CHAPTER 5 : MAINTENANCE OF THE CLASSIFICATION AND ITS USE IN PUBLICATIONS

Maintenance of the ASGC Manual

1   The ASGC manual is being kept up to date on a periodic or as needed basis by the issue of replacement pages – usually twice a year, ie at the beginning of calendar and financial year collections.

2   The spatial unit and other changes for which the ASGC manual is being updated are essentially of two kinds:

(a)   Externally imposed spatial unit changes. These changes relate to administrative or political areas which have been adopted as spatial units in the ASGC. The ABS has usually no influence or control over changes to such spatial units which have to be made to the ASGC manual virtually as they occur. The most usual changes of this type are changes to Legal LGAs which are determined by the Local and State Governments involved. These changes can range from Legal LGA boundary variations to the creation or amalgamation of whole Legal LGAs and do usually require consequential changes to related ASGC spatial units such as SLAs.

(b)   All other changes. These cover changes to statistical type spatial units, such as Census Collection Districts and Statistical Districts, to the principles and criteria which govern their delimitation, and to all the explanatory and other material in the ASGC manual. Although changes of this type are, on occasions, triggered by changes to administrative or political areas, described in (a) above, they usually flow from ad hoc or systematic reviews and tend to be implemented in the ASGC manual in time for particular statistical collections such as the Census of Population and Housing or the Census of Retail Establishments.

Maintenance of ASGC Based/Related Material

3   The ASGC manual presents the classification primarily in a conceptual sense and as a statistical standard according to which spatially (ie geographically) classified statistics are to be produced. For purposes of applying the ASGC in statistical work, however, additional and more specialised ASGC based or related material is needed which has to be maintained by relevant ABS organisational entities in accordance with the ASGC manual. Some of the more important types of this material are briefly described below.

ASGC Descriptor Sets

4   ASGC descriptor sets are complete, partial or modified reproductions of ASGC structures (such as the 'Main structure' of the ASGC in Chapter 6 of this manual) which are used primarily as stubs in statistical tabulations and tables. They are nowadays usually held on computer files from which they can be accessed automatically for table generation. Any ASGC descriptor sets, which are modified reproductions of complete or partial ASGC structures, would still conform in all essential respects with the standard ASGC structures from which they are derived but might incorporate permitted combinations of adjoining ASGC categories and provide additional entries for showing statistical totals. Such modifications can be quite numerous and descriptor sets incorporating them tend to be increasingly produced from standard descriptor sets by the use of special computer programs in accordance with the needs of particular tables in different statistical series rather than by specifying and storing each such set separately.

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5   The main body of standard ASGC descriptor sets is held on ABS Data Dictionary (DD) computer files from which each set is accessible to authorised users of the DD or in print form through the information services of the ABS. Descriptor sets for ASGC structures can be identified on the DD by their classification name or descriptor set names as listed below.

DD CLASSIFICATION NAME	DESCRIPTOR SET NAMES
ASGC–DETAILED–MAIN–STRUCTURE	CGC–STATES–OF–AUSTRALIA–MY CGC–STAT–DIVISIONS–MY CGC–STAT–SUBDIVISIONS–MY CGC–STAT–LOCAL–AREAS–MY
ASGC–STAT–DISTRICT–STRUCTURE	CGC–STAT–DISTRICTS–MY CGC–STAT–DIST–SUBDIV–MY CGC–STAT–DIST–SLAS–MY
ALPHA–LIST–OF–LGA–SLA–BY–STATE	CGC–ALPHA–ORDER–AUST–MY CGC–LOCAL–GOVT–AREAS–MY CGC–ALPHA–LIST–BY–STATE–MY
ASGC–DETAILED–REGION–STRUCTURE	CGC–STATES–MY CGC–MAJOR–STAT–REGIONS–MY CGC–STATISTICAL–REGIONS–MY CGC–STAT–REGION–SECTORS–MY CGC–SLA–IN–STAT–REGIONS–MY

(where 'M' indicates the month and 'Y' the year of the effective version). The complete list is shown in Appendix 3.

6   A 'time stamping' facility on the ABS Data Dictionary further enhances descriptor set maintenance by recording for each individual ASGC spatial unit the period during which it is operative in terms of a starting and finishing date. This facility enables ASGC descriptor sets and full ASGC structures to be identified and/or produced for any given date and ASGC spatial unit changes over any specified period, eg between two different operative versions of the ASGC, to be identified and listed. For example, any publication containing statistics classified in accordance with a particular version of the ASGC could specify that particular version in terms of its operative date and list the spatial unit changes which have taken place between that version of the ASGC and any other.

7   Original ASGC spatial unit records on the DD carry, as the starting date of their operative period, the ASGC introduction date, ie 5th July 1984 (840705) and 31st December 1999 (991231) as the ending date of their operative period. When changes to ASGC spatial unit records are made, the superseded record will have the ending date brought forward to the day before the effective date of the new record as printed on the ASGC replacement pages. For edition 2 of the ASGC manual, changes are effective from 29 July 1985. This was the date for conversion of the ABS Integrated Register Information System (IRIS), from which a large majority of the ABS direct collections select their framework, to ASGC codes. The effective date for the 3rd (Population Census) edition was 1 January 1986. Complete listings of effective and/or implementation dates are referenced in Appendixes 1 and 2.

Area Coding Reference Data

8   Area coding reference data consist essentially of localities and streets/localities tables or indexes which specify for each locality and, where necessary, for street addresses within localities, the appropriate spatial unit code or codes. Additionally, the term can also cover various keys and conversion tables which specify for one set of spatial unit codes (eg SLA codes) the codes of related spatial units (eg of Statistical Districts) to facilitate data conversion in cases where only one spatial unit code has been assigned to the data.

9   The localities and streets/localities tables and indexes are needed for the purpose of determining and assigning spatial unit codes for statistical units and are nowadays held mainly on computer media for accessing in automatic coding operations or for producing manuscripts for printing of hard copy indexes used in manual coding processes.

Maps

10   Maps depicting spatial unit boundaries and other features are needed generally for the following purposes:

(a)   precise delimitation of spatial units, eg for precise specification of area coding reference data or for use by field staff in collecting statistical information;

(b)   collection and geographic encoding of Census of Population and Housing data. The maps used for this purpose are referred to as Census Field Maps and depict Census Collection Districts which are updated for each Census; and

(c)   presentation of statistical information. For this purpose a wide variety of maps are produced and published which either accompany statistical tables or incorporate, as map features, statistical information as in the Atlas of Population and Housing.

Geographic Base Files and Similar Data Stores and Systems

11   There are computer files and systems which incorporate spatial unit information for use in automated statistical processing. The largest of these is the Geographic Base File which was developed for the 1986 Census of Population and Housing. It incorporates most of the ASGC spatial unit specifications (such as their codes, hierarchic links and, in the case of the CDs, their digitised boundary points) as well as those of other spatial units for which Census output is produced, such as electoral districts.

Co–ordination of ASGC Maintenance

12   Maintenance of the ASGC manual and of ASGC based/related material is shared by a number of organisational entities within ABS State and Central Offices and is co–ordinated by Integration and Classification Section which also has responsibility for maintaining the ASGC manual and the ASGC descriptor sets on the ABS Data Dictionary.

13   Examples of major ASGC and related maintenance functions, handled outside Integration and Classification Section or shared with it, include the following:

(a)   delimitation of CDs, urban centres and other Population Census specific spatial units in accordance with ASGC criteria and the specification of Population Census maps – these tasks are carried out in ABS State and Central Offices and are the responsibility of Population Census and Demography Branch;

(b)   maintenance of area coding reference data on the ABS Integrated Register – this task is carried out in ABS State and Central Offices and is the responsibility of the Register Administration and Services Section; and

(c)   conduct of spatial unit reviews and preparation of proposals to vary existing statistical type spatial units and/or spatial unit criteria – these tasks are undertaken, in most cases, by ABS State Office organisational units concerned with the provision of geographically classified statistics. Under existing co–ordination arrangements the results of all such work would flow to Integration and Classification Section for assessment (in conjunction with other ASGC users) and co–ordinated implementation.

Use of the ASGC in Publication of Statistics

14   The ASGC has been constructed to, inter alia, enable spatially classified statistics to be produced on a spatially comparable basis. However, actual production and publication of spatially comparable statistics also requires that the ASGC be consistently applied in statistical work.

15   Accordingly it is recommended that in publishing statistics according to the ASGC:

(a)   where possible each table should relate to one particular ASGC structure only, which should ideally be presented in full and be identified in the table heading or a table footnote;

(b)   ASGC codes and spatial unit names should both be shown in table stubs or column headings and should conform with those in the ASGC or authorised ASGC descriptor sets;

(c)   omission of one or more hierarchic levels in a particular ASGC structure is permitted (eg omission of the entire CD level and/or the entire SSD level within the main structure of the ASGC) provided the omissions are noted somewhere in the publication and, preferably explained;

(d)   ASGC spatial units can be combined (eg where statistics for one or more of them are confidential) provided the combinations are confined to spatial units which are:

    .   within one ASGC structure,

    .   at one hierarchic level, and

    .   within the spatial unit at the next hierarchic level to which they are directly related,

eg: to two or more SLAs within an SSD or to two or more SSDs within an SD in the main structure of the ASGC;

(e)   where statistics are required for spatial units from 2 different ASGC structures, eg Legal LGA and SD, it is permissable, in certain circumstances, to publish the statistics in one table using a cross–classification of the spatial units. Care should be taken to ensure that the spatial units being cross–classified cover the same total area. For example, in some States (and the Northern Territory) Legal LGAs cover only part of the State/Territory (the remainder of the State/Territory being unincorporated) while SDs cover the whole of the State/Territory. A cross–classification of LGAs within SDs would be inappropriate in these circumstances if a State/Territory total were required. In this case the detailed main structure or the statistical region structure would be more appropriate; and

(f)   each file, document or publication containing statistics classified according to the ASGC should specify the applicable ASGC edition.

16   There may, of course, be circumstances where it is not possible to conform with these recommendations. In these cases application of the recommendations may be relaxed with Integration and Classification Section agreement.

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