Data protection, confidentiality and privacy

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In Australia, information collected through the Civil Registration system provides a foundation for personal identity, connects people with government and enables disbursement of estates.

It is also used extensively as a foundation for population and health statistics, with data uses expanding over time.

Much of the information collected through Civil Registration is personal and needs to be protected appropriately in accordance with policy and legislation throughout its journey though the CRVS system.
There are many pieces of legislation that underpin CRVS data protections in Australia.

RBDM legislation states what data can be collected and how it can be used.

The Census and Statistics Act (1905) enables the ABS to securely collect data from RBDMs, provides protections for data once received and also provides a clear framework for how that data can and cannot be used.


Memorandums of Understanding and Inter-government Agreements underpin additional arrangements between the ABS and RBDMs or between jurisdictional RBDMs to enable additional transfers and use of data for specified purposes.
CRVS data has always been an important data source for population and public health policy

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent need for rapid and targeted information to help inform government responses

CRVS system changes to support these new requirements have needed to take account of data protection, confidentiality and privacy principles

Cooperation between agencies, focusing on key requirements and signing additional agreements has helped facilitate data delivery
Focus on data uses – data linkage

- An important additional use of information has been through data linkage.
- Linked data has the potential to provide information on the impacts of the pandemic on aged-care residents, people with disabilities or particular demographic within the population.
- To facilitate this type of new linkage work, it has been important to understand data custodianship at each point in the system and ensure agreements are signed to underpin relevant linkages or projects.
- Use of civil registration data in linked data assets is supported through jurisdictional MOUs and associated schedules – these can be adapted as necessary.
- Use of data in linked datasets also needs to be shown to be in the public interest and have sufficient protections so data is used appropriately and outputs maintain confidentiality and privacy.
The 5-safes framework – data linkage

A multidimensional approach to disclosure risk assessment

- Safe people: Is the researcher(s) authorised to access and use the data appropriately?
- Safe project: Is the data to be used for an appropriate purpose?
- Safe setting: Does the access environment prevent unauthorised use?
- Safe data: Is there a disclosure risk in the data itself?
- Safe output: Are the statistical results non-disclosive?

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