



# **Consultation paper—Regional Data Hub: Understanding and responding to regional data needs**

May 2021



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Director—Creative Services  
Communication Branch  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia

Email: [publishing@communications.gov.au](mailto:publishing@communications.gov.au) and [webservices@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:webservices@infrastructure.gov.au)

Website: [www.infrastructure.gov.au](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au)

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## What is the Regional Data Hub?

Data plays a critical role in helping community decision-makers and governments improve outcomes for Australia's regional communities. The Regional Data Hub (the Hub) will improve the evidence base for regional communities, local leaders and industry by bringing together key economic, demographic and socio-economic data to provide easy access for users to information about their regions. The Hub is part of the Australian Government's \$13.7 million *Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians* program, announced in the 2020-21 Budget.

The Hub will provide staged delivery of regional data over the next three years.

## Who do we want to hear from?

We need to understand the data needs of communities, organisations and industry to develop and deliver the Hub to meet those needs.

This consultation process aims to understand the data needs for regional communities, including those with planning, policy and program responsibilities for Australia's regions. We are also exploring working with data owners to enable them to share their data with us for the benefit of regional communities and stakeholders.

Our definition of regional Australia is those areas outside the major capital cities. However, we recognise that the definition of regional may change depending on the policy or program of interest to users.

Your feedback will guide the design and content of the Hub to ensure it provides value to its users. Therefore, anyone with an interest in accessing and using regional data is encouraged to share their views. These include:

- those living and working in the regions
- community leaders and their organisations
- business owners and operators
- state, territory and local governments
- the Regional Development Australia (RDA) network
- industry peak bodies with regional interests and regional peak bodies
- others with an interest in regional issues, including researchers and consultants
- data owners and data holders.

## How to provide your feedback

- Feedback may be provided through an [online survey](#). Your response will be sent securely and treated in line with *Australian Privacy Principles*.
- If you prefer to submit a written response, please read and consider the questions presented in each section below. You can submit your written response via [email](mailto:regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au) to [regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au) or through the [Have Your Say](#) page.
- The remainder of this paper discusses these questions to provide greater context if needed and to support alternate feedback options.
- **This consultation process closes at 5pm AEST, Friday 2 July 2021.**

# Background

Our regions are diverse, spanning sparsely populated remote communities to towns and large non-metropolitan cities. The Regional Data Hub aims to help communities and those involved in policy design and service delivery to understand the state of the regions and identify future opportunities. The Hub will have high quality data at geographic scales suitable for regional decision-makers.

The Australian Government is committed to the continual improvement of regional data<sup>1</sup>, releasing the *Progress in Australian Regions*<sup>2</sup> dashboard in 2020. In the 2020-21 Budget, the Australian Government announced it will invest \$13.7 million over four years commencing in 2020-21 for the *Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians* program.

Data enables better, faster and more efficient design and delivery of programs, policy and services to meet the needs of communities. Easy access to the right data can help people and communities have their say on local needs, plan investments and make decisions.

Better access to data, advances in data sharing, and data tools have seen the emergence of government data hubs to meet the information priorities of their users.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication's National Freight Data Hub<sup>3</sup> consolidates transport information for use by industry and in state planning<sup>4</sup>. At the local government scale, the Moreton Bay Regional Council's Data Hub focuses on zoning and local development<sup>5</sup>. The Pacific Data Hub<sup>6</sup> shows the full potential of a data hub with 92 organisations contributing over 5000 datasets presented in the format most suited to the data and its users. The Pacific Data Hub also proved useful to governments in managing the COVID 19 pandemic<sup>7</sup>.

The following sections of this consultation paper ask four key questions that the Department would value your input on to shape and implement the Hub (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The approach of this paper**



<sup>1</sup> The Australian Government collects and is consolidating many national data assets. The breadth of these initiatives have strong spatial applications and relevance to regional Australia and provide data resources and analytical opportunities to measure people, businesses and policy outcomes in regions, over time. These include initiatives such as: the [Statistical Spatial Framework](#); the [Data Integration Partnership for Australia](#); [Loc-I](#); and [Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment](#) (BLADE).

<sup>2</sup> *Progress in Australian Regions 2020*, [www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/bureau-communications-and-arts-research/progress-australia-regions-dashboard](http://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/bureau-communications-and-arts-research/progress-australia-regions-dashboard)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/transport/freight/national-freight-data-hub/index.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> DITRDC 2020, '[National Freight Data Hub Options Discussion Paper #2](#)'

<sup>5</sup> Moreton Bay Regional Council 2020 "[Our Data in Action](#)", updated January 7, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> [Pacific Data Hub](#) accessed 19 April 2021.

<sup>7</sup> [Launching the Pacific Data Hub: a one-stop shop - Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre](#) accessed 19 April 2021.

## How do you use data? What data do you need?

To ensure we focus on your data needs and priorities, we want to understand how you use data and what data is useful to you.

Table 1 sets out examples of data categories that may be useful at a regional level. Please consider what data would support your current and future planning, program and policy development. Data is available from many sources so consider whether this data is available from the private and/or public sectors.

**Table 1: Data of interest**

Education	Housing supply	Transport
Arts	Internal/overseas migration	Skills supply
Telecommunications	Ageing	Drought
Health outcomes	Population density	Jobs
Tourism	Ethnic diversity	Property development

In considering what data you need, please identify your information needs and priority data sets. These insights will help us determine the order in which we make data available. Not all data will be available at all geographic scales and the time needed to collect and curate the data will vary. Nevertheless, your priorities will help us determine where to invest.

### Questions

- What are the major types of data (e.g. economic, social, industry, demographic) that you use?
- Are there particular sources (e.g. government) that you would prefer to receive data from?
- Would you like to access data by a particular area or location? Examples are by local government area, Indigenous Regions or the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).
- What other information could be included in the Hub, including for release as regular Hub products?

Note: The ASGS encompasses Australian Bureau of Statistics and non-ABS structures that enable consistent statistical reporting from local to national scales, see [ASGS \(abs.gov.au\)](http://abs.gov.au).

### How do you want to access data?

People have different preferences and needs in accessing data. Some want quick access to key facts or information, others want to have access to data sets for analysis. Others may want information presented on a map.

The Department is looking to provide data in multiple formats, tailored to user needs. We are seeking to understand your preferences, so we can provide the right tools for a wide range of data users.

The following are examples of how data can be presented:

- user generated reports (such as Queensland Treasury's Regional Profiles)
- dashboards—for example, Progress in Australian Regions)
- interactive maps (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Data by Region)
- data files, with data catalogues, for users to download and undertake statistical analysis
- access to Application Programming Interfaces (API). APIs enable applications to talk to each other, for example to convert data so it can be displayed on a map.

The following questions explore how you currently access data, and how you would use the Hub:

### Questions

- How do you currently access regional data and information? Please provide examples.
- What other ways would you prefer to access regional data and information?
- What tools or products would help you to access and use data (e.g. a dashboard, user generated reports, maps, raw data)?
- What features would you like to see as part of the Hub to improve your access to regional data?

We are also interested in understanding the barriers to you accessing data. The following are some examples of barriers that may prevent access to regional data:

- The data exists but we can't find it
- The data exists but we can't compare it with other data
- We don't know what data exists or how to access it
- The data exists but we can't get permission to access it
- The data doesn't exist

### Questions

- What barriers prevent you accessing data?
- How could the Hub make it easier for you to access data?

## Data sharing opportunities

Sharing data is a powerful way to better understand how regions are changing and to make effective and targeted responses to challenges and opportunities. The Hub provides an opportunity for data owners to share their data, so that communities, organisations and governments can use this information to make well-informed plans for the future.

Facilitating data access and sharing helps put information at the fingertips of Australian citizens, communities and industry, and provides new ways to access relevant and targeted information.

Table 2 summarises some of the opportunities and challenges for data sharing in Australia for a wide range of data owners within community organisations, industry bodies and all tiers of government. Opportunities include sharing data to improve access and build greater comparability and consistency across data sources.

**Table 2: Data sharing—opportunities and challenges**

The opportunities	The challenges
Ensuring the evidence is available to community and government decision-makers	Building trust in data sharing
Creating new information sources and insights	Locating relevant data
Expanding tools and capabilities	Providing data in comparable formats
	Sharing data securely

The protection and confidentiality of data is essential to provide confidence and trust in data sharing. Key considerations include privacy settings, cyber security and protection of sensitive information.

The Hub's data holdings will be managed within legislative and regulatory frameworks across the management, storage, handling and release of data assets. Data access and sharing through the Hub will be informed by your feedback and gauging user need.

## Questions

- What regional data do you hold?
- What data (either your own or other data) would you like to see shared through the Hub?
- What are the greatest barriers to sharing data (either your own or other data) and how can these be overcome?
- What would be the benefits of greater data sharing for you or your organisation?

## Next steps

Your response will help inform the design and delivery of the Regional Data Hub.

Our [online survey](#) will help us to understand in detail how you use data and what your information needs are.

You can also provide your views through the [Have Your Say](#) page.

**This consultation process closes at 5pm AEST on Friday 2 July 2021.**

In addition, we will be consulting further to discuss the outcomes of this consultation process and implementation options.

Please [email regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au) if you have questions or would like to further contribute your views on the hub design project or visit [our website](#) for updates on the hub design at [www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/bureau-communications-regional-research/regional-data-hub](http://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/bureau-communications-regional-research/regional-data-hub).

## Appendix A: Designing the Regional Data Hub

The principles of open data and data exchange are central to the Hub (Figure A1). Through this initiative, the Australian Government is providing the opportunity for regional communities to access data and for data holders to share their data.

**Figure A1: Proposed Hub development**

Publish data	Share data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build data holdings</li> <li>Develop data and metadata standards</li> <li>Develop data insights</li> <li>Develop analytical tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable efficient and safe data sharing</li> <li>Provide for data owners to set permissions</li> <li>Deliver through a platform that complies with national data security and governance standards</li> </ul>

Different user groups will have different uses for the Hub. Figure A2 provides the strategic framework for designing the Hub. Implementation will be informed through consultation.

**Figure A2: Regional Data Hub: Strategic framework**

Improve access	Improve governance	Invest in the right activities	Facilitate collaboration
Existing data and information is discoverable, accessible and reusable, maximising its value	Data and information is collected, managed and shared in a trusted and secure environment	Address priority data and information gaps	Facilitate cross-government and public-private data sharing partnerships