

# **Independent Reporting Mechanism**

Australia Co-Creation Brief  
2025

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Open  
Government  
Partnership



Independent  
Reporting  
Mechanism

# Overview

This brief from the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) supports the co-creation process and design of Australia's fourth action plan. It provides an overview of OGP processes in the country and presents recommendations based on collective and country specific IRM findings. The co-creation brief draws from prior IRM reports for [Australia](#), the [OGP National Handbook](#), [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#), and IRM guidance on [the minimum requirements](#). Section 1 offers guidance for OGP processes and co-creation and Section 2 for commitment design. Government and civil society can determine the extent to which this brief is used to shape the next action plan's trajectory and content.

Australia's OGP action plans have achieved important progress combating corporate crime, improving the accessibility of government information, and enhancing public participation in government decision-making. The third action plan renewed engagement in OGP following a period of inactivity, capturing key government priorities and planned integrity reforms. The plan's design did not meet the minimum requirements of the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards, as the co-creation timeline was published after the process had started, and public suggestions did not receive reasoned response. However, the process built positive momentum for collaboration between government and civil society on open government reforms and reengaged the Open Government Forum. Even beyond OGP, the forum has begun to exercise wider oversight on open government in Australia, a good practice to keep moving forward. For the next action plan, Australia has the opportunity to continue aligning OGP with key government priorities and build on momentum towards reform. Ambitious commitments could introduce a new focus on climate action and civic space, and continue efforts to enhance whistleblower protection, political integrity, and beneficial ownership transparency.

To strengthen the co-creation process, the IRM recommends the following:

- Provide advanced notice of the co-creation timeline.
- Widen engagement in co-creation.
- Provide reasoned response to stakeholders.

## Section I: Action Plan Co-Creation

The following recommendations present opportunities for national reformers to strengthen OGP institutions and processes in the country.

### Recommendation 1. Provide advanced notice of the co-creation timeline

Standard 3 of the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#) requires member countries to provide inclusive and informed opportunities for public participation during development of the action plan. During the previous co-creation process, Australia published an infographic on the pathway to the third action plan. However, it was not shared with stakeholders two weeks before the development process began. This limited opportunities for stakeholders beyond the Open Government Forum to receive information on how to engage with the process from the very beginning. To meet this standard, the IRM recommends publishing a co-creation timeline and overview of opportunities to participate in the fourth action plan on the OGP website well in advance of the start of co-creation (at least two weeks before, but ideally longer). Together with the Open Government Forum, the Attorney-General's Department can provide advanced notice that outlines clear stages of the process, roles, and expectations. This can include information on the planned methods and decision-making process, such as how commitments will be drafted, how language will be proposed, and how final decisions will be made. Providing advanced notice ensures that participants are well prepared to provide input or participate in decision-making processes.

### Recommendation 2. Widen engagement in co-creation

For the fourth action plan, Australia could widen engagement in co-creation. During the previous co-creation process, the urgency to meet deadlines in a short period of time meant that consultation with stakeholders relied on outreach by working groups and the action plan's commitments were mostly proposed by government agencies. To widen engagement, the Attorney-General's Department and Open Government Forum could consider a six-month period to develop the next action plan. With a longer timeframe, stronger outreach or a media campaign could elicit wider engagement in the co-creation process across Australia, bringing in non-traditional and marginalised communities. For instance, the [Finnish process](#) incorporated national dialogues targeting marginalised communities. In Australia, civil society organizations on the Open Government Forum can take a proactive role in engaging other community members in the process. A more balanced mix of government and civil society commitments could also be achieved. Evidence from ten years of OGP shows that a high level of public participation in action plan design is linked to more diverse action plans and more ambitious commitments.

### **Recommendation 3. Provide reasoned response to stakeholders**

Standard 4 of the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#) requires member countries to provide a reasoned response and ensure ongoing dialogue between government and non-governmental stakeholders during co-creation of the action plan. During the previous co-creation process, Australia published responses to online surveys, but did not provide reasoned response to stakeholders' suggestions. To meet this standard, the IRM recommends that before the end of the fourth action plan's co-creation period, the Attorney-General's Department or Open Government Forum publishes written feedback to stakeholders to report back on how their contributions were considered during development of the action plan. The response can include reasoning for the selection of commitments, justifications for commitment proposals not adopted, and other feedback as appropriate. Canada's [What We Heard](#) report offers a useful model for this practice.

## Section II: Action Plan Design

The following recommendations offer policy areas for national actors to consider in the next action plan. They may represent opportunities for new commitments to address issues of national importance or to advance existing reforms.

### Area 1. Whistleblower Protection

Australia's third action plan is progressing a promising commitment to reform the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PID Act), which established the Commonwealth public sector whistleblowing scheme. Where secrecy laws stand in the way of legitimate whistleblowing, the next plan could implement [reforms foreseen](#) in response to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Secrecy Review. A commitment could also implement a new [Whistleblower Protection Authority](#). Transparency International Australia, the Human Rights Law Centre, and Griffith University identify this as the missing piece of Australia's national integrity landscape. First proposed by a Senate select committee in 1994, establishment of this authority was endorsed by the bipartisan Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services in November 2024. Counterparts in [Spain](#) and the [Republic of Korea](#) offer different approaches to using OGP commitments as a mechanism for strengthening whistleblower protection.

### Area 2. Political Integrity

The fourth action plan can strengthen the approach to political integrity from the previous two plans. Australians place high trust in government, but are concerned about private interests steering public policies, according to [surveying by the OECD](#). Transparent political finance can help continue to increase public trust in government, as outlined by the [Open Gov Guide](#).

Following passage of the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Reform) Bill in 2025, the next action plan could fill gaps in political finance laws. It could focus on aggregation of donations, spending caps, a new independent expert commission, special treatment of nominated entities, disclosure of all cash-for-access and corporate donations, and charities' voice in election debates – drawing on the [recommendations](#) of the Australia Institute, the Centre for Public Integrity, the Australian Democracy Network, and Transparency International Australia.

The fourth action plan could also accept suggestions made during the previous plan's consultations to focus on lobbying and peoples' ability to move between the public and private sectors. It could follow recommendations to [take action](#) on mandatory lobbyist registration, introduce a database for real-time disclosure of meetings between lobbyists and public officials, address cooling-off periods for former officials, strengthen regulations on access to parliament, or improve relevant independent oversight and enforcement. Australia could draw on the example of [Croatia's](#) political funding disclosure website, which has contributed to improved public monitoring and oversight by authorities.

### Area 3. Beneficial Ownership Transparency

Without adequate requirements on beneficial ownership disclosure, [Australian companies](#) have been used to disguise the identity of those involved in corruption and other illicit activities. Australia's first and third action plans began commitments to improve beneficial ownership transparency. In its fourth action plan, the Australian government could implement its decision to [introduce a beneficial ownership register](#). A publicly accessible register could increase the effectiveness of regulatory oversight of corruption or other illicit activities, including tax evasion, money laundering, bribery, corruption, and terrorism financing. Reformers could draw on the [Beneficial Ownership Data Standard](#) and resources from the [Open Gov Guide](#). Counterparts in [Portugal](#), the [United Kingdom](#), [Indonesia](#), and [Armenia](#) offer different pathways to leverage the OGP platform in order to achieve beneficial ownership transparency.

### Area 4. Climate Action

Australia's fourth action plan could introduce new commitments on climate action. With billions committed to [secure the supply chain of minerals](#) needed for [energy transition](#) and to the Future Made in Australia programme, open government mechanisms can help [embed transparency, accountability, and participation](#). Commitments could amplify civil society and marginalized voices as equal partners in shaping energy and climate policies, including First Nations leadership and local communities. Commitments could also focus on strengthening Australia's climate integrity framework, improving ethical resource management by government, and the accessibility of information on climate action and critical minerals. Reformers can draw on climate and environment resources from the [Open Gov Guide](#). Counterparts in [Argentina](#) and [Uruguay](#) offer examples of how open government mechanisms can effectively contribute to climate action.

### Area 5. Civic Space

The ability of Australians to organize and participate freely, without fear of intimidation, is essential to safeguarding democracy and ensuring that institutions are open, inclusive, accountable, and responsive. Since 2019, CIVICUS has assessed Australia's civic space as [narrowed](#). Bringing civil society stakeholder priorities to the forefront, Australia could use its OGP platform to introduce new commitments safeguarding civic space and democratic resilience. Reforms could protect [freedom of peaceful assembly](#) by addressing states' laws that restrict the right to protest or instituting measures to eliminate use of excessive force during protests. Reforms could strengthen [media freedom](#) by focussing on secrecy and national security laws, as well as ties between political leaders and large media companies. These efforts could build on the upcoming OECD review of civic space and participation in Australia. Reformers can also make use of civic space resources from the [Open Gov Guide](#) and the experiences of counterparts in OGP's [Democratic Freedoms Learning Network](#) and [Civic Space Lab](#).

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The brief was reviewed by IRM senior staff for consistency, accuracy, and with a view to maximize the context-relevance and actionability of the recommendations. Where appropriate, external reviewers or members of the IRM International Experts Panel (IEP) review briefs.