



ESSENTIAL STATISTICAL ASSETS FOR AUSTRALIA

Investing in the information that counts most

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Outline of Presentation

- **1** – Brief overview of the ESA for Australia initiative
- **2** – Overview of consultation process and feedback
- **3** – Summary feedback on *ESA for Australia* initiative
- **4** – Summary feedback on *ESA for Australia* preliminary list
- **5** – ESA Next Steps



Origin of the ESA Initiative

"The ABS should set out to identify, in a highly consultative way, the key national datasets that are the essential indicators of the state of the nation, regardless of which organisations produce them."

Allen Report (2004) – Recommendation 1: Areas of duplication and underutilisation

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Why identify Essential Statistical Assets?

"To guide Governments' investments in official statistics by prioritising and protecting those statistical assets that are critically important for the nation."

- i. To identify where there are critical information gaps, so that these can be addressed;
- ii. To ensure that information (statistics and datasets) are of sufficient quality, and;
- iii. To ensure the efficient use of Government resources by identifying areas of duplication and underutilisation

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Defining Essential Statistical Assets

- “Essential Statistical Assets” are defined as a sub-set of official statistical assets that for their roles and importance should be given priority for ensuring high quality and integrity
- Satisfy a set of criteria:
 - i. **Application in public policy and service delivery**
 - ii. **Importance to key national progress measurement**
 - iii. **Domestic electoral or legislative requirement**
 - iv. **International reporting obligation and/or critical for international comparability**

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ESA Initiative – Project phases

- **Phase 1** – Identification of the Essential Statistical Assets
- **Phase 2** – Assessing the quality of existing statistical assets
- **Phase 3** – Identification of essential statistical infrastructure
- **Phase 4** – Discussing and determining the priorities for future investment

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Consultation progress to date

- Positive support for the purpose of the initiative
- Data custodians keen for their datasets recognised on the list
- Identification of future data gaps needed
- Some submissions still be received

Sector	Formal	Informal*	Total
Government – Commonwealth	16	8	24
Government – state/territory	19	29	48
NGO/industry/individual	16	0	16
Total	51	37	88

* - Includes meeting summaries and responses from individuals within government departments. Some departments have more than one submission

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Phase 1 – Key dates to finalise ESA List

March – April

Essential Statistical Assets for Australia Preliminary list

May – Dec



Jan – Feb



Mid Feb (out of session)



12–14 March 2013

Launch at NatStats 2013

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 1: Impact for statistics not on the list - Concerns from stakeholders that statistics not featured on the list will be considered unimportant and at risk of losing investment leading to their cessation or deterioration, particularly in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment

- Absence from the list does **not** suggest unimportant
- Focus on improving statistics through new investment, not cutting existing statistics
- ABS is already required to prioritise and review its work program to ensure effective use of resources

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 2: Governance of the list in prioritising and protecting investment in statistics – Queries on how the list would realise investment outcomes and benefits and who would be involved in the decision making processes. More clarification about future review process to ensure relevance to the changing policy questions and providing essential statistics for informing public debate.

- ASAC is most appropriate existing forum to endorse
- At a minimum, will guide ABS forward work program and broader statistical system support
- Initial review after 2 years; subsequently 3-5 years

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 3: Relative importance of each criterion – The majority of submissions agreed that criteria 1 & 2 were by far the most important out of the four, albeit with some conflicting views over which of the two was most important.

- ABS agrees with feedback on relative importance of criteria 1 & 2 – was taken into account in preliminary list development
- Believe the four criteria are still relevant to reflect broad range of statistical uses

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 4: Use of the criteria in determining essentiality – Feedback was mixed regarding how many criteria should be required to be met to qualify statistics as essential, as well as how consistently the criteria had been applied in determining what statistics were included on the preliminary list.

- Purpose of consultation to seek feedback on justifications
- Criteria always intended to act as guide
- Strong relevance to one criteria could be considered acceptable
- Justifications need to be clearly linked to criteria

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 5: Need for future statistical requirements to be identified

Concern that the process and criteria 3 & 4 may not be sufficient in identifying gaps as the process focuses on statistics and data currently collected, and how emerging issues requiring statistical investment would be considered after the establishment of the list. Concern that should focus on identifying key policy questions and progress aspirations prior to determining statistical requirements.

- Preliminary list development focused on source agnostic identification of statistics before identifying datasets
- Identification of essential gaps are welcomed
- Scope of initiative extends beyond policy

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 6: Alignment and collaboration with other initiatives –

Support to ensure that the ESA initiative aligns with other cross cutting Government initiatives such as the NPEI, COAG, SEWPAC Measuring Sustainability work and the outcomes of the revised Measures of Australia's Progress.

- Continuing to look at how the initiative can complement others
- Varying timeframes and objectives mean that some benefits may not be realised until future iterations

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Key Issues arising from feedback

Issue 7: Ambiguity over statistical labels – A number of new statistics suggested for inclusion in submissions were already considered by the ABS to be embedded within existing statistics on the preliminary list.

- Considering adding a description column to the final list, explaining what comprises each essential statistic

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The Revised List

- List feedback still being reviewed
- Final list will be binary – no categories (definitely in, just in etc)
- 17 new statistics suggested
- Strong support for the elevation of several just-out statistics:
 - Capital Expenditure
 - Building Approvals and other housing activity statistics
 - Job Vacancies
 - IT use and innovation by businesses
 - Literacy and Numeracy (students and adults)
 - Early Childhood Development
- Feedback on disaggregations less prevalent
 - Indigenous and sub-state spatial disaggregations most commonly identified

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Phase 2 – Quality Assessment

- Commencing early 2013
- Will consider essential statistics and datasets
- Will be based on ABS Data Quality Framework, potentially using DQO Tool
- ABS to lead assessments, working in collaboration with custodians of essential datasets

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Phase 3 – Essential Statistical Infrastructure

- Commencing early 2013 (in parallel with Phase 2)
- Purpose is to identify essential infrastructure that is required to support essential statistical information
- Scope potentially includes frames and registers, standards and classifications, measurement frameworks
 - Eg. GNAF, ANZSCO, ANZSIC, ICD, Australian Business Register, SNA, Age, Sex, Indigenous classifications, Country of Birth...

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Phase 4 – Identification of Investment Priorities

- Timing dependent on Phase 2
- Ongoing discussions and consideration of possible Governance approach
- At a minimum, will be used when considering ABS Forward Work Program priorities

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For more information

The ESA webpage on the NSS website:

www.nss.gov.au

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