

Governance of Australia's Official Statistics System

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Australia's Federal System of Government involves

- Australian Government (1)
- State and Territory Governments (8)

AND

ABS has legislated responsibility to provide statistical services to both levels of government in Australia

Governance in Australia involves

- A statutory Statistics Advisory Council
- Statutory independence for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Concept of a National Statistical System and a framework of strong statistical policies, protocols and practices
- Effective strategic engagement with key stakeholder groups through
 - **Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF)**
 - **State Statistics Forum (SSF)**
 - **User/Technical Advisory Groups (subject specific)**
 - **Bilateral meetings with heads of Australian Government Departments**

Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC)

- Established by Australian Bureau of Statistics Act in 1975 and meets 2 times a year
- The role of ASAC is to advise the Minister and the Australian Statistician on:
 - (a) The improvement, extension and coordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;
 - (b) Annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and
 - (c) Any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.

ASAC Membership

Appointed by the Australian government and comprises:

- Independent chair (5 year term)
- Australian Statistician as an ex officio member
- Other members (3 year terms) include
 - One nominee from each State/Territory government (8 in total)
 - Up to 14 other members drawn from Australian government, business, academic and community organisations

Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF)

- The Australian Statistician is chair

Members comprise

- Senior officers of policy departments and other major Australian government agencies that are key producers and/or users of official statistics
- Deputy Australian Statisticians and other relevant senior ABS staff

Meets for a day twice a year with a formal agenda agreed after consultation with all participants

State Statistical Forum (SSF)

- The Australian Statistician is chair
- A member is nominated by each State/Territory government to represent their major government producers and/or users of official statistics
- Deputy Australian Statisticians and other relevant senior ABS staff attend

Meets for a day twice a year with a formal agenda agreed after consultation with all participants

User and Technical Advisory Groups (around 40 in total)

Generally comprises senior government, academic, business and community representatives with expertise in specific areas. For example:

- Economic Statistics User Group
- Labour Statistics Advisory Group
- Social Statistics User Group
- Methodology Advisory Group
- Productivity Measurement Advisory Group
- Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group
- Population Estimates Technical Workgroup

Bilateral Meetings with Heads of Australian Government Departments and their senior staff

- Generally held every 6 to 9 months
- Focus is on strategic directions/new initiatives with statistical implications, from both ABS and departmental perspectives
- Addresses any significant issues/concerns in relationship
- Looks for opportunities to collaborate on statistical or related research work

ABS Planning/Reporting Cycles

- 10 year Strategic Planning Framework
- 3 year Forward Work Program (reviewed annually)

[Key elements are discussed in AGSF, SSF, User Advisory Groups and in Departmental Secretaries bilateral meetings]

- Outcomes presented to ASAC for consideration and advice
- Annual Work Program then finalised and fed into Federal budget cycle
- ABS and ASAC are each required by legislation to report annually to Parliament

Conclusions

Good governance of the official statistics system in Australia involves:

- **Concept of a National Statistical System (NSS) supported by a framework of strong statistical policies, protocols and practices**
- **An independent NSO (ie the ABS) as the core of the NSS with a strong leadership mandate**
- **Independence of peak Advisory body**
- **Effective mechanisms to regularly engage with key stakeholders in the system**