Australian Government
Australian Signals Directorate

ASD

ASD CORPORATE PLAN 2020–2021

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Director-General's introduction

I, as the accountable authority, am pleased to present the 2020–21 Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) corporate plan, which covers the period 2020–21 to 2023–24, as required under section 35(1)(b) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Two years ago ASD became a statutory agency and this Corporate Plan includes, for the first time, our Enterprise Key Performance Indicators.

We continue to experience significant internal change. ASD continues to build its foundational capabilities, structures and enterprise governance that we need as a statutory agency within the Defence portfolio, tailored to the unique nature of our work. ASD will continue to improve its foundational capabilities over the period covered by this corporate plan.

Our external environment is also changing rapidly. The *Defence Strategic Update 2020* states that *"This security environment is markedly different from the relatively benign one of even four years ago, with greater potential for military miscalculation"*. ASD's highest priority will always be the protection of Australian lives whether that is supporting Australia's warfighters or detecting, and in some cases disrupting, malicious threats against Australian interests.

ASD's success will depend on developing an organisation that is built around our people and the work they do, now and in the future. ASD will continue to prioritise its analyst-centric business transformation, as well as reforming our learning and development, to help our staff gain the skills required to meet emerging threats and challenges. The coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic has driven ASD to reflect on optimising working arrangements – including through more flexible work.

My vision for ASD remains that we are a world-class intelligence and cyber security agency, enabled by talented and dedicated people, leading-edge capabilities, strong partnerships, and the trust of the Australian public. ASD can only be effective in its roles if it has the trust of the Australian Government, industry and the public – and we will continue strengthening accountability, transparency and governance of our activities to further build this trust.

This plan outlines the steps we will take to achieve this vision in 2020–21 and beyond.

Rachel Noble PSM
Director-General
Australian Signals Directorate

ASD's purpose

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) defends Australia from global threats, and advances the national interest by providing foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by the Government.

ASD is a statutory agency within the Defence portfolio, reporting directly to the Minister for Defence. It operates under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. All of ASD's activities are subject to oversight from the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security provides further oversight of ASD's administration, expenditure and enabling legislation. It also considers other matters within its scope that are referred by the Australian Senate, House of Representatives, or a Minister of the Australian Government.

ASD operates under the *Intelligence Services Act 2001*, which specifies that the organisation's functions are to:

- collect foreign signals intelligence
- communicate foreign signals intelligence
- prevent and disrupt offshore cyber-enabled crime
- provide cyber security advice and assistance to Australian governments, businesses and individuals
- support military operations
- protect the specialised tools ASD uses to fulfil its functions
- cooperate with, and assist, the National Security Community's performance of its functions.

To achieve these objectives, ASD needs to keep pace with the latest technology trends and invest in cutting-edge capabilities to gain asymmetric advantage. ASD's activities are enabled by innovative techniques, including specialist tools to detect threats in large volumes of data. ASD's mastery of technology also underpins the formulation of sound advice to protect Australia from sophisticated cyber threats.

Partnerships are critical to the organisation's success. ASD works closely with the Australian national security community, overseas intelligence and cyber security partners, academia and industry. This level of collaboration is essential to comprehensively understand the threat environment and to stay at the leading edge of technology.

ASD's success is founded in the ingenuity of its workforce. The organisation seeks to recruit and develop a curious and imaginative workforce which is not deterred by difficult challenges. Recruiting the requisite specialist technological expertise has become increasingly challenging, given the high demand for staff with these skillsets.

This combination of a uniquely skilled workforce, empowered by innovative technology, enabled by responsible financial management, and leveraging partner capabilities, positions the organisation to deliver trusted intelligence, cyber security expertise and offensive cyber operations for Australia's national interest.

ASD's five strategic objectives

DELIVER STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

ASD ***delivers strategic advantage*** for Australia by providing foreign signals intelligence that protects and advances Australia's national interest. Foreign intelligence collection activities are guided by strategic priorities set by Government.

LEAD CYBER SECURITY

ASD is the Australian Government's ***leading cyber security agency***, and aims to make Australia the safest place to connect online and to foster national cyber security resilience. ASD's Australian Cyber Security Centre monitors cyber threats targeting Australian interests, and provides advice and information, including through an international network of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) to help protect Australians. When serious cyber incidents occur, ASD leads the Australian Government response to help mitigate the threat and strengthen defences.

SUPPORT MILITARY OPERATIONS

ASD has a long history of ***supporting Australian military operations***, with the organisation's heritage dating back to the Second World War. Today, ASD supports Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations around the globe, including by providing intelligence and offensive cyber capabilities to enable the warfighter and protect ADF personnel and assets. ASD also draws on its deep technical expertise to help the ADF stay ahead of technology advancements in the region, including the introduction of 5th generation weapons and cyber-warfare capabilities.

COUNTER CYBER-ENABLED THREATS

ASD capabilities play an important role in ***countering cyber-enabled threats***. The organisation protects Australia and Australians by preventing and disrupting offshore cyber-enabled crime, including the activities of organised criminal groups using malware to target Australians, and terrorists who use the internet to plan and incite attacks against Australian interests.

PROVIDE TRUSTED ADVICE AND EXPERTISE

ASD provides ***trusted advice and expertise*** to government, business and the community. ASD draws on its deep technical understanding of communications technology to help the Australian Government and the public understand the nature of the cyber threat environment, how they might be vulnerable and what they can do to protect themselves.

ASD VALUES

REVEAL THEIR SECRETS. PROTECT OUR OWN.

WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We give our customers the critical edge

Our output affects operations and policy

Our products are unique

WE STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

We seek and foster talent

We are world class

We are committed and enthusiastic

We are flexible and responsive

WE BELONG TO A GREAT TEAM

We succeed through teamwork

We recognise others' inputs

We support and care about each other

We all contribute

WE ARE AUDACIOUS IN CONCEPT

We operate in the slim area between the difficult and the impossible

WE ARE METICULOUS IN EXECUTION

We always act legally and ethically

We are accountable to the public through Government for everything we do

We manage risk effectively

ASD organisation chart

ASD STRATEGIC PLAN 2020–21 to 2023–24

CONTEXT & EXTERNAL DRIVERS

- Global Shifts
- Technological Change
- Public Trust
- Partnerships
- Fiscal Environment

OUR PURPOSE

Defend Australia from global threats and advance our national interests through the provision of foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by Government

OUR VISION

We are a world-leading intelligence and cyber security agency, enabled by talented dedicated people, leading-edge capabilities, strong partnerships, and the trust of the Australian public. Our role as both 'poacher' and 'gamekeeper' uniquely positions us to provide trusted advice and conduct intelligence operations.

We provide unique capabilities and access that inform and make a difference. We excel in the collection and exploitation of data

We build world-class, innovative offensive cyber capabilities that deliver real-world impact

We make Australia the safest place to connect online

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Deliver Strategic Advantage	Lead Cyber Security	Support Military Operations	Counter Cyber-enabled Threats	Provide Trusted Advice and Expertise
Generate intelligence and operational effects to protect and advance Australia's national interests	Make Australia the safest place to connect to the online world. Foster national cyber security resilience	Enable the war fighter. Protect Defence personnel and assets	Protect Australia and Australians by countering cyber-enabled crime and disrupting terrorists' use of the internet	Deliver timely, trusted and quality advice to Government, law enforcement, business and the community

OUR ENABLING CAPABILITIES

People and Culture	Technology	Partnerships	Tradecraft	Governance and Risk	Leadership and Influence
Our success is based on the ingenuity and diversity of our team. We have an inclusive culture that values and rewards teamwork. We attract and retain the best talent.	We use technology in innovative and creative ways to gain asymmetric advantage. We master technology to identify and disrupt threats, and protect Australian interests.	We bring together our expertise and capabilities with those of our partners for mutual benefit. Respectful relationships and collaboration enable our success.	We give our staff the skills to solve challenging problems, and operate in the slim area between the difficult and the impossible.	We act professionally, legally and ethically. We manage risk and are fully accountable for our actions. We are fiscally responsible, and we promote a culture that values strong compliance and security practices.	The leadership skills of our people underpin everything we do. And our mastery of technology underpins our trusted advice to the Government and the public.

OUR UNIQUE VALUES

We make a difference | **We strive for excellence** | **We belong to a great team** | **We are audacious in concept** | **We are meticulous in execution**

Operating context

ASD's ability to deliver on the outcomes described in its corporate plan is influenced by changes in its operating environment. These factors are key to ASD's efforts to evolve its business, ensuring it is well-positioned to continue to help keep Australia safe.

GLOBAL SHIFTS

Australia's security and prosperity rely on a secure, stable, prosperous and rules-based region. As communicated in the *Defence Strategic Update 2020*, our region is in the midst of the most consequential strategic realignment since the Second World War. The Indo-Pacific is at the centre of a greater strategic competition, making the region more contested and apprehensive: military modernisation has accelerated faster than expected, major power competition has intensified, and the conduct of 'grey zone' activities has expanded. These trends are continuing and will potentially sharpen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASD's capabilities provide the Australian Government with intelligence and cyber security expertise that deliver strategic advantage, policy and advice that protects national security and sovereignty, and practical support that informs law enforcement and military operations. Across the life of this corporate plan, ASD will continue to invest in developing its workforce and technology to ensure it responds flexibly to the changing priorities of the Australian Government.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Technological advances provide great benefit to our society, but these advances can also introduce risks.

ASD's mastery of technology enables it to protect Australia from global threats. But technology is evolving rapidly. State and non-state actors can access increasingly sophisticated communications technologies and the tools to exploit them.

ASD has a dual role as a trusted adviser in assisting the Australian Government to navigate major technological change, and to exploit technology to deliver foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations in support of Australian Government priorities.

ASD has always evolved its capabilities in response to technological change. In the years covered by this corporate plan, the challenge of maintaining mastery of technology will become more complex and demanding. To meet this challenge, ASD will enhance STEM skills in its workforce and invest in new and emerging technologies.

PUBLIC TRUST

As an intelligence and security agency, ASD has been entrusted with sensitive powers. ASD takes this responsibility very seriously.

ASD's functions are set out in the *Intelligence Services Act 2001*, along with the limitations on these functions. ASD is accountable for its actions under this legislation to the Australian Government, the Minister for Defence and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security. ASD's activities are regularly reviewed by the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security – who has the powers of a standing Royal Commission – to provide independent assurance that ASD acts legally and ethically.

ASD recognises the importance of maintaining the trust of the Australian Government and the Australian public.

While ASD may not be able to share the details of its operations for security reasons, for the duration of this corporate plan and beyond, ASD will seek to increase the information it shares with Australians about its functions. It is committed to assisting Australians in understanding the principles on which ASD makes decisions, the way it protects the privacy of Australians, and its strong culture of operating within the spirit and letter of the law.

PARTNERSHIPS

In a complex and evolving world, ASD cannot operate effectively alone. Strong partnerships underpin ASD's ability to understand global threats, collect foreign signals intelligence, formulate and implement cyber security advice, and conduct offensive cyber operations in support of the Australian Government.

ASD has a long history of working effectively with its partners in the National Intelligence Community (NIC), Australian federal, state and local government entities, the Australian Defence Force, academia, and industry. ASD collaborates across both the private and public sector, providing advice and assistance to prevent and combat threats and minimise harm to Australians.

ASD has long-standing, robust and meaningful ties with its Five-Eyes counterparts in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand, and other international partnerships, including through the international network of Cyber Emergency Response Teams (CERTs).

In the period covered by this corporate plan, ASD will strengthen partnerships with its counterpart agencies, state, territory and federal government agencies, industry, academia, and think-tanks to meet the Australian Government's strategic objectives and operational needs. ASD will also continue to strengthen partnerships with all levels of government, critical infrastructure operators and Australian businesses to boost Australia's whole-of-economy cyber defence capabilities.

FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

The Australian Government has made a significant investment in building ASD's foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations capabilities.

ASD is continuing to refine and enhance its governance and accountability frameworks, including enterprise performance management and fit-for-purpose financial management systems, to ensure it is operating efficiently, sustainably and responsibly within its forward budget.

Capability

ASD's capabilities enable it to deliver on its purpose and strategic goals. For the duration of this corporate plan, ASD will place special emphasis on building and enhancing the capabilities needed to meet the challenges of the evolving strategic environment, including changes in technology and data analysis. It will invest in improving leadership skills and building a culture that leverages the strength of a diverse and capable workforce. It will build and foster partnerships to deliver value in this complex operating environment.

People and culture

ASD's people are its greatest resource. The skills and experience of its people are in high demand across private industry and government. To ensure its success, ASD must continue to attract, develop and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- mature its dedicated human resources and learning and development functions
- deliver strategic workforce planning to achieve the optimal future workforce
- develop and deliver a comprehensive attraction and recruitment strategy, focused on growing a diverse and capable workforce
- enhance its training and development programs, underpinned by a comprehensive capability development framework
- deliver a wellbeing program to safeguard the physical and mental health of its staff
- review its remuneration framework to remain an employer of choice.

Partnerships

ASD's partnerships are critical enablers for its success in an increasingly complex operating environment.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- foster its existing relationships and develop new approaches to deliver on mission related outcomes
- enhance its ability to work with key stakeholders and partners across multiple security classifications
- enhance partnerships with industry and academia – particularly in the fields of data science, cyber security, and technology
- strengthen relationships with key foreign counterparts, focusing on delivering outcomes of mutual benefit.

Tradecraft

ASD's foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations missions require a highly skilled workforce, equipped with the right skills to be effective and successful at delivering its missions. The pace of technological change and evolving threat landscape increases ASD's opportunities to develop new tradecraft, but also increases the challenge of keeping ahead. ASD needs to ensure that its analysts are equipped with the right skills and can deploy modern tradecraft against ASD's toughest analytical problems.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- continue to implement its multi-year, analyst-centric business transformation
- redesign its training framework, focusing on equipping its people with key skills to develop modern and innovative tradecraft
- evolve data and technology systems to support contemporary analytic requirements.

Technology

Technology is at the heart of ASD's capability. Mastering and adapting to technological change is crucial to enabling ASD's ongoing success in delivering foreign signals intelligence, cyber security, and offensive cyber operations.

In the period of this corporate plan ASD will:

- implement its Enterprise Technology Strategy to deliver modern enterprise-grade capabilities that underpin leading-edge mission systems
- mature its portfolio management capabilities, ensuring its technology investment delivers the capabilities needed to meet its strategic goals
- deliver contemporary technology platforms that provide an enhanced user experience to its workforce
- optimise its technology investment portfolio to effectively strike the balance between current requirements and future capability.

Governance and risk

ASD's status as a statutory agency has given it the autonomy to build enterprise governance and risk frameworks that are tailored to the unique nature of ASD's work. As part of this work, ASD is strengthening compliance and oversight processes, which provide assurance that ASD acts within the spirit and the letter of the laws that enable us.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- mature its risk management frameworks
- refresh its security functions
- grow its compliance and oversight functions, ensuring ASD maintains the highest standards of compliance with the laws that govern our actions
- continue to develop a fit-for-purpose financial management system.

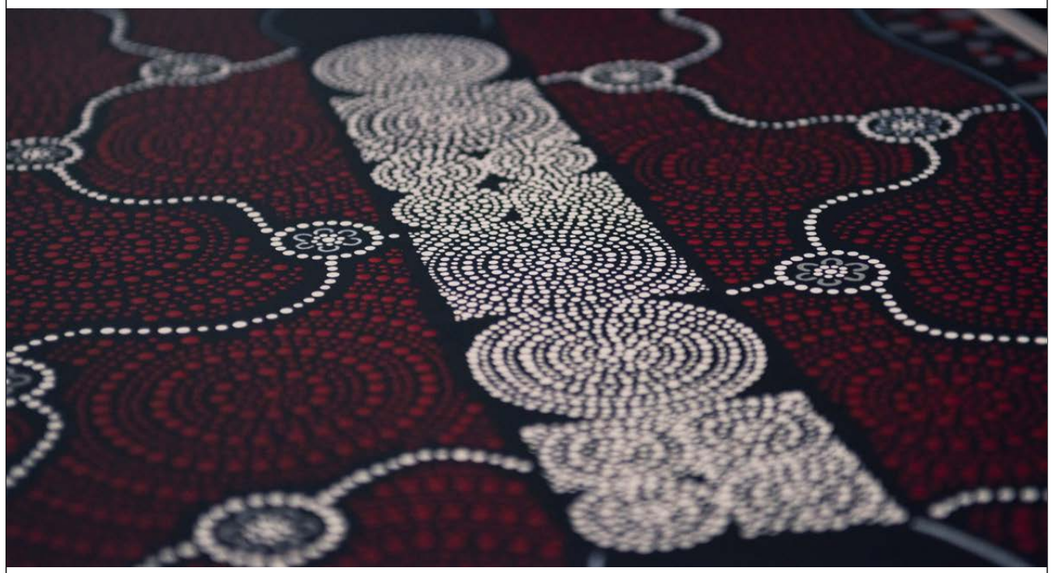
Leadership and influence

The leadership skills of ASD's people – at all levels of the organisation – are vital to its success. ASD's leaders are at the forefront of delivering strategic initiatives, and supporting and developing the workforce.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- ensure delegations and accountabilities are clear for all managers and supervisors
- enable governance structures and associated processes that improve the agility of decision-making in ASD
- invest in building the leadership and management skills of its people.

Diversity and inclusion



ASD's workforce operates in the slim area between the difficult and impossible. Solving the toughest problems in foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations requires teams of clever, curious people with diverse and complementary skills. ASD's strength, resilience, and creativity is derived from the different ages, backgrounds, genders, cultures, neurodiversity, physical abilities, religions and sexualities of its staff.

ASD is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive workplace.

In the period of this corporate plan, ASD will:

- continue to mature our diversity and inclusion goals as committed to in ASD's first diversity and inclusion strategy
- develop an evaluation framework to monitor progress in achieving ASD's diversity and inclusion goals.

Performance

ASD's purpose is to defend Australia from global threats and advance the national interest through the provision of foreign signals intelligence, cyber security and offensive cyber operations, as directed by the Government. While ASD's purpose will not change significantly over the duration of this corporate plan, the way in which it meets the needs of Australians and the Australian Government will evolve in response to shifts in its operating context and changes in the global threat environment.

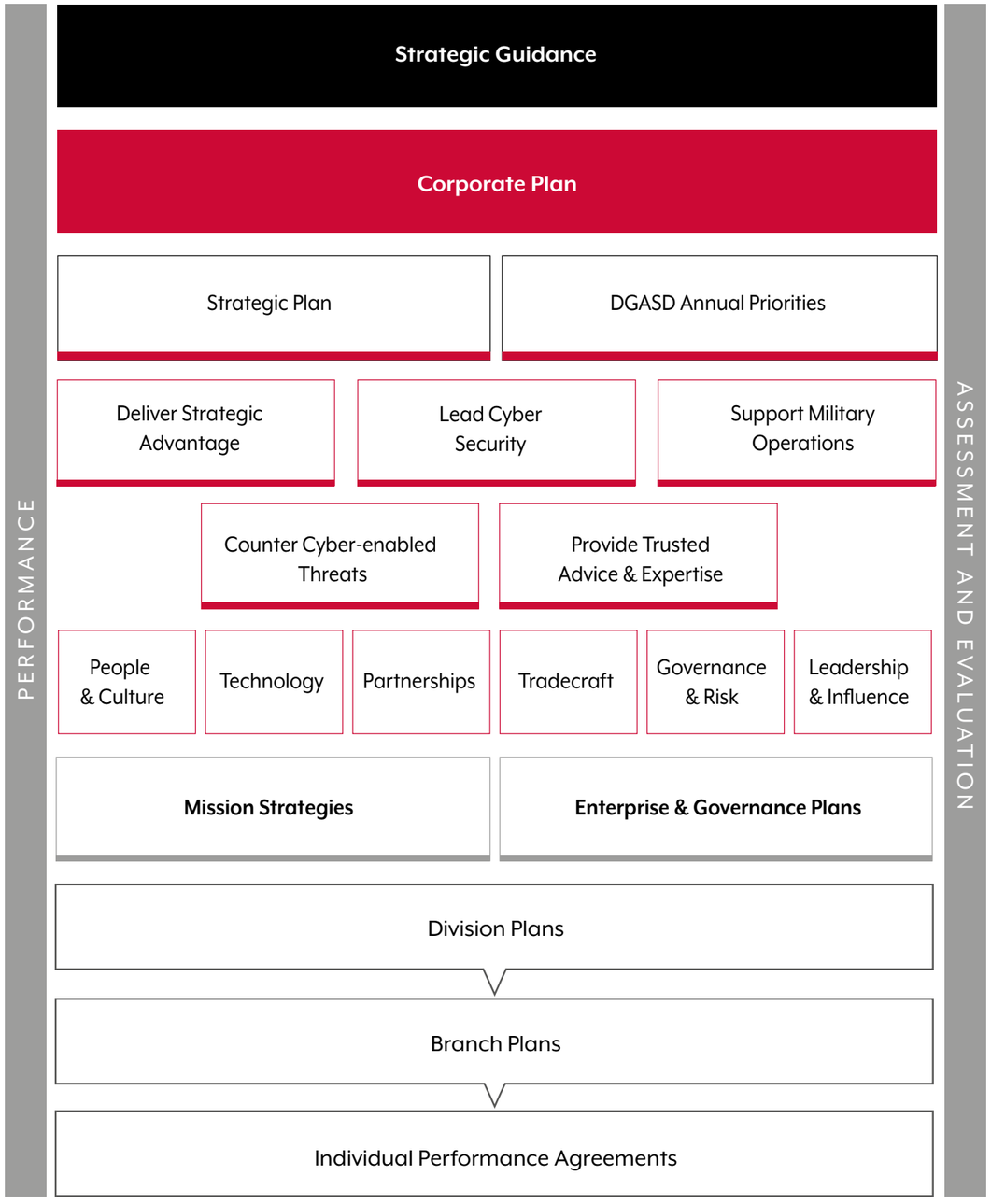
For the duration of this corporate plan, ASD will assess its performance against its purpose through a mix of qualitative and quantitative assessments. This corporate plan communicates new enterprise key performance indicators as ASD's performance evaluation baseline. The enterprise key performance indicators provide a performance measurement foundation that will link ASD's performance goals directly to tangible metrics in each ASD Group.

ASD will continue to evolve its performance evaluation processes to ensure it effectively demonstrates the value of ASD's activities to the Australian Government. Due to the nature of ASD's work, some performance measures will continue to be reported through existing performance frameworks in classified channels

Performance criteria

Objective: Defend Australia from global threats and advance our national interests through the provision of foreign signals intelligence, cyber security, and offensive cyber operations, as directed by Government.		
KEY ACTIVITY	**PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**	**ENTERPRISE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR**
Provide foreign signals intelligence	ASD's foreign signals intelligence informs strategic, operational and tactical decision-making.	ASD's intelligence products, technical expertise and advice deliver strategic advantage to Australia and enable National Intelligence Community operations.
		ASD's foreign signals intelligence and technical expertise effectively supports military operations.
Provide cyber security services	ASD's cyber security advice, assistance and operational responses prevent, detect and remediate cyber treats to Australia.	ASD's Australian Cyber Security Centre provides high quality, impactful cyber security services to government, critical infrastructure and services, businesses, families and individuals.
		ASD delivers international partnership programs and advanced technical capability that strengthen national cyber security and resilience.
Conduct offensive cyber operations	ASD's offensive cyber operations deliver real world impact, including providing advantage to military operations.	ASD's offensive cyber operations provide effective and timely support for military operations in accordance with Australian Defence Force priorities and requirements.
		ASD's offensive cyber operations provide effective measures to counter offshore cyber threats targeting Australians and Australia, consistent with whole-of-government security priorities and requirements.
Sustain and secure future capability	ASD's capability needs are met and fiscal outcomes are delivered, while managing ASD's risk and maintaining a secure internal operating environment	ASD provides and sustains a suite of contemporary, integrated and optimised technology platforms, products and services that meet the needs of ASD's signals intelligence, cyber security and effects missions while ensuring interoperability with partners.
		High-quality corporate support required to enable mission outcomes is provided to all parts of ASD and partners (including through Defence shared services arrangements).

ASD planning framework



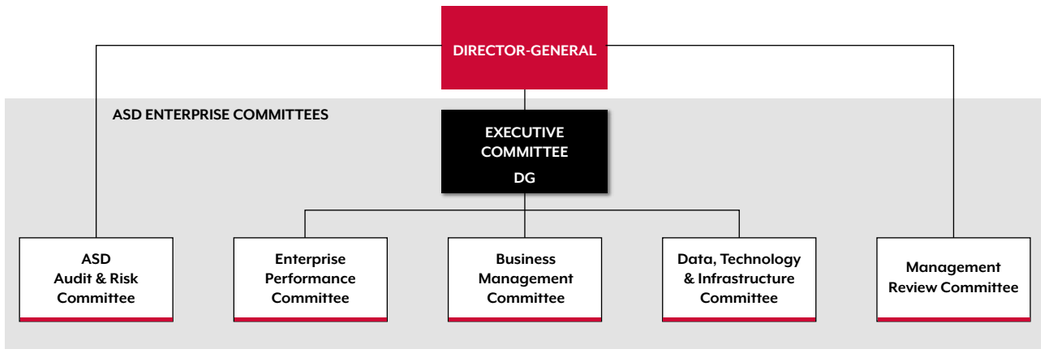
Risk oversight and management

ASD's Executive Committee is the primary advisory committee to support the Director-General in the oversight of all of ASD functions. The committee defines operational and corporate risk tolerances, and oversees effective risk management across the agency. The Director-General is supported in these functions by ASD's governance frameworks and committees. Risk is managed across four key domains. These domains are:

- security, integrity and reputation
- enterprise performance
- people, finance, and workplace health and safety
- data technology and infrastructure.

The ASD Audit and Risk Committee (ASDARC) was established in 2018 to comply with section 45 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The ASDARC provides independent assurance of ASD's risk management framework, internal governance, and performance. It provides independent advice to the Director-General and, where appropriate, makes recommendations to the Director-General with respect to financial reporting, ASD's system of oversight and management, ASD's system of internal control, and internal and external audit reports.

ASD will continue to review its governance frameworks and committees in support of the Director-General into the 2020–21 performance year and beyond, seeking opportunities to enhance and streamline existing governance framework and committee processes.



A diagram of the relevant committees.

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