The role of the Australian Bureau of Statistics in data governance and stewardship in Australia – a regulatory perspective

UNECE Expert Meeting on Modernizing Statistical Legislation
18-19 November 2021

Julie Greenall-Ota, Principal Legal Officer
Melissa Gare, Director, Policy and Legislation

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Informing Australia’s important decisions
### I. In the public sector data landscape
- ‘Commonwealth arrangements’ for data integration
- BLADE and MADIP integrated data assets
- Data Integration Partnership for Australia
- Data Professional Services stream
  - Leadership, infrastructure development and delivery

### II. In current regulatory initiatives
- New Data Availability and Transparency Bill establishing a new data-sharing scheme for public data
  - Secondments, technical advice
  - Contribution to development of Data Sharing Principles and Accredited Data Service Provider framework

### III. Building on past regulatory initiatives
- Enabling increased user access to microdata
  - Remote Access Data Laboratory
  - TableBuilder analytical tool
  - DataLab
- Developing national integrated data assets and governance framework
I. Developments in the Australian public sector data landscape over time

- **1905:** Census and Statistics Act
- **1975:** Australian Bureau of Statistics Act
- **1983:** Statistics Determination

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT**

- **1905:** Census and Statistics Act
- **1975:** Australian Bureau of Statistics Act
- **1983:** Statistics Determination

**AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS**

- **2003 - 09:** Remote Access Data Laboratory launched
- **2006 - 14:** Table Builder analytical tool released
- **2010 - 12:** ABS accredited as first Integrating Authority
- **2013 - 14:** BLADE Business Longitudinal Data Environment established
- **2015 - 16:** MADIP Multi-Agency Data Integration Project established
- **2017 - 18:** ABS Data Lab established
- **2019 - 20:** Data Integration Partnership for Australia established
- **2021:** Digital Economy Strategy announced

**Notable Initiatives**

- **2003 - 09:** ‘Commonwealth Arrangements’ for integration of Australian Govt data
- **2010 - 12:** Table Builder analytical tool released
- **2015 - 16:** MADIP Multi-Agency Data Integration Project established
- **2017 - 18:** Data Integration Partnership for Australia established
- **2019 - 20:** Office of the National Data Commissioner established
- **2021:** Digital Economy Strategy announced

**Productivity Commission Inquiry into Data Availability and Use**

- **2019 - 20:** Data Availability and Transparency Bill introduced to Parliament

**Data Integration Projects**

- **2015 - 16:** ABS Data Lab established
- **2019 - 20:** Office of the National Data Commissioner established
- **2021:** Digital Economy Strategy announced

**Key Events**

- **2016:** ABS accredited as first Integrating Authority
- **2018:** MADIP Multi-Agency Data Integration Project established
- **2019:** Data Integration Partnership for Australia established

**COVID-19**

- **2020:** ABS Covid-19 Response

**Digital Economy Strategy**
II. Current regulatory initiatives

Data Availability and Transparency Bill 2020

- Grants authority to Government Agencies as data custodians to voluntarily share data with accredited users
- Specifies 3 permitted purposes for sharing data
- Establishes a regulatory framework

II. In current regulatory initiatives

- New Data Availability and Transparency Bill establishing a data-sharing scheme for public data
  - Secondments, technical advice
  - Contribution to development of Data Sharing Principles and Accredited Data Service Provider framework
III. Building on past regulatory initiatives

Increasing access to meet user demands

- Safe data and safe people
- Access to heavily confidentialised data providing limited utility
- Five Safes – data, people, projects, settings and outputs
- Access to more detailed data in controlled (safe) settings for safe people and safe projects with only safe outputs released publicly to maximise utility

Unidentified (basic microdata – 1980’s)
Growing the user base (1990’s)
Harnessing technology (2000’s)
Expanded access pathways (2009)
Integrated data and enhanced access
Data integration – developing enduring assets and a governance framework

**Governance**
- Cross government arrangements including principles to govern the integration of Government data for research purposes
- Integrating Authorities (including accreditation for high risk projects)
- Cross-Government Boards to guide decisions on enduring assets

**Regulation**
- Must be authorised by legislation or by obtaining consent from the data provider to access and use the custodians’ data for research purpose
- Prevent the disclosure of identifiable information
- Privacy Impact Assessments

**Technology**
- Maintain security of data
- Technical tools to integrate data
- Environment to provide safe researcher access
Enduring Integrated Assets

- Core datasets with unit level information and characteristics which can be augmented for specific policy research

**Business**
- Insights to provide a better understanding of the economy and business performance over time across tax, trade and intellectual property data

**Population**
- Whole-of-life insights about people across health, education, government payments, income, taxation, employment and demographics over time

- What kinds of businesses thrive in response to government programs? Which businesses struggle and may need more targeted assistance from government?

- What are the background characteristics and living conditions of vulnerable groups? How does this relate to their use of welfare and medical services?
Conclusion

Through its actions over time
the Australian Bureau of Statistics has
demonstrated its commitment to being
a trusted partner and data steward
in the statistical and data landscape
today and in the future

Contacts: Julie.Greenall-Ota@abs.gov.au and M.Gare@abs.gov.au