



DELVING INTO DATA

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRADUATE DATA NETWORK'S ANNUAL DATA FORUM

15 MARCH 2022

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

SHOWCASE HIGHLIGHTS

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ANDREW LALOR

Why do we need an Australian Government data strategy? So, a couple of flippant answers first. If you have a vague idea of where you are, and a vague idea of where you want to get to, a strategy helps you get from one place to another. And I say vague, because the data system's actually pretty complex. There's a lot of different parts to it, and actually, articulating what that system is, is actually pretty important in the first place.

We can't provide advice to government on really complex issues or make things really easy for citizens when we're dealing across agencies, or if someone has a baby and they're engaging with commonwealth and state government. So, there's just too many opportunities for doing things together, and we need to coordinate that action. So a lot of the whole of government work that we do intends to organise that.

LOUISE RAWLINGS

I guess the first lesson I'd highlight is when you're embarking on some of these practical data projects, which is what this session is supposed to highlight, you really need to think about what questions that you have that you want to answer. So, so often from a BITRE perspective, we go and talk to our policy and project colleagues, and they'll say, "Oh, we just need more data."

And we say, "Well, what's the problem you're trying to solve? What are the questions you're trying to answer?" And I think that's always something to keep upfront. It's no good in having reams and reams of data if you don't have a question that you're trying to answer.

Often the Commonwealth in this space is not the owner of the data, it's our colleagues in the states and territories or it's our road freight operators, or it's the rail operators and so forth. So really, thinking about where would we think about getting the data from? Whose data is it? What do they want to know? What problems are they trying to solve? So, I think that's a lesson we've learned with the freight data hub is to engage closely with our stakeholders.

JESSICA ROBINSON

Sometimes as humans, when we're asked for more information or when there's more information provided to us, it actually makes us stop and think and go, "Oh, this seems even riskier." So, one of the challenges we've got in CDR is setting, I guess, potentially the gold standard for data sharing, that we want it to be truly informed consent. But a lot of the population have low data literacy and don't actually understand how the data's going to be used, or mistrust government.

SIMON COSTELLO

What this platform will do, is it will bring together trusted data sets from across government and possibly even some private sector data sets, into an interactive, secure and easy to use mapping platform. And the way that data we connect this through location or mapping.

SUSIE KLUTH

Data integration is when you bring together data and join it up in some way. The most common, the most powerful integration is the work that the ABS does, where they bring together information on people and businesses from a range of different data sets. You can also do things where you bring together data at a region, which is something else that we've been doing some work on.

CELIA MOSS

Yeah, thanks to everyone who's mentioned MADIP today. It's been a great ad for that amazing piece of infrastructure. And as Philip said, if you have the foundational infrastructure built, and when I say infrastructure, I mean the systems, the processes, as Susie mentioned, the governance. If you have those things in place, when you need to undertake analysis in a circumstance where you really want to do something quickly, you've got something to build on. So this is the fabulous thing about building this foundational structure. And as David Gruen said, enabled through an investment by the government, but it hasn't been easy. It hasn't been easy to get people interested in giving this money to agencies that want to build infrastructure. They want to give money to agencies that do analysis and come up with really interesting insights. So this one was a pretty extraordinary thing to be able to do at the time.

LOUISE GATES

These things aren't easy. There's a lot of aspects that we need to consider, whether it's around governance, whether it's around the technical linkage. And what we're finding is that we have been repeating these processes many times, for ever so slightly different projects, for different uses, for different clients. A lot of the data sharings has certainly seemed to be quite

Commonwealth-centric. And this model is really looking at a Commonwealth jurisdictional partnership where all of the states are co-designing together with the Commonwealth. We're all working together with the idea being that we have access to the national spine. We have access to all of the different data sets that created under appropriate governance.

CELIA MOSS

For the Bureau of Statistics, our primary driver is trying to work out the best ways to get information, that we can then produce official statistics from, to inform the issues of the days. So, our traditional model has been surveys. We run surveys. It takes two years for us to process that data. We then produce it and go, wow, we just found out something amazing. We're really trying to move, obviously away from that. So apart from the fact that our respondents are not as keen to answer questions that come through, from someone knocking on the door or internet, et cetera. So we're looking to big data, looking to private sector data, as well as the administrative data that comes from agencies to determine whether we can substitute data that we would've collected in surveys, whether we can create a whole different way of reporting on things that are important in the economy and in society. So, yeah, that's the big thing that's on our minds at the moment, how can we better use data that's available rather than having to directly collect it.