

Australia: Data governance profile



1. Vision and policy intent

The Australian Government sees public data as a valuable national asset that underpins Australia's ability to realise economic and social objectives. Australia released its [Public Data Policy Statement](#) in 2015, which formalised the Government's commitment to open data and data-driven innovation.

It provided a mandate for the government to optimise the use and reuse of public data and to make non-sensitive data publicly accessible. In 2023 it released the first combined [Data and Digital Government Strategy](#) outlining its vision to deliver simple, secure, and connected public services for all people and business through world class data and digital capabilities. The Strategy helps align data and digital initiatives across the Australian Government's strategic and reform agenda. Development of the Strategy was led by the Australian Government Department of Finance, which has responsibility for data policy. The [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (ABS) contributed extensively to shaping the Strategy.

2. Data Management: policies, rules & institutions

Australia's Commonwealth arrangements for data integration were established in 2013, and introduced '[Integrating Authority](#)' roles for authorized data integration projects. The [Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022](#) (DATA) promotes secure data sharing through the [Office of the National Data Commissioner](#) (ONDC). The [National Data Advisory Council](#) advises the ONDC, with the **Australian Statistician** as a member. The [DATA Scheme](#) comprises 'Data Custodians' controlling public sector data, ONDC accrediting 'Accredited Users' and 'Accredited Data Service Providers' for data sharing.

3. Data custodians and data stewardship

[ABS](#) is empowered by the [ABS Act 1975 and Census and Statistics Act 1905](#) to serve as Australia's primary statistical authority encompassing data collection, analysis, and dissemination. While statistical production is its core focus, ABS is also taking on a leadership role. ABS contributes to and partners in data stewardship activities although this is not its main mandate or function.

The key roles and responsibilities for data custodians under the Commonwealth arrangements concern access and use of data.

The ABS leads the [Australian Public Service \(APS\) Data Profession Stream](#), fostering data literacy and a data culture.

4. Data sharing, accessibility and integration

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) prioritizes data integration and access to new data sources, including administrative and transactions datasets from public and private sectors. This involves collaborating with other data providers to enhance statistical products.

Key initiatives include:

- [ABS DataLab](#), enabling secure in-depth analysis of microdata, serving numerous active projects and analysts across organizations, [Person Level Integrated Data Asset](#) (PLIDA) combines diverse data on health, education, payments, and demographics for complex policy insights. It involves agencies like Taxation, Education, and Health; and
- [Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment](#) (BLADE) fuses ABS business surveys and taxation data, supporting businesses from 2001-02 onwards.

ABS seeks to sustain and improve data quality, supporting evidence-based policies and research through platforms like PLIDA and BLADE.

5. Data sharing risks & mitigation

The ONDC has established a [DATA Scheme](#) to enhance secure data sharing while managing associated risks. Regulatory measures include entity accreditation, commissioner oversight, and privacy safeguards for personal and sensitive information. DATA promotes responsible data sharing among Data Custodians, limiting sharing to three designated purposes and adhering to data sharing principles. The ABS emphasizes shared data governance with custodians and users, employing a trust-building approach. Stringent safeguards, aligned with legislative requirements, ensure data safety and privacy.

The [Five Safes framework](#) supports data access, addressing disclosure risks through: Safe People, Safe Projects, Safe Settings, Safe Data, and Safe Outputs.

The ABS, complying with enabling legislation and the [Privacy Act](#), conducts [Privacy Impact Assessments](#) to regulate personal information use for trustworthy data sharing.

DATA Scheme Operation

