

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO:

- *The Australian Government's Data Sharing and Release Legislative Reforms Discussion Paper*
- *The Australian Government's Privacy Impact Assessment*

Attention: Office of the National Data Commissioner
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600

BACKGROUND

Economic Development Australia is the national peak body for economic development professionals; building capacity, promoting excellence and providing leadership on issues that matter to our members.

EDA's activities are underpinned by four guiding principles:

1. Fostering a community of professionals
2. Promoting a culture of economic development excellence
3. Delivering influence and leadership on issues that matter to our members
4. Operating at best-practice governance standards

EDA's membership is comprised of over 750 public and private-sector economic development professionals operating in regional, urban and international contexts.

Economic Development practitioners empower urban and regional communities across Australia to innovate, evolve, invest and embrace socioeconomic opportunities and challenges that are important to their communities. Local economic empowerment is critical if Australia's communities are to thrive in a future characterised by rapid change and disruption.

Effective decision making in local economic development is increasingly reliant on transparent, accurate, up-to-date and community-specific data to inform:

- Identification of trends and disruptions impacting upon local competitiveness and productivity;
- Identification of opportunities and threats that may be relevant to the aspirations of local residents, workers and enterprises;
- Understanding of comparative regional/local economic performance against benchmark communities;
- Understanding of the local implications of global/national megatrends and macroeconomic factors;
- Development of targeted interventions that will make a meaningful difference to the economic resilience, prosperity and sustainability of local communities; and
- Tracking of impacts of initiatives/interventions over time.

Development of effective evaluation and measurement frameworks for economic development is a priority for EDA and is the focus of a national working group consisting of private and public economic development professionals as well as academics. EDA recently commissioned the University of South Australia to conduct a study into the *Development and Evaluation of Economic Development Measures* with funding by the Local Government Association of South Australia Research and Development Fund. This study identified a number of challenges faced by economic development practitioners seeking to access quality, consistent and affordable data to inform economic development strategy and activity. A comparison with the US and many European cities found that Australian economic development is not data-driven due to the lack of open source data which is available in comparable jurisdictions.



RECOMMENDATIONS

EDA advocates that effective use of data is integral to effective economic development decision making as Australia's economy transitions from a reliance on natural resources to a complex, dynamic, diverse, knowledge intensive and service-oriented economy. Access to current, accurate data is a critical tool for economic development practitioners seeking to identify nascent local industry competitiveness, demographic and workforce implications, export opportunities, etc.

EDA strongly recommends consideration of these factors in the development of Australia's Data sharing framework, with particular consideration of:

- Recognition of the important role that public and private national, state and local economic development entities and practitioners play through targeted inclusion in Shared Data programs;
- Ensuring the continued availability and development of local economic data products that provide communities with an understanding of economic characteristics and performance within the contemporary Australian economy. In particular, Census data is particularly critical to informed decision-making, and every effort should be made to ensure the integrity, accuracy, availability and timely release of census data;
- Development and facilitation of an overarching framework for consistent classification and reporting of socioeconomic data across National, State and Local tiers of government;
- Ensuring ongoing trust in the Government's management of the collection and retention of data to encourage accurate reporting;
- Partnering and integrating with private technology platforms (e.g. Google, Facebook etc) to develop more accurate and complete data around socio-economic behaviours and trends;
- Streamlining data sources across agencies to allow for more efficient usage - with the ABS to play a greater role in centralising data provision; and
- Continued improvements in streamlining of economic data with international partners to allow for greater comparison of economic performance at local levels across different nations.

EDA commends the Australian Government for identifying that improvements must be made in order to ensure data is shared in a more effective and responsive manner. The proposed changes will address Australia's detrimental position in relation to its international counterparts. We support the strategies outlined in the discussion paper which endeavour to unlock the value of data and welcome the opportunity to further shape economic development policy in the future.

Jacqueline Brinkman
Chief Executive Officer

