



ACT Information Development Plan

Australia

2008 to 2011

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AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

EMBARGO: 11.30AM (CANBERRA TIME) WED 24 SEP 2008

ABS Catalogue No. 1344.8.55.003

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PREFACE

FOREWORD

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) ACT Regional Office and the ACT Government have developed the *ACT Information Development Plan, 2008-2011* (IDP) to recognise and give effect to the important role that quality statistics play in informed decision making within governments, business and the community.

The IDP provides a high level strategic framework for a whole of government approach to improving the management and development of statistical resources for the Territory. There is a commitment from all ACT Government agencies to develop and improve their statistics to better equip them to develop policies and programs that meet the current and future needs of their clients. The development and review of the *Canberra Plan* and the ongoing interest in an ACT community indicator framework highlight the importance of statistics as the basis for informed decision making in the ACT.

Under Section 6(1) of the Commonwealth's *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the functions of the ABS are:

- (a) to constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the governments of the States, provide statistical services for those governments
- (b) to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information
- (c) to ensure co-ordination of the operation of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information, with particular regard to:
 - (i) the avoidance of duplication in the collection by official bodies of information for statistical purposes
 - (ii) the attainment of compatibility between, and the integration of, statistics required by official bodies
 - (iii) the maximum possible utilization, for statistical purposes, of information, and means of collection of information, available to official bodies
- (d) to formulate, and ensure compliance with, standards for the carrying out by official bodies of operations for statistical purposes
- (e) to provide advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics
- (f) to provide liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organizations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters.

The ACT Government recognises the ABS as a partner in developing a framework and collaborating in the development, collection, coordination, application and dissemination of statistical information (whether from ABS or from other sources) about the Territory.

The ABS recognises the ACT Government as a partner in providing statistics about the nation as a whole. The ACT Government is a significant provider of data derived from administrative records relating to their various policy areas (including data relating to education, health and crime).

Development of the IDP included extensive consultations across the whole of the ACT Government. In undertaking these consultations, the ABS received generous access to staff at all levels of the ACT Government and the contribution of these staff is gratefully acknowledged. Similarly, the ACT Government acknowledges that the IDP would not have come about without the assistance and dedicated efforts of staff at the ABS ACT Regional Office.

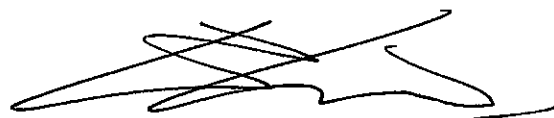
PREFACE *continued*

FOREWORD *continued*

A formal coordination process is being used to progress implementation of the IDP. An Information Development Steering Committee (IDSC), chaired by the ACT Chief Minister's Department, was established in February 2007 to support this work. The IDSC consists of senior policy staff from all ACT Government departments as well as the Regional Director of the ABS ACT Regional Office.



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05 June 2008

ABBREVIATIONS

ABP	administrative by-product data
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CMD	Chief Minister's Department
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
IDMS	Integrated Document Management System
IDP	Information Development Plan
IDSC	Information Development Steering Committee
NMDS	National Minimum Data Set
NSS	National Statistical Service
ROGS	Report on Government Services

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE

The IDP provides a framework for advancing the availability and quality of statistical information in the ACT, and constitutes a significant step in advancing evidence-based policy research within the ACT Government. It reflects a commitment by the ABS and the ACT Government to continue to collaborate on improving statistical information for the ACT while focusing on areas of mutual interest and priority. It also recognises the importance of a coordinated and integrated approach to the development of statistics.

The ACT Government is the first jurisdiction in Australia to develop a whole of government Information Development Plan. The IDP supports the National Statistical Service and aligns with the ABS mission to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within government and the community.

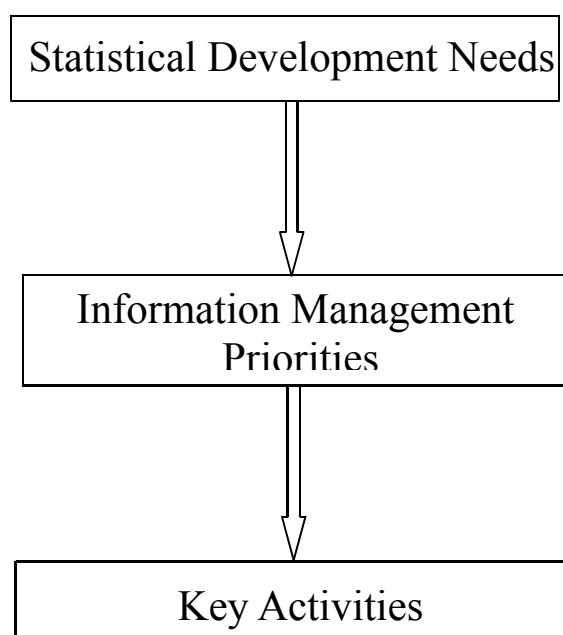
The objectives of the IDP are to:

- provide a framework within which the ABS and the ACT Government can collaborate on the development, collection, coordination, application and dissemination of ACT administrative by-product data and ABS data about the Territory;
- provide high quality data to the community;
- increase awareness and understanding of ABS data and seek to improve ABS statistics for the ACT; and
- develop and maintain capacity within the ACT Government for statistical research and analysis.

A number of key steps were undertaken to develop the IDP. The first of these was the identification of common whole-of-government *statistical development needs*. These needs were then mapped to a set of *information management priorities* and developed into a set of *key activities* designed to address the identified information development needs (see Figure 1).

The identification of these key activities provides a framework within which the IDSC, ACT Government agencies and the ABS can collaborate on where effort and resources are best invested to improve statistical data for the ACT. The expertise of the ABS will help develop quality information relevant to these strategic areas to allow the ACT Government to make well-informed decisions, while ensuring confidentiality is protected.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*



Governance

The IDSC, chaired by the Chief Minister's Department, will provide the formal mechanism through which the IDP will be implemented and monitored. The ABS and the ACT Government departments will work collaboratively through the IDSC. The ABS ACT Regional Director and most ACT Government departments are represented on this Committee.

To support the IDSC, the ABS ACT Regional Office has a Government Relations Team and Statistical Liaison Officers (SLO) responsible for each department. The role of the Regional Director, the SLOs and the Government Relations Team is to collaborate with each department and support their statistical requirements. This includes being abreast of key policy drivers of the department, ensuring the ABS is aware of emerging statistical needs associated with these policy drivers and encouraging statistical training and development.

Review and amendment processes

The IDP provides a high level strategic framework for 2008-2011. The work undertaken to implement the key activities will be reviewed and prioritised annually by the IDSC. This will ensure that any emerging priorities can be appropriately incorporated into the implementation of the IDP.

THE CANBERRA PLAN AND OTHER DATA NEEDS

The Canberra Plan was released in 2004 and is being refreshed in 2008. It provides a framework for action by the ACT Government and community for the future development of the Territory. In this context, the Canberra Plan guides planning and budget decisions across the whole of the ACT Government.

The Canberra Plan seeks to implement the vision for Canberra through actions under seven strategic themes:

- Investing in our people
- Building a stronger community
- A city for all ages
- Canberra's knowledge future

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

THE CANBERRA PLAN AND OTHER DATA NEEDS *continued*

- A dynamic heart
- Partnership for growth
- Living with the environment – our bush capital.

Having quality data and information on issues related to these seven strategic themes will provide the opportunity for the ACT Government and community to regularly assess how implementation of this vision is tracking.

The requirement for quality statistical data extends beyond *The Canberra Plan*. For example, quality data is required for Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Working Groups, the production of the annual *Report on Government Services* (ROGS), in the negotiation and implementation of Specific Purpose Payments, and in ongoing policy and program development and analysis.

ADMINISTRATIVE BY-PRODUCT (ABP) DATA

Government administrative and private transaction record databases can be a principal source of statistical information, with survey based collections undertaken to supplement, calibrate and bridge gaps in these data. Administrative by-product (ABP) data is the cornerstone of the IDP and improving the awareness, understanding, comparability, quality of, and access to ABP data are key activities listed under the IDP.

ABP data is collected in the course of agencies providing services to their clients. Information may be extracted from these records and compiled for record keeping, internal workload monitoring, management, and for external reporting. The ABS currently compiles national ABP data from data supplied by a number of State and Territory agencies. These data are published in a range of ABS publications, including *Births, Australia* (cat. no. 3301.0), *Deaths, Australia* (cat. no. 3302.0) and *Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia* (cat. no. 4510.0).

The ACT Government also produces a number of statistical publications based on ABP data, including the *Criminal Justice Statistical Profile* (produced by the ACT Department of Justice and Community Services) and the *ACT School Census* (produced by the ACT Department of Education and Training). Existing ABP datasets have content relevant to significant medium and long-term policy issues for the ACT and may be cost-effective sources of statistical information. ABP data can be treated as an asset within policy departments, with key datasets harnessed for their statistical potential to support the policy requirements of government.

ABP data limitations

Data quality can be a major limitation of ABP information sources. The quality of ABP data varies according to the systems and instructions applied by data custodians.

In addition, ABP data collected for internal management purposes will not necessarily be able to fulfill the information needs of a wider and more diverse range of users or meet the information and policy needs of government.

Definitions of ABP data items may not match the data item concept required by statistical data users. For example, a user may need information relating to the number of long-term unemployed people accessing a particular service, while the ABP data source relating to that service might only collect information on the total number of unemployed persons.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

ABP data limitations continued

Other limitations exist when comparing ABP data from different departments or from different jurisdictions. These include differences in legislation, recording and processing practices and reference (time) periods.

However, poor quality does not necessarily exclude ABP data from being used judiciously for decision making purposes. Rather, the quality of the data has to be considered as a factor in decision making processes.

A variety of frameworks exist that can provide guidance in improving the quality of data. An example is the ABS Data Quality Framework (this is discussed in more detail under *Key Activities* – see Activity 3). The use of a quality framework across all agencies will support the identification of differences and support the development of standards, including common definitions and common recording practices.

The effective assessment, management and development of key ABP datasets for statistical purposes will minimise the burden on clients and reduce collection costs for the ACT Government.

STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

The key whole of government statistical development drivers and needs identified during IDP consultations with the ACT Government were to:

- improve the quality of ABP data and the information derived from it, in order to better inform government policy and service provision;
- increase the use of data standards across all areas of government;
- streamline and improve data collection, provision and use for service providers;
- increase capacity for research and analysis, including improved understanding of the usefulness and quality of existing datasets;
- improve feedback on, and access to, data, both internally and externally;
- improve data linkages within and across agencies;
- improve information on the need for services, particularly unmet needs and type of clients accessing services;
- increase the use and sharing of data and information across agencies; and
- develop appropriate information technology and data management protocols for storing information and linking ABP datasets.

Some of these statistical development needs are currently being met in areas of ACT Government. For example, some areas are currently using the appropriate standards and disseminating their data to other areas. However, these areas may lack the research and analysis skills to further investigate the quality of their data. Limited initiatives to link and share data across ACT Government agencies are also underway. However, across the whole of the ACT Government the information needs identified above require further attention.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

This section summarises the information management priorities being applied within the IDP.

Protecting confidential information

A considerable amount of statistical information is collected and held by ACT Government agencies.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

Protecting confidential information continued

The ability to share ABP data collections between agencies is deemed a high priority for effective policy research. However, this objective needs to be balanced against client confidentiality and legal obligations relating to the protection of information.

There are several processes that may be used to enable the dissemination of data within and between departments while protecting client interests. One such process involves data custodians aggregating data into a tabular format and removing unique identifiers to ensure its confidentiality.

If data is to be interrogated more intensively, there is a need for more public debate and the development of guidelines or memorandum of understandings for sharing data across a department and between departments. These would establish procedures for sharing data while at the same time make explicit the privacy requirements that would apply in ensuring individual unit record files were not misused.

Improving data comparability

Improving the comparability of data within and between departments and jurisdictions is a high priority for both the ACT Government and the ABS.

Comparable data will allow program-by-program comparison to achieve best practice and is a key component in the development of effective and efficient policies. Comparable data will also ensure that such policies are open to external review by the ACT community.

To improve data comparability, standard collection, classification, processing and dissemination practices will be implemented. These practices, combined with rigorous quality assessment, will result in high quality statistical data that can be compared across collections and over time.

Improving data quality

Combined with the need to continue to improve data comparability, there is a need to implement a common data quality framework.

The ABS Data Quality Framework is a tool to assist in evaluating whether data are 'fit for purpose'. Taking into account the importance of the data set, relative priorities and available resources, data custodians will assess the quality of their data against the framework.

The use of national quality standards will also assist in comparisons not only within the ACT Government but also potentially with other jurisdictions.

Developing consistent statistical concepts and terminology

A comprehensive set of statistical or methodological concepts and terminology will assist in the management and use of ACT Government datasets.

Without consistent statistical concepts and terminology, it is not possible to draw together all the data from different sources and at different times about a particular topic, variable, or population, and compare them in any meaningful way. Clear statistical concepts and terminology will assist in maximising the effectiveness of statistical outputs and the efficiency of the collection and dissemination of those statistics.

KEY ACTIVITIES

To address the statistical development needs and information management priorities discussed in the previous sections a number of key activities have been identified to provide a framework for advancing the availability and improved quality of statistical information about the ACT. These are:

Activity 1 – Identify the key datasets required for policy development and the associated metadata held by each department.

Activity 2 - Facilitate the use of data standards for key datasets.

Activity 3 - Implement a common data quality framework for all departments.

Activity 4 - Increase the capability within and across departments for statistical research and analysis.

Activity 5 - Increase awareness and understanding of ABS data and seek to improve ABS statistics for the ACT.

Activity 6 - Improve the way administrative data is stored and managed.

Activity 7 - Review and improve data on ACT Government services provision.

Activity 8 - Ensure that the community and service providers have feedback on, and access to, information derived from the data they provide.

Activity 9 - Improve the quality of data collected from service providers and ACT Government grant recipients and make better use of this data for planning.

Activity 10 - Develop a capacity to link non-ABS datasets, particularly:

- on the number of people accessing government services, and
- on clients with multiple and complex needs and how they access services.

There is a great deal of interrelationship between some of the activities. Some are aimed at bringing about change in the short term while others are focused on bringing about change in the longer term. The tasks are ordered roughly from those that will be addressed in the short term to those where outcomes may be achieved from across the whole of the ACT Government in the longer term.

Activity 1 – Identify the key datasets required for policy development and the associated metadata held by each department

This activity will focus on datasets that are of most strategic value to the ACT Government. In this respect, key datasets will include those relating to strategic and accountability indicators within the ACT budgetary framework, and those with significant bearing on Commonwealth-Territory financial arrangements.

Other possible key datasets include those that could be used to meet requirements under ROGS, and those that measure cross border service use or progress against indicators set down in the *Canberra Plan*.

To assist departments in making the most effective and reliable use of information, there is an immediate need to identify the key datasets held by the ACT Government. There is also a need to assess and advise on the quality of these collections.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

KEY ACTIVITIES *continued*

This activity should also include the formulation of metadata for departmental information holdings. This metadata could ultimately be placed on a centralised environment within ACT Government.

Activity 2 - Facilitate the use of data standards for key datasets

This activity will focus on improving data quality through the use of agreed data standards. In particular, relevant National Minimum Data Sets (NMDS) should be used by agencies contributing to national data.

While assisting in having comparable data within the ACT, the use of national standards for key datasets will allow greater comparability between data from the different States and Territories and assist in improving data comparability and collections across portfolios.

Activity 3 - Implement a common data quality framework for all departments

This activity will focus on the adoption of the ABS Data Quality Framework, or adaption of it, to assist in evaluating whether data is fit for purpose to meet the needs of ACT Government and other users of the data.

The use of data without adequate quality assessment adds an additional level of uncertainty to policy development and program evaluation. The ABS has used a data quality framework to assist in evaluating whether data are 'fit for purpose'.

Over recent years the ABS and a number of other State and Territory Governments have been assessing the quality of their ABP data collections. In conjunction with the ABS, the Commonwealth Grants Commission and State and Territory Governments are also working towards providing quality assessments for all the data provided to the Commonwealth Grants Commission by the States and Territories.

The following quality framework has been adapted from the ABS Data Quality Framework to meet the ACT's particular needs and will be progressively adopted by ACT Government agencies under the IDP.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

Framework	Definition
Relevance	The relevance of statistical information reflects the degree to which it meets the real needs of users. It is concerned with whether the available information sheds light on the issues most important to users. Relevance is generally described in terms of key user needs, key concepts and classifications used and the scope of the collection.
Accuracy	The accuracy of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure. It is usually characterised in terms of error in statistical estimates. It may also be described in terms of major sources of error that potentially cause inaccuracy (e.g. administrative practices, non-response).
Timeliness	The timeliness of statistical information refers to the delay between the reference point (or the end of the reference period) to which the information pertains, and the date on which the information becomes available.
Accessibility	The accessibility of statistical information refers to the ease with which it can be referenced by users. The cost of the information may also be an aspect of <i>accessibility</i> for some users.
Confidentiality	The confidentiality of statistical information refers to the imperative of ensuring systems and behaviours are developed and promoted which ensure that sensitive and personal information is respected and protected from misuse or inappropriate disclosure.
Interpretability	The interpretability of statistical information reflects the availability of the supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and utilise it appropriately. This information normally covers the availability and clarity of metadata, including concepts, sources and methods, classifications and measures of accuracy.
Coherence	The coherence of statistical information reflects the degree to which it can be successfully brought together with other statistical information within a broad analytic framework. Coherence encompasses the internal consistency of a collection as well as its comparability both over time and with other data sources.

KEY ACTIVITIES *continued*

Depending on the type of data and the purpose for which it will be used, some of the criteria may be more important to understanding the quality of specific datasets than others.

The framework is useful because it not only provides the basis to ensure the concept of quality is always at the forefront but also provides a common ground for communication about quality.

Activity 4 – Increase the capability within and across departments for statistical research and analysis

The focus of this activity is to increase the statistical and analytical capabilities of ACT Government staff and to improve the utilisation of ABS, ACT Government administrative by-product data and other data to support policy development.

The capacity to analyse and merge data from different sources has been identified as a skills gap in some areas of ACT Government. Increasing the capabilities and knowledge within departments is critical if available data is to be used to its fullest potential and agencies are to respond to a changing environment and emerging community interests.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

KEY ACTIVITIES *continued*

Activity 5 – Increase awareness and understanding of ABS data and seek to improve ABS statistics for the ACT

The focus of this activity is to increase the understanding of ABS statistics by ACT Government staff. This will be achieved through seminars and training, and through collaboration between the ABS and ACT Government officers.

The ABS and the ACT Government will work through the ABS ACT office, ABS Advisory Groups and Boards, the State Statistical Forum and ACT Government working groups (e.g. Population Working Group, IDSC) to increase the awareness of ABS statistics and input ACT statistical needs to the ABS work program.

Activity 6 -Improve the way administrative data is stored and managed

This activity will focus on collaboration to improve the development, collection, coordination, application and dissemination of ACT administrative by-product data.

There are two broad types of administrative by-product data or information found in ACT Government agencies. These are:

- *Records required for agency business*: transactions that provide evidence of business activities — for example, client records, personnel records, development of policy issues and records of the rights and obligations of the agency.
- *Ephemeral (temporary) material*: information messages that may have a business context but are not part of a business transaction — for example, notification of a meeting or a message containing an attached document. This IDP is primarily concerned with source records required for agency business and the attendant administrative datasets that are produced from those records.

Improving both the electronic and physical management of data on departmental systems is a priority under this IDP. In this regard, the potential development of an Integrated Document Management System (IDMS) that manages both the input and storage of information collected by ACT Government agencies is of note. However, a range of other small-scale activities may also contribute to improving the way data is stored and managed at the individual agency level.

Activity 7 - Review and improve data on ACT Government services provision

The focus of this activity is to work with ACT Government agencies to improve ACT data contributed to the ROGS.

The Council of Australian Governments' Review of Commonwealth/ State Service Provision publishes data annually in ROGS on Commonwealth and State and Territory Government services. In general, information in the ROGS is derived from existing collections. Some of these may not be directly comparable between States and Territories. Other datasets need to be refined to ensure relevant, high quality information is available to assist in organisational planning and help drive performance.

While the advancement of cross-jurisdictional comparability is difficult, the ACT will position itself through this IDP to assist in the process through a focus on ensuring that ROGS data is of high quality and can also be used strategically for organizational planning purposes.

WHAT DOES THE IDP PROVIDE *continued*

KEY ACTIVITIES *continued*

Activity 8 - Ensure that the community and service providers have feedback on, and access to, information derived from the data they provide.

This activity is designed to improve the application and dissemination of administrative data on service provision.

A key outcome of the IDP is to ensure that the ACT community is provided with quality data. This data should provide information on the need for services and how these needs are being addressed.

In particular, community service providers receive funds from, and provide reports to, multiple funding sources. The review of data provision and reporting processes will assist in the progressive examination and streamlining of these processes.

Activity 9 - Improve the quality of data collected from service providers and ACT Government grant recipients and make better use of this data for planning.

This activity aims to improve the development, collection and coordination of administrative by-product data on service provision.

The need to improve the quality of data collected under service agreements and from grant recipients has also been identified as a long-term priority under the IDP. High quality data can then be used for service delivery planning.

Data from service providers and ACT Government grant recipients can also be enhanced to address some of the data gaps and information needs identified in this IDP.

Activity 10 - Develop a capacity to link non-ABS datasets, particularly:

- On the number of people accessing government services, and
- On clients with multiple and complex needs and how they access services.

The focus of this activity is to improve the development, collection, and coordination of administrative data to increase the capacity to link data to enable better policy development.

A key commitment of the ACT Government is to meet the multiple and complex needs of clients, adopting a whole of government approach to service delivery. Accordingly, the ACT Government is concerned to improve data on the numbers of people accessing services and, in particular, on those with complex and multiple needs and the services that they access.

For example, the Turnaround program is aimed at young people who have complex and multiple needs (such as involvement in the criminal justice system, parental substance abuse, substandard housing). The data relating to these issues is held by different departments and, in general, not easily exchanged. However, the program has successfully linked data from multiple non-ABS sources, despite the difficulties involved, and provides a model for further work in this area.

In developing this capacity to link datasets to provide information for reporting purposes and policy development programs, such as Turnaround, it is acknowledged that client confidentiality is a key principle which needs to be respected.

GLOSSARY

Administrative by-product data	<p>Administrative by-product (ABP) data is collected from clients during the day-to-day operations of agencies.</p> <p>There are two broad types of ABP data:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Records required for agency business2. Ephemeral (temporary) material. <p>Administrative data refers to source records required for agency business and the attendant administrative datasets that are produced from those records.</p>
Client	<p>A person who uses a certain government service.</p>
Data Custodian	<p>The person responsible for the input and maintenance of datasets.</p>
Data Dictionary	<p>A Data Dictionary is a vehicle for specifying data collection standards. Essentially describes the meaning of the information to be collected.</p>
Metadata	<p>Information about the data, especially in relation to its structure and organisation, e.g.: time period; the scope; etc.</p>
National Minimum Data Set	<p>A National Minimum Data Set is a minimum set of data elements agreed on by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. They allow consistency of data standards across certain fields.</p>
National Statistical Service	<p>The National Statistical Service (NSS) is a coalition of agencies that will deliver to Australia an improved range of statistical information for policy, research and decision making.</p>
User	<p>A person or organisation using statistical data. This may include someone developing policy or conducting research or reporting or other purpose.</p>

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