



Better Services Better Decisions Better Government

A fairer, safer society for all Australians

Reform of public sector data use will help us build a better Australia.

Whether it is claiming a Medicare rebate, having a passport checked before an overseas trip, lodging a tax return or simply looking at the weather forecast, every day millions of Australians rely on services delivered by the Australian Government.

Streamlining and modernising how the Government shares data, while ensuring privacy and security, can support policy and programs, services and research to:

- Improve access to the information and services Australians need, without having to provide multiple areas of government with the same information.
- Enable more smart and efficient services, like pre-filling forms that save time.
- Inform decisions to prioritise funding when and where it is needed, for services such as education, regional development, transport, and health services.
- Provide greater access to data for accredited researchers, scientists and innovators to help make Australia's economy, environment and society healthier into the future.



**The data that
government collects
plays a big part in
making a better future
for all Australians.**

Understanding the problem

The Australian Government currently collects, holds and uses data on topics as diverse as weather patterns, who is coming and going from Australia, and administrative data about access to government services. This data is used to develop government policies, enforce Australia's laws and deliver government services. Government agencies currently share data to achieve these purposes, but they do so slowly and inconsistently wasting time and stifling innovation.

In 2016, the Government commissioned the Productivity Commission to undertake a review of data availability and use across the Australian economy. The Productivity Commission's report found Australia was lagging behind our international counterparts, with inconsistent practices and no single approach to public sector data sharing.

The report also found the Australian Government cannot deliver digital services that meet the expectations of Australians in a modern world without better data. The report made a series of recommendations to unlock the value of data, including how public sector data is shared. The Government's response to these recommendations committed to reforming the national data system to improve availability and use of public sector data.

Better service delivery

The government already shares your data to help you at tax time by pre-filling your myTax form with information from your employer, bank, Medicare and private health insurance providers. However, due to privacy restrictions in some pieces of legislation, this isn't always the case.

For example, at present, citizens who apply for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Disability Support Pension have to provide the same medical certificate twice—once to the National Disability Insurance Agency and separately to Centrelink.

Once the Data Sharing and Release legislation has commenced, the government could share your data if you ask us to, so you only have to tell us once when your circumstances change.



Better informed policy

Through better use of data, the government has developed a more sophisticated independent schools funding model that relies on a more accurate picture of student needs. Previously, the funding model was informed by Census data, looking at the suburbs where students lived. This was potentially misleading as parental income was not taken into account and not all families that live in affluent suburbs have high incomes. The Australian Bureau of Statistics worked with the Department of Education and Training to dig deeper into the actual income, education and employment data of parents and develop a much fairer allocation of funding to schools based on better information.

Streamlining Australia's data sharing framework

The Government has been coordinating the design of a new legislative framework to get the most out of public sector data held by the Australian Government. The new framework includes:

- 1 An independent National Data Commissioner.
- 2 A National Data Advisory Council.
- 3 Data Sharing and Release legislation.

The National Data Commissioner will be the champion of the new system, drawing on the expert advice of the National Data Advisory Council, to maximise the value of public sector data to achieve outcomes for Australians.

The Data Sharing and Release legislation will create the legal grounds for the reforms, establishing the National Data Commissioner as an independent statutory authority and authorising the sharing of public sector data to deliver public benefits while ensuring privacy and security are preserved.



The Office of the National Data Commissioner

In July 2018, the Office of the National Data Commissioner (ONDC) was formed within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

On 8 August 2018 the interim National Data Commissioner, Ms Deborah Anton was appointed to oversee the development of these data reforms. The ONDC is committed to a philosophy of listening, learning and improving through meaningful engagement. This commitment is critical to build trust in our work and design a system which meets the needs of Australians.

Consistent with our philosophy, there will be many opportunities to comment on the legislation during the drafting process before it is debated by the Parliament, including through our Discussion Paper. The Australian public expects the Government to handle public sector data in a safe, transparent, and accountable way that benefits society. The ONDC has spent over a year speaking to Australians to understand their expectations and to design the new Data Sharing and Release framework to get it right.

We are working with the Australian Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner, to ensure Australia's data sharing framework is driven by a strong foundation of privacy and security. We are also supported by technical advice from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and are talking across government, industry and the community to develop a framework that delivers a safe, secure and workable system.

Better informed research

Medicines are developed to improve and save lives, but occasionally there are unexpected adverse effects from taking some medicines that are difficult and time consuming to detect through clinical trials.

De-identified patient prescription data from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) was shared safely with researchers and their analysis detected adverse events associated with certain medicines.

As a result of this work, five medications were identified as potentially leading to heart failure or stroke. These findings have enabled the Government to work with doctors to change prescription guidelines, minimising adverse effects, enhancing patient safety, and avoiding the costs of hospitalisation and treatment.



Data Sharing and Release legislative reforms

The Discussion Paper is the next step in the conversation with the Australian public and stakeholders towards legislation enabling the data reforms.

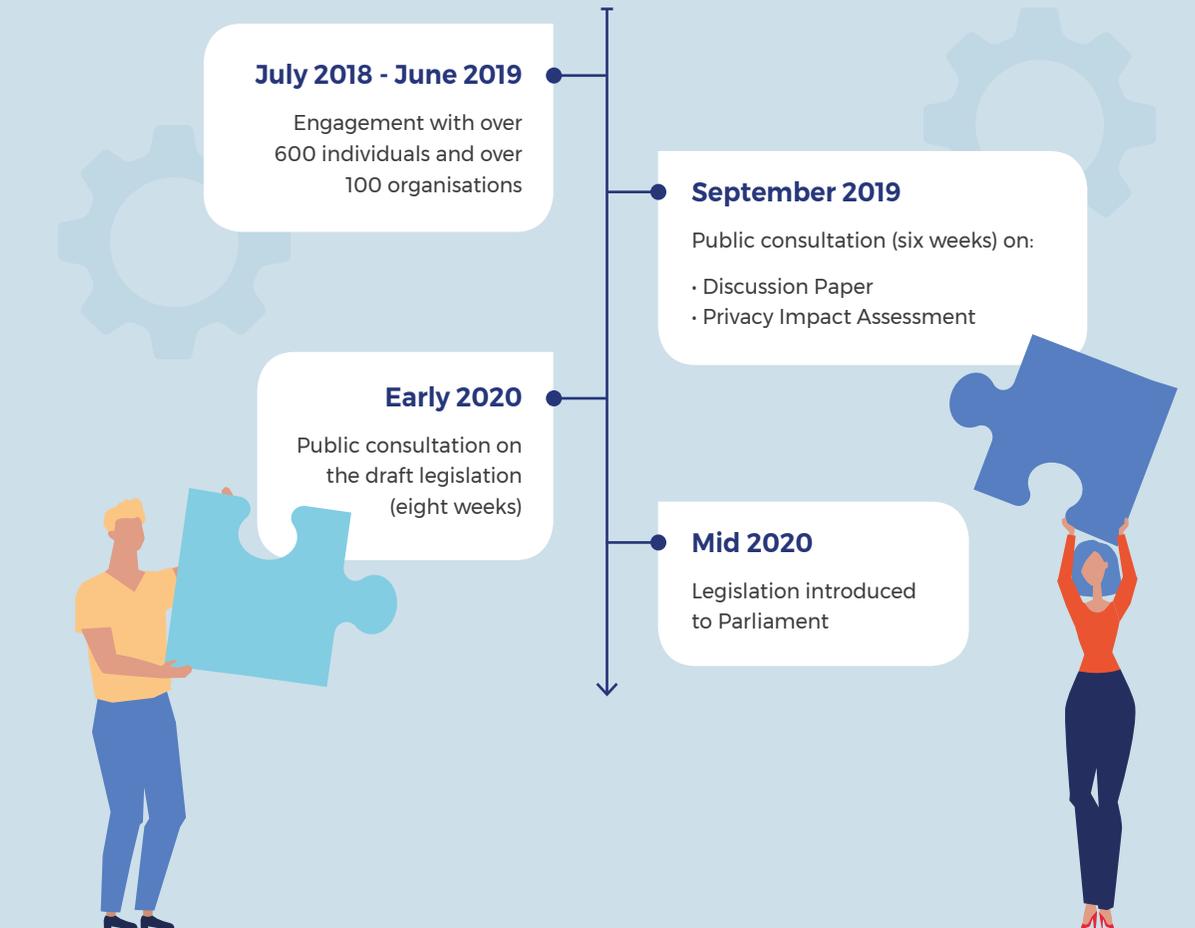
The Discussion Paper provides more details on the policy positions underpinning the reforms and more information on:

- The Data Sharing and Release framework, including the role of the National Data Commissioner and National Data Advisory Council.
- The public benefits of data sharing, including the permitted and precluded purposes.
- The privacy preserving safeguards in place to protect Australians, including the Data Sharing Principles.
- Transparency mechanisms, including various public registers and annual reports.
- Regulatory approach, including offences, defences, complaints, and penalties.



What's the plan from here?

The Discussion Paper is not the end of our consultation—we will conduct another series of roundtables and engagements in September and October 2019. In early 2020, we will produce a draft of the legislation for public consultation. After eight weeks of public consultation and responding to your concerns on the legislation, we will introduce the legislation for debate in Parliament. Together we can build meaningful data reforms, develop better government policies, enforce Australia's laws, and deliver better government services, for the benefit of all Australians.



Find out more

We invite you to engage with and make a submission on our Discussion Paper, available at www.datacommissioner.gov.au