



Australian Government

Developing Australia's Science and Research Priorities and National Science Statement – a National Conversation Starter

| consult.industry.gov.au/sciencepriorities1

On 27 September 2022, the Australian Government [announced](#) it would revitalise Australia's Science and Research Priorities (the priorities) and the National Science Statement (the statement). The terms of reference for this work are available on the [Department of Industry, Science and Resources website](#).

Purpose

The priorities and the accompanying statement will provide the vision and direction for science in Australia. They will align efforts and investments in science to deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits for all Australians. A vibrant and energised science system is essential to our national prosperity and the well-being of the Australian people.

The priorities will signal areas the Australian Government considers important and aim to encourage activity and growth in these areas. The priorities will not identify all science and research that should be undertaken in Australia, nor preclude investment in other areas, particularly for basic or blue-sky research. Likewise, the priorities will not be the only vehicle to target government science and research investments. For instance, the National Reconstruction Fund has its own priority areas for investment due to the economic drivers of the program. Further, the research block grant funding model provides flexible funding for investment across the research pipeline, giving universities autonomy to invest outside of the priorities. The priorities should reflect Australia's biggest challenges and opportunities today and into the future, and the role of science in addressing these issues.

Revitalising the Priorities and Statement

We would like to understand your views on what Australia's priorities should address. Much has changed since the last priorities were published in 2015. Events such as the global pandemic, accelerating climate change impacts and emerging technologies mean those priorities no longer reflect our needs or our ambitions. The current priorities and statement also do not acknowledge or recognise First Nations science and knowledge systems appropriately.

Australia's Chief Scientist will lead a national conversation in the first half of 2023 to inform the new priorities and statement. The initial stage will help to identify national challenges and potential priorities to address them. This paper aims to support these discussions. The next stages of the priority setting process will focus on refining and scoping these potential priorities.

The principles

The 7 principles set out below are designed to guide discussion on the priorities and the statement.

The government would like the priorities to:

- **Be community-informed.** To build community ownership of the priorities, a public conversation about the challenges and opportunities facing Australia will inform the priority setting process. The process will recognise and support First Nations perspectives on science, technology, and innovation.
- **Be ambitious and purpose-driven.** The priorities should be ambitious and address Australia's biggest challenges and opportunities. They should have meaningful impact and reflect Australia's competitive and comparative advantages.
- **Be evidence-based.** The priority setting process will consider all national challenges and opportunities that are supported by evidence, which includes supporting and embedding First Nations knowledge and knowledge systems.
- **Be enduring and responsive.** The priorities should be enduring and designed to address ambitious, long-term priorities for Australia. They should provide system-level stability. The priorities should also be responsive to scientific progress and emerging issues (for example, natural, social, or economic emergencies).
- **Be relevant.** The priorities will be reviewed on an ongoing, regular basis to ensure they remain relevant for Australia.
- **Be bounded.** The priorities are not intended to be exhaustive nor include all science that should be undertaken in Australia.
- **Inform investments.** The priorities will be used to guide government policies and investment in science. They will also act as a signal to inform industry, international, research and community decision-making and investment.

Conversation starters

Having regard to the principles above, we would like to hear your views on:

1. What are Australia's greatest:
 - a. *challenges* that science could help to address?
 - b. *opportunities* we should seize?
 - c. *strengths* we should maintain or build?
2. Does Australia have the capability and capacity needed to address these challenges, opportunities and strengths? If not, how could we build this?

We also welcome any feedback on the principles:

3. Are the principles the right principles to shape the priorities?

Next steps

We are engaging Australians to help us identify what are the biggest national challenges and what are the opportunities that we could seize. The following figure sets out planned engagement steps following this initial phase:

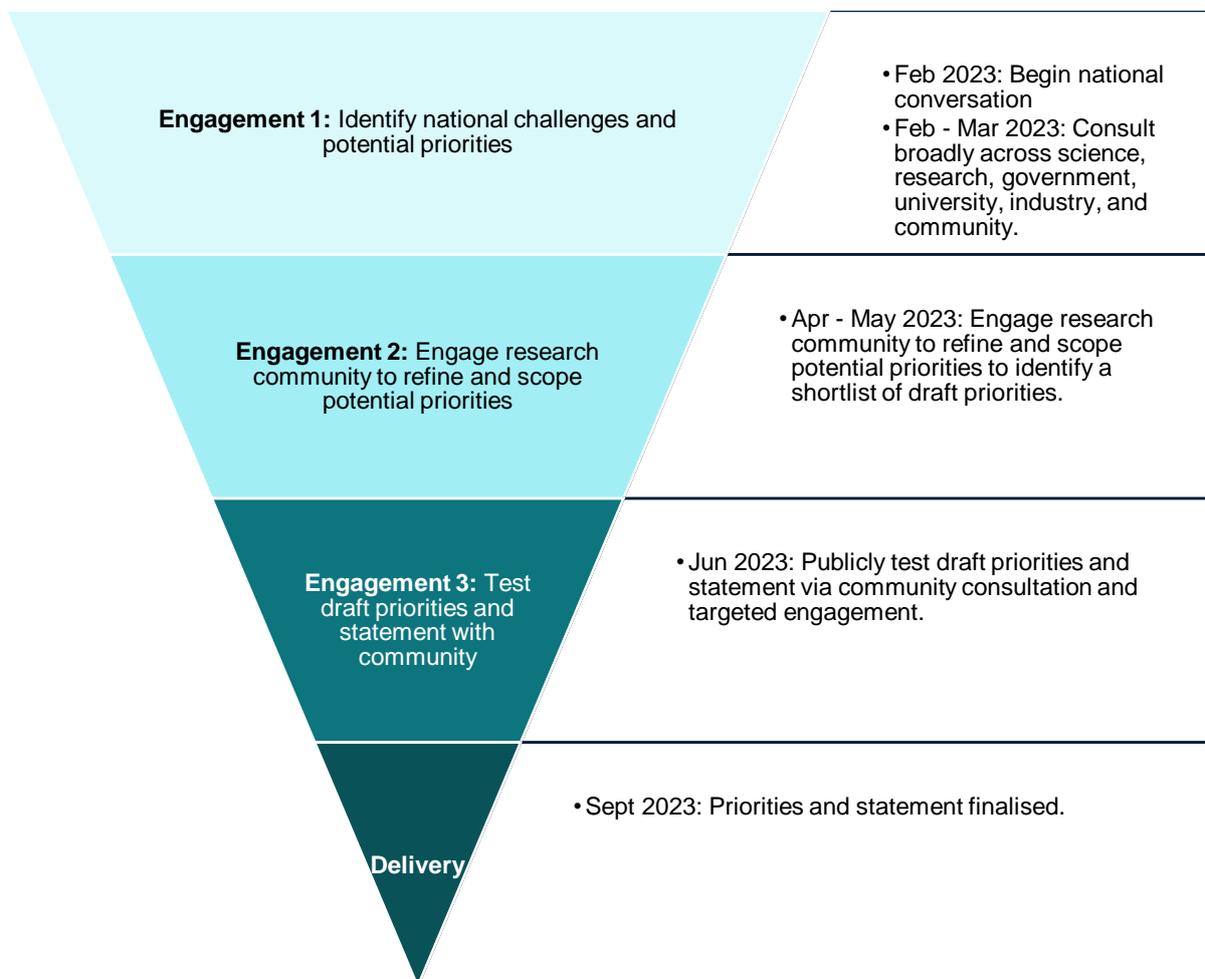


Figure 1: Outline of community engagement in the setting of Australia's science priorities

How to contribute

Let us know your views through our Consultation Hub. We will publish submissions online after the consultation closes. You can ask that your submission is kept confidential and not published.

We are also scheduling roundtable discussions and meetings. For details, subscribe for updates on our [website](#).