30 September 2026

To: Productivity Commission

Re: Business reporting requirements

Introduction

The Australian Government has asked the Productivity Commission (PC) to undertake an inquiry into opportunities to improve the efficiency and value of non-financial business reporting requirements.

Reporting requirements impose costs on reporting businesses, and sometimes on the businesses that work with them. Costs can include, but are not limited to, the time required to understand reporting obligations, establishment of reporting systems, collection and maintenance of information, preparation and submission of reports, and demonstration of compliance to regulators. There is frequent duplication in these reporting requirements. The most obvious are Federal and State overlap and interstate licencing issues.

About AMEC

AMEC is a national industry association representing over 550 member companies across Australia, with over half invested in Western Australia (WA). Our members are mineral explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry. Collectively, AMEC's member companies account for over $100 billion of the mineral exploration and mining sector's capital value.

Mineral exploration and mining make a critical contribution to Australia's economy, directly employing over 314,000 people. In 2025-26, the industry generated $383 billion in resource exports, invested $3.95 billion in exploration expenditure to discover future mines (2025), and collectively paid over $59.4 billion in royalties and taxes.

General Comments

The growing number of Australian Government reporting and regulatory frameworks creates a complex compliance environment for business. Differing definitions, thresholds, reporting entities and reporting periods across regulatory systems, and also across different State jurisdictions, can result in businesses undertaking multiple processes to report substantially the same underling information.

One definition

The Australian Government should prioritise, and co-ordinate with all States and Territories, consistent definitions, threshold and reporting requirements across regulatory systems and frameworks. The inconsistency of definitions creates costs. This is particularly evident in the environmental regulatory sphere, with the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation*

Act 1999 having differing definitions than the States and Territories legislative frameworks. The assessment bilateral that are currently being negotiated and sought provide the pathway to a solution. However, there are still areas for improvement, for example, what is defined as a threatened species differs for the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories. Unifying those lists will reduce uncertainty and cost.

Tell us once

A "tell us once" principle, should be adopted as a core regulatory or business reporting requirement design principle. This should apply to State and Territory jurisdictions too. The Australian Government should strongly encourage the States and Territories to adopt this design principle. Where information has been provided to one government agency, businesses should not be required to provide the same information again to another agency where that information can be appropriately shared and relied upon. The age of digitalisation, the cloud, and data sharing make this easier than it has been historically.

Legislative barriers

Across Federal and State governments there are differing legislative barriers to the sharing of information. Including, privacy provisions, specific secrecy or confidentiality provisions and statutory restrictions on onward disclosure. These Acts include but are not limited to the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Taxation Administration Act 1953 (Cth) and Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), Freedom of Information Acts. These barriers have developed in response to specific issues and needs. However, cumulatively they can result in unproductive duplicative form filling.

Legislative opportunities

The Western Australian Government recently introduced the *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (WA Act) which legislated for responsible information sharing. Western Australia took a new and unique approach in combining essential privacy protections and a robust information sharing framework into a single Act.

Other States and Territories have legislation that facilitates information sharing but is limited or sector specific. For example, New South Wales has the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, and Victoria a Family Violence Information Sharing scheme. The WA Act goes beyond simply establish privacy rules, and then provide exceptions where agencies may share information. It creates an affirmative statutory framework for responsible information sharing. The WA Act may provide a model that other governments could emulate.

In 2025, the Australian Government did pass legislation that supported the "tell us once" approach to government service delivery, in relation to Services Australia, with the *Regulatory Reform Omnibus Act 2025*[1]. This was introduced as a result of the inefficiencies of repeated requests for the same information across agencies being highlighted during the 2025

[1] https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bId=r7380

Economic reform Roundtable. The *Regulatory Reform Omnibus Act 2025* demonstrates the Australian Government's recognition that repeated requests for the same information impose unnecessary costs.

Audit what information is held

Government should undertake a systematic review of the legal and administrative barriers that prevent appropriate information-sharing between Commonwealth regulators. This should include consideration of privacy, commercial confidentiality and statutory secrecy provisions, with reforms pursued where these provisions unnecessarily prevent regulators from using information that has already been provided by industry.

Of course, appropriate safeguards must remain in place for commercially sensitive and confidential information. However, confidentiality provisions should not become a justification for maintaining unnecessary duplication in reporting requirements.

For resources companies, regulatory duplication is not simply an administrative inconvenience. It consumes technical, professional and management resources that could otherwise be directed towards investment, exploration, project development, environmental management and productivity improvements.

A coordinated “tell us once” framework, supported by consistent definitions, common metrics and effective data-sharing, would reduce unnecessary compliance costs while maintaining the quality and integrity of regulatory information. It would also provide greater certainty for industry and help ensure that Australia's regulatory framework supports, rather than unnecessarily constrains, investment and economic activity.

Make reported data reuseable

A related frustration to duplicative business reporting requirements is that data has been provided to the Government historically, but it is not accessible or in a useable format. This is unproductive, and creates repeated reporting.

An example of constrained data, is in Western Australia the publication and sharing of hydrogeological reports is bound by intellectual property restrictions. The Government has no legislative pathway to use the hydrological data they are given or share it. The Western Australian legislative framework governing water is acknowledged as badly needing reform.

How drilling core is handled in most jurisdictions in Australia provides a neat counter example of how to unconstrain data, without forgoing commercial advantage. Under the Mining Act (1978) and Mining Regulations (1981), Regulation 96D, the Minister for Mines may request drill core from mineral tenement holders in Western Australia. As detailed in Mining Regulations 1981 R96D, companies must retain their own core archive and provide at least three months’ written notice if they plan to destroy core so that diamond drill core may be set aside for inclusion in the Western Australian Geological Survey of Western Australia (GSWA) department’s core libraries.

GSWA then curate a library of core that is a public good, that can then be analysed. This is an example of public reporting that creates a public good that creates precompetitive data and is a regulatory framework that has reinforced the phenomenal geological advantages Western Australia has.

The Environmental Information Australia agency has the potential to undertake a similar function. Australian mining and mineral exploration have undertaken considerable surveys across remote and regional Australia.

Industry has also reported that if asked they would release more data but would have to be asked. The default legal advice provided to companies in-house is to not share and release information as to do so may be sacrificing an unseen competitive advantage. This is a hurdle that could be overcome in two ways: the Government having a default position that most environmental and commercial data provided to it will be public; and using systems that allow for data sharing, like the Shared Environmental Analytics Framework.

As already discussed, the Western Australian hydrogeological data and the treatment of geological core samples provide an example of opt in (hydro data) and opt out (core samples) approaches. The opt out default creates a much more data rich outcome and could be legislated for.

The Shared Environmental Analytics Framework project[2] (SEAF) is a project managed by the Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute that allows data sharing in both the Pilbara and Cockburn Sound. It allows for deidentified data to be shared and allows for cumulative analysis, without data owners having to sacrifice control of their data. While still being developed, SEAF provides a way to overcome the commercial confidentiality restrictions that can stop cumulative analysis. SEAF shows that commercially sensitive environmental data can be pooled for cumulative analysis without forcing full public disclosure.

Sustainability and Environmental Reporting

This is an ideal time for the Government to re-evaluate sustainability and environmental reporting of businesses, as they implement the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act reforms and have established the National Environmental Protection Agency.

There are many different sustainable and environmental reporting requirements, including climate-related financial disclosures (sustainability reporting), emissions reporting, and pollution reporting requirements.

Carbon reporting

AMEC is advised that our larger businesses are currently re-reporting the same emissions and energy data to multiple Commonwealth regulators and again in sustainability reports. Eliminating duplicate calculations could lead to lower internal reporting and assurance costs. If regulators could access the same validated dataset for different purposes, this would lower the regulatory and reporting requirement burden on Australian businesses and industry.

The Australian Government could conduct a one-off review or stocktake of existing Commonwealth sustainability and environmental reports to identify and reports that can be removed because their data is fully captured elsewhere.

[2] https://wabsi.org.au/our-work/projects/seaf/

EPBC Standards

The reformed *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* will come into legislative effect by 2 December 2026. At that time four of the National Standards will also have effect. They include Standards on Data and Information, which will have far reaching and consequential impacts on how environmental matters are reported. We anticipate that these Standards will lift the rigor of environmental surveys and the scale of environmental reporting. What the quantum of that increase will be is unclear but is expected to grow. It is currently unclear what the unintended consequences are of those changes.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Industry feedback is that they undertake repeated reporting to confirm engagement with the appropriate Traditional Owners around the management of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. Ensuring that the correct Traditional Owners have been engaged appropriately and respectfully is important for industry. However, for each stage of approval from grant of tenure, early environmental approvals for mineral exploration, through to full project approval there are repeated reporting requirements. Providing such evidence can be challenging as many agreements have commercial confidentiality requirements. The regulatory process can reopen sensitive commercial arrangements multiple times, creating uncertainty, without necessarily improving heritage outcomes.

Treasury consultation

It should be noted that there is an irony that this process is in itself duplicative: as the Federal Treasury Department[3] is currently also consulting on ways to reduce the burden of sustainability reporting, including changing assurance rules, providing clearer guidance and reducing the burden of information requests across supply chains.

Final Remarks and Recommendation

Business reporting requirements do impose costs on the reporting businesses. It is incumbent on the Australian Government to ensure that this reporting is done in an efficient way, which does not hinder investment and economic activity.

AMEC recommends the following to reduce the reporting burden on businesses and industry:

- consistent definitions, thresholds and reporting requirements across Federal and States regulatory systems and frameworks, where possible;
- an adoption of the “tell us once” design principle to business reporting requirements;
- develop pathways for the reuse of data between regulators, and as a public good;
- legal barriers to data sharing (privacy, confidentiality, secrecy provisions) being identified and addressed; and
- conduct a one-off review of existing Commonwealth sustainability and environmental reports to identify reports that can be removed as data fully captured elsewhere.
- Liaise with the Commonwealth Treasury regarding their review of reporting requirements.

[3] https://consult.treasury.gov.au/c2025-536708

The objective should not be fewer reports for their own sake, but a reporting system in which information is collected once, used many times, and only requested again where a clear regulatory benefit exists.

AMEC welcomes the opportunity provided by the PC to consult on business reporting requirements. If appropriate, we are happy to discuss further with the PC.

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