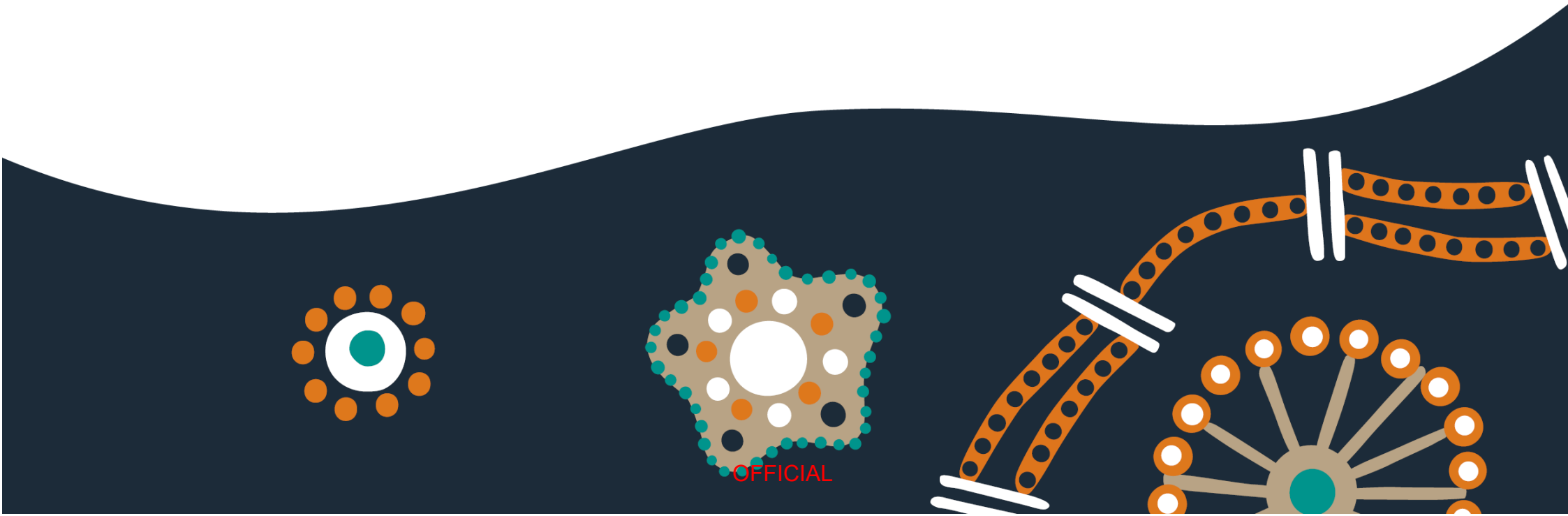
Australian Government
National Indigenous Australians Agency

NIAA

Census Action Plan 2024-27

NIAA Census Work Program: November 2026 – October 2027



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Executive Summary

The 2026 APS Employee Census shows that NIAA remains strongly connected to its purpose, with staff continuing to demonstrate a deep commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Agency's mission, community focus and strong local leadership remain important strengths.

However, the results also point to several persistent organisational challenges. Communication, change management, workload pressures, decision-making processes, leadership visibility and accountability, and career development emerged as the most consistent themes across the Census, staff comments and all-staff event questions. Staff generally support organisational change but are seeking greater transparency, clearer direction and more meaningful engagement in decisions that affect their work.

Feedback also highlighted a strong desire to reduce bureaucracy, simplify processes, improve role clarity and strengthen workforce capability. Concerns about psychological safety, bullying, harassment and confidence in reporting processes remain prominent and require continued attention. At the same time, flexible work, wellbeing initiatives, inclusion efforts and supportive supervisors continue to be valued by staff.

Overall, the 2026 Census reflects a workforce that remains highly committed to NIAA's purpose but is looking for greater clarity, trust, empowerment and organisational support. The following Action Plan focuses on strengthening wellbeing, inclusion, communication and capability while building on the Agency's existing strengths.

Driving shared accountability

In 2026, we again asked two Agency-specific questions focused on the Census. These measured staff perceptions of their SES Manager's commitment to responding to Census results and how well embedded localised plans have become. We will continue to ask these questions moving forward to ensure work areas are driving our shared accountability of responding to the Census.

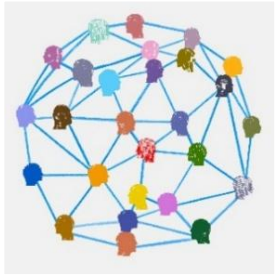
- 73% of staff agreed their SES manager was committed to taking action in response to Census results (down 5%).
- 55% of branches/regions had embedded their Census Action Plans into the way they work (down 6%).

4 key areas of focus:

1. Prioritising the **wellbeing** of our staff and taking action to respond to psychosocial hazards.
2. Building an **inclusive workplace culture**, where bullying, harassment and discrimination is called out and not tolerated.
3. Improving our **communication** both at an Agency level and within our work areas.
4. Investing in the **capability** our people, to ensure they have the skills they need to drive organisational outcomes.

8 headline actions 2026-27

Figure 1. 8 headline actions mapped to the areas of focus



Wellbeing

1. Continue to implement the NIAA Wellbeing Strategy.
2. Continue to manage and respond to psychosocial hazards.

Inclusive culture

3. Respond to the differences in experiences of our workforce which is diverse.
4. Continue to foster a culture of integrity, where inappropriate behaviours including racism are called out and not tolerated.





Communication

5. Build Agency pride through storytelling and visibility.
6. Strengthen communication, connection and collaboration.

Capability

7. Use the NIAA Capability Framework to guide and empower staff learning, development and career aspirations.
8. Provide the NIAA and APS with First Nations-designed and delivered career development programs, qualifications and career pathways.



Headline Action 1: Continue to implement the NIAA Wellbeing Strategy

Why is this a priority? Our Wellbeing Strategy is based on the APS Mental Health Capability Framework. This will ensure our investments in mental health and wellbeing are sustainable overtime and that we are investing in things that work. We will continue to invest in Yarn Strong, our flagship wellbeing program. We will also ensure our available wellbeing supports reflect the diverse needs of our workforce.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
1.1	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continue to implement the NIAA's Wellbeing Strategy (including key actions that support this as outlined below).	Led by People and Safety Branch, and Branches and Regions identified as responsible work areas in the Action Plan. December 2027.	Gains made in overall maturity as captured in the Maturity Scale Assessment tool.
1.2	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continue to review and refresh wellbeing offerings and resources available to staff, including through our flagship wellbeing program, Yarn Strong.	Led by People and Safety Branch, in consultation with staff and Diversity Networks. December 2027.	Gains made in overall maturity as captured in the Maturity Scale Assessment tool. Feedback from staff who have engaged in the services.

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Headline Action 2: Continue to manage and respond to psychosocial hazards

Why is this a priority? We have both a legislative and moral obligation to provide a psychologically healthy and safe workplace by identifying, assessing and managing psychosocial hazards. Left unaddressed, psychosocial risks can negatively impact employee wellbeing, engagement, retention and performance, affecting both our people and our ability to deliver outcomes. Proactively monitoring and responding to these risks helps create a safer, more supportive workplace where staff can thrive and perform at their best.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
2.1	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Branches and Regions monitor and review psychosocial risk within their work areas.	Led by People and Safety Branch, in consultation with staff and the National Health and Safety Committee. While led by People and Safety Branch, all Branches and Regions are responsible for driving work in their business area. Throughout 2026-27.	Staff engagement with materials available via the Hub; Census ADDRESS screener outcomes; risk register review outcomes.
2.2	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Branches and Regions manage psychosocial work health and safety incidents using the available supports and resources.	Led by all Branch and Region Managers, with support from the People and Safety Branch. Throughout 2026-27.	Percentage of incident reports where corrective actions have been identified, documented and actioned or are progressing within one month of submission; Census ADDRESS screener outcomes; risk register review outcomes

Headline Action 3: Respond to the differences in experiences of our diverse staff

Why is this a priority? We embrace diversity as a cornerstone of our values. A review of our Census has highlighted differences in the experience of how diverse staff experience work. As part of our ongoing implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework, we're committed to unpacking this further and developing tailored supports for staff to address this challenge.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
3.1	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continue to embed our Diversity and Inclusion Framework, including acknowledging days of significance, and supporting staff-led networks to thrive.	People and Safety Branch; All groups; All staff; Staff diversity networks. Throughout 2026-27.	Progress on individual items met in line with the measures outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework; staff engagement with days of significance; sustainable staff-led networks.
3.2	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Building cultural safety by adopting the recommendations for workplaces and employment from the National Anti-Racism Framework, where applicable.	People and Safety Branch; Staff diversity networks. Throughout 2026-27.	Reduction in experience gap for staff of diverse backgrounds (First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse).
3.3	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Commence development of the 2028-31 People Strategy, adopting a data and evidence-based approach to understanding the diverse experiences of our staff.	People and Safety Branch, Staff diversity networks. By early 2028.	Staff engagement in the development process; decreased gap in staff experiences between diverse staff and NIAA overall on key Census measures (including bullying, harassment and discrimination).
3.4	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Appropriate mechanisms are established to support engagement between the Diversity Network co-chairs and an executive committee, enabling oversight of progress against diversity and inclusion priorities and initiatives.	Governance, Communications and Parliamentary Services Branch; Diversity Network co-chairs; People and Safety Branch. Throughout 2027.	A regular cadence of updates from Diversity Network co-chairs are considered through appropriate governance processes.

Headline Action 4: Continue to foster a culture of integrity, where inappropriate behaviours including racism are called out and not tolerated

Why is this a priority? We do not tolerate bullying, harassment and discrimination but our Census results indicate a higher prevalence than the APS average on these issues. Our diverse staff also report experiencing this more frequently. We need to do more to ensure we all work in a way that is aligned with our values and behaviours and foster cultures of integrity, underpinned by psychological safety.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
4.1	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continue implementing the NIAA Integrity Strategy (and Action Plan).	Led by Finance and Integrity Division and owners of action items (Branch and Region Managers). Ongoing throughout 2026-27.	Increased perceptions of inclusion; decreased perceptions of bullying, harassment and discrimination; increased reporting of integrity concerns.
4.2	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continuing HR open door sessions to promote greater staff understanding of key Agency initiatives, including flexible work and values and behaviour	Led by People and Safety Branch; all staff and managers to attend. Throughout 2026-27.	Attendance at sessions; reduction in behaviours out of step with policies and procedures.
4.3	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Deliver a Brown Bag Lunch session focused on the APS Code of Conduct and appropriate behaviours.	Led by People and Safety Branch; all staff and managers to attend. By December 2027.	Attendance at sessions; reduction in behaviours out of step with policies and procedures.
4.4	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Refresh the Workplace Respect Policy and Internal Complaints Management Framework (plus associated resources). This will include engagement with the	Led by People and Safety Branch. By December 2027.	Staff engagement in the review process; decreased gap in staff experiences between diverse staff and NIAA overall on key Census measures (including

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
		diversity networks to ensure behaviour they are experiencing is captured accurately under these policies and resources.		bullying, harassment and discrimination).

Headline Action 5: Build Agency pride through storytelling and visibility

Why is this a priority? Staff feedback highlights a desire for greater visibility of the Agency's work and stronger awareness of how teams, Regions and Branches contribute to NIAA's purpose and outcomes. By increasing opportunities to showcase achievements, share success stories and highlight the breadth of work across the Agency, we can strengthen agency pride, improve understanding of priorities and foster greater connection between staff and the impact of NIAA's work.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
5.1	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Launch a "Did You Know?" series to showcase the breadth of work occurring across Divisions, Branches and Regions and build awareness of Agency priorities and achievements.	Led by Parliamentary and Communications Services Branch. Embedded by March 2027.	Improved staff awareness and understanding of Agency priorities, achievements and cross-Agency work through the ongoing delivery of the "Did You Know?" series.
5.2	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Increase opportunities for storytelling and knowledge sharing through staff profiles, regional spotlights, project showcases and community success stories.	Led by Parliamentary and Communications Services Branch. By February 2027.	Regular storytelling features are embedded in Agency communications, resulting in improved staff awareness, connection and understanding of work across NIAA.

Headline Action 6: Strengthen communication, connection and collaboration

Why is this a priority? Staff feedback highlights opportunities to strengthen communication, collaboration and connection across the Agency. By improving how information is shared and creating more effective channels for engagement and knowledge sharing, we can help staff feel more informed, connected and empowered to contribute to NIAA's priorities and culture.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
6.1	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Develop an integrated Internal and External Communications Framework that aligns messaging, priorities and storytelling across the Agency.	Led by Parliamentary and Communications Services Branch. Finalised by March 2027.	Internal and external communication strategies are implemented, resulting in improved staff engagement, increased stakeholder reach, and stronger confidence in NIAA communications and reputation.
6.2	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	Leverage the new intranet as a platform for connection, collaboration, recognition and knowledge sharing across the Agency.	Led by Parliamentary and Communications Services Branch. By June 2027.	Increased staff engagement, collaboration and knowledge sharing through the successful implementation and adoption of the new intranet platform.

Headline Action 7: Use the NIAA Capability Framework to guide and empower staff learning, development and career aspirations

Why is this a priority? Our Capability Framework supports strengths-based development for all staff. It enables capability growth aligned with APS Craft and supports the development of the functional and behavioural capabilities required for success in current roles and future career pathways. The framework articulates the core capabilities that underpin how we work, ensuring we are equipped to effectively meet the needs, priorities and aspirations of First Nations peoples and communities.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
7.1	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Embedding the Capability Framework and associated tools into business-as-usual conversations between staff and managers.	Led by all staff and managers, supported by People and Safety Branch. Throughout 2026-27.	Staff have capability development plans as part of their engage. Staff are accessing learning and development tools and resources as a regular part of their development.
7.2	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	The Leadership Continuum and associated interactive tools are positioned within the Capability Framework on NIAA Learn.	Led by People and Safety Branch, all staff and managers are responsible for engaging with the tools and resources. Throughout 2026-27.	Leadership resources are regularly accessed. Facilitated leadership courses are aligned with the Leadership Continuum.

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Headline Action 8: Provide the NIAA and the APS with First Nations-designed and delivered career development programs, qualifications and career pathways

Why is this a priority? Investing in First Nations-designed career development programs, qualifications and career pathways supports capability uplift and creates clear progression opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. This contributes to a strong and sustainable First Nations workforce and enhances the APS's ability to deliver outcomes for First Nations peoples and communities.

Action	Status	Key focus for next 12 months	Lead and timeframes	Measuring success
8.1	New item for 2026-27 Census work program.	The *Duru-wa: Early Career Program* and *Duru-wa: Graduate Certificate in Management* support capability development of First Nations employees and nurture career progression within the NIAA and build networks across the APS.	Led by People and Safety Branch, supported by staff and managers. Ongoing throughout 2026-27.	Strong participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
8.2	In progress – this action item is being carried forward from 2025-26.	Continue to provide the Pat Turner Scholarship.	Led by People and Safety Branch. Ongoing throughout 2026-27.	The scholarship continues to be made available for staff applications.

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We are driving cultural change through evidence-informed activities that will be tracked and monitored overtime.

Measuring our success and keeping you informed

Each year, the NIAA will complete an annual impact evaluation of our progress against the Headline Actions (see figure 1) and the specific 12-month actions in this plan. This will be shared with staff via the Investing in our People intranet page. Regular progress reviews will be led by People Branch and reported to the NIAA People and Culture Committee.

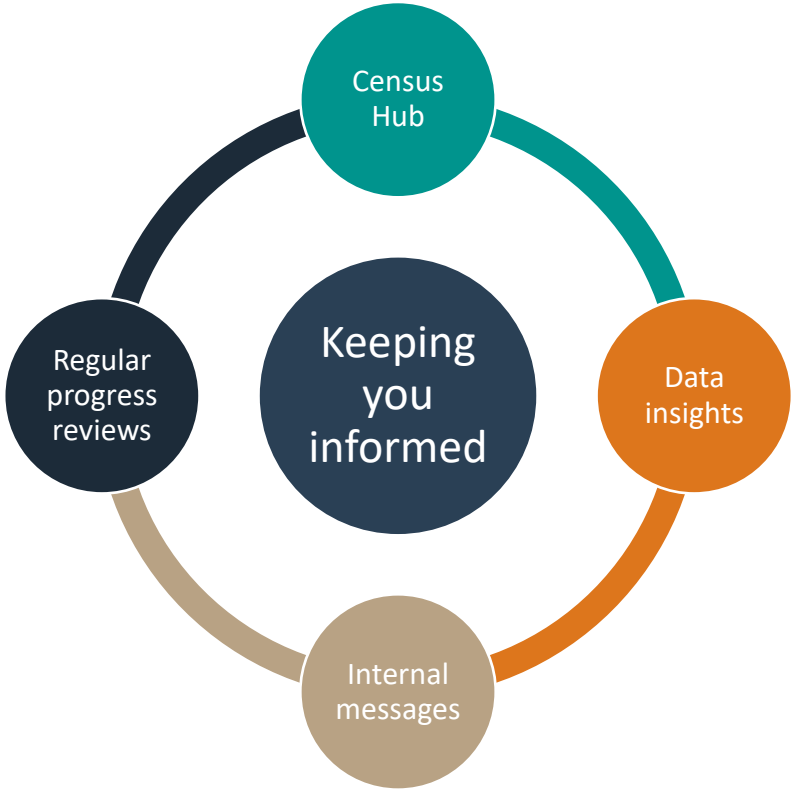
Key impact measures will include our Agency Census results, including the areas identified as success measures within each sub-action in this plan, feedback from staff captured through internal surveys (including new starter and exit surveys), and a review of key workforce metrics.

While the key areas of focus will remain the same during the 2024-2027 period, it is expected that the Headline Actions will be adjusted each year based on updated data, information and feedback from staff.

Holding ourselves accountable

As an Agency, we will continue to be transparent about the progress we are making. Staff can access information at any time via the Census Hub (including past results), and we will continue to share key progress goals through our internal communication channels.

Figure 1. Keeping you informed



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Aligning with the Improving Delivery Program

Workload management, role clarity and clearer accountabilities have emerged as significant themes throughout the Census results, staff comments and all-staff discussion. Staff frequently described challenges associated with competing priorities, high workloads, resource constraints, unclear responsibilities, overlapping functions and uncertainty regarding organisational direction. Many employees expressed concern about balancing increasing demands with available capacity, while others highlighted difficulties understanding decision-making authority, accountabilities and how work should be prioritised across teams and functions.

These themes are strongly connected and reflect broader questions about how work is organised and delivered across the Agency. Importantly, they align closely with the objectives of the Improving Delivery Program, which is intended to reduce duplication, clarify functions and responsibilities, improve spans of control, strengthen decision-making arrangements, simplify processes and better align resources to priorities.

Given this alignment, managing workforce pressure, workload management, organisational clarity and prioritisation are not proposed as standalone Agency Census Action Plan priorities. Instead, they should be recognised as key measures of success for the Improving Delivery Program. Future Census results will provide an important indication of whether the intended benefits of the Program have translated into improved employee experiences, greater clarity, reduced workload pressures and a stronger sense of organisational alignment.



Improving Delivery Program - NIAA Intranet