Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Emissions Reduction Plan 2026









Information	Details
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Purpose:	The goal of this Emissions Reduction Plan is to provide a pathway for the Department of Social Services to meet net zero emission targets through reduction activities.
Category:	Corporate
Applicable to:	All staff, including contractors, consultants and visitors.
Relevant Authority:	Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy and Roadmap describes the approach for implementing the Australian Government's commitment to achieve net zero emissions from government operations by 2030 as included in Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution Communication 2022 under the Paris Agreement.
Related Documents:	Net Zero in Government Operations Annual Progress Report Department of Social Services Corporate Plan Department of Social Services Annual Report Emissions Reduction Plan | Department of Social Services
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Acknowledgement of Country

The department acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures, and the Elders past and present.

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Declaration of targets and Accountable Authority sign-off

The Australian Government released the Net Zero in Government Operations (NZGO) Strategy in November 2023, setting out the overall approach and action required by Commonwealth entities to achieve the APS Net Zero 2030 Target (2030 Target). The NZGO Strategy represents a commitment by the Australian Government to lead by example on emissions reduction and contribute to the decarbonisation of Australia's economy.

The Department of Social Services (the department) is committed to the 2030 Target in full, as per the NZGO Strategy. The 2030 Target is the target set by the government to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from government operations by the year 2030. It includes Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from activities in Australia and its territories, as described in the NZGO Strategy. It applies at the aggregate level to non-corporate Commonwealth entities and those Commonwealth entities and companies who opt-in and generally covers the entirety of the entity's organisation.

From the department's perspective, this means minimising the greenhouse gas emissions that are within our control. The department is committed to the achievement of the government's 2030 Target. This Emissions Reduction Plan describes the priorities and actions the department is taking to reduce our operational emissions and contribute to the 2030 Target.



Michael Lye
Secretary

Emissions Reduction Plan

Purpose

The Department of Social Services (the department) is implementing emissions reduction initiatives in line with the Australian Government's Net Zero in Government Operations (NZGO) Strategy, developed by the Department of Finance. The NZGO Strategy sets out the government's approach to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions from its operations by 2030, including the reinstatement of public emissions reporting.

The purpose of this Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) is to provide a pathway for the department to contribute to achievement of the APS Net Zero 2030 Target (2030 Target) through emissions reduction activities. The ERP encompasses both existing and new priorities and actions within the department to reduce emissions.

This ERP has been developed in accordance with the NZGO Strategy, associated guidance and relevant reporting standards for annual emissions reporting.

Governance and reporting

The ERP annual update summarises progress against the actions and targets set out in the ERP for the department. Business areas provided updates through our staff-led sustainability network (ECONet), which comprises the Branch Manager, Financial Management and Property Services (chair), and the leads from departmental functions such as Property, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Procurement and Fleet.

The department recorded progress using our emissions reporting and other indicators relevant to our operations as defined in the ERP, including total Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions (t CO_2-e) and the percentage change from our baseline year.

Department of Social Services operational context

As at 30 June 2026, the department operates across all Australian states and territories, with staff located in 16 sites across Australia of which 9 properties are leased directly. Leasing and facilities management activities are managed under the whole-of-government Property Services Coordinated Procurement Arrangements.

The department has staff located in 7 properties which are sub-leased from other government departments under Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements. The department does not have operational control of MoU properties.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and staff from 5 other MoU agreements are located within the department's tenancies.

The department operates a small fleet of 20 leased vehicles to support the delivery of services across all Australian states and territories, of which 12 are Low Emission Vehicles, including 10 Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) and 2 Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs).

The provision of ICT services including infrastructure, support, and maintenance of equipment, is provided by Services Australia under a managed service arrangement.

The department's use of cloud, data and artificial intelligence services is expected to contribute to changing demand for computing capacity. The department will consider the energy and emissions implications of these services as part of its broader approach to managing the ICT emissions footprint, including through its managed services and technology procurement arrangements.

All procurement is undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. For the full financial year 2025-26, the department entered into 236 contracts with a total estimated value of $6.4 billion.

All departmental travel is undertaken utilising the whole-of-government Travel Arrangements which includes travel management services, domestic and international air travel services, domestic accommodation, domestic vehicle rental services and travel and procurement payment services.

For the full financial year 2025-26, the department undertook 1,619 domestic and international trips.

On 13 May 2025, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet released Administrative Arrangements Orders (AAOs) regarding Machinery of Government changes that affected the department. As per the AAOs, housing, rental and homelessness functions have been transferred to Department of the Treasury and disability functions (except Disability Employment Services) have been transferred to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. These changes have not been reflected in the department's baseline emissions and previous years' emissions reporting.

Engagement

In developing this ERP, the department collaborated with a range of internal and external stakeholders, including:

- Department of Finance and the Climate Action in Government Operations unit, to ensure alignment with the NZGO Strategy and Commonwealth Climate Disclosure requirements.
- Department of Finance Fleet team, and departmental fleet team to explore options associated with the transition to low emissions vehicles.
- Department of Finance Travel team and departmental travel team, to consider options and approaches for reducing emissions associated with official travel.
- Social Services portfolio (the portfolio) entities, where applicable, to identify opportunities to address shared considerations and reduce emissions across the portfolio.

The following branches within the department were involved in developing the ERP:

- Financial Management and Property Services Branch – in relation to net zero energy, buildings, fleet, procurement and travel.
- Chief Information Officer Branch – in relation to net zero ICT.

Emissions inventory

The department's baseline emissions were established using data from the 2022-23 financial year and remain the reference point for measuring progress against emissions reduction actions.

In 2024-25, the department recorded an overall reduction in combined Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions relative to the baseline year. The percentage change since baseline for each emissions source is presented in **Table 1**.

As shown in **Table 1**, electricity related emissions (Scope 2, market based) decreased in the reporting year compared to the baseline. This decrease is primarily attributable to purchasing 100% GreenPower, in one large-market electricity contract extension.

Continued reduced emissions were recorded in fleet along with other vehicle emissions such as short-term hire car.

Second annual update, third year of reporting

Table 1: Greenhouse gas emissions inventory and annual progress towards net zero emissions

APS Net Zero 2030 target emissions sources	FY 2022-23 t CO_2-e (baseline)	FY 2023-24 t CO_2-e (2nd year)	FY 2024-25 t CO_2-e (3rd year)	Percentage change since baseline
Total Scope 1	18.80	19.18	15.53	-17%
Natural gas	-	-	-	n/a
Solid waste	n/a	n/a	-	n/a
Fleet and other vehicles	18.80	19.18	15.53	-17%
Refrigerants	n/e	-	-	n/a
Other energy	-	-	-	n/a
Total Scope 2	455.12	425.50	248.89	-45%
Electricity (market-based approach)	455.12	425.50	248.89	-45%
Total Scope 1 and Scope 2	473.92	444.68	264.42	-44%

Notes:
The table above only includes Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and excludes Scope 3 emissions.
The table above presents emissions related to electricity usage using the market-based accounting method.
t CO_2-e = tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents.

Emissions reported may differ from previously published emissions due to reconciliation of natural gas and electricity data or updates to emission factors and calculation methods. See 2024-25 Net Zero in Government Operations Annual Progress Report for details regarding emission factors and calculation methods updates.

APS Net Zero 2030 Target

The department is in scope of the 2030 Target, as per the Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy.

The metric used to set the 2030 Target is t CO_2-e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent).

The 2030 Target is defined in the NZGO Strategy as: "A target set by the Australian Government to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from government operations by the year 2030."

The objective of the 2030 Target is to reduce emissions to mitigate further impacts of climate change. It applies to all non-corporate Commonwealth entities, and any corporate Commonwealth entities or Commonwealth companies that opt-in. The organisational boundary is the whole entity, unless an exemption has been agreed for security or other reasons.

The timeframe for achieving the net greenhouse gas emissions target is from 16 June 2022 to 30 June 2031.

The initial baseline as per the NZGO Strategy is the 2022-23 financial year. The initial baseline may change as additional emissions sources are included in the future.

Our specific interim targets are detailed within this ERP.

The 2030 Target is an absolute target.

The 2030 Target forms part of Australia's international climate commitments, including Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement.

The 2030 Target methodology has not been reviewed by a third party.

In 2026-27, the Department of Finance will undertake a mid-term review of the NZGO Strategy to consider overall progress to date, domestic expectations and any recommended changes to the 2030 Target and associated NZGO Strategy.

Interim metrics used to monitor performance are detailed within this ERP and our annual climate disclosure.

Progress against the aggregated 2030 Target for the Australian Public Service, including metrics, is detailed within the Climate Action in Government Operations Annual Progress Report prepared by the Department of Finance.

During the reporting period there were no changes to the 2030 Target.

The following greenhouse gas emissions are included in the APS Net Zero Emissions Reporting Framework and 2030 Target: carbon dioxide (CO_2); methane (CH_4); nitrous oxide (N_2O); hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs); perfluorocarbons (PFCs); sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6); and nitrogen trifluoride (N_3).

The 2030 Target includes Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and is a net greenhouse gas emissions target.

It was not derived using a sectoral decarbonisation approach.

As part of our commitment to the 2030 Target, we also commit to the relevant targets in the NZGO Strategy. This includes:

- developing an ERP, and
- publishing our annual progress towards the 2030 Target, as measured by percentage of overall emissions reduction each year, in the annual updates to the ERP.

Additional interim targets are detailed within this ERP and subsequent ERPs.

The published locations of our previous ERPs are also included in this ERP.

Interim targets

The department has not set any interim targets (time-bound milestones) to reduce combined Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions, relative to the 2022-23 baseline.

Broader climate-related targets

This section reports on progress against the broader climate-related targets set out in the entity's long-term ERP, beyond the 2030 Target. By addressing key emissions drivers these targets support reductions in operational emissions.

Progress against each target is summarised in the **Appendix A**, and the department will continue monitor and report progress annually.

Priorities and actions

Over the reporting period, the department progressed implementation of priority actions identified in our previous Emissions Reduction Plans, with a continued focus on electricity, property and fleet emissions as the largest sources of operational emissions. Actions progressed during the year included increasing access to renewable electricity through purchasing 100% GreenPower and continuing the transition of the passenger vehicle fleet towards low and zero emissions options.

A summary of progress against priorities and actions identified within the ERP is provided below:

- Energy: Purchasing 100% GreenPower in one contract extension from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027.
- Buildings: Incorporating Green Lease Schedules into 2 new leases. Working with landlords to install Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure within 1 leased premises.
- Fleet: Transitioning 92% of our fleet to Low Emissions Vehicles, including: 10 BEVs and 2 PHEVs. All other vehicles are fit for purpose.
- People, culture and capability: Promoting the Net Zero Procurement training to relevant staff.
- ICT: Continuing to use data centre facilities that meet the Australian Government's minimum environmental performance standards. The department will work with Services Australia and relevant technology providers to consider AI and other compute-intensive services as emerging drivers of ICT demand and to identify practical opportunities to manage the associated energy use and emissions footprint.

Appendix A: Annual progress on broader climate-related targets

Category	Measure	Responsible area the	Timeframe	Status	Progress update
Net Zero Energy	**Electricity procurement** Procure renewable energy through participating in the WoAG renewable electricity procurement, when available.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department purchased 100% GreenPower (effective from 1 January 2026) in one contract extension. The department participated in the Australian Government Electricity Services Arrangement (large market) for the Australian Capital Territory (effective from 1 July 2026). Future iterations of this plan will align with the Department of Finance's approach to small market electricity and landlord embedded networks, when available.
Net Zero Buildings	**Commonwealth National Lease (CNL)** From 1 January 2025, incorporate additional environmental sustainability and emission reduction elements into the CNL template to negotiate with landlords.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department incorporated additional sustainability considerations into 2 new leases.
	Green Lease Schedule (GLS) From 1 January 2025, review new leases over 1,000m^2 and 4 years duration to include the relevant version of the GLS.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department included a GLS in 2 new leases.
	EV charging From 1 January 2025, review office space with allocated parking, and electric fleet vehicles on site, to support electric vehicle charging, where possible.	Property Services	Ongoing	At risk	The department incorporated an EV charging plan into its Property Management Plan. The department's landlords installed EV charging infrastructure within one leased premises. The department will continue to work with landlords to install charging stations within leased premises carparking.

Category	Measure	Responsible area the	Timeframe	Status	Progress update
	NABERS ratings From 1 July 2025, ensure new leases over 1,000 m^2 and 4 years duration are working towards and can maintain a 5.5 star or higher base building and tenancy NABERS energy rating.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department included a 5.5-star NABERS target in 2 new leases.
	GBCA Green Star ratings From 1 July 2026, contracts for the purchase or construction of office spaces with a value greater than $15 million must obtain a GBCA 4-star Green Star rating (minimum) using the climate positive pathway and 6-star NABERS energy rating.	Property Services	Ongoing	Not started	The department did not undertake any procurements that met the value threshold.
	Electrification From 1 July 2026, review contracts for the purchase or construction of office space to ensure they include all-electric where available[1].	Property Services	Ongoing	Not started	The department did not undertake any procurements for the purchase or construction of office space.
	Energy efficiency measures Consider the use of energy efficient lighting solutions including sensor lights and LED. Consider conducting audits of operational use of buildings and operation of plant and equipment by building management systems (BMS) to identify BMS tuning opportunities and resource consumption reduction. Reduce power consumption by using technology that automatically switches off when left on and unattended. Using heating/cooling air conditioning timers in meeting rooms and breakout areas.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department has incorporated energy efficiency measures in the Property fit-out brief.

[1] This includes building heating, cooling and water heating but excludes backup generation, subject to the 2026-27 Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy review.

Category	Measure	Responsible area the	Timeframe	Status	Progress update
	Minimise environmental impacts Minimise use of hazardous waste materials. Target premium Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) ratings, where possible.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy principles are incorporated in the Property fit-out brief.
	Reducing landfill Promote waste management practices. Provide recycling bins in every site and provide organic waste bins, where possible. Support a circular economy through reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycled content use, where possible.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department's waste service provider completed a waste audit of the department's national office.
Net Zero Fleet	Transition 25% of new passenger vehicle orders to low emission vehicles.	Fleet Team	1 July 2023	Completed	
	Transition 50% of new passenger vehicle orders to low emission vehicles.	Fleet Team	1 July 2024	Completed	
	Transition 75% of new passenger vehicle orders to low emission vehicles.	Fleet Team	1 July 2025	Completed	The department has transitioned 92% of our passenger fleet to low emission vehicles, including 10 BEVs and 2 PHEVs. All other vehicles are fit for purpose.
Net Zero ICT	Continue to work in partnership with Services Australia to ensure new data facilities, which are sourced outside the whole-of-government panel arrangement, are required to achieve, and maintain 5 stars NABERS rating or equivalent environmental rating, such as a Power Usage Effectiveness of 1.4 or less.	CIO Branch	Ongoing	On track	Services Australia confirmed the data facilities already meet the minimum standards.
	Continue to participate in the whole-of-government digital marketplace panel, wherever possible.	CIO Branch	Ongoing	On track	
	Continue using new technology that allows staff to 'wake up' PCs that have been switched off to install software updates.	CIO Branch	Ongoing	On track	

Category	Measure	Responsible area the	Timeframe	Status	Progress update
Net Zero Procurement	Commit to supporting training and guidance, including the government's Sustainable Procurement Guide to be embedded into the department's procurement process, training, and templates.	Procurement and Contracts	1 January 2025	Completed	The department considers the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy and the Sustainable Procurement Guide when undertaking procurements. Environmentally Sustainable Procurement training courses are available on the department's online Learning Management System.
	Purchase 100% recycled content paper for internal printers, photocopiers, and multifunction devices.	Procurement and Contracts	Ongoing	On track	
	Only where all options associated with emissions avoidance and reduction have been exhausted should residual emissions be addressed through the purchase of offsets, when available.	Procurement and Contracts	When available	Not started	
Net Zero Travel	Ensure the travel policy is updated to enable and encourage low-emission sources of transport, such as trains or other land-based transport.	Procurement and Contracts	August 2024	Completed	
	Work with staff responsible for booking travel to ensure they consider energy ratings in the Online Booking Tool once available under the whole-of-government arrangements.	Procurement and Contracts	Ongoing	On track	
People, Culture and Capability	Appoint a Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO)	Property Services	August 2024	Completed	The department has appointed the Chief Operating Officer (COO) to be the CSO. The role of the CSO is to: • champion the Strategy and related initiatives that support climate action in government operations. • represent the department in the CSO network.

Category	Measure	Responsible area the	Timeframe	Status	Progress update
	Communicate the ERP	Property Services	2024-25	Completed	The department communicated the Emissions Reduction Plan through multiple channels including the Secretary's update, COO all staff message, intranet and internet.
	Support and promote APS Academy advice, guidance, tools, case studies and training programs, when available.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department promoted the Net Zero Procurement training to relevant staff.
	Promote employee engagement and staff-led initiatives such as WoAG Environmental Contact Officer network (ECONet), when available.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department's ECONet (formerly referred to as the Net Zero Working Group) is an officer-level working group, chaired by the Branch Manager, Financial Management and Property Services. The department's ECONet is responsible for developing and maintaining the department's ERP and including Emissions Reporting in the Annual Report.
	Update intranet pages to promote: • Fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. • Thinking before printing. • The importance of shutting down equipment. • Effective use of blinds to optimise air conditioner and heating system efficiency.	Property Services	Ongoing	Completed	
	Participate in Earth Hour each year.	Property Services	Ongoing	On track	The department participated in Earth Hour 2026.

Owner/contact officer

CSO and/or COO.

More information

For more information, please contact Property Services, Financial Management and Property Services Branch by email netzero@dss.gov.au.