

Deeper insights from Data Integration

Case Study

Better use of existing public sector data through data integration: the removal of the Outgoing Passenger Card



From 1 July 2017, travellers leaving Australia were no longer required to complete an Outgoing Passenger Card.

For more than 50 years Outgoing Passenger Cards were used as a source of data for official population estimates. These statistics played a crucial role in determining the distribution of GST revenue and the number of seats in the House of Representatives for each state and territory.

However, with the annual number of cross-border movements expected to reach 50 million by 2020, collecting Outgoing Passenger Cards at the border was no longer considered efficient or in line with Government direction towards automated border clearance and digitisation of manual processes.

In 2015, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) commenced plans to discontinue paper-based Outgoing Passenger Cards. Since then, ABS and DIBP worked closely together to ensure statistical requirements were taken into account before a key data source for official population statistics was discontinued.

The ABS reviewed its methodology for compiling some key statistics, taking the opportunity to step back and assess what other information sources might already exist that could be used to produce these statistics.

With support from key stakeholders, including DIBP and the Australian Government Departments of Health and Human Services, the ABS was able to identify and test alternative data sources to develop a new methodology for calculating quarterly population estimates using existing public sector data sources. This allowed the ABS to maintain the reliability and credibility of Australian, state and territory population estimates. The main solution was to use a range of existing electronic data collected by DIBP about Australians travelling overseas. However, for a small proportion of cross-border movements, state of residence was missing from existing DIBP data sources, and this information is now obtained by anonymously linking a person's electronic movement record to a corresponding Medicare enrolment record.

By making better use of existing public sector data, the ABS can continue to produce high quality official statistics to inform Australia's important decisions. Early feedback from travellers is that they are enjoying the shorter queues and the faster processing times as a result of the discontinuation of Outgoing Passenger Cards.

Data collected or acquired by the ABS may only be used for statistical and research purposes. The ABS respects the privacy of individuals and protects the confidentiality of their information by operating under the [Census and Statistics Act 1905](#), and the [Privacy Act 1988](#).



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