



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SCIENCE



Corporate Plan 2026 – 2027

AIMS Corporate Plan 2026-27

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This document, along with a range of other information about AIMS, is available online at www.aims.gov.au. Formal enquiries should be directed to: AIMS CEO Professor Selina Stead.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and sea on which we work. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first scientists and acknowledge the unique relationships and enduring cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land and sea, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We particularly recognise the Traditional Owners of the land on which our main laboratory and office bases are located: the Bindal and Wulgurukaba peoples in Townsville, the Larrakia people in Darwin, the Noongar people in Perth, and the Ngunnawal people in Canberra. We also recognise and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who are Traditional Owners of the areas of our marine science operations across tropical northern Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images of deceased people.

Cover image: Violeta Brosig

Foreword from the Chair of Council

As Chair of the Council of the Institute of Marine Science, I am pleased to present the Australian Institute of Marine Science's (AIMS) Corporate Plan for 2026–27 to 2030–31.

This plan is developed at a time when Australia's tropical marine environments are experiencing increasing and compounding pressures from climate change, causing extreme weather events. Recent years have demonstrated both the resilience and the vulnerability of marine ecosystems, reinforcing the importance of sustained, high-quality marine science to inform effective stewardship and decision-making.

The Council's role is to provide governance, strategic direction, and oversight to ensure AIMS remains focused on its legislated purpose, is accountable for its performance, and positioned to deliver enduring public value. In that role, the Council places strong emphasis on AIMS strategic direction, robust systems of risk management and assurance, and the capability required to provide quality, objective marine science to governments, industry, communities, Traditional Owners and research partners. AIMS' success depends on the strength of its partnerships, and the confidence placed in it as Australia's tropical marine research agency.

This Corporate Plan begins the first year of implementation of AIMS Strategy 2040. The Strategy sets AIMS' vision of thriving oceans through trusted science and innovation, and sharpens the focus on addressing the most significant challenges facing tropical marine ecosystems. For Council, this plan provides the accountability framework through which that ambition will be translated into priorities, investment decisions, partnerships and performance over the forward estimates.

Over the period of this plan, Council will continue to place strong emphasis on scientific excellence, integrity, financial sustainability, effective stewardship of national research infrastructure, and the responsible use of public resources. We will also support AIMS' continued commitment to working with First Nations partners in ways that respect and recognise Indigenous Knowledge Systems, elevate leadership and support their caring for, and management of Sea Country.

On behalf of the Council, I acknowledge the expertise, dedication and professionalism of AIMS' staff and leadership, and the important contribution of our partners across Australia and the Indo-Pacific.

The Council is focused on ensuring AIMS is well-governed, strategically aligned and ready to meet the challenges ahead. Through this Corporate Plan, AIMS will continue to deliver the science, knowledge and innovation required to support the protection, resilience and sustainable development of Australia's tropical marine estate.

Dr Beth Woods OAM

Chair, Council of the Institute of Marine Science

Foreword from the Chief Executive Officer

Climate change is warming Australia's oceans at a speed never scientifically evidenced before. Many tropical oceans remain under sampled and under measured relative to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). This Corporate Plan reflects the ambition of the AIMS Strategy 2040 and our role as Australia's trusted national tropical marine science advisor.

In 2026, AIMS is celebrating 40 years of the world's longest running scientific dataset on the status of coral reefs, the Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP). The LTMP illustrates why Australia is a renowned leader in delivering robust high-quality data required to address key scientific questions that can help tailor effective sustainable management of marine resources. For example, the LTMP data has been used to demonstrate the effectiveness of re-zoning the GBR Marine Park and is used in prioritising reefs requiring action to tackle the population size of Crown-of-Thorns Starfish.

AIMS launched its Strategy 2040: Science to Impact in 2025. Five research themes – Future Reefs, Coastal Futures, Blue Economy, Digital Oceans and First Nations Innovation – emerged from engagement with AIMS' colleagues and external partners. Through a co-design process, AIMS is collaborating with strategic partners to align priority research areas to achieve our vision – thriving oceans through trusted science and innovation.

The AIMS Marine Index published in 2025 highlighted the importance of the blue economy in Australia, which contributed \$203 billion in total value added - representing 9.1% of Australia's GDP – and supported 713,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs for the 2022-23 financial year. The economic output of the marine economy was \$229 billion.

In this context, AIMS plays a critical national role as Australia's tropical marine research agency. AIMS brings together world-leading scientific capability, a unique breadth of expertise, long-term datasets and national research infrastructure. We continue to provide trusted, independent scientific advice that enables governments, industry, communities and Traditional Owners to have an evidence-based understanding to inform decision-making on how best to manage and protect our marine estate.

The interest from collaborators to engage through AIMS Strategy 2040 is inspiring and strengthening the way we prioritise investment and resources so we can deliver the impact that will make a positive difference to Australia's tropical ocean ecosystems and marine resource users. Our work over the period of this Corporate Plan will be organised around implementation of the Strategy to deliver long-term impact across the key areas of: reef resilience; adaptive coastal ecosystems; sustainable ocean use; digital oceans; and First Nations Innovation. This is focused on three core areas:

First, we will undertake strategic, fundamental and applied research, supported by long-term monitoring, experimental and systems thinking, enabled by cutting edge digital and technological capabilities, to enhance resilience of Australia's tropical marine ecosystems.

Second, we will work in partnership with communities, governments, industry, First Nations peoples, research institutions and international collaborators to ensure that our science is translated into practical solutions that support conservation outcomes, adaptive management, sustainable use, and community well-being.

Third, we will continue to invest in and optimise our science infrastructure - our vessels, laboratories, data systems, observing capability and specialist facilities - ensuring they are accessible, integrated and future-proof.

AIMS' impact is delivered through our people. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of staff across scientific, technical, engineering, operational, professional and enabling roles. Their expertise and commitment are the foundation of AIMS' reputation and the reason our work is trusted by those who rely on our marine science to make informed decisions.

I also recognise the essential role of our partners, whose knowledge, leadership and collaboration are critical to achieving meaningful and enduring outcomes.

As we look ahead, AIMS will continue to evolve how we work: embracing innovation in science and technology; investing in capability; and strengthening the way we translate knowledge into impact. By doing so, AIMS will help ensure Australia's tropical marine ecosystems are better understood, more resilient, and sustainably managed for the benefit of current and future generations.

Professor Selina Stead

Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

We, as the accountable authority of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), present the 2026–27 AIMS Corporate Plan, which has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

This Corporate Plan is prepared for the 2026–27 reporting period and covers the five-year period from 2026–27 to 2030–31.

The plan outlines AIMS' purposes, key activities, operating context and performance information for the period covered, and describes how AIMS will deliver on its statutory role and contribute to the Australian Government's priorities through trusted marine science, knowledge and innovation.



AIMS Council (L-R): Prof Selina Stead, Dr Cass Hunter, Prof Peter Steinberg, Dr Beth Woods OAM, Patricia Kelly PSM, Prof Simon Biggs, Steve Duffield

Our Vision

Thriving oceans through trusted science and innovation.

Our Mission

To deliver research and knowledge to manage, protect and steward Australia's tropical marine ecosystems.

Our Purpose

AIMS' purpose is to deliver trusted marine science, knowledge and innovation to support the protection, resilience and sustainable development of Australia's tropical marine estate.

In fulfilling this purpose, AIMS delivers targeted and long-term research to understand how Australia's tropical marine ecosystems are responding to climate change and other pressures. AIMS' science provides scientific evidence to inform decision-making by governments, industry, communities and Traditional Owners, and contributes to national environmental, economic, cultural and social priorities.

AIMS' purpose is guided by [AIMS Strategy 2040](#), which sets a long-term vision of thriving oceans supported by trusted science and innovation, and is delivered consistently with AIMS' legislative functions and the Australian Government's outcomes for marine science and environmental stewardship. Strategy 2040 is delivered through five integrated research themes, enabling capabilities and partnerships that guide AIMS' activities and investments.

About Us

AIMS is Australia's national institute for tropical marine research and a trusted source of independent scientific advice. Established to advance understanding of Australia's vast tropical marine estate, AIMS delivers world-leading science, long-term monitoring, and innovation to support the protection, resilience, and sustainable use of marine ecosystems. Its work underpins evidence-based decision-making by Traditional Owners, governments, industry, and communities, and contributes to national priorities across environmental stewardship, economic development and regional engagement.

AIMS combines multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific expertise with nationally significant research infrastructure, including vessels, laboratories, and advanced observing systems. Working in partnership with First Nations peoples, research organisations, industry, communities, and international collaborators, AIMS translates knowledge into practical outcomes for reef and ocean management. Guided by AIMS Strategy 2040, AIMS is focused on addressing the most significant challenges facing tropical marine environments, ensuring that trusted science and innovation continue to support thriving oceans for future generations.

Key Activities

To achieve its purpose, AIMS will undertake the following three key activities over the period covered by this Corporate Plan:

1. Undertaking research to enhance resilience to climate change and environmental pressures across Australia's tropical reefs and oceans

AIMS will deliver strategic, fundamental and applied marine research to strengthen understanding of how Australia's tropical marine ecosystems are changing in response to climate change and other environmental pressures. This work will be supported by sustained observing and monitoring programs and will incorporate fundamental and applied research drawing on long-term datasets, experiments, modelling and synthesis, and analysis to build a clearer picture of ecosystem condition, trajectories and resilience.

This activity will also include the development and application of innovative scientific methods, technologies and analytical approaches that improve understanding of climate-driven and other pressures on marine systems. Through this work, AIMS will develop, test and support practical management approaches for reefs, coasts, industries and communities that depend on tropical marine environments.

The evidence generated through this research will inform policy, environmental management and responsible development across Australia's tropical marine estate. In doing so, AIMS will support decisions that balance environmental protection with economic, cultural and social considerations.

2. Contributing scientific expertise and capacity as part of local, national and international collaborations to support the conservation and sustainable use of tropical ocean resources and the well-being of communities that depend on them

AIMS will deliver its science through strong and enduring partnerships with First Nations peoples, research organisations, industry, communities, governments and international collaborators. These collaborations will enable science to be co-designed, co-delivered and applied directly to policy, management and operational decisions addressing real-world challenges.

Through these partnerships, AIMS will provide scientific expertise, data and analytical capability to support conservation, management and sustainable development outcomes. This will include delivering advice, tools and knowledge products that inform policy, regulatory and operational decision-making across a diverse range of stakeholders.

AIMS will continue its ambition under Strategy 2040 to advance Indigenous Knowledge Systems, build genuine partnerships through Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and build capability across the marine science system. By working in partnership, AIMS will extend the reach of its science, strengthen national and international marine science capability, and help ensure that its research is accessible, relevant and applied in ways that support the well-being of communities that depend on tropical ocean resources. AIMS will also contribute to science diplomacy and regional collaboration.

3. Optimising the use of AIMS' national science and research infrastructure and ensuring it is accessible to the research community

AIMS will continue to operate and maintain nationally significant marine science infrastructure, including the research vessels, laboratories, specialist facilities and observing systems, that underpin the delivery of high-quality marine research and collaboration. This includes major public research infrastructure including the AIMS vessel fleet and the National Sea Simulator (SeaSim) facility.

This activity will focus on ensuring AIMS' infrastructure is well utilised, accessible and performing effectively in support of both the institute's research priorities and the needs of the broader research community. It will include enabling access for collaborators, supporting the SeaSim facility, as well as the ReefWorks testing range, and maintaining facilities that are safe, reliable and fit for purpose.

AIMS will also continue to invest in its digital and technology transformation, including through the development and integration of data, digital and technology capabilities that strengthen and increasingly scale the collection, management, analysis and application of marine data. These capabilities will support more efficient science delivery, improved interoperability and stronger collaboration across the marine science system.

Through careful stewardship and ongoing optimisation of its infrastructure and supporting systems, AIMS will ensure its capability remains sustainable, responsive and aligned with current and future research and stakeholder needs.

Operating Context

Overview

AIMS operates in a complex and evolving environment shaped by accelerating climate and environmental change. There is increasing demand locally, nationally and internationally for evidence based decision-making, and growing expectations for collaboration, transparency and impact. As Australia's national tropical marine research agency, AIMS supports the stewardship, resilience and sustainable use of tropical marine environments that are ecologically significant, culturally important and economically valuable.

AIMS' operating context reflects the interplay between long-term scientific challenges, policy cycles and stakeholder priorities, and the practical requirements of delivering high-quality science at scale. Our highly skilled scientific, technical and operational teams support the effective operations of national research infrastructure, in partnership with First Nations organisations, governments and industry, and delivering trusted science that informs policy, management and investment decisions in Australia and the region.

Delivering Research Impact

AIMS' purpose is realised through the translation of high-quality marine science into tangible environmental, economic, cultural and policy outcomes. Under [AIMS Strategy 2040](#), the organisation takes a deliberate and structured approach to ensuring that its research delivers meaningful outcomes for Australia and the broader region.

AIMS is deliberate in how it delivers impact. Research priorities are shaped by national challenges, stakeholder needs and emerging opportunities, and translated into a strategically aligned portfolio supported by capability, infrastructure and partnerships.

AIMS continues to closely align its activities with the National Science and Research Priorities. In particular, we contribute to advancing *Transitioning to a Net Zero Future (Priority 1)*, *Elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Systems (Priority 3)*, and *Protecting and Restoring Australia's Environment (Priority 4)*.

Research outputs are actively translated through engagement, advice, tools and knowledge products, enabling their adoption in policy, management and industry settings. Outcomes are monitored and evaluated over time, providing a feedback loop that informs future planning and investment decisions.

Research impact at AIMS is delivered through multiple, reinforcing pathways:

- Policy and management influence: scientific evidence informs legislation, regulation, environmental planning and decision-making at local, state, national and international levels;
- Environmental outcomes: improved understanding, protection and restoration of marine ecosystems and enhanced resilience to climate and environmental pressures;
- Economic outcomes: supporting sustainable ocean-based development, risk management and innovation across marine industries;

- First Nations outcomes: co-designed and Indigenous-led research that supports self-determined stewardship of Sea Country and elevates Indigenous Knowledge Systems; and
- Capability and knowledge transfer; training, data sharing, digital tools and international collaboration that strengthens marine science capacity in Australia and the Indo-Pacific.

AIMS applies a structured approach to impact planning and evaluation across its research portfolio, including the tracking of outputs and outcomes which demonstrate progress towards longer-term impacts. A strong focus of this approach includes the development of impact pathways and statements at program and project levels, the use of case studies to demonstrate real-world outcomes, and performance measures that capture both the uptake and value of AIMS' science. Impact is considered over multiple time horizons, recognising that some outcomes are realised over short timeframes, while others emerge over decades through sustained investment in long-term research and monitoring.

In this way, AIMS ensures that its research not only advances scientific knowledge, but also contributes to informed decision-making, improved environmental stewardship and sustainable development outcomes.

Environment

External environment

Australia's tropical marine estate is experiencing rapid and compounding pressures from climate change, including ocean warming, marine heatwaves, sea level rise, ocean acidification and extreme weather events. These changes are driving increasing demand from governments, industry and communities for timely, trusted marine science to support adaptation, resilience and risk-informed decision-making.

At the same time, Australia's marine environments underpin significant and diverse economic activity. Key sectors include commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism (particularly reef based tourism), offshore energy (including oil, gas and emerging renewables), shipping and ports, and a growing blue economy encompassing aquaculture, marine biotechnology and carbon-related industries. These sectors are both dependent on and increasingly exposed to changes in marine ecosystem condition. Balancing environmental protection with sustainable economic development is therefore becoming more complex and contested, requiring high-quality scientific evidence, improved forecasting tools, and innovative approaches to management, intervention and restoration.

AIMS' operating environment is also shaped by evolving national and international policy and regulatory settings. These include domestic environmental legislation, climate and biodiversity policies, marine and ocean strategies, and international agreements and commitments (such as those related to climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable oceans). Together, these frameworks influence research priorities, funding mechanisms and the allocation of resources, as well as setting expectations for transparency, data accessibility, ethics, and stakeholder engagement. They also drive a need for alignment between scientific outputs and policy relevance, and for strong partnerships across government, research organisations, industry and Traditional Owners.

First Nations and societal context

Australia's marine environment is increasingly influenced by climate change, biodiversity loss, population growth, expanding ocean industries and competing demands on marine resources. Governments, industry, Traditional Owners and communities are seeking robust evidence to inform decisions that support environmental sustainability, economic development and community resilience.

There is growing expectation that publicly funded science delivers tangible benefits through informed policy, effective management and practical solutions to marine challenges. This includes increasing recognition of the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in understanding, managing and caring for Australia's marine estate, alongside western science.

National policy settings, including the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, are reinforcing expectations for stronger partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, greater participation in decision-making, and improved access to data and information. Together, these trends are shaping the way marine science is undertaken, applied and translated into outcomes for Australia.

Research, technology and innovation environment

Rapid advances in data science, digital technologies, automation and analytical methods are transforming how marine science is conducted and applied. The scale and complexity of environmental data continue to grow, increasing the importance of national research infrastructure, digital platforms, interoperability and advanced analytical capability. At AIMS, this is reflected in the development and deployment of digital science platforms and tools, including AI-enabled systems such as [ReefCloud](#) and [ReefScan](#), integrated data platforms, and emerging capabilities such as digital twins (e.g. virtual reef models) and AI-augmented analytics to accelerate discovery and improve decision-making.

Advances in automation and marine technology are also reshaping how data is collected and analysed at scale. AIMS is increasingly utilising autonomous monitoring systems, remote and robotic platforms, and technology-enabled approaches to expand ocean observation coverage, improve safety, and enable near-real-time data collection in complex or inaccessible environments. These approaches support more efficient and scalable monitoring and underpin growing demand for high frequency, decision-ready data.

The national and international research environment is characterised by increasing collaboration, shared infrastructure and interdisciplinary approaches. Maintaining trusted scientific capability requires sustained investment in people, infrastructure, data systems and partnerships, alongside strong frameworks for research integrity, data governance, security and regulatory compliance. AIMS is strengthening these capabilities through its Digital Plan and technology transformation initiatives, embedding data science and digital innovation as core enablers of impact.

Organisational and funding environment

AIMS is funded through a combination of government appropriation and external revenue, including commissioned research with government and private sector partners. Demand for AIMS' expertise and infrastructure varies across programs and is influenced by government priorities, stakeholder needs and external funding cycles.

Within this environment, AIMS must balance long-term capability stewardship with flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities. This includes maintaining a reputation of high integrity and transparency, building a sustainable, resilient and well-governed organisation that continues to deliver high-quality science underpinned by measurable impact.

Capability

AIMS' capacity to deliver its purpose and key activities depends on maintaining strong scientific, technical, organisational and partnership capability. This capability is built and sustained through its people, national research infrastructure, data and digital platforms, governance systems, and enabling functions that support the delivery of high-quality marine science and the real-world application of science outcomes.

Our people: capability, culture and collaboration

Capability

AIMS' workforce encompasses a diverse range of scientific, technical, operational and enabling expertise required to deliver marine research, long-term monitoring, innovation and partnership-based outcomes. The workforce includes scientists and technologists, technical and field operations staff, digital and data specialists, and corporate and governance professionals.

Culture

AIMS is a value driven organisation. AIMS strives to maintain a positive and inclusive workforce. Staff are provided a safe and supportive workplace, where passion and creativity generate real innovation and world-leading solutions to the complex problems our oceans face. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are core to AIMS delivering a positive culture.

Collaboration

Capability is strengthened through effective collaboration across interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams that integrate ecological, physical, chemical, social and data sciences, alongside Indigenous Knowledge Systems and culturally informed approaches to research and stewardship. AIMS also relies on inclusive collaboration across teams and programs to support integrated delivery, particularly where complex environmental challenges require cross-cutting scientific and operational expertise.

National research infrastructure and physical assets

To support world-leading marine science, AIMS maintains and operates nationally significant marine science infrastructure that underpins Australia's tropical marine research capability. This includes the AIMS research vessel fleet, laboratories, specialist facilities and the SeaSim, which enable experimental, observational and applied research at scale.

These assets support the delivery of long-term monitoring, applied research, innovation and partnership-based projects, and are critical to AIMS' role as a trusted national science provider. Capability is supported through ongoing stewardship of infrastructure, investment in reliability and safety, and alignment of operational systems with scientific and stakeholder needs.

In 2026–27, AIMS will expand access to its national science and research infrastructure, actively promoting the use of its world-class experimental and observational facilities as part of the

NCRIS funded SeaSim. This will enable scientists to undertake nationally significant research across a diverse range of marine and environmental domains.

This initiative will be supported by the establishment of a Science Advisory Panel, chaired by Professor Peter Steinberg, to provide strategic guidance on facility access, prioritisation, and alignment with national research priorities.

Data, digital and technology capability

AIMS' scientific capability is increasingly reliant on advanced data, digital and technology platforms that support the collection, management, analysis and application of large and complex marine datasets. Broadly, this includes marine observing systems, remote and autonomous platforms, digital platforms, modelling and analytical tools, and open and secure data services that support collaboration within Australia and internationally.

Digital capability enables integration across research themes, improves efficiency in science delivery, enhances predictive and decision-support capability, and supports the accessibility and reuse of trusted marine data. Governance frameworks, including data governance, research integrity, Indigenous data sovereignty and responsible use of emerging technologies, underpin confidence in AIMS' digital and scientific outputs.

Long-term infrastructure and technology outlook to 2040

As part of maintaining capability to deliver its purpose, AIMS' national research infrastructure is a foundational enabler of its scientific capability and long-term impact. Infrastructure planning is undertaken with a long-term, integrated perspective, ensuring that physical, digital and technological capabilities evolve in alignment with future research priorities and national needs.

AIMS recognises that contemporary marine science increasingly depends on the convergence of physical infrastructure, advanced technology and digital systems. Laboratories, field platforms and marine assets operate as part of a broader, integrated capability that includes data systems, modelling platforms, automation, artificial intelligence and secure, accessible data services. This integrated approach enables AIMS to conduct science at scale, improve efficiency and responsiveness, and enhance the accessibility and application of its data and knowledge.

Infrastructure planning at AIMS is guided by a set of core principles:

- alignment with strategic research priorities and emerging demand;
- integration of physical, digital and data capabilities;
- resilience to environmental, operational and technological change;
- support for collaboration, accessibility and national capability; and
- adaptability to evolving scientific and technological frontiers.

Over the long-term to 2040, AIMS will progress a staged approach to infrastructure development and renewal that balances capability needs with financial sustainability, informed by prior strategic planning and business case development:

- Near-term priorities focus on critical resilience and enabling works, including upgrades to site services, refurbishment of existing facilities, and continued master planning to support future investment decisions;

- Medium-term priorities involve major capital works to modernise and expand laboratories, office and collaboration spaces, marine operations facilities, and supporting infrastructure, alongside the sustainment and planned replacement of key research vessels; and
- Long-term priorities include expansion of scientific capability and capacity, such as enhanced experimental systems, large-scale facilities and collaborative infrastructure, as well as growth in accommodation, training and partnership spaces to support national and international engagement.

This staged approach reflects the scale and complexity of AIMS' infrastructure needs and ensures that investment is prioritised to support both current delivery and future capability requirements.

Technology and digital capability are integral to this outlook. Advances in data science, automation, remote and autonomous platforms and sensing, and artificial intelligence are transforming how marine science is conducted. AIMS is embedding these capabilities across its infrastructure, including through the development of integrated digital platforms, decision-support tools, and increased observational coverage from coastline to reef to open ocean. This enables more efficient data collection and analysis, improved predictive capability, and enhanced translation of science into decision-making.

AIMS' long-term infrastructure outlook is closely aligned with its research planning processes. Investment decisions are informed by research prioritisation, demand forecasting, and portfolio design, ensuring that infrastructure capability is matched to the scale, complexity and interdisciplinary nature of future research activities. This integrated approach enables a clear line of sight from Strategy 2040 through to capability development, research delivery and impact.

Delivering this outlook will require careful stewardship of existing assets, strategic prioritisation of capital investment, and effective engagement with government and partners. It will also require ongoing management of risks associated with ageing infrastructure, funding constraints and evolving operational requirements.

Through this approach, AIMS is positioning its infrastructure and technology capabilities to support world-leading marine science and deliver sustained impact to 2040 and beyond.

Partnerships and collaborative capability

AIMS' capability is amplified through partnerships with First Nations peoples, research organisations, industry, communities, governments and international collaborators. These partnerships extend scientific capacity, enable co-designed and co-delivered research, support the application of science in policy and management contexts, and contribute to national and regional priorities.

Our capability includes the ability to manage complex stakeholder relationships and build genuine partnerships with First Nations communities through Free, Prior and Informed Consent, broker knowledge between disciplines and knowledge systems, and sustain long-term collaborations that translate science into practical outcomes.

Governance, systems and enabling functions

Strong governance, planning and corporate systems underpin AIMS' ability to deliver its key activities effectively and responsibly. This includes financial management, risk management, compliance, people and culture functions, safety systems, performance and reporting frameworks, and executive and organisational leadership.

These enabling capabilities support stewardship of public resources, organisational resilience, and continuous improvement, ensuring that scientific effort is appropriately supported, risks are managed, and AIMS remains adaptable in a changing operating environment.

Risk

AIMS undertakes a range of complex research in an environment characterised by scientific uncertainty, environmental change, complex stakeholder expectations and planning for changing long-term infrastructure and capability requirements.

AIMS is committed to a systematic and comprehensive approach to the effective management of potential opportunities and adverse effects by achieving best practice in risk management (see Fig 1). Our policies, procedures and risk culture support our efforts to understand and manage the Institute's risk environment and to ensure that risks are contained to acceptable levels consistent with the Institute's risk appetite.

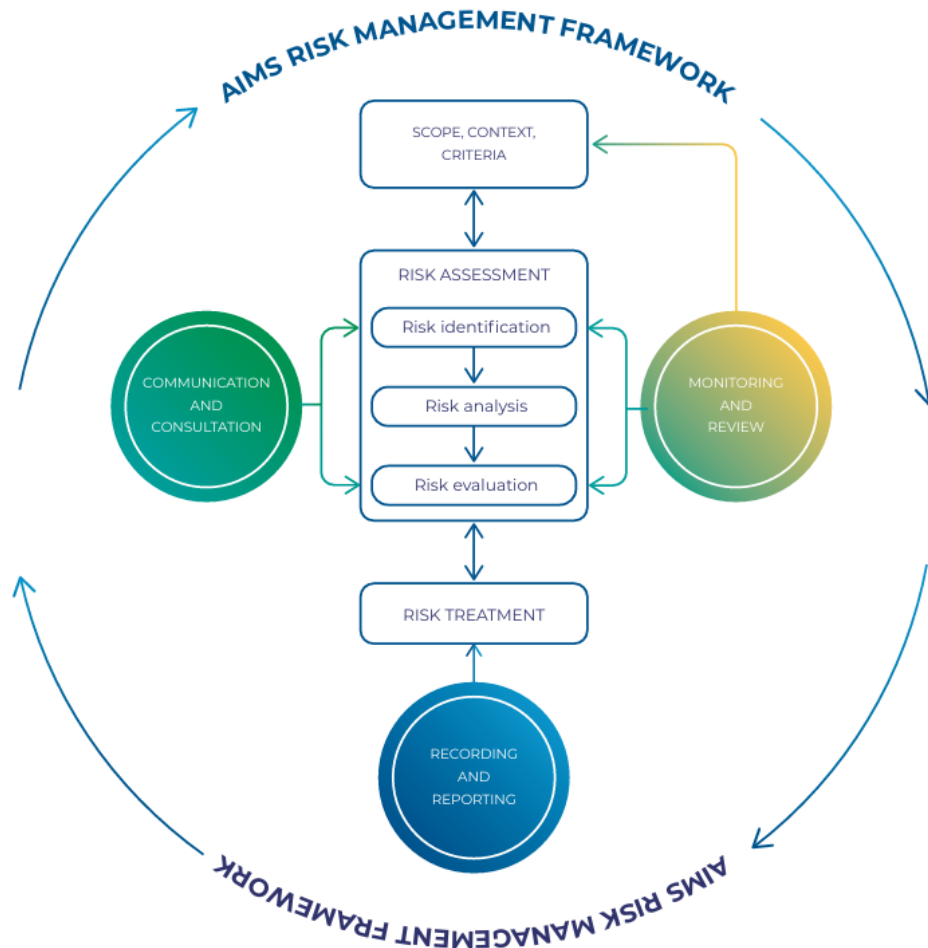


Figure 1: AIMS Risk Management Framework.

Enterprise-level risk environment

AIMS adopts a structured and cost-effective risk management process, integrated across the organisation, to minimise risks that compromise AIMS' capability and capacity to deliver on its mission and purpose. AIMS achieves effective risk management by:

Science Delivery and Impact

Focusing on science priorities and partnerships: working in genuine partnership to provide the research and evidence to drive scalable action to deliver positive outcomes for tropical oceans and coastal environments

Sustainable, trusted and resilient organisation

Putting in place a sustainable, resilient and well-governed operating model: maximising value for money, optimising the use of our inputs and maintaining a reputation for high integrity and transparency

Safe, supportive and values driven workforce culture

Providing a safe and supportive workplace where our passion and creativity generate real innovation driven by our values, building a positive and inclusive workforce, embodying respect for all people and maintaining good standing by demonstrating integrity in our day-to-day actions and interactions, making AIMS an employer of choice.

Good stewards

Demonstrating that we are good stewards of our oceans, coastal environments and terrestrial ecosystems.

Strategic Risks

AIMS identifies and groups its strategic risks around four risk themes that we actively manage to maintain AIMS' capability and capacity. AIMS puts in place mitigations that are proportionate to AIMS' risk profile and are in line with AIMS Council's direction and appetite.

Table 1: AIMS Strategic Risks and Mitigations.

Risk Theme	Strategic Risks	Key Mitigations
Science delivery and impact	Risks to AIMS delivering world-leading marine science, through undertaking science that is not fit for purpose and does not support the pathway from science to impact in line with AIMS Strategy 2040.	- Establishment of project governance and dedicated investment in building project management capabilities within AIMS. - Prioritisation of resources towards research-led, purpose-driven, and impactful science and research activities that are aligned to AIMS' Strategy 2040. - Engaging with new partners to pursue new areas of research, innovation, and impact. - Stakeholder engagement and information sharing are beneficial to AIMS' scientific standing and reputation, and release of scientific advice as a public good. - Adoption of an inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches to developing novel solutions to complex problems faced by tropical marine environments. - Investment in organisational development and learning, professional development, leadership development, and culture improvement initiatives.

Sustainable, trusted, and resilient organisation	Risks to AIMS maintaining a sustainable and resilient organisation due to ineffective management of financial sustainability, poor business continuity practices, and realisation of legal risks that impact AIMS' long-term operational viability.	• Active engagement with government to showcase AIMS' value and advocate for funding necessary to deliver on the Minister's Statement of Expectations. • Establishment of good financial governance where financial delegations are devolved to appropriate levels and adherence to approved budgets and plans is actively monitored. • Strong systems of internal control to uphold appropriate standards of integrity and prevent fraud and non-compliance with financial laws. • Development of robust business continuity plans to guide responses to unforeseen or unplanned events, supported by mature emergency management procedures. • The application and use of cyber security controls and systems that are appropriate to AIMS' operations and risk profile. • Master planning ensures AIMS infrastructure is well positioned to facilitate science now and into the future, acknowledging economic, environmental, and other constraints.
Safe, supportive and values driven workforce culture	Risks that compromise the safety and wellbeing of AIMS' staff, affiliates and third parties, and that unduly impact AIMS' workforce culture and reputation as an employer of choice.	• A strong, proactive safety culture is fostered by all staff. • Empowering all people at any level of seniority to speak up in good faith and stop any activity if they consider it may be unsafe, in the knowledge that doing so has the full support of AIMS Council. • Strong systems of internal control to uphold robust standards of integrity and drive practices that align with AIMS' values. • Well designed, consulted and communicated change implementation, where staff and management are appropriately consulted in the change process. • Implementation of the Culture Improvement Program which sets in place the right policy and practices to foster a culture where all feel safe and supported at work. • Establishment of a positive risk culture that supports better practice risk management and compliance.
Good Stewards	Management of AIMS' environmental risks and regulatory requirements, resulting in a failure to ensure environmental risks and hazards, inherent in our operating context, are minimised as far as reasonably practicable.	• Relevant operational decisions that actively consider the impact of AIMS' activities on its environment, in line with the AIMS Environmental Policy and associated legislation. • Prioritise prevention and proactive measures to minimise our environmental footprint and comply with required climate disclosures. • Clear commitment through the AIMS Values to minimising the impact on the environment and undertaking science that enables the safeguarding tropical marine ecosystems in the face of environmental change.

Managing risk in a dynamic environment

AIMS considers risk within a broader frame of opportunities and impacts. The AIMS Council has a higher risk appetite where the benefits of leveraging existing opportunities and innovations outweigh the risks of taking action.

This higher appetite requires AIMS to mature its risk capabilities and processes. Over the next 3 years, AIMS will build and mature its risk management capabilities. In line with international standards, AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018-02, AIMS will implement more agile and effective risk management systems and processes that:

- (a) Embed risk consideration as an integral part of organisational decision-making.
- (b) Ensure a structured and comprehensive approach to risk management contributes to AIMS' ability to generate positive and sustainable impacts for tropical oceans and coastal environments.
- (c) Ensure the risk management framework and related processes are appropriate to the Institute's external and internal context related to its objectives.
- (d) Embed appropriate and timely involvement of stakeholders so that their knowledge, views and perceptions are considered as part of AIMS' shared risk management.
- (e) Implement regular monitoring of AIMS' risk profile, noting risks can emerge, change or disappear as the Institute's external and internal context changes.
- (f) Ensure the inputs to risk management are evidence-based, drawing on historical and current information, as well as on future expectations.
- (g) Support staff practices and promote a positive risk culture, influencing all aspects of risk management at each level and stage.
- (h) Support regular review of AIMS risk management performance, taking action to continually improve these systems, processes and practices through learning and experience.

Cooperation

Through extensive cooperation with First Nations partners, research organisations, industry, communities, governments and international collaborators, AIMS is committed to delivering science that delivers real-world outcomes. Cooperation is fundamental to AIMS' operating model and underpins its ability to deliver high-quality science, operate national research infrastructure, and translate knowledge into decision-making and impact.

National cooperation

AIMS works closely with Australian Government departments and agencies, state and territory governments, and public sector institutions to support evidence-based policy, environmental management and regulatory decision-making. This cooperation aligns AIMS' scientific capability with national priorities and ensures that marine science informs the stewardship of Australia's tropical marine estate.

AIMS also cooperates with universities, research institutions and national research infrastructure providers to share expertise, facilities and data, reduce duplication, and strengthen Australia's overall marine science capability. These collaborations support multidisciplinary approaches to complex environmental challenges and maximise the value of public investment in research and infrastructure.

First Nations partnerships

AIMS recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first scientists and custodians of Sea Country. We are committed to building enduring partnerships with Traditional Owners, Indigenous organisations and communities.

AIMS supports the National Agreement on Closing the Gap through collaborative approaches that strengthen shared decision-making, capability development, knowledge exchange and access to information. Through its First Nations Innovation research theme, AIMS is elevating Indigenous Knowledge Systems alongside western science and expanding opportunities for Indigenous-led, co-designed and co-delivered research.

Working in partnership with Traditional Owners, Indigenous ranger groups and communities, AIMS contributes to marine monitoring, restoration, stewardship and decision-making while supporting pathways for First Nations leadership, participation and capability in marine science. In addition, AIMS supports sustainable growth in Indigenous marine science and stewardship capacity and capability, matched to Traditional Owner ambitions, through training and capacity building pipelines across the education and training matrix. This approach will help overcome structural barriers to participation in science and stewardship and support communities to identify and develop commercial opportunities on Sea Country. These partnerships support better outcomes for Sea Country and strengthen the application of knowledge to national and regional marine challenges.

Industry and stakeholder cooperation

AIMS cooperates with industry and non-government stakeholders to support sustainable ocean-based development and responsible environmental management. These partnerships enable applied research, monitoring and risk assessment that inform operational decision-making, environmental performance and long-term sustainability outcomes.

Industry cooperation is undertaken within appropriate governance and ethical frameworks to manage conflicts of interest, protect research integrity and ensure alignment with AIMS' purpose and values.

International cooperation

AIMS maintains cooperative relationships with international research organisations, regional bodies and development partners, particularly across the Indo-Pacific. These relationships support the exchange of knowledge, data and best practice, contribute to regional capacity building, and extend the impact of AIMS' science beyond Australia.

AIMS' international engagement contributes to Australia's scientific standing, science diplomacy objectives and engagement in global marine science initiatives, ensuring that AIMS' scientific expertise contributes to shared global challenges affecting tropical marine environments.

To ensure safe and responsible cooperation, AIMS will strengthen organisational safeguards through implementation of foreign interference and espionage protections by updating policies and increasing staff awareness when operating in international regions. These measures will protect sensitive research and partnerships while supporting continued international collaboration. In parallel, AIMS will deepen engagement with key global partners, including our ongoing work with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), to accelerate innovation,

as well as targeted international engagement to share scientific expertise and technology to build marine science capability.

AIMS will continue its leadership of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, coordination of international contributions, and advancing consistent monitoring approaches. A key milestone will be the release of the Status of Coral Reefs of the World Report: 2025, providing a global assessment of reef condition and trends to inform policy, investment, and collective action.

Enabling cooperation through systems and governance

Effective cooperation relies on clear governance, strong relationships and enabling systems that support collaboration. AIMS continues to invest in partnership management capability, data sharing frameworks, digital platforms and governance arrangements that enable cooperation while protecting research integrity, cultural knowledge, intellectual property and sensitive information.

Through these cooperative arrangements, AIMS amplifies its capability, extends the reach of its science, and ensures that research outcomes are translated into practical, trusted and durable impacts.

Subsidiaries

AIMS does not control any subsidiary entities for the purposes of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Performance

AIMS delivers its purpose through 3 Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Key Activities, which are translated into prioritised Research Areas that structure investment, capability and delivery. Performance measures are structured to assess the extent to which AIMS' key activities are contributing to the achievement of its purpose.

AIMS' PBS outputs reflect the intended impact of its activities for the benefit of the Australian community, delivered through research, monitoring, experimentation, modelling and knowledge exchange activities. These activities produce outputs—including scientific publications, datasets, tools and advice—that inform policy, management and industry decisions.

These outputs contribute to intermediate outcomes, including improved decision-making, adaptive management practices and strengthened capability, and ultimately support the achievement of long-term impacts, including improved environmental condition, increased resilience of marine ecosystems, and economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits for Australia. Performance measurement is calibrated at the program level to reflect differing output types and pathways to impact, ensuring alignment with Portfolio Budget Statements requirements and fit-for-purpose assessment of effectiveness.

Table 2: Performance Elements

AIMS Performance Framework	AIMS Strategy 2040 (15 years)	Corporate Plan (5 years)		Portfolio Budget Statements (4 years)		Corporate Plan & Annual Performance Statement (1 year)		
Key Elements	Research Themes & Key Enablers	Entity Purpose	Priorities	Required Inputs	Planned Outputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
What we deliver	Research Themes & Impact Statement	Institutional Research Goals	Research Areas (What)	Program Objectives	Planned Research Projects and Activities	Research Outputs	Research Outcomes	Research Impact Statement
How we deliver	Key Enablers	AIMS Purpose	Key Activities (How)	Program Objectives and Priorities	Planned Performance Criteria, Measures & Targets	Assessed performance against measures and targets using theory of change		

AIMS will measure performance over the forward years of this Plan against the following key activities and measures set out in the [Portfolio Budget Statement](#) (PBS):

Table 3: Performance Measures and KPIs 2026-27 – 2030-31

Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Key Activity	Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Performance Measure	Key Performance Indicators	Targets				
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
1. Undertake research to enhance resilience to climate change and environmental pressures across Australia's tropical reefs and oceans	1.1 AIMS research creates a positive triple bottom line contribution (impact value) to Australia	Impact case studies ¹	≥ 2 case studies published per year				
	1.2 Build and evolve AIMS' innovation in the planning and delivery of marine research, to increase opportunities for research leadership by First Nations Australians ²	Year on year increase in % of AIMS science and research projects in gold and/or platinum tier as measured by total project costs	Year on Year increase from 2025/26 baseline result of 78.5%				
		Case Study that demonstrates increased opportunities for research leadership by First Nations Australians ³	1 case study published per year				

¹ 2026-27 case studies will focus on dredging impact on environmental regulation and restoration and adaptation science

² Updated performance measure for 2026-27 to reflect the First Nations Innovation research theme in AIMS Strategy 2040. Targets identified based on availability of reliable, verifiable data sources.

³ 2026-27 case study will focus on Indigenous Futures training and Pilot Deployment Program activities

Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Key Activity	Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Performance Measure	Key Performance Indicators	Targets				
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
	1.3 Deliver strategic and applied research and monitoring that anticipates and addresses stakeholder needs	Achieve revenue budget from stakeholder commissioned research	Achieve revenue budget				
		Demonstrate value by addressing national research priorities and stakeholder needs	>50% of projects associated with one or more national research priorities >80% acceptance of project deliverables on stakeholder commissioned research				
	1.4 Maintain or increase current standings for scientific excellence, innovation and impact	Maintain acknowledged domestic and global high standing in relevant fields of research, and confidence of key stakeholders in research outputs	Maintain top 3 ranking in marine science in Australia and top 10 globally		Maintain top 3 ranking in marine science in Australia and top 5 globally		
	1.5 Deliver research advice, scientific products and guidance that are critical for stakeholders to assess and better manage the impacts of natural and human pressures on marine ecosystems	Maintain or increase the number of peer reviewed publications and other knowledge products and make datasets or data products publicly available	Maintain or increase from 2025-26 baseline for journal articles and technical reports: ≥ 212		≥ 220 journal articles and technical reports		
	2. Contribute scientific expertise and capacity as part of local, national and international	2.1 Increase research capability, capacity, impact and science diplomacy through participation in formal national and international collaborations, joint ventures,	Maintain or increase the number and scale of domestic and international research partnerships,	≥ 80% of published papers and reports include collaborators			

Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Key Activity	Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Performance Measure	Key Performance Indicators	Targets				
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
collaborations to support the conservation and sustainable use of tropical ocean resources and the well-being of communities that depend on them	partnerships and strategic alliances	collaborations, joint ventures, and strategic alliances Specialist advice and expertise provided by AIMS is used by relevant advisory panels and committees	Maintain contributions to advisory panels and committees				
	2.2 Elevate Traditional Knowledge and the role of First Nations Australians to inform research priorities and care for Country ⁴	Maintain or exceed the 2025-26 baseline of 4% for First Nations Australians in indefinite employment positions at AIMS	Maintain or exceed 4%	Maintain or exceed 5%			
		Year on year increase in % of AIMS science and research projects in gold and/or platinum tier ⁵ as measured by total project costs	Increase from 2025/26 baseline result of 3%				
		# FPIC engagements supported by scientific knowledge products (factsheets and reports)	Increase from 2025/26 baseline result of 55				

⁴ Updated performance measure for 2026-27 to reflect the First Nations Innovation research theme in AIMS Strategy 2040. Targets identified based on availability of reliable, verifiable data sources.

⁵ [Tiers of engagement defined in AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Plan.](#)

Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Key Activity	Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Performance Measure	Key Performance Indicators	Targets				
			2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
		# publications submitted and/or published with at least 1 FN co-author	Increase from 2025/26 baseline result of 11				
3. Optimise the use of AIMS' national science and research infrastructure and ensure it is accessible to the research community	3.1 Build and sustain the collaborative use of AIMS National Sea Simulator Facility by external partners and collaborators ⁶	# of collaborations using the National Sea Simulator Facility	Maintain 2025-26 baseline result for # of collaborators: 18				
	3.2 Build and sustain science and research infrastructure utilisation ⁷	# science sea days per vessel as a % of available time	Maintain or improve from 2025/26 baseline result Solander: $\geq 89\%$ Cape Ferguson: $\geq 96\%$				
		# researcher days at sea	Maintain or improve from 2025/26 baseline result ≥ 11906				
		# collaborators on field trips	Maintain or improve from 2025/26 baseline result ≥ 241				
		# unplanned maintenance days	Maintain or improve from 2025/26 baseline result Solander: ≤ 8 Cape Ferguson: ≤ 4				

⁶ Updated performance measure for 2026-27 focused on enabling the use of the National Sea Simulator by partners and collaborators, to complement the additional reporting required under the NCRIS arrangements for National Research Infrastructure.

⁷ Updated performance measure for 2026-27 focused on efficiency of vessel operations to drive delivery of Strategy 2040. Measured via a 3 year rolling average to improve ability to identify longer-term trends and remove year to year variability.

Appendix 1: Changes to performance information

This Plan sets out new performance measures and Key Performance Indicators relating to First Nations Innovation and infrastructure utilisation, supporting the achievement of the long-term vision articulated in Strategy 2040. New measures introduced in 2026-27 are summarised below:

- Innovation in the planning and delivery of marine research, to increase opportunities for research leadership by First Nations Australians.
- Elevating of Traditional Knowledge and the role of First Nations Australians to inform research priorities and care for Country.
- Building and sustaining collaborative use of AIMS National Sea Simulator Facility by external partners and collaborators.
- Building and sustaining science and research infrastructure utilisation (focused on efficiency of vessel operations).

[AIMS Strategy 2040](#) describes five research themes which will guide its future research portfolio.

Appendix 2: Consultation

In developing this Corporate Plan, AIMS undertook internal consultation to ensure the plan reflects organisational priorities, statutory obligations and the operating realities of delivering tropical marine science at scale.

The Corporate Plan has been informed by engagement with AIMS' leadership, research programs, national facility operators, corporate and enabling functions, and specialist teams responsible for partnerships, operations, workforce, infrastructure and governance. This consultation ensured alignment between the organisation's purpose, key activities, operating context and the delivery of science, capability and partnerships across the institute.

The development of the plan has also drawn on AIMS' existing strategic frameworks, including AIMS Strategy 2040, program-level research and business planning, workforce and capability considerations, and oversight arrangements established by AIMS management and Council.

External consultation for specific activities and initiatives delivered under this Corporate Plan will continue to occur through established engagement mechanisms with governments, First Nations partners, research organisations, industry, communities and international collaborators, aligning with AIMS' partnership principles and ethical obligations.

Appendix 3: List of requirements

PGPA Rule reference	Required element	Legislative requirement	Page number(s)
s16E(2) item 1 of the PGPA Rule	Introduction	The following: (a) A statement that the plan is prepared for paragraph 35(1)(b) of the Act; (b) The reporting period for which the plan is prepared; (c) The reporting periods covered by the plan.	6
s16E(2) item 2 of the PGPA Rule	Purpose(s)	The purpose(s) of the entity	7
s16E(2) item 3 of the PGPA Rule	Key activities	For the entire period covered by the plan, the key activities that the entity will undertake in order to achieve its purpose(s).	8-9
s16E(2) item 4 of the PGPA Rule	Operating context	For the entire period covered by the plan, the following:	10-11
s16E(2) item 4(a) of the PGPA Rule	Environment	(a) The environment in which the entity will operate;	11-13
s16E(2) item 4(b) of the PGPA Rule	Capability	(b) The strategies and plans the entity will implement to have the capability it needs to undertake its key activities and achieve its purposes;	13-16
s16E(2) item 4(c) of the PGPA Rule	Risk	(c) A summary of the risk oversight and management systems of the entity, and the key risks that the entity will manage and how those risks will be managed;	16-19
s16E(2) item 4(d) of the PGPA Rule	Cooperation	(d) Details of any organisation or body that will make a significant contribution towards achieving the entity's purpose(s) through cooperation with the entity, including how that cooperation will help achieve those purposes;	19-21
s16E(2) item 4(e) of the PGPA Rule	Subsidiaries	(e) How any subsidiary of the entity will contribute to achieving the entity's purpose(s).	21
s16E(2) item 5 of the PGPA Rule	Performance	For each reporting period covered by the plan, details of how the entity's performance in achieving the entity's purpose(s) will be measured and assessed through: (a) specified performance measures for the entity that meet the requirements of section 16EA; and (b) specified targets for each of those performance measures for which it is reasonably practicable to set a target.	22-27

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