



Final Report: Review of Australia’s Longitudinal Data System

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is pleased to make available the Review of Australia’s Longitudinal Data System (“the Review”).

Since the completion of the Review in 2016, significant progress has been made in the broader Australian public data environment. DSS recognises the significant benefits of enhanced collaboration and coordination across the longitudinal data system, but notes the importance of aligning any response to the Review’s recommendations with developments occurring in the broader data landscape.

While the framing of the Review may have been overtaken in part by recent developments, such as the recommendations of the Productivity Commission’s *Inquiry into Data Availability and Use*, and the Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA) project, the Department is broadly accepting of its recommendations.

The National Centre for Longitudinal Data (NCLD), established within DSS, will continue to manage the Department’s nationally-significant longitudinal studies, and actively contribute to the stewardship of Australia’s longitudinal studies by facilitating conversations and applying innovative approaches to the design, use and application of these studies.

Information on steps taken within the NCLD to achieve the vision for longitudinal data articulated in the Report is outlined below.

Recommendation 1: Funding and preserving Australia’s longitudinal data assets

In its 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government provided additional funding of \$40.9 million over four years to support the delivery of Australian longitudinal studies managed within DSS.

At present, the four studies managed by DSS include:

- The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey
- The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)
- The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)
- Building a New Life in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants (BNLA)

This ongoing funding provides for continued operation of longitudinal studies within DSS into the foreseeable future.

Recommendation 2: Strengthening the longitudinal data system

The NCLD is taking steps to enhance collaboration across the broad longitudinal data system as articulated in the Review. Through development and coordination of communities-of-practice, the longitudinal data system will be strengthened with improved information sharing and jointly building capability to derive maximum impact from our collective efforts.

Key actors in the longitudinal data system, including researchers and academics, data custodians, policy advisers and government, were brought together through the inaugural Longitudinal Data Conference in 2016, which showcased the benefits of longitudinal data, as well as providing a collaboration space.

The next Longitudinal Data Conference planned for 2018 is expected to build on the momentum created at the 2016 event, and will demonstrate further progress in the application of longitudinal data to the development of public policy.

Recommendation 3: Investing in harmonisation, coverage and impact of longitudinal data

Following the Government's commitment to the ongoing funding of DSS' longitudinal studies (above), work is underway in the NCLD to deliver a suite of coordinated and inter-related projects to drive greater value and policy impact from Australia's longitudinal data assets.

The starting point for conceptualising this body of work was international best practice, most particularly the United Kingdom's Cohort and Longitudinal Studies Enhancement Resources (CLOSER) facility.

Work currently being progressed in the NCLD includes online data access, improved harmonisation and streamlined data linkage. Initial work has commenced to develop broader use and understanding of longitudinal data and analysis, and to ensure that data analyses have strong links to policy needs wherever possible.

Further opportunities are expected to arise over coming years to invest in the development of Australian longitudinal studies and to realise greater policy impact from their application.