

Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF)

Summary Record

Thursday 23 April 2015, ABS House, Canberra

Theme: Data Governance

Chair	Dr Paul Jelfs (ABS)
Attendees	Mr David W. Kalisch (ABS) Mr Ian Ewing (ABS) Ms Cassy Short (ABS) Ms Milly Lubulwa (ABARES, proxy for Mr Walter Shafron) Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) Ms Julie Neville (ATO) Dr Andre Zerger (BoM, proxy for Dr Louise Minty) Mr Glen Malam (BITRE, proxy for Dr Gary Dolman) Ms Judi Dawton (Communications, proxy for Ms Helen Owens) Ms Debbie Mitchell (Employment) Mr Anthony O'Connor (Health) Mr Simon Wight-Wick (Human Services, proxy for Mr Joe Burke) Ms Janice Wykes (Immigration) Mr Andrew Lalor (Industry) Mr Sean Innis (Social Services, proxy for Mr David Dennis) Dr Craig Fowler (NCVER)
Apologies	Mr Peter Harper (ABS), Dr Louise Minty (BoM), Dr Gary Dolman (BITRE), Mr Walter Shafron (ABARES), Ms Helen Owens (Communications), Mr Joe Burke (Human Services), Mr David Dennis (Social Services), Ms Pia Waugh (Finance), Mr Mike Maslen (Environment), Mr Geoffrey Armitage (BREE)
Presenters	Dr Andre Zerger (BoM) Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) Dr Craig Fowler (NCVER) Mr Michael Abbondante (ABS)
Observers	Mr Daniel Phillips (Immigration) Mr Graeme Thompson (ABS)
Minutes	Ms Jacki Agius and Mr Ben Ashton (ABS)

Agenda Item 1 - Welcome

1.1 Dr Paul Jelfs, First Assistant Statistician, Social, Health and Labour Division, ABS; opened the meeting acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and paid respect to their elders, both past and present. He welcomed attendees and noted that Mr Peter Harper, who was to chair the meeting, was an apology. The summary record of the September 2014 meeting was accepted as a true record by members and the action items were reviewed. Members introduced themselves and their respective departments.

Agenda Item 2 - Statistician's Update

2.1 Mr David W. Kalisch (ABS) welcomed members and noted that it has been four months since commencing in the role of Australian Statistician. Mr Kalisch commented that we are faced with a dynamic information environment,

remarking on the growing recognition of the value of information and the way it can be used more effectively.

- 2.2 Mr Kalisch outlined the three main directions for the ABS moving forward:
1. continuing to provide robust and timely information
 2. pursuing innovative solutions including capitalising on government and commercial administrative data whilst addressing challenges for partner organisations; bringing data together to meet emerging information needs and prioritising this against current need; and finding more effective and efficient ways to process and disseminate information
 3. enabling better partnerships with our stakeholders for example with access to micro data. Mr Kalisch commented on the critical importance of having a shared understanding of the benefits of collaboration and the development of partnerships built on mutual respect.

2.3 Further to these three overarching directions, Mr Kalisch explained that the ABS transformation will be across six key areas, including: understanding our environment; a focused strategy for the ABS, with a corporate plan and statement of expectation to shape ABS directions; agile and effective governance and decision making, including a review of our 40 year old legislative framework; a diverse and adaptable workforce, with a culture of trust, leadership and high performance; and lastly, efficient and effective enterprise systems.

2.4 Mr Innis queried the role of AGSF in the review of governance and clarifying engagement needed to build mutual benefit. Mr Kalisch commented that in terms of governance, ASAC has a legislated governance role and the ABS is currently liaising with the Treasurer about membership. Aside from this, he is open to developing something that people will value, stating he would like frank feedback on whether members believe the AGSF is a useful forum.

2.5 Mr Lalor asked whether Mr Kalisch had any thoughts on a whole of government engagement approach across jurisdictions. Mr Kalisch said the ABS is looking to broker effective partnerships, noting that some conversations already occurring at the state and territory level indicate significant interest in this area.

2.6 Ms Wykes commented that DIBP and ABS are working to maximise their relationship and saw opportunity for the ABS to do more in the competitive data environment. Mr Kalisch stated that this is something the ABS is looking at and advised that whilst there cannot be any risk taken with the main economic indicators, there is scope to be more innovative with some other statistics. Mr Kalisch informed members that the proposed merger between the AIHW and the ABS is not proceeding, but noted that both agencies are looking at how they can work more collaboratively to complement each other's work program.

2.7 Ms Dawton asked whether the ABS might have a role in driving discussions on sharing data for open data. Mr Kalisch stated that he is happy to encourage data sharing; however he proposed that the question to stakeholders that will drive better use of data in the future and focus ABS assistance is 'what questions do you want to answer?'

Agenda Item 3 – Conformance framework for the National Environmental Information Infrastructure presentation by Andre Zerger (BoM)

3.1 Dr Andre Zerger (BoM) presented on the National Environmental

Information Infrastructure (NEII) Conformance Framework. The NEII is a distributed network of environmental data nodes in which BoM plays a coordinating role, improving the discoverability and accessibility of national environmental data. Using standards based architecture; the NEII brings together three platforms focusing on high-level national data, incorporating engagement with the broader information community.

3.2 There are a number of challenges with the NEII, including gaining participation in a distributed system, building a platform, ICT constraints, and managing change. The requirements to address these include having a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and assigning BoM as the backbone organisation to lead this initiative.

3.3 The conformance framework has different levels of maturity for conforming to standards.

3.4 As an addendum to his presentation, Dr Zerger noted that the Environmental Information Exchange, a BoM initiative which focuses on whole of government activities in the environment sector, is currently inviting new members and accepting content for future publications. Subscription is available at www.bom.is/exchange.

3.5 Ms Mitchell asked what prompted the refocus towards change management during the development of this initiative. Dr Zerger responded that the requirement of meeting engagement goals and the increasing importance of open data provided the driving force.

3.6 Mr Innis asked how BoM was selected as the organisation to lead this initiative. Dr Zerger noted that the environmental reform agenda arising from the 20/20 summit resulted in a push for the environment sector to increase in importance in the community. BoM was selected as it is an externally facing organisation and a recognisable leader in this field.

Agenda Item 4 – Data Governance Practices presentation by Geoff Neideck (AIHW)

4.1 Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) presented on the Data Governance Framework in AIHW, which is designed to bring together various aspects of data governance under an overarching framework. The introduction of a central point of reference for agency operations was the motivator for this holistic approach.

4.2 Mr Neideck explained that the creation of the framework required consideration of the intended audience; the approach of other agencies; an understanding of the relationship with existing governance, policies, and guidelines; logical order of content; and maintaining currency. The development process also required senior level support and extensive consultation.

4.3 The framework includes core governance structures; an overview of data related policies, guidelines and procedures; systems and tools supporting data governance; compliance regimes; and mechanisms for providing feedback. To support this, AIHW has also established a Data Governance Committee reporting to the Executive Committee.

4.4 The process of development provided the opportunity to map the environment, including legislative, governance and jurisdictional regimes, and helped to identify areas of strengths and deficiencies. As well as having a central source of information, the benefits of this framework include providing a structure for decision-making, links to external governance arrangements, increased stakeholder confidence, and a mechanism for marketing organisational capacity.

4.5 Dr Jelfs asked how long this process took to complete. Mr Neideck said that whilst the internal consultation took considerable time, it was approximately six months from conception to approval from the Board.

4.6 Ms Mitchell asked how AIHW managed risks whilst setting up this governance framework. Mr Neideck advised that managing risk has always been important to AIHW; however, this can now be undertaken through a more structured approach.

4.7 Mr Wight-Wick was interested in exploring whether there should be more external representation on departmental committees to address overlap across agencies, with the question posed as to whether the expertise of AGSF members should be used on broader Data Governance committees.

4.8 Ms Wykes asked how this data governance framework fits into the overarching information policy strategy. Mr Neideck stated that both strategies were aligned and commented that the information policy strategy was a driver for the development of the data governance framework.

Agenda Item 5 – Data Governance presentation by Craig Fowler (NCVER)

5.1 Dr Craig Fowler (NCVER) presented on data governance at NCVER, providing an overview of NCVER's updated data governance model, which was implemented due to changes in technology, increasing data, replacement of manual processes, more formal data related decision-making, and the introduction of new systems and processes.

5.2 Dr Fowler provided an outline of the current data collection structure in NCVER; their data governance model; and their information strategy. A summary of the organisational structure and roles was also provided, including the Executive Sponsor, Data Committee, Data Stewards and Custodians, and Data Consumers.

5.3 NCVER faces a number of challenges, including a high public profile, absence of an external authorising body, and legislative and environmental changes. The next step for the organisation is to develop an information management strategy to ensure fulfilment of requirements.

5.4 Mr Ewing noted that data consumers are at the bottom of the organisation structures model and asked whether they determine more about what is needed and how we respond. Dr Fowler noted that the vocational and educational markets have shifted to being publicly funded; and as a consequence, the Government is a high priority stakeholder in the model.

5.5 Mr Innis posed a question to the forum as to whether we listen to our customer's needs enough and whether AGSF should do more in this space.

5.6 Ms Lubulwa asked whether a framework should be implemented in each organisation and whether AGSF could coordinate this. Dr Fowler noted that the presented framework was not developed as a template and that it would need to be adapted for use in other organisations.

Agenda Item 6 – Commonwealth Data Integration Initiative presentation by Michael Abbondante (ABS)

6.1 Mr Michael Abbondante (ABS) presented on Commonwealth data as a strategic resource, advising that the heads of the ABS and Health developed the foundations of a Commonwealth framework to enhance the evidence base for research and evaluation. This vision aligned with a number of government priorities (e.g. Gov2.0), with recognition of the value of cross-portfolio collaboration leading to the endorsement by the secretaries' board.

6.2 A Commonwealth data integration framework was developed with a series of outputs, including establishing a set of high-level principles; governance and institutional arrangements to operationalise these principles; the establishment of a Cross Portfolio Data Integration Oversight Board; an accreditation process for agencies undertaking high-risk projects; and a public register of projects. There have been significant advances driven by the Deputies group, with a progressive rollout of these initiatives leading to mandatory arrangements from July 2014.

6.3 The establishment of a secure environment facilitating sensitive data integration was noted as an achievement in a review of the implementation of this framework. However, Mr Abbondante advised that more needs to be done to maximise the use of public sector data. He noted that future themes of increasing importance will include the enhancement of Australia's statistical research base, addressing barriers to data access, and reforms in governance.

6.4 Mr Innis commented that to get the best value out of this work we need more product to inform policy development but there is a key need to sort out who has access to the data. He suggested a "trusted user" model, noting that all public servants are subject to privacy provisions which may be enough as a legislative framework. He suggested that the principles should guide all government work (e.g. including the work of the Digital Transformation Office) and posed the question of whether there is an opportunity to engage a central agency to agree principles to ensure a consistent approach.

6.5 Mr Ewing commented that the ABS is working on this, posing the questions 'Are we too strict in our interpretation of ABS legislation?' and 'Where can we move within our current legislation?'

Agenda Item 7 - Around the Table: Statistical Matters of Significance

7.1 The Chair invited members to share statistical updates:

- Mr Andrew Lalor (Industry) advised that Industry are moving away from an IT to a business led change management approach to open data to try and gain an understanding of the breadth of their data and how to integrate it

with other data sources. Mr Lalor undertook to keep members informed of progress.

- Dr Andre Zerger (BoM) drew attention to the existence of the Australian Government Environmental Information Advisory Group led by the Bureau of Meteorology with members including ABS, Communications, and the Department of the Environment. The advisory group provides an analogous forum to AGSF but with a greater focus on environmental information and welcome additional representation from agencies with an interest in environmental information. If any AGSF members are interested, please email Dr Zerger at a.zerger@bom.gov.au (further information is also available at <http://www.bom.gov.au/environment/coordination.shtml#advisoryGroup>). Major activities underway within the Bureau of Meteorology include the procurement of a new supercomputer that will significantly improve numerical modelling and forecasting capability; big data challenges associated with new data provided by the Japanese weather satellite Himawari 8; and how to best leverage the increasing prevalence of citizen-science data, particularly around weather observations, into the Bureau's high-quality monitoring frameworks.
- Mr Simon Wight-Wick (DHS) advised that DHS recently had a secondee from the ABS into their Data Integration Method Unit who has provided useful recommendations such as transitioning to a perturbation approach, including a trusted user model and better ways to make CURFS even more confidentialised.
- Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) discussed the development of an access monitoring system for data linkage with a public data catalogue and protocols, which will go live in May. AIHW will review the product development approach from casual users to in-depth researchers.
- Ms Milly Lubulwa (ABARES) updated on the statistical activities and surveys being conducted by ABARES in three main areas: Fisheries (e.g. survey on recreational fishing), Forestry (e.g. survey on tree plantations), and Agriculture (e.g. longitudinal tracking survey on the effect of wild dogs on landholders).
- Mr Anthony O'Connor (Health) advised that work is progressing on data sharing with the states; including the integration of pharmaceutical, medical and state hospital data; with the full data set to be released in July. Health has external representatives on the data.gov council and is developing local access and release plans and policy to make data more accessible to the public. Health's analytical capability has traditionally been stove-piped, so there is a move towards a more holistic agency view.
- Mr Ian Ewing (ABS) spoke about collaboration and partnerships, citing the example of the National Agriculture Statistics Review achieved by working with ABARES to make data more visible and usable. The ABS is working on whole of government approaches to improve data accessibility and usability, along with tools to support its use. The ABS is also working on increasing the use of administrative data, replacing direct collection through collaboration with industry. An example of this is the production of a paper

on ecosystem services for the Great Barrier Reef which resulted from collaboration between the ABS, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and James Cook University.

- Mr Glen Malam (BITRE) spoke about the redevelopment of a census of aircraft activity, classified to integrate with CASA unit level records. A new classification has been developed as a result of this collaboration.
- Ms Julie Neville (ATO) advised that Tax Stats will be released next week. The ATO have also established a new 'smarter data' division bringing together data work from across various areas of the ATO.
- Ms Cassy Short (ABS) provided an update on the Essential Statistical Assets (ESA) for Australia, discussing the recently published quality assessment results. The work has resulted in a shared understanding between users and producers of statistical information about the quality of our statistical assets.
- Dr Paul Jelfs (ABS) advised that consideration is being given to producing an integrated program for social statistics, involving presenting data on a more frequent basis and linking to administrative data. Additionally, work is progressing on integrating census data with MBS and PBS data to provide greater insights into mental health. The ABS is also partnering with Food Standards New Zealand, looking at nutrition data that feeds into the burden of disease work. The largest survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is currently in the field, with the ABS looking to link this with other administrative data.
- Mr Sean Innis (DSS) advised that DSS will hold a workshop with the ABS in July focusing on what Australia's future longitudinal data will look like. To illustrate the large range of data held by DSS, one interesting example given is that DSS are responsible for the national public toilet map on data.gov.au, with this being one of the most used data sets across Australia.
- Mr Graeme Thompson (ABS) has been working on building the Metadata Registry and Repository (MRR). This is an internal model and ABS would like to consult on external parts of the MRR. The ABS will approach external stakeholders for their feedback in the future.

Agenda Item 8 – Other Business

8.1 No other business was raised.

Agenda Item 9 - Arrangements for Next Meeting

9.1 Dr Jelfs stated that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 8 October 2015 and the proposed theme is "Longitudinal Data". He asked members to please think about any work member's agencies are doing around this theme and to contact Cassy Short (cassy.short@abs.gov.au) if they would like to present on this topic (Action item 1).

Meeting closed at 12:30pm.

Action items from 23 April 2015 meeting

Action Item	Description	Responsibility	Time-frame	Minute reference
1	AGSF members to advise Cassy Short (cassy.short@abs.gov.au) if they would like to share information on their agencies work in "Longitudinal Data", the theme for the next AGSF meeting on 8 October.	AGSF members	31 July	9.1

Action items from previous meetings

Action Item	Description	Responsibility	Time-frame	Status
1	ABS to circulate its Statistical Capability Framework to members.	AGSF Secretariat	October 2014	Progressing – draft still under revision following consultation with the states and territories.
2	ABS to provide an update on the integration of confidentiality processes at the next AGSF meeting.	Mr Trevor Sutton (ABS)	2015	Ongoing – pending government announcements
3	ABS to place documentation on the statistical process 'plug and play' components available on the open data tool kit once they are developed.	Ms Borowik (ABS)	As soon as practicable	Ongoing
4	AGSF members to hold a meeting to discuss the Commission of Audit and reductions to red tape.	AGSF Secretariat	When the Government response is released	Waiting for the Government Response to the Commission of Audit