Services Australia statement of intent 2024–25

## Delivering on the government’s regulatory agenda

## Introduction

This statement of intent sets out the intentions of the Chief Executive Officer in relation to
how Services Australia (the agency) will comply with the Minister for Government Services’ statement of expectations in terms of the agency’s regulatory functions under the Department of Finance Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework and the Regulatory Performance (RMG128) guide.

## Overview

The agency supports Australians by efficiently delivering high-quality, accessible services and payments on behalf of the government, including other Commonwealth departments and agencies. While the agency does not administer legislation, it does perform regulatory functions under legislation administered by other departments and agencies, as well as other Commonwealth legislation such as the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (PGPA Rule) and the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework.

For example, the agency’s regulatory functions include:

* powers to recover debts relating to Social Security and Welfare payments under the
*Social Security Act 1991*
* the exercise of investigative powers under Part IID of the *Human Services (Medicare)
Act 1973*
* powers to require the payment and recovery of Child Support debts under Part V of the *Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act 1988*
* the management of fraud and corruption in accordance with the PGPA Rule and the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework across all payments made
* monitoring and reporting non-compliance under the Australian Government Digital Identity System accreditation scheme.

The agency also provides advice to other departments and agencies on the regulatory impact of proposals that relate to the services it delivers.

## Regulatory stewardship

The agency’s senior executive staff will adopt a stewardship approach to regulatory functions. Stewardship covers the range of functions the agency undertakes to help ensure regulation
is effective, fit for purpose and does not impose unnecessary burdens. Effective regulatory stewardship requires a whole-of-system view of regulation and a proactive and collaborative approach to the regulatory functions the agency performs.

A number of external reviews, including the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme and the myGov user audit, have identified areas of focus in relation to the agency’s regulatory functions. The agency is implementing recommendations and addressing findings from these reviews. The insights from these reviews will continue to inform the agency’s strategic approach to its regulatory role from 2024 to 2025.

The agency will:

* actively and continually work across government to monitor the legislative and regulatory environment, to ensure its regulatory functions keep pace with changes
in technology, industry practices and community expectations.
* regularly review, and where necessary, adjust the administration of policies, processes and operating procedures, to ensure its regulatory functions continue to align the expectations of the Minister, the Australian Government and the Australian public.

In 2024, the agency undertook a review of its strategic performance measures to further strengthen the approach to planning, measuring and reporting on performance. In managing
its regulatory functions, the agency will, where relevant, consider performance against the strategic performance measures (SPM) set out in the Corporate Plan 2024–25:

* SPM 1: customer satisfaction
* SPM 2: customer trust
* SPM 3: administrative correctness of payments
* SPM 4: customers served within 15 minutes
* SPM 5: work processed within timeliness standards
* SPM 6: availability of digital channels
* SPM 7: tasks managed by customers in digital channels.

## Best practice principles

Best practice in regulation is central to our principles of providing services that are simple, helpful, respectful and transparent. The agency recognises the importance of these principles in building trust and maintaining constructive stakeholder relationships in the regulatory context.

The Department of Finance sets out regulatory best practice principles to support agencies
in developing performance monitoring and reporting processes and performance measures. The updated version of the Regulatory Policy, Practice and Performance Framework
(the framework), approved by the Hon Patrick Gorman MP, Assistant Minister to the
Prime Minister, on behalf of the Prime Minister on 12 July 2024, sets out 6 principles for regulation. In accordance with the minister’s statement of expectations and the principles set out in the framework, the agency will work to ensure its approach to its regulatory functions reflects these 6 principles.

### 1. Targeted and risk-based

The agency will:

* adopt a whole-of-agency and whole-of-APS perspective to engage with and effectively mitigate strategic risk, in order to successfully perform its regulatory functions.
* make compliance easier by simplifying processes, making information more accessible and educating customers about the purpose of regulatory requirements, their obligations and how to comply, and what to expect in the event of non-compliance.
* provide up-to-date, clear and accessible guidance and information to assist customers in meeting their obligations and seek to reduce non-compliance through proactive measures to alert customers of requirements and simple, accessible and flexible avenues to meet compliance requirements.

### 2. Integrated in existing systems

The agency will:

* maintain an awareness of the broader regulatory ecosystem to identify potential overlap, disparities and opportunities for alignment.
* continue to engage with other departments and agencies across the Commonwealth and with states and territories, and ensure the agency is aware of regulatory developments throughs forums, such as the Regulatory Reform Interdepartmental Committee.
* utilise formal and structured bilateral governance arrangements and collaborative working partnerships with other Commonwealth, state and territory entities, in order to support the regulatory framework.
* provide advice to other departments on the service delivery impacts of proposed regulatory measures through the cabinet submission process.

### 3. User-centred

The agency will:

* seek opportunities to remove duplication and streamline processes, to reduce the regulatory burden and provide simple, secure and accessible services.
* engage with customers, peak bodies and other stakeholders, and seek and incorporate diverse viewpoints, to build trust and confidence in the government’s regulatory settings.
* engage with peak community sector organisations through our established advisory forums, including the Civil Society Advisory Group, the National Multicultural Advisory Group, Stakeholder Consultative Group and disability peak bodies.
* identify opportunities to engage and co-design services with customers and other stakeholders, seek feedback on service delivery and respond to diverse views.

### 4. Evidence-based and data-driven

The agency will:

* use data and digital technology to maintain essential safeguards and ensure the integrity
of government payments, while managing risks proportionately to minimise the regulatory burden of compliance.
* draw on its data and where appropriate, share data (which could include insights and research) with other Commonwealth agencies, to understand how regulatory measures impact businesses, individuals and the community.
* implement environmental scanning and data collection strategies, to inform risk-based assessments and evidence-based education, monitoring, compliance and enforcement decisions.

### 5. Reflective of the digital era

The agency will:

* design simple, connected and secure digital services that people can rely on and find the information and support they need.
* ensure services are accessible, safe and leave no one behind, designing services that optimise access for all individuals, regardless of the channel, including ensuring help is available for vulnerable customers and customers with complex needs.
* leverage opportunities for legislative reform to make services easier through the ability
to collect, use and share customer information to tailor information to customers circumstances and proactively notify customers of services and supports they may be entitled to.
* adopt digital-era practices, including agile and iterative delivery, product- and service-led design approaches, and multidisciplinary teams incorporating both regulatory and digital expertise.
* consult with the Independent Advisory Board on digital and non-digital strategies, initiatives and projects, to ensure government services delivery is ethical, upholds human rights and is of value to citizens and the Australian economy.

### 6. Continuously improved and outcomes-focused

The agency will:

* incorporate feedback from customers, peak bodies and other Commonwealth agencies
into the planning, design and evaluation of regulatory functions, and where appropriate seek opportunities for co-design of services.
* maintain and extend existing measures for collecting data, to support regular review of the effectiveness of regulatory design in achieving the intended outcomes.
* adopt a whole-of agency and inter-agency perspective to monitor, report and improve regulatory performance, capability and culture.

## Relationship with the minister and portfolio

The agency recognises its role in supporting the minister, the government and the social services portfolio in meeting their regulatory objectives. The agency will continue to perform this role through timely and transparent engagement with the minister, to ensure the minister is kept informed of regulatory performance and developments. The agency will also engage across the portfolio to provide guidance and support where needed to support regulatory functions.

## Conclusion

The agency’s regulatory performance is a key enabler of its vision to deliver services that are simple, helpful, respectful and transparent.

The agency will continue to improve services, with a focus on providing customers with a seamless experience that includes high-quality, simplified and efficient access to the services and support they need. This will support the Australian Government’s vision of modernising regulation and improving regulator performance through data, innovation, and stewardship to ensure regulation is fit-for-purpose in a digital era, protects against regulatory failures and improves productivity.