

Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF)

Summary Record

Thursday 8 October 2015, ABS House, Canberra

Meeting theme: Longitudinal Data

Chair	Ms Gemma Van Halderen
Members	Mr Lewis Conn (ABS) Dr Phillip Gould (ABS) Ms Milly Lubulwa (ABARES, proxy for Mr Walter Shafron) Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) Ms Julie Neville (ATO) Mr Glen Malam (BITRE, proxy for Dr Gary Dolman) Ms Margie Smith (Communications, proxy for Ms Helen Owens) Dr Peta Odgers (Employment) Ms Pia Waugh (Finance) Mr George Phillips (Health) Ms Fleur Butt (Immigration, proxy for Ms Marianne Gomba) Mr Andrew Lalor (Industry) Mr David Dennis (Social Services) Ms Alison Anlezark (NCVER, proxy for Dr Craig Fowler)
Apologies	Mr Walter Shafron (ABARES), Dr Gary Dolman (BITRE), Dr Louise Minty (BoM), Mr Geoffrey Armitage (BREE), Ms Helen Owens (Communications), Mr Mike Maslen (Environment), Dr Craig Fowler (NCVER)
Presenters	Mr David Dennis (Social Services) Mr Andrew Lalor (Industry) Ms Alison Anlezark (NCVER) Mr David Smith (Immigration) Dr Phillip Gould (ABS)
Observers	-
Minutes	Carolyn Verey and Kate Chaloner (ABS)

Agenda Item 1 - Welcome

1.1 Ms Gemma Van Halderen (ABS) opened the meeting and introduced herself as the new Chair of AGSF and acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and paid respect to their elders, past and present. She welcomed attendees and noted member apologies.

1.2 The summary record of the April 2015 meeting was accepted as a true record by members and the action items were reviewed.

Agenda Item 2 – Chair’s Update

2.1 Ms Van Halderen advised members of the new ABS organisational structure, noting the appointment of Ms Luise McCulloch as the new ABS Deputy Statistician for the Statistical Services Group looking over both economic and social statistics, and the ABS’s focus on transformation. Ms Van Halderen advised members of her role as General Manager of the new Strategic Partnerships and Projects Division, which has a key role in transforming ABS statistical programs.

2.2 Ms Van Halderen highlighted the new ABS Corporate Plan, and the new vision to ‘Unleash the power of statistics for a better Australia’, noting the ABS needs to work more collaboratively in partnerships while still retaining the trust and support of the public.

2.3 Ms Van Halderen thanked all members for their input for the Essential Statistical Infrastructure (ESI) consultations, noting early findings suggest the three priority pain points are: incompatible systems, lack of national standards, and difficulty in accessing administrative data. A publication is anticipated to be released in December covering barriers and opportunities identified in consultation.

2.4 ABS events for World Statistics Day, a United Nations initiative, on 20 October were highlighted. The ABS intends to celebrate the day with an expo to showcase achievements and milestones in the ABS transformation, and Dr Chris Pigram, CEO of Geoscience Australia, will present on their successful transformation. The results of the Community Trust in ABS Statistics Survey will also be released.

Agenda Item 3 – Longitudinal Data

3.1 Mr David Dennis (Department of Social Services (DSS)) discussed the review of Australia’s longitudinal data architecture which DSS has been undertaking as part of the Government’s ‘investment approach’ to Australia’s social security system. The review will examine the current state of longitudinal surveys and administrative data sets in Australia, and advise on how best to ensure that our longitudinal data assets are of high quality and can best meet the needs of data users across government, academia and the private sector.

3.2 DSS formed the National Centre for Longitudinal Data (NCLD) in 2014. The National Centre will act as a coordination point to support the ongoing improvement of longitudinal data and will work with agencies to support greater access, linkage and use of administrative data and with the ABS to develop best practise guidelines to support longitudinal data governance, data harmonisation and administrative data linkage. The National Centre will host a Longitudinal Data conference on 25-27 October, 2016 to demonstrate the power of longitudinal data. Members were invited to look on the NCLD website for events and to keep in touch with key information (www.dss.gov.au/nclid).

3.3 Members discussed current issues including: data silos, data harmonisation, confidentiality and the difference between survey data, which is gathered with consent, and administrative data, with Mr Dennis noting the National Centre for Longitudinal Data can assist with these issues. Privacy and

confidentiality issues were discussed and Ms Van Halderen noted there is work across the Commonwealth Government on these issues and she would circulate an interesting article on privacy issues and administrative data to members (Action item 1).

Agenda Item 4 – Expanded Analytical Business Longitudinal Database and associated Dynamics of Employment work

4.1 Mr Andrew Lalor (Department of Industry, Innovation and Science) highlighted the usefulness of the Expanded Analytical Business Longitudinal Database (EABLD) to understand businesses or firms, and their impact on the economy, in order to develop policy or address program delivery. The Department is responsible for grants to businesses and this database will assist in the delivery of its services.

4.2 The Department funded the ABS to build the database, which includes ATO firm level and ABS survey data and covers all active businesses in the Australian economy for 2001-02 to 2012-13. The EABLD has been used to examine employment growth in the economy and has found that start-up businesses drive employment growth, however Australia's start-up rate is in long-term decline.

4.4 Members discussed the potential opportunities to expand access to the EABLD. Ms Van Halderen noted the ABS is developing a Linked Employer-Employee Data (LEED) Analytical System and noted the work Statistics New Zealand has done in this space.

Agenda Item 5 - Data Linkages

5.1 Ms Alison Anlezark (National Centre for Vocational Education Research – NCVET) outlined data linkage work undertaken with NCVET collections including: the Apprentice and trainee collection; National VET Provider collection; National VET in Schools collection; Student Outcomes Survey and Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY).

5.2 Ms Anlezark noted some of the challenges with data linkage projects including: cooperation and knowledge sharing between agencies, privacy and informed consent, ethics approval and access to data, limited opportunity to reuse linked datasets, resources and cost, corrections and updates to linked datasets, and data quality.

Agenda Item 6 – Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants (CSAM)

6.1 Mr David Smith (Department of Immigration and Border Protection) provided an insight into the Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants, (CSAM) which is a small, low budget, longitudinal survey which has been collected for five years. The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) which the department previously undertook no longer suited the Department's needs as it was expensive and took too long to process the data.

6.2 CSAM was first conducted in 2009 and is run on an annual basis building time series data on migrants who come through the skilled migration and family reunion programmes. The majority of the survey is managed in house which

keeps costs down. The smaller survey is quicker to process ensuring data is timely and policy relevant.

6.3 However CSAM does have some limitations with the response rates just under 50% and there are some concerns around non-response biases in the data. Questions are only asked for one person in the household not all and the topics covered are narrow.

Agenda Item 7 – Extracting Insights from ABS Longitudinal Data

7.1 Dr Phillip Gould (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)) outlined the ABS's aims to gain the full value of existing data sources and to partner with others to maximise the value of public and private sector data. Noting, plans to link key public sector datasets covering migrants, payments, health and tax data to the Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset.

7.2 The ABS is looking to increase its microsimulation capability to generate synthetic unit record level data which can be used to model "what if" scenarios. The ABS is developing a dynamic population microsimulation model which might be used in enhancing annual estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population to account for Indigenous identification change.

7.3 Members discussed the ABS's review of its legislation. Ms Van Halderen advised the ABS legislation review will be enabling and the ABS is looking at its policies and its risk appetite. Members also questioned if there will be any change to retain personal identifiers from the Census. Ms Van Halderen advised the ABS would never release information that would enable users to identify individuals or households, however the ABS is looking at the value of retaining personal identifiers to assist in data integration activities and will be putting out a privacy impact assessment to discuss the matter with the Australian public.

Agenda Item 8 – Around the Table: Statistical Matters of Significance

8.1 The Chair invited members to share statistical updates:

- Ms Alison Anlezark (NCVER) advised the new LSAY cohort started this year; and new infographics and data visualisation tools will be available soon.
- Dr Peta Odgers (Employment) advised the department is currently looking at online data collection.
- Ms Julie Neville (ATO) advised Longitudinal datasets will be ready next April with 10 years of data; Data for tax stats is being prepared and will include more information on super data; the reduction of red tape has impacted on the amount of administrative data collected and the ABS and ATO are working through the impact on statistics if data fields on the BAS form are reduced.
- Mr George Phillips (Health) advised on data sharing activities with the States and Territories.
- Ms Fleur Butt (Immigration) advised of a recruitment process for a chief statistician to develop data dissemination protocols for the department and to look at what data is available and ensure a single source of truth is used for clearance of data. The outgoing passenger's card is currently

being reviewed and the paper card may be ceased, discussions are being held with users to determine the impact on data.

- Mr Glen Malam (BITRE) advised of a number of changes to their minister.
- Ms Margie Smith (Communications) stated the data team at Communications are moving to Prime Minister & Cabinet.
- Ms Milly Lubulwa (ABARES) provided an update on the review of Agricultural Statistics and noted they are making better use of administrative data.
- Mr Lewis Conn (ABS) advised the ABS is reviewing its legislation and policies; he noted the ABS now has more secondments and greater remote data access. The ABS has been working closely with the NSW Government to assist them set up a new data analytics centre which will be a one stop shop for NSW government agencies to share data.
- Mr David Dennis (Social Services) noted the work with ATO on the Data Analytics Centre of Excellence, with the launch of a website which will include a range of data analytics tools.
- Mr Geoff Neideck (AIHW) noted there is change to the Health portfolio with the health performance function moving to AIHW. He noted AIHW is building its data analytics capabilities, and improving the Data Quality Framework.
- Mr Andrew Lalor (Industry) noted the whole of government culture change to share data and to have open data programs. He advised his department has been using a change manager for every data project the department runs and this has been very effective.

Agenda Item 9 – Arrangements for Next Year

9.1 AGSF members suggested a number of topics they would like to discuss at future meetings:

- Internal data cultures including risk appetite and legislation
- Change Management related to data
- Confidentialised data
- Terms of reference for AGSF
- Strategic management of data across Australian Government agencies
- Big Data threats and opportunities.

Agenda Item 10 - Other Business

10.1 It was agreed the next meeting be scheduled in six months' time.

Meeting Close

Action items from 8 October 2015 meeting

Action Item	Description	Responsibility	Time-frame	Minute reference
1	<p>Circulate article on privacy issues and administrative data to members (Action item 1).</p> <p><i>http://www.nature.com/news/researchers-wrestle-with-a-privacy-problem-1.18396</i></p>	AGSF secretariat	With the minutes Completed	3.3

Action items from previous meetings

Action Item	Description	Responsibility	Time-frame	Status (for Chair to report)
1	ABS to circulate its Statistical Capability Framework to members.	NTDS (ABS)	October 2014	A draft version is being progressed and AGSF members and other Australian government agencies will be approached shortly to provide comment.
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