

Canberra Staff

Corporate Plan Launch

9 November 1995

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Auditor-General for Australia



I would firstly like to thank very sincerely Peter White and his group who were the instruments by which our Corporate Plan was developed and finally delivered. Secondly, thanks are due to all those who contributed their ideas and comments and participated in discussions. Such involvement was essential to the aim for common ownership. No matter what our contribution has been, we now need to 'sign up' to the challenges presented, incorporate the approaches identified in our day-to-day tasks and be part of the accountability for successful outcomes. This has been a team effort and requires a team commitment to ensure that the challenges presented by the Corporate Plan are met.

Corporate planning is a means not an end. That is, the production of the document is not the end of the matter. Unfortunately, too often Corporate Plans simply finish up languishing in bottom drawers or gathering dust on bookshelves - this one is plastic coated so it can stand a lot of use. I suggest we use the document constantly to remind us of the outcomes we want to achieve, the priorities we need to establish and the strategies we have to determine to get results. The strategic linkages with the other more detailed planning processes are well illustrated in our Plan. The key word is integration. That word also applies to the way in which we operate as an ANAO team - FABU, PABU and Corporate - in both central and regional offices. It is only by having a common vision and working together that we will maximise our contribution to improved accountability and overall public sector administration.

A considerable proportion of the benefits of corporate planning is achieved by the involvement of people at all levels in an organisation. This is an explicit recognition that it is our people who deliver the required outcomes. The processes by which agreement and commitment are obtained are therefore of the greatest importance to the ultimate success of the Plan for the period to which it is intended to apply. We all need to agree on a common purpose. That is, we need to understand clearly the business we are in. We need to agree on our objectives, who are our stakeholders and what will be reasonable assessments of our performance. I consider we are well on the way to doing this, for example by translating these requirements into our various business and operational plans. Importantly, however, they need to be reflected in our individual performance agreements and personal development plans. Finally, our performance has to reflect the values and priorities we have set for ourselves. The latter have to be an integral part of all we do.

Again, this is not the end of the process. We need to review constantly not only our achievements in relation to the Corporate Plan challenges but also the ongoing relevance of its various elements. In these ways the Corporate Plan is a 'living document' directly related to the circumstances and demands of the time. What we learn over time will also be an

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investment in our next Corporate Plan. We will be truly a 'learning' organisation.

You have heard many of us talk about the ANAO going through a period of consolidation. This follows a period of considerable upheaval. We all know that change has become the constant in our organisations. Corporate planning helps us deal and cope with such change. If we are successful we promote confidence both within and outside the Office in its performance. We know how dependent we are on our perceived independence, credibility and professionalism. In these respects, and with slight adaptation to the old adage, 'results speak louder than words' has to be our particular challenge.

I consider we have already done much to identify more clearly our future directions. This is certainly the case for the two main business units. We have three reviews in train bearing on our regional offices and corporate and information services. I am hopeful we will have settled our future directions in those areas from those reviews by next February/March. This should provide greater focus and confidence for all of us but particularly for those most directly affected. We will manage sensitively and co-operatively any changes that result from the reviews over a time period that takes into account both the impact on our people and their environment and our business performance. My commitment is that we will manage change, not the reverse.

We will have a better chance of achieving our organisational objectives if we operate in a more integrated team environment. We need to value and respect the contribution of each other. That is a challenge as well as a discipline. As I noted earlier, an important part of corporate planning is understanding the business we are in. There is an urgent requirement to integrate better our corporate and information services with our two main business units. This will only occur successfully if the people in the various service areas make a concerted effort to understand those businesses so that they can better align their services to the relevant business imperatives. There is an equal responsibility on the audit community to recognise and appreciate the contribution that such services can make to their ability to actually do their jobs as well as to add value to the audit process. Unfortunately, we often only recognise the value of such services when something goes wrong.

As you have heard me say on a number of occasions since I became Auditor-General, our major aim - consistent with our corporate vision - should be to add value to public administration. We will also continue to provide assurance to the Parliament, and through it to the Australian community, of the accountability of the Government and the Australian Public Service. We will focus on improving performance. This will largely be done by identifying better or best practice and areas where

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improvements need to be made, whether in, say, internal control systems or quality client service delivery. The new Audits of Financial Controls and Administration are a good illustration of what I think is a challenging initiative in this regard. They will be an important test in this respect.

To reiterate, the prime focus of our Corporate Plan is on our people and their ability to undertake their work. We will be seeking to achieve a better balance between home and work lives. We will be consulting with you as to ways in which we can improve our overall working environment. We will be putting in considerable effort to improve our approach to personal development. That requires a two-way commitment as in many other facets of our Corporate Plan. We will be continuing to promote the development of our 'breakthrough' or 'continuous improvement' teams. I urge you to consider being part of these teams at some stage, as I consider they would always benefit from new ideas and approaches. As well, it is a very good personal development opportunity. This also applies to interchanges elsewhere which we will continue to encourage.

Let me finish by reiterating my personal vision for the ANAO:

- (1) it will be the organisation that people first think about when looking for independent advice on accountability for performance of the commonwealth public sector;
- (2) it will be an organisation for which people want to work; and
- (3) it will be recognised and respected for the quality and professionalism of its work.

On that note, I commend to you our Corporate Plan for the period 1995-98 and ask for your commitment to its values, challenges and outcomes.