of reporting was found.

3.93 As shown in Table 3-6, of the 32 plans and strategies that commit to performance reporting, the review observed:

- nine instances of performance reporting;
- eight instances of insufficiently detailed reporting, such as a cursory update in an annual report or partial evidence of the commitment being met;
- six instances where there is no evidence of reporting (where there is otherwise an expectation); and

⁴² Community Services Directorate, *ACT Disability Strategy (2024-2033)* p.3.

⁴³ Community Services Directorate, *ACT Carers Strategy First Three-Year Action Plan (2018-2028)* p.10.

⁴⁴ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, *ACT Climate Change Strategy (2019-2025)* p.77.

⁴⁵ Justice and Community Safety Directorate, *ACT Road Safety Strategy (2020-2025)* p.9.

- nine instances in which performance reports have not been published (because they are new plans/strategies and a report is not yet required).

Table 3-6 Evidence of reporting

Categories	Instances
Good evidence of reporting	9
Insufficient evidence of reporting	8
No evidence of reporting	6
Not applicable as strategy or plan commenced in 2023/2024	9
Total	32

Source: ACT Audit Office analysis.

3.94 Of the 15 long-term plans and strategies that provide public performance reporting, 11 report performance through a 'report card'. Report cards are presented and ordered differently, but they are commonly published annually and:

- reiterate the vision, strategic goals or objectives of the plan or strategy;
- provide details on the status of activities in relation to an action, indicator or target (often with symbols and colours to represent whether an action item is complete, partially complete or incomplete);
- include descriptions, case studies and photos as evidence of activity undertaken and provide a 'performance story'; and
- provide an overview of priorities for the next phase/year of the plan or strategy.

3.95 The report card for the *ACT Housing Strategy (2018-2028)* is a representative example of the report cards observed in the review. Each report card documents annual progress to meet the Strategy's objectives. Five report cards are available online; an extract of the first report card is provided at Figure 3-11.

Figure 3-11 ACT Housing Strategy year 1 report card (extract)

REPORT CARD:
PROGRESS AGAINST FIRST YEAR ACTIONS

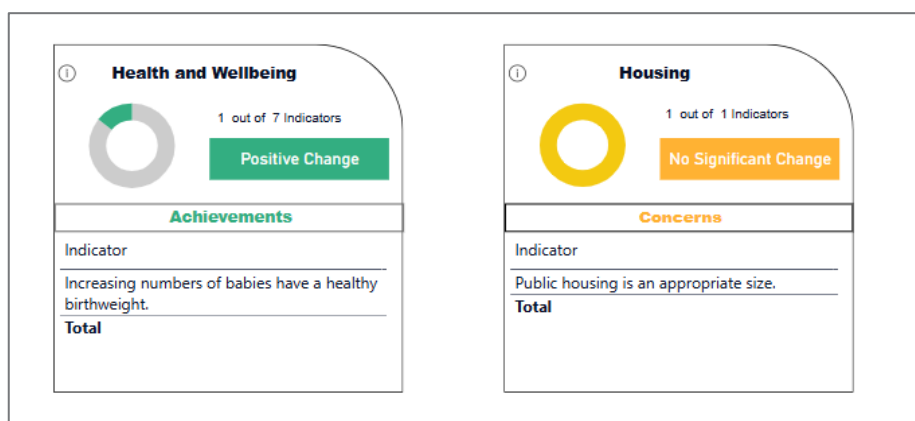
The table below is a condensed summary of the [Implementation Plan](#)

OBJECTIVE	ID	ACTION	STATUS
1A. Provide land and housing development opportunities to meet demand	1A.1	Model and publish ACT Government housing supply and demand projections via the ACT Land and Property report.	Complete
	1A.2	Monitor and report on trends in Canberra and the region's land and property markets via the ACT Land and Property report.	Complete
	1A.3	Release land in greenfield and urban renewal locations as part of an evidence-based and proactive approach to meet demand.	Complete

Source: ACT Housing Strategy (2018-2028) – Year 1 Report Card.

- 3.96 The review found one instance of a public-facing dashboard being used to report performance information. This was for the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement (2019-2028)*. Described as an ‘impact statement dashboard’ it uses Power BI to show annual progress against ‘indicators’; these indicators are grouped into ‘focus areas’ aligned with the Agreement. Figure 3-12 shows the 2022 results for selected indicators associated with the focus areas Health and Wellbeing and Housing.

Figure 3-12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement dashboard (extract)



Source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement – dashboard.



- 3.97 Performance reporting involves collecting, analysing and reporting information that can be used to assess the delivery of activities or initiatives towards the outcomes and objectives of a long-term plan or strategy. To be effective, performance reporting needs to be accurate, timely and provided to stakeholders in a useful way.



3.98 The review found 32 of the 55 plans and strategies include a commitment to performance reporting, while 18 of the 55 do not include such a commitment. Across the 32 that commit to performance reporting, the review found:

- nine instances of this occurring;
- eight instances of insufficiently detailed reporting, such as a cursory update in an annual report or partial evidence of the commitment being met;
- six instances where there is no evidence of reporting (where there is otherwise an expectation); and
- nine instances where performance is not yet scheduled to be reported.



3.99 The review noted 11 instances of performance reporting through an annual 'report card'. These summarise the status of action items or other indicators associated with the objectives or outcomes of a long-term plan or strategy, and typically draw on data, case studies and visuals to create an overall 'performance story'.

Appendix A: Long-term plans and strategies

Long-term plans and strategies	Date range	Duration (Years)
<i>Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate</i>		
Urban Forest Strategy	2021-2045	24
Zero Emissions Transition Plan for Transport Canberra	2020-2040	20
ACT Transport Strategy	2020-2040	20
ACT Waste Management Strategy	2011-2025	14
ACT Circular Economy Strategy	2023-2030	7
ACT Active Travel Plan	2024-2030	6
ACT Road Safety Strategy	2020-2025	5
<i>Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate</i>		
ACT Water Strategy	2014-2044	30
ACT and Region Catchment Strategy	2016-2046	30
Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary Strategy 2050	2022-2050	28
Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City.	2019 -	-
Caring for Dhawura Ngunnawal: A Natural Resource Plan for the ACT	2022-2042	20
ACT Housing Strategy	2018-2028	10
ACT Biosecurity Strategy	2016-2026	10
ACT Cat Plan	2021-2031	10
ACT Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy	2022-2030	8
ACT Integrated Energy Plan	2024-2030	6
ACT City Plan	2023 -	-
Namadgi National Park Feral Horse Management Plan	2020 -	-
ACT Climate Change Strategy	2019-2025	6
Canberra Region Local Food Strategy	2024-2029	5
<i>Education Directorate</i>		
Inclusive Education: A disability inclusion strategy for ACT Public Schools	2024-2034	10
Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT	2020-2030	10
The Future of Education Strategy	2018-2028	10
<i>Community Services Directorate</i>		
ACT Community Services Industry Strategy	2016-2026	10
ACT Disability Strategy	2024-2033	10
ACT Carers Strategy	2018-2028	10
ACT Disability Justice Strategy (with JACS)	2019-2029	10
ACT Women's Strategy	2016-2026	10
ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement	2019-2028	10

Long-term plans and strategies	Date range	Duration (Years)
ACT Social Recovery Framework	2024 -	-
Best Start for Canberra's Children: the first 1000 days strategy	2022-2032	10
The ACT Children and Young People's Commitment	2015-2025	10
Next Steps for Our Kids	2022-2030	8
ACT Health Directorate (including Canberra Health Services)		
ACT Disability Health Strategy	2024-2033	10
ACT Public Maternity System Plan	2022-2032	10
Digital Health Strategy	2019-2029	10
ACT Health Quality Strategy	2018-2028	10
Accessible, Accountable and Sustainable Framework	2020-2030	10
Better Together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT	2022-2030	8
ACT Health Services Plan	2022-2030	8
ACT Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan	2023-2030	7
ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan	2019-2024	5
Healthy Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan	2020-2025	5
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate		
Canberra's International Engagement Strategy	2022-2050	28
CBR Cycle Tourism Strategy	2018-2028	10
Major Events Strategy	2017-2025	8
ACT Tourism Strategy	2023-2030	7
ACT Sport and Recreation Strategy	2023-2028	5
Capital of Equality Strategy	2024-2029	5
Statement of Ambition on the Arts	2021-2026	5
ACT Digital Strategy	2020-	-
ACT Infrastructure Plan	2019-	-
Justice and Community Safety Directorate		
ACT Road Safety Education Strategy ⁴⁶	2018-2025	7
ACT Detainee Health and Wellbeing Strategy	2023-2028	5

⁴⁶ JACS advised the Audit Office in April 2025 that responsibility for this Strategy has moved to TCCS.

