



2026-27 priorities for government funding of strategic policy research

Whole-of-government objectives and strategic research priorities on national security challenges

Introduction

The Australian Government recognises the important role the strategic policy sector (the sector) plays in driving public discussion and strengthening partnerships on national security matters. An unencumbered sector, characterised by diversity and evidence-based research, is essential to achieve robust policy contestability to support government to address contemporary and emerging national security challenges.

These annual priorities for government funding of strategic policy research (research priorities) provide guidance to departments and agencies when commissioning and funding national security-focused strategic policy work, to ensure value for money for government and provide greater transparency to the sector and broader public.

This inaugural iteration of the research priorities is guided by national security policy priorities, the concept of National Defence as defined by the [2026 National Defence Strategy](#) and other government policies. The government recognises a whole-of-nation response, across all arms of national power, is required to address our ever-evolving strategic environment and complex security challenges to defend Australia and advance our interests.

Further background

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) commissioned the [Independent Review of Commonwealth funding for strategic policy work](#) (the review), led by Mr Peter Varghese AO, on 5 February 2024. The review's report and the [government's response](#) was released on 19 December 2024.

In its response, the government agreed to develop and publish annual strategic policy research priorities for the sector to better guide national security-focused activities. The priorities are agreed by ministers and released on the PM&C website on an annual basis.

Guiding principles

The research priorities have been developed according to four core guiding principles to frame government decisions on the commissioning of strategic policy work. Departments and agencies, and the sector, are encouraged to consider these principles in addition to the research priorities when commissioning national security-focused work and undertaking research, respectively.

Solutions-focused

The sector's strategic policy research should be focused on Australia's national interests, priorities and strategic circumstances. Government-commissioned work should concentrate on driving solutions-focused, policy-relevant work to equip Australia with the right tools and mechanisms to address the complex national security challenges we face in our contemporary strategic environment.

Evidence-based

The sector's strategic policy research should be founded on a strong principle of empirical and evidence-based research. This core principle provides a foundation for the development of valuable policy insight and contributes to robust policy contestability. A research and information environment that is characterised by integrity, fidelity, transparency and diversity supports Australia's democratic resilience.

Secure

The sector's research should be undertaken in a secure manner, identifying and mitigating national security risks, such as high-risk foreign collaboration or cyber security vulnerabilities, to protect intellectual property and the equities of the Australian Government.

Responsive and relevant

While focusing on the research priorities is important, the sector's strategic policy research should also be responsive, and adapt, to our evolving strategic environment. The sector should continue to respond to the Australian Government's priorities, produce policy-relevant research, and enhance public understanding and debate about national security challenges.

2026-27 research priorities

The government recognises the value of contestability and the independent consideration of national security policy by the strategic policy sector. While the government has set these priorities, it expects and values pragmatism and flexibility in how they are applied and seeks rigour in the process. The government acknowledges contestability is essential to national security and strengthens the work of both the sector and government.

The priorities are of equal importance and numbered in no particular order.

Priority 1: Support a democratic, diverse and cohesive Australia

The Australian Government seeks to achieve and retain a democratic, diverse and cohesive Australia.

Ongoing information manipulation and foreign interference, polarisation and intolerance, and increasing distrust in government are challenging this objective.

A diverse strategic policy sector underpinned by robust policy contestability is key in shaping and developing evidence-based government policy, invigorating social inclusion and cohesion, and building public trust in government. The sector should play a role in reinforcing and safeguarding diverse and integrity-based research that contributes to an environment of healthy policy contestability.

Priority 2: Support a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific

The Australian Government is committed to promoting a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

In a region facing geopolitical change and intensifying strategic competition, Australia is committed to working with our allies and regional partners to promote a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region; one that is characterised by respect for the global rules-based order and adherence to international law.

Research plays a crucial role in supporting international relations by providing evidence-based insights, fostering mutual understanding among nations and providing thematic analysis of key issues including security cooperation. The sector should provide research that supports the Australian Government in maintaining strong and deep relationships and alliances with strategic partners within the region.

Priority 3: Build a strong, prosperous and resilient economy

The Australian Government seeks to build a strong, prosperous and resilient economy that can withstand and counter threats to our economic wellbeing.

Economic and traditional national security policies are becoming progressively interconnected. Geostrategic competition, trade, climate security, supply chain resilience, cyber security, critical and emerging technology, and Australia's transition to net zero are all key drivers underpinning Australia's broader economic resilience. Enhancing and strengthening security in these areas contributes to Australia's ongoing economic productivity and prosperity.

The sector should utilise an integrated and cross-disciplinary approach to research and explore the interactions between security and economy. This will provide policy makers with the evidence-based innovative policy tools and mechanisms we need to address the complex security challenges we face, as well as contribute to building a more resilient and prosperous Australian economy.

Priority 4: Support Australia's national defence

The Australian Government seeks a coordinated, whole-of-nation approach across all arms of national power to achieve and support Australia's concept of National Defence, as set out in the 2026 National Defence Strategy.

Australia is increasingly threatened by both traditional and non-traditional security challenges that cannot be addressed in isolation. Evidence-based and solutions-focused strategic policy research that supports Australia's ability to anticipate, prevent, absorb, and recover from threats both at home and in our broader strategic environment is critical to ensure Australia becomes more self-reliant and resilient.

The sector should seek to contribute its knowledge, skills and capacity for contestability to address Australia's wide spectrum of security challenges and reduce our exposure and vulnerability to risks. Strategic policy research that considers and analyses cross-cutting threats to Australia's national security, and their possible solutions, will help support integrated policy development and bolster Australia's National Defence.

Priority 5: Enhance Australia's resilience and responsiveness

The Australian Government is committed to an Australia that is well-prepared and equipped with the right policy tools and mechanisms to be able to prepare for, successfully address, and readily respond to complex domestic and international national security challenges.

The sector should produce evidence-based, cross disciplinary research that enhances policy makers' navigation of Australia's strategic environment and threats to our national security beyond those specific to National Defence, including climate and environmental challenges.

Strategic policy research can enhance policymakers' readiness to address, and plan for, changes in our strategic environment, including how Australia is to be well prepared to respond to the full spectrum of challenges, whether current, emerging or future. Sector research can also increase our threat awareness and provide Australia strategic advantage in decision-making.