



# Principles-based framework for strategic policy work

These principles underpin the Commonwealth's commissioning of strategic policy work from Australia's national security research sector (the sector), as adopted from the [Independent Review of Commonwealth Funding for Strategic Policy Work](#) and updated in accordance with the [government response](#).

## Principle 1: Minimal burden

- 1.1. All activities should be commissioned and administered through the least burdensome process necessary, commensurate with the level of funding.

## Principle 2: Funding certainty

- 2.1. Commonwealth funding for the sector should include larger, longer-term arrangements to enable organisations to develop deeper expertise, deliver strategic research, secure leases and facilities, and attract and retain quality staff. This may mean fewer but better funded recipients than currently.
- 2.2. The majority of operating funding an organisation receives from the Commonwealth should support activities against the annual research priorities, with organisations retaining some autonomy to explore new and emerging issues.

## Principle 3: Co-design and collaboration

- 3.1. Initial proposals for strategic policy work should involve short pitches from applicants, enabling government to shortlist as efficiently as possible. Shortlisted proposals should then be fine-tuned through a co-design process between the funding recipient and the commissioning department or agency to drive policy relevance in accordance with agreed priorities.
- 3.2. Government, through departments and agencies, should brief the sector on the annual research priorities.
- 3.3. Departments and agencies should be more directive in assigning specific tasks for the sector to deliver in collaboration with government.

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## **Principle 4: Contestability and collaboration**

- 4.1. Government should actively fund the sector to critically review identified government policy with the focus being on alternate policy options for government to consider.
- 4.2. Contestability should occur earlier in the policy development cycle wherever possible, to encourage diversity and to identify and rectify policy gaps.
- 4.3. For major policies, several think tanks or academic institutions should be engaged on the same topic to provide a suite of perspectives and options.
- 4.4. Sufficient funding and timeframes should be allocated to research on major policy issues, to incentivise multi-disciplinary perspectives and encourage collaboration across institutes and individuals.

## **Principle 5: Transparency**

- 5.1. Departments and agencies should prioritise open and competitive grant and tender processes for commissioning strategic policy work.
- 5.2. Grant rounds should occur at regular intervals to allow the sector to plan proposals.

## **Principle 6: Review and evaluation**

- 6.1. Evaluations should be commensurate with the funding amount. Evaluation of smaller agreements should be streamlined, with written reporting on deliverables replaced by engagement between the commissioning department or agency and the funding recipient to discuss findings and final reports.
- 6.2. Organisations receiving operating funds from government should undergo regular evaluation led by the funding department. If operating funding is provided on a 5-year cycle, then the review should occur in the third year.

## **Principle 7: Governance**

- 7.1. Organisations receiving a significant proportion of Commonwealth funding should invite a government representative to sit as an observer on their governing body.
- 7.2. Organisations should have robust and transparent policies in place to determine the appropriateness of funding from the corporate sector, philanthropy and foreign governments, in order to preserve research independence and avoid perceived conflicts of interests. This should be a precondition of government funding.
- 7.3. Organisations should maintain a board skills matrix and make board appointments to ensure diversity in knowledge and experience.