

Realising the full value of public data

It's a great pleasure to be here today on Ngunnawal Country and to be part of this wonderful event. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today and to pay my respects to Elders past and present. For those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders joining us today, it's great to have you here.

Thank you to Minister Robert for his "data rules the world" message – a terrific way to kick off the day. To the Graduate Data Network - Heshan Inamaluwa and the team - thank you for your energy and enthusiasm in bringing the day together. Thank you to Gordon de Brouwer, Chantelle Kreti and Caroline Walsh at the ACT Institute of Public Administration Australia for your expert guidance and support and making it all happen.

I also want to acknowledge those agencies who have generously sponsored the event – the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, the Department of Health, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Department of Social Services.

Welcome to APS graduates

I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to the many Australian Public Service graduates participating today. In preparing my comments for today, I was reflecting on my experience as a graduate at the Reserve Bank of Australia. Just thinking about it puts a smile on my dial.

What an opportunity! From the vantage point of Martin Place in Sydney, I had a unique, whole of system view on Australia's financial system and the broader economy. There were challenging problems to solve. I learned so much, including about the value of data which was always a starting point in helping us understand the nature of the problem and informing solutions. Our efforts were focused on delivering for Australians. I was reminded of this each day. The RBA's purpose is set in stone in the foyer of the building ... to contribute to ... the stability of the currency of Australia; the maintenance of full employment in Australia; and, the economic prosperity and welfare of the people of Australia. And oh, to sort of quote Dr Seuss, the people you meet. At the Bank, across government and the community writ large – people from whom I learnt so much, people that supported, guided and inspired me, people that have been lifelong friends.

The national perspective, solving challenging problems, continuous learning, serving Australians, the amazing people. These have been constants in my career in the Australian Public Service whether it was my time at the Bank, my work on the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation or negotiating Australia's free trade agreements with Japan and China, managing the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings, or working on climate change issues. They are the constants that continue to motivate and inspire me.

I hope your experience is all of that and more.

A new, best practice scheme for sharing Australian Government data

Now let me take you from where I've been to where I am, where we are, where we are going.

Here in the Australian Government, we are the custodians of a most valuable national asset – data. And we are surrounded by talented people making great use of that data. Let me give you a few examples.

- Your COVID vaccination certificate – that's the Australian Immunisation Register administered by Services Australia. Through data sharing agreements, we were able to link this data to state and territory check-in apps.
- Data from the Australian Immunisation Register has also been linked with data from the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to inform the roll out of COVID vaccines.
- The Bureau of Meteorology and other scientific agencies such as Geoscience Australia have incredible data assets and play a critical role in preparing for and responding to natural disasters.

In my current role, I'll be responsible for overseeing a new scheme – a best practice scheme - for sharing Australian Government data, underpinned by strong safeguards and simplified, efficient processes. It's also my job to educate and foster best practice data sharing.

Data is one of the significant currencies of today's world. A few statistics to illustrate the point. The International Data Corporation predicts the global datasphere will grow more than five-fold in the seven years to 2025 from 33 zettabytes to 175 zettabytes. Lateral Economics estimates that the Australian Census generates \$6 of value for every \$1 spent to roll it out. You can also think of data as the feedstock of the digital economy which grew in value by 7.4 per cent in 2019-20, compared with 2 per cent for the economy overall.

The Data Availability and Transparency Scheme – the DATA Scheme as we like to call it - sets us up to do even more with our data, to realise its full value and for a future where the Australian Government is a best in class manager and user of data.

The scheme is focused on increasing the availability and use of Australian Government data helping us deliver government services that are simple, helpful, respectful and transparent, inform better Government policy and programs, and support world-leading research and development.

This is a journey we've been on for some time. The proposed Data Availability and Transparency Act that underpins the scheme, acts on a commitment made by the Australian Government in its response to the 2017 Productivity Commission inquiry into data availability and use. I want to acknowledge the excellent work of Deb Anton and her team, including the National Data Advisory Council, in developing the scheme and thank the many whose suggestions have strengthened the scheme.

Passage of the proposed Data Availability and Transparency Act remains a priority for the Government and the Office of the National Data Commissioner. Alongside this, we're focused on preparing for the scheme's commencement – building awareness and understanding of the scheme as well as preparedness to participate.

So let me give you a quick 101 on the scheme.

- Under the scheme an accredited data user can make a request for data from an Australian Government agency. It could be a request from a NSW government agency to the Australian Government Department of Health, for example. Or from one Australian Government agency to another. The data may be shared directly or via an accredited data service provider.
- The strong safeguards require that sharing be in the public interest and for one of three purposes – to deliver government services, to inform government policy and programs, or for research and development; participants in the scheme be accredited; a data sharing agreement is in place that applies the data sharing principles; all sharing is consistent with the *Privacy Act 1988*; the National Data Commissioner as a trusted overseer of the scheme keeps public registers of accredited participants and data sharing agreements, reports annually on the scheme, as well as monitors activities and works with others such as the Australian

Privacy Commissioner to ensure compliance, taking action where appropriate.

We're keen to hear from you about what you are doing and would like to do in this space. As part of my education role and to prepare for the commencement of the scheme, we are engaging with Australian Government agencies and others to encourage participation in the scheme and provide you with information, tools and guidance to support the step change and ensure best practice data sharing.

For example, the Office of the National Data Commissioner is working to make it easier to discover Australian Government data. Through the Australian Government's \$16.5 million Data Discovery initiative, we are working with Australian Government entities to support them to develop consistent data inventories and create a searchable Australian Government Data Catalogue. We have started pilots with three participating agencies – the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, and the Department of Finance. We are scaling up the program building partnerships with more than 20 Australian Government agencies that have expressed an interest in the initiative.

With the help of many Australian Government agencies and other data users, we are also building Dataplace. This \$11 million commitment from the Australian Government will

deliver a one stop shop where users can make a request for data from any Commonwealth agency. Dataplace will underpin the administration of the DATA Scheme and provide a tool for helping Australian Government agencies manage an increasing number of data requests, in a more timely and efficient manner.

Australia's Data Strategy

The DATA Scheme has a key role to play in helping realise the Australian Government's vision for Australia to become a modern data-driven society by 2030. This is the vision articulated in Australia's first Data Strategy, released in December 2021 for consultation through until June 2022. The Data Strategy complements other strategies like the Australian Government's Digital Economy Strategy which aims to position Australia as a leading digital economy and society by 2030 and the Digital Government Strategy where the focus is on being one of the top three digital governments in the world by 2025.

The Data Strategy focuses on three areas: maximising the value of data, protecting data to build trust, and enabling the use of data. It sets out the actions the Australian Government will take to realise the vision, building on work already underway. There is loads of exciting work going on:

- The DATA Scheme, the Data Discovery initiative and data.gov.au enhancements

- The APS Data Profession, headed by the Australian Statistician, Dr David Gruen. David will tell you more about the profession this afternoon.
- Digital Atlas Australia – a \$40 million commitment for Geoscience Australia to develop an interactive map of Australia
- More than \$200 million for the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to develop the Australian Climate Service to support natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Working together, these agencies were able to provide data to the National Resilience and Recovery Agency within 24 hours to help them to estimate the population adversely affected by the recent floods.
- \$100 million for Treasury to accelerate rollout of the Consumer Data Right to expand the control individual and business consumers have over data about them that is held by business and government from the banking to the energy and telecommunications sectors
- With an investment of \$125 million, Geoscience Australia will expand the Exploring the Future program to improve our understanding of the nation's minerals, energy and groundwater resource potential
- \$40 million has been committed for the Department of Social Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to

extend the National Disability Data Asset linking Commonwealth and state and territory data

- The Department of Health will invest more than \$360 million in data to improve outcomes and transitions between health and aged care settings and \$117 million on data for better mental health and suicide prevention services
- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications is developing a National Freight Data Hub (\$16.5 million) and a Regional Data Hub (\$13 million)
- \$14 million to build the Vocational Education and Training National Data Asset to improve our understanding of employment and social outcomes for VET students
- A review of the *Privacy Act 1988* to ensure personal data is better protected and the digital economy is better supported
- \$1.67 billion to implement the Cyber Security Strategy.
- An Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing signed in 2021 commits the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to share public sector data by default, be responsive to data requests and share data unless there is a legitimate reason not to.

You'll hear more about the strategy and many of these actions over the course of the day. You'll also get to hear about what others in the private sector, state and territory governments and universities are up to and what's happening internationally.

Conclusion

The DATA Scheme and the Australian Data Strategy offers us so many opportunities. Let's realise them. Let's do so in a way that builds our capability as data managers and users, delivers better outcomes for Australians and builds their trust and confidence in us. To spur you on, we'll be introducing a new competition to flush out the best data sharing projects that deliver public benefit. It's something I will work on with Dr Gruen – watch this space.