Australian Government

GRADUATE DATA NETWORK
ANNUAL REPORT 2020

pmc.gov.au/public-data/graduate-data-network

Graduate Data Network: Annual Report 2020

© Commonwealth of Australia 2021

ISSN **2653-2646**

Copyright Notice

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0)(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Third party copyright

Wherever a third party holds copyright in this material, the copyright remains with that party. Their permission may be required to use the material. Please contact them directly.

Attribution

This publication should be attributed as follows:

© Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, ***Graduate Data Network: Annual Report 2020***

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the following website: https://pmc.gov.au/cca

Other uses

Enquiries regarding this document are welcome at: *dylan.sutton@dese.gov.au* and *caroline.chong@treasury.gov.au*

DISCLAIMER 2

1. AGENCIES ON THE GDN MAILING LIST 4
2. CHAIRS' FOREWORD 6
3. ABOUT THE GRADUATE DATA NETWORK 7
   - 3.1. Functions and Purpose 7
   - 3.2. Organisational structure 7
4. OUTCOMES OF 2020 9
   - 4.1. 2020 in review 9
   - 4.2. Key achievements 10
5. 2020 WORKING GROUPS 11
   - 5.1. Data Maturity Working Group 13
   - 5.2. Graduate Demographic Analysis Report 15
   - 5.3. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Report 17
   - 5.4. LGBTIQA+ Diversity Report 19
   - 5.5. Crisis Response Handbook 21
   - 5.6. Data Forums 23
   - 5.8. Communications 24
   - 6. The Year Ahead 26
   - 7. Talking Points for Executives 28

1. Agencies on the GDN Mailing List

Attorney-General's Department

Austrade

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian Electoral Commission

Australian Federal Police

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Australian National Audit Office

Australian Public Service Commission

Australian Taxation Office

Australia's Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

Clean Energy Regulator

Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment

Department of Communications and the Arts

Department of Defence

Department of Education and Training

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Health

Department of Home Affairs

Department of Human Services

Department of Industry, Energy, Science and Resources

Department of Social Services

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Digital Transformation Agency

Geoscience Australia

Maritime Safety Queensland

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics

National Health and Medical Research Council

NDIA

Northern Territory Department of Attorney-General and Justice

Northern Territory Department of Corporate and Information Services

Northern Territory Department of Education

Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources

Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

Productivity Commission

Queensland Department of Education

Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Queensland Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation

Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads

Queensland Health

Queensland Police Service

Queensland Treasury

Questacon

Safe Work Australia

Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

Tasmanian Environment Protection Authority

The Treasury

Western Australian Department of Finance

Western Australian Land Information Authority

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

2. Chairs' Foreword

2020 has been a rollercoaster of a year. Despite the upheavals that have punctuated the year, the Graduate Data Network has continued to expand our influence.

The network's working group members of 2020 have dedicated significant amounts of time and effort to projects that have expanded the network's influence and shed light on pertinent issues relating to data. It has been an absolute pleasure working with such an enthusiastic and driven cohort of graduates. I look forward to seeing the network expand and evolve in the future.

In the wake of the global pandemic, the public service has had to adapt to a new way of working and collaborating. The Graduate Data Network has embraced these changes superbly. Despite the setbacks and hiccups along the way, we have done our best work so far.

This year's graduates have pushed the limit on what the APS can do with data, from collection and analysis to presentation. I have been routinely impressed by the talent and passion of our cohort for data and innovation in the Australian Public Service. The future of the public service is in good hands.

Caroline Chong

Treasury

Dylan Sutton

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment

3. About the Graduate Data Network

3.1. Functions and Purpose

The GDN aims to empower graduates to advocate for better data use, analysis, and capability across the APS. We want to use data to drive improvements in policy, program and corporate delivery outcomes across the APS for the benefit of Australians.

The GDN is not necessarily a group for data specialists. Our members come from a range of different backgrounds including policy, program, service delivery, legal, financial and others. We have in common a desire to gain exposure to data-related issues and see improvements in the use of data to support our work. The three objectives of the GDN are:

- **Championing cultural change** – developing the confidence of graduates to discuss and use data both within and across agencies.
- **Empowering graduates** – building a platform for graduates to identify and discuss opportunities and challenges in data, and collaborate on initiatives and projects to address these issues.
- **Working with Senior Executives** – working with Senior Executive governance forums to support our bottom-up approach. This includes the Secretaries Data Group, Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG), Data Champions Network (DCN) and the interim National Data Commissioner to positively influence data culture in the APS.

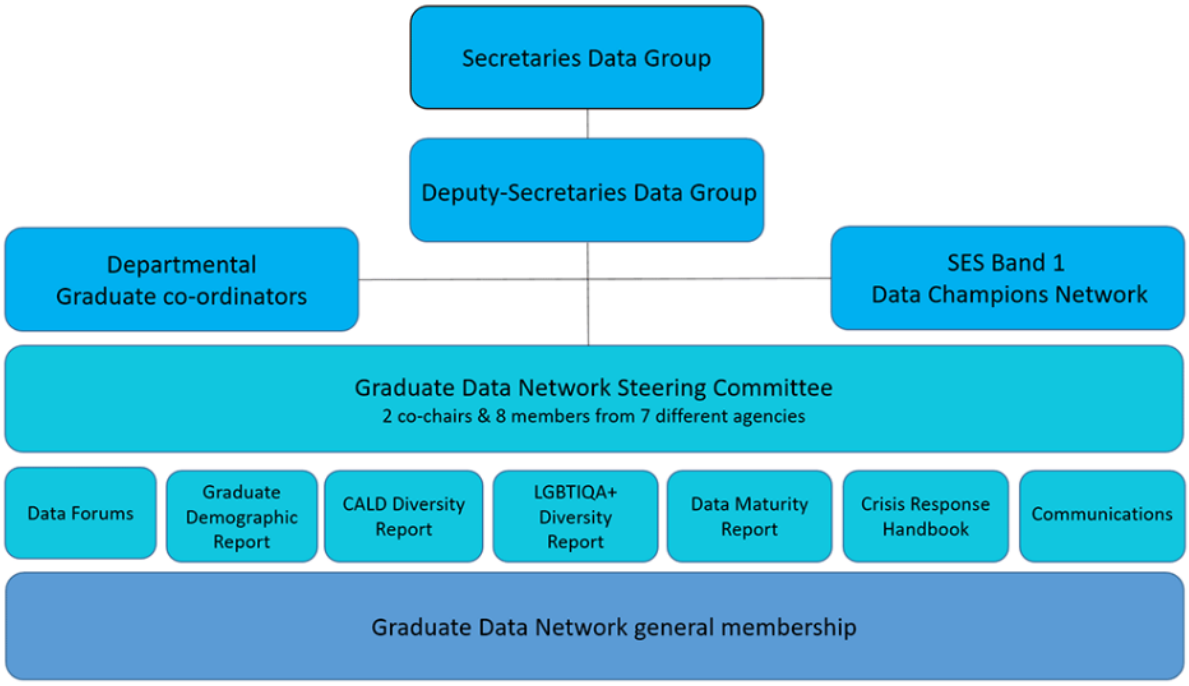
3.2. Organisational structure

The GDN has 561 general members, of which 354 are graduates. We span 54 Commonwealth agencies over all the states and territories. These members receive correspondence from the GDN and can participate in events such as our large and small data forums.

In 2020, over 90 graduates actively participated in seven working groups, and 10 graduates comprised the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee provides strategic direction for the GDN and engages and collaborates with other data networks across the APS on particular projects.

The GDN reports directly to the Secretaries Data Group and DSDG, as key sponsors and top-down drivers of graduate efforts in affecting data culture across the APS. The GDN provides updates to the

DCN at their regular meetings. In 2020, the GDN collaborated with the DCN to deliver the APS Data Maturity Assessment as well as the Crisis Response Handbook which was developed in close collaboration with the 'Using data to respond to national crises' DCN working group.

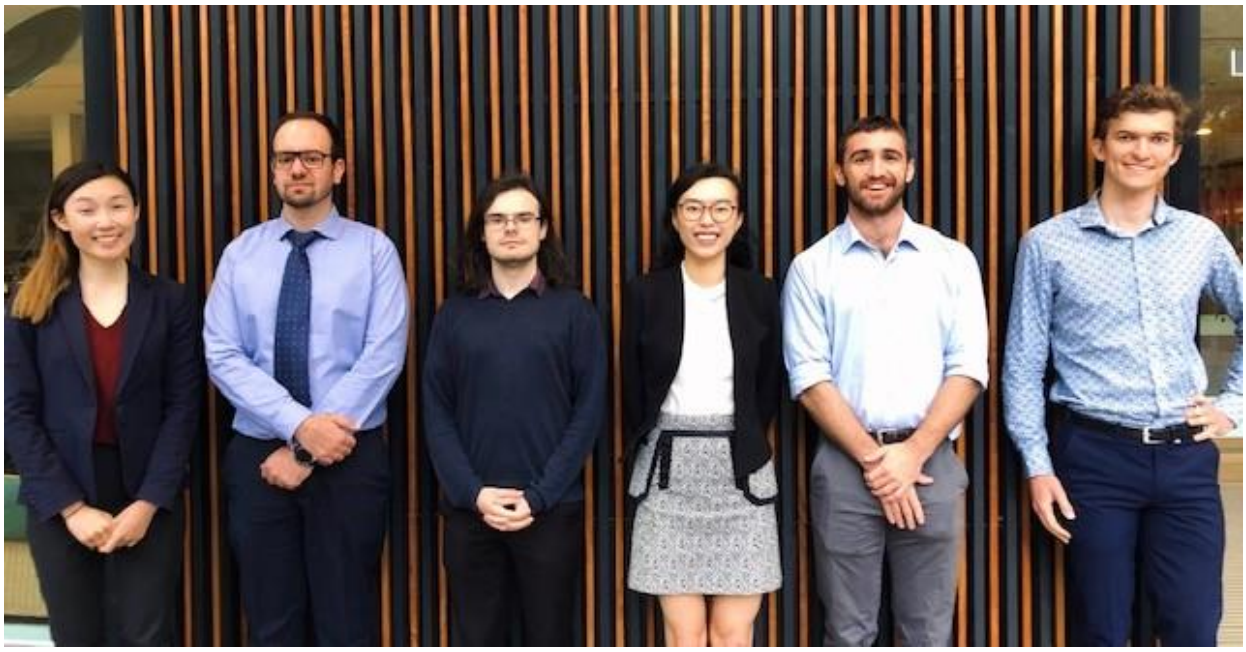


Graduate Data Network – organisational structure.

4. Outcomes of 2020

4.1. 2020 in review

April	2020 Co-Chairs appointed
May	Large Data Forum hosted by the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) - 'A Data-based APS: Reflections and New Directions'
June	2020 Work Program launches. Steering Committee and seven working groups established.
November	First 2020 Data Forum event on 'Artificial Intelligence in Australia and the Future of Decision Making' - attended by 140 people.
December	Working groups deliver final reports



Members of the Graduate Data Network 2020. From left, Jessica Cheng, Tim de Rango, Dylan Sutton, Caroline Chong, Julian Bocking, Zeke Coady.

4.2. Key achievements

Engagement

- Presented at the data forum event on 'A Data-based APS: Reflections and New Directions'
- Collaborated with the 'Using data to respond to a national crisis' DCN working group to deliver a 'Crisis Response Handbook'
- Invited to present at a number of DCN events throughout the year

Improving capabilities

In 2020, the GDN collaborated with:

- the Australian Public Service Commission to deliver a workshop on how to develop a survey
- the Department of Agriculture, Water and Energy to deliver a masterclass on successful event organisation
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics to deliver a workshop on effective data visualisation
- the Department of Agriculture, Water and Energy to deliver a workshop on 'Agile' project management

Working Group Outcomes

- Collaborated with the DCN to deliver the second Data Maturity Assessment of 28 APS agencies. The assessment tested a set of minimum data governance standards for the APS.
- Updated and improved the official GDN webpage on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.
- Established GDN newsletters to update members on GDN activities and upcoming events.

5. 2020 Working Groups

In 2020, the GDN developed and delivered seven working groups to:

- Improve how the public sector uses data;
- Analyse the culture of the APS and identify opportunities for improvements to various networks and programs relating to data; and
- Increase the influence of the GDN to empower graduates

In 2020, over 80 graduates delivered on the following seven data-related projects:

- **Data Maturity Report** – a collaboration between the GDN and the DCN that assesses the data maturity of APS agencies against a set of minimum data governance standards.
- **Graduate Demographic Analysis Report** – a report that analyses the demographic profile of APS graduates, to enable the Senior Executive Service to make informed improvements to graduate programs.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CaLD) Report** – a report that analyses the recruitment and continued employment of culturally and linguistically diverse employees. The report provides recommendations to create a more diverse and fulfilled workplace.
- **LGBTIQA+ Diversity Report** – a report that explores what influences LGBTIQA+ identifying individuals to seek jobs in the APS, the representation of LGBTIQA+ individuals in terms of APS recruitment and employment, and the intersection of these employees in the APS with those who identify as being CaLD, Indigenous, or from a regional or remote area.
- **Crisis Response Handbook** – in an attempt to capture lessons learnt from the recent bushfires and novel coronavirus (COVID-19), this report focuses on synthesising the responses of different agencies across the APS in order to help the Senior Executive Service create more effective responses to crises in the future.

- **Data Forums** – a series of small- and large-scale events that provide graduates with opportunities to engage in thought-provoking discussions on different data related topics. This includes an annual conference event to engage graduates and new starters in compelling discussions about the use of data and data-driven technologies in the APS.
- **Communications** – a series of GDN newsletters that provide regular updates and data related news to our members, with the aim of increasing our outreach and empowering even more graduates to champion data use and capability.

5.1. Data Maturity Working Group

Purpose

The Data Maturity Working Group is responsible for designing and delivering the GDN's APS Data Maturity Assessment Report (DMR). The DMR aims to provide an overview of foundational APS data maturity in four areas – Data Leadership, Data Strategy, Data Governance and Asset Discovery. These areas make up the Office of the National Data Commissioner's (ONDC) Foundational Four framework of data practices. The 2020 report aims to expand on the pilot assessment of 2019, to measure how effectively the APS is using data and inform the development of a set of minimum data governance standards.

What did we do?

Following the delivery of the pilot APS Data Maturity Assessment in 2019, the DSDG commissioned the GDN to produce an annual data maturity assessment. This assessment again employs the Foundational Four, expanding the scope by interviewing and surveying more of the APS-at-large.

To improve the quality of responses, the working group redeveloped the survey questionnaire and interview methodology from 2019, sacrificing comparability with the 2019 data to better assess each of the ONDC Foundational Four. The Working Group collaborated with the DCN and newly created APS Data Network to build visibility of the project and widen engagement with the survey and interview.

The working group delivered the survey to 28 agencies and received 1,205 responses. 13 of these agencies also participated in an SES interview. A report of the assessment's findings was delivered to the GDN co-chairs on 7 December and noted by the DSDG in their first meeting of 2021.

Key findings

- Data leadership measures were mostly well-established in participating agencies, indicating that it is key to developing maturity in all domains.
- Data strategies exist, but lack engagement and follow-through
- Data governance standards need to be more clearly communicated
- Asset discovery systems, including dataset catalogues, require more visibility within agencies

Recommendations

The report identified four potential areas of improvement through the survey and interviews:

1. Develop data catalogues & asset discovery systems
2. Improve data literacy through training and education
3. Prioritise an (open) data culture
4. Engage with developing technology

In particular, the importance of data literacy was recognised across the APS, being strongly related to data governance, data quality, and general engagement with data.

Moving forward

An evaluation of the assessment found that the methodology was appropriate for investigating individual agencies, but that it is not suitable for APS-wide longitudinal assessments of data maturity without a larger and more representative pool of responses. Future work should investigate two avenues for success:

- Focus on directly measuring the maturity of individual agencies by providing them with an agency self-assessment toolkit.
- Collaborating with the APSC to identify a representative sample of employees across the APS, and survey employees beyond those represented by the DCN.

Building on these opportunities will also provide the GDN avenues for more specific, targeted evaluation of data capability and maturity in the APS.

5.2. Graduate Demographic Analysis Report

Purpose

The Graduate Demographic Analysis Report (GDAR) investigates whether graduate recruitment practices are bringing knowledge, skills and experience in the fields of data science and data analytics into the APS. This focus aligns with the overall strategic direction and aims of the GDN. The report extracts key insights on APS graduates from the APS employee census data, the APS Employment Database (APSED) and through surveying graduate coordinators.

The GDAR consolidates publicly available information on APS graduate program offerings. The report also gives graduates an opportunity to work together to use data to bring a whole-of-government perspective to shared issues and challenges.

What did we do?

The working group collected data from the APS employee census, the APSED and through surveying graduate coordinators. Prior to surveying graduate coordinators, the working group conducted a stock take of available graduate data that graduate coordinators had access to. The stocktake assisted with shaping the graduate coordinator survey.

The GDAR is now in its third year and was delivered by a working group of 12 current graduates across eight APS agencies and one state government agency. The delivery of this report encourages graduates to work innovatively and collaboratively across agencies. These collaborations increase data literacy and positively influence culture and attitudes toward the use of data. Collaboration between APS graduates also helps to establish future working relationships and build towards the APSC's vision of One APS.

Key findings

2019 APS graduates:

- have a mean age of 26 years.
- are more likely to be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander descent, have a disability and come from a non-English speaking background than the wider APS.

- came from a wide range of academic backgrounds. The most common field of study is Law (24%).
- did not exhibit a significant difference between the proportion of STEM background compared to the wider APS (STEM degrees acted as a proxy for data literacy).
- generally enjoyed their work life more than other APS employees.

Recommendations

Recommendations from the 2019 GDAR include:

1. **Add "Data Science" to tertiary education backgrounds in APS census**. Failure to include this category makes it difficult to accurately assess the number of data scientists within the APS.
2. **Increase focus on data literacy in graduate selection processes.** Current methods for graduate selection potentially lead to recruitment agencies overlooking data literate applicants.
3. **Create a formal relationship between APS agency HR divisions and the GDN.** APS graduate coordinator roles have a high turnover rate which can lead to knowledge loss from year to year. Knowledge loss can create issues in conducting the GDAR project.
4. **Establish pathways for future GDAR working groups to follow-up on the recommendations of past reports**. Many of the recommendations from the 2018 and 2019 reports are still outstanding. Developing pathways for the GDAR working group or the GDN Steering Committee to follow-up on recommendations would help to establish institutional change.

Moving forward

The GDAR project will continue next year with a fourth edition of the project examining graduate programs that commenced in 2020. The current working group has proposed a re-scoping of the GDAR project, with findings from the project being presented as a dashboard tool and a series of placemats. It will be up to the next working group to decide whether they would like to adopt this re-scoped project or continue in the same style as previous GDAR projects.

5.3. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Report

Purpose

The 2020 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CaLD) report builds on the 2019 GDN CaLD report by further investigating the representation and experiences of CaLD employees in the APS. The findings will contribute to increased cultural competence for CaLD and non-CaLD employees, inform future diversity strategies, and ultimately improve transparency, equity and inclusivity in the APS.

What did we do?

Through quantitative and qualitative means, this report deepens our understanding of the unique experience of CaLD employees. The report consists of three main components:

- A literature review on Australian CaLD employment;
- Quantitative data analysis of pre-existing Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) non-English Speaking Background (NESB) data; and
- A survey which was broadly distributed to CaLD and non-CaLD employees across the APS.

Key findings

- Most APS employees are born in Australia and have English-speaking backgrounds, the second largest group are born overseas and come from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).
- NESB employees, specifically NESB females, are underrepresented in senior leadership positions.
- There is a lack of awareness surrounding cultural support services on offer to CaLD employees, as well as inadequacies in the quality of existing services.
- CaLD employees experience higher rates of discrimination in the workplace, with the most frequent type being racial discrimination.

Recommendations

Our key recommendations to improve the APS culture of inclusivity and equity for CaLD people are to:

1. Move towards more inclusive and appropriate terminology for collecting data on CaLD employees.
2. Demonstrate an increased commitment to promoting cultural diversity, inclusion and awareness.
3. Provide additional support for the career mobility and development of CaLD employees.
4. Increase the availability and quality of cultural support services.
5. Review procedures and support mechanisms for reporting discrimination and harassment.

Moving forward

In addition to our recommendations relating to APS policy and procedure, we outline the following suggestions for future research:

1. **Disentangle the different experiences of CaLD sub-groups.** We suggest breaking down analyses by sub-continent of birth to answer questions such as whether non-European CaLD employees are disproportionately underrepresented in senior leadership positions.

2. **Build a deeper understanding of CaLD employee representation and movements.** We recommend investigating why CaLD employees receive promotions, resign or are retrenched. We also suggest qualitative research into the representation of CaLD employees in different APS job families, to identify whether differences are due to preferences or perceived barriers.

3. **Explore differences in CaLD experiences across different state and territory offices.**

4. **Investigate the reasons behind compounding intersectional effects.** CaLD employees with a disability, who are LGBTI+ or who work part-time reported poorer outcomes than expected. We should explore the specific barriers that these groups may face in order to form a better understanding of their unique experiences and how identities may intersect.

5.4. LGBTIQA+ Diversity Report

Purpose

The purpose of our working group's report is to provide deeper insight into LGBTIQA+ employee experiences in the APS, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. We aim to understand the demographics of gender and/or sexuality diverse employees, to investigate their representation and inclusion in the APS, and to provide recommendations on how to promote increased recruitment and retention.

What did we do?

The LGBTIQA+ Diversity Working Group conducted research using two main sources:

1. Existing data on LGBTI+ employees in the APSC's 2019 APS Census, the most comprehensive survey of APS employees.
2. A survey which the working group designed and distributed to multiple APS agencies via the ABS platform 'Citizen Space'.

To ensure the sensitivity and relevance of questions, working group members consulted various APS Pride Networks and the GDN Steering Committee prior to its release.

Key findings

- There are a growing number of APS employees who identify as LGBTI+.
- LGBTIQA+ APS employees are just as satisfied with opportunities for career progression as their non-LGBTIQA+ employees.
- Employees with more stable working conditions, such as full-time or ongoing contracts, are more likely to be 'out' at work.
- Employees who are 'out' in their workplace are generally more satisfied with their job.
- LGBTIQA+ inclusion initiatives are visible in the APS. 96% of LGBTIQA+ survey respondents reported having seen relevant communications or events within their organisation.
- Younger employees who identify as LGBTI+ are less likely to 'come out' to their colleagues.

- LGBTI+ employees who are 'out' in their workplace experience significantly higher levels of discrimination than those who are not. Many of these employees expressed that they were not comfortable taking action to address discrimination (40%) or did not know how to lodge a complaint (34%).
- Barriers to coming 'out' include feeling a lack of closeness to colleagues, having conservative colleagues and/or having colleagues who are unaware of diverse genders or sexualities.
- There is low visibility/representation of senior APS employees who openly identify as LGBTIQA+.

Key recommendations

1. Promote LGBTIQA+ awareness or ally training events.
2. Increase support to lodge discrimination complaints to help LGBTIQA+ employees to speak up.
3. Create Pride networks and/or nomination of workplace allies or "rainbow champions" in all agencies. These structures help employees access appropriate support in their workplace.
4. Increase consultation with Pride networks when making decisions affecting LGBTIQA+ staff.
5. Increase support for LGBTIQA+ employees outside of the ACT.
6. Achieve an APS-wide consensus on the appropriate terminology to be used when referencing sexuality and gender diverse employees.
7. Further consideration of gender diverse staff and the facilitation of their inclusion into the APS workplace. For example, including gender neutral bathroom options.

Moving forward

We hope that this report inspires a more rigorous effort by the APS and diversity professionals to collect annual data on the experiences of LGBTIQA+ employees using standardised terms and data items. Areas for further investigation include how to promote and expand APS Pride networks; evaluation of existing and potential workplace diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly those that help LGBTIQA+ employees to feel supported to come 'out' at work; and mechanisms to assist reduction and redress of workplace discrimination due to LGBTIQA+ identification.

5.5. Crisis Response Handbook

Purpose

The Crisis Response Handbook working group reviewed the Government's use of data during the Black Summer Bushfires and the COVID-19 outbreak to deliver a handbook in two parts:

1. Analyse the Government's use of data during the crises, identification of lessons learned, and recommendations on how the Government could improve its use of data.
2. Provided a practical handbook to improve data usage across the APS in times of crisis.

What did we do?

To complete these components, the working group developed a qualitative survey, which was distributed to the Using Data to Respond to National Crisis working group and several EL and SES employees across the APS. The feedback from the respondents was used to identify recurring themes relating to data usage during recent crises. From these themes, the working group developed several recommendations that could improve data usage in the form of a practical handbook.

Key findings

While data was used effectively to guide crisis response activities relating to the bushfires and COVID-19, such activities could be improved through further refinement and development of data related capabilities across the APS. The working group identified four areas for improvement:

1. Balancing the speed of data release with the quality of the data
2. Distribution of data expertise and the development of data skills among non-specialists
3. Legal and logistical issues of data sharing
4. Data sharing relationships and data-sharing agreements

Recommendations

As a result of the discussion and analysis, the working group recommended that the APS:

1. Establish a broader APS Data Quality Framework that will improve activities relating to producing, analysing and sharing data, particularly in times of crises, where there is a demand

for rapid data in tight timeframes. Develop an additional, separate quality specifically for the release and use of preliminary data.

2. Identify critical inter-agency relationships and allocate resources to ensure that such relationships are formalised.

3. Divert and reassess the approach to agency resourcing to ensure that Australian Government agencies have the incentives and ability to collect data.

4. Improve and refine data training offerings, particularly for non-data specialists. This may include: periodically reviewing training opportunities for quality and engagement, and redesigning programs where participation is low; and promoting the APSC's two-way secondment model to trial internal secondments of data analysts to policy areas and vice versa for 3-6 month transfers.

5. Develop an APS-wide flow chart that articulates how relevant legislation should be applied, and the circumstances in which certain legislative instruments prevail over others.

6. Commit resources to develop a whole-of-government data infrastructure system. This could be achieved through developing an application programming interface (API).

Moving forward

The Crisis Response Handbook provides a comprehensive review of how the Government used data during the recent Black Summer bushfires and COVID-19. Moving forward, there is opportunity to build upon this report through:

- Examining data usage through a quantitative lens (this report focused on qualitative information and exploration of performance from a quantitative perspective would achieve completeness).
- Conducting a comparative analysis of the performance of crisis response activities of other countries that possess similar characteristics to that of Australia.
- Exploring how the Australian Government has used data to respond to other historical crises.
- Investigating how the APS can develop geo-spatial and location data capabilities to improve crisis response activities.

5.6. Data Forums

Purpose

The Data Forum working group is responsible for planning and delivering the annual Graduate Data Forum along with smaller events throughout the year. The annual forum allows APS graduates and new starters to network, learn about opportunities for data and data-driven technologies in the APS, and share best practice from their agencies. The small-scale events help promote the network and keep the GDN and APS more broadly engaged and thinking about data throughout the year.

What did we do?

Due to the disruption caused by COVID-19, the 2020 Graduate Data Forum successfully pivoted to an online platform with a notice period of roughly two weeks. In conjunction with the IPAA, several panel sessions were run online over the course of three weeks between April and May 2020. The event achieved relatively high viewership and limited speaker drop out. This pivot also left significant amounts of sponsorship funds for the following working group to use on future GDN events.

On 17 November, the working group ran an online panel discussion in partnership with the IPAA, titled “Emerging Technologies: AI in Australia and the Future of Decision Making” with panellists representing government, research, industry and academia. This attracted a total of 140 participants from across the APS, and was very engaging, with an unusual <10% dropout rate across the event.

Moving forward

The group is now working towards running a data visualisation workshop to improve data visualisation skills across graduates. This workshop will take place in February 2021 and will focus on the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of visualisation, rather than the ‘how’. We aim to provide more general, transferable advice to graduates who may be working across a range of software, with varying needs. The team is also in the process of setting up the 2021 Graduate Data Forum. The decision has been made to make this a purely online event, due to COVID considerations, and an attempt to reduce the “Canberra-centric” nature of GDN events. Details are still being decided, however the theme will be “Data Without Borders” and will look at the role of data in Australia’s international relations. Various formats are being assessed to reduce audience fatigue, increase engagement, and allow for networking despite the online format.

5.8. Communications

Purpose

The role of the Communications working group was to act as a conduit between the other working groups and the general membership of the GDN, engaging with both sets of stakeholders in order to promote the network's events, work program and professional development opportunities.

What did we do?

Early on, the Communications working group established clear lines of communication with the other GDN working groups, meeting with them to better understand their work program and key deliverables so as to best service their needs in relation to communications.

The Communications working group then distributed bi-monthly newsletters, containing information gathered from the GDN working groups that was thought to be interesting and/ or relevant to members. This included promotional emails relating to upcoming Data Forum events and the launch of the APS Data Network.

Moreover, building on the achievements of the previous cohort, the Communications working group worked with the co-chairs to update the GDN webpage on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website. This means that the website now contains updated information on the 2020 Working Groups.

Moving forward

We recommend that in 2021, the Communications working group:

1. Continue to work with other GDN working groups to communicate the network's events, achievements and work program to members.
2. Engage with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's to update and maintain the network's webpage.
3. Pursue the creation of social media pages for the network, ensuring that there are necessary protections for the privacy and security of GDN members and APS staff.

4. Establish a central GDN inbox that can be accessed by members from several agencies, and can receive emails from external stakeholders.
5. Engage with more state and territory graduate programs, and encourage their participation in working groups.
6. Investigate alternative promotional and outreach activities to grow the size of the network.
7. Find ways for graduates to meaningfully engage in data advocacy outside of existing GDN activities.

6. The Year Ahead

Our forward work plan for 2021 will focus on maintaining the momentum of the GDN and engaging more graduates and agencies. Our specific objectives include:

Working groups

- Continue existing working groups and potentially create new working groups to undertake new projects of strategic importance to the public sector. The incoming co-chairs could explore ideas for new working groups in collaboration with the DCN.
- Deliver the annual Large Data Forum from the GDN to engage new graduates and increase awareness of the network.
- Complete the third Data Maturity Assessment to achieve a more representative portrait of data maturity across the APS, and identify trends in data maturity.

Steering Committee

- Effectively transition to new co-chairs and Steering Committee members with established handover processes and establishment of advisor positions.
- Continue to improve the governance structure.
- Develop further initiatives to ensure smooth transition between working groups across years.

Collaboration

- Continue to support collaboration with executive and interagency networks, including the Secretaries Data Group, Deputy Secretaries Data Group, the Office of the National Data Commissioner, and the APS Data Network.
- Continue collaborating with the Data Champions Network on the delivery of the third Data Maturity Assessment and a self-assessment tool to assess data maturity.
- Collaborate and engage closely with the newly established APS Data Network to promote continuity between the networks, prevent duplication of effort, and identify mentoring and networking opportunities.
- Effectively promote the transition of outgoing graduates to the APS Data Network to encourage early-career public servants to continue advocating for better data use, analysis, and capability across the APS.

7. Talking Points for Executives

Purpose

The purpose of the Graduate Data Network is to empower graduates to advocate for better data use, analysis, and capability across the APS to drive improvements in policy, program and corporate delivery outcomes for the benefit of Australians.

Summary

The Graduate Data Network is influencing cultural change in the APS by:

- Empowering graduates to develop confidence to discuss and use data both within and across agencies to find new ways to use data to improve outcomes
- Building a platform for graduates to identify and discuss opportunities and challenges in data, and collaborate on initiatives and projects to address these issues
- Working with Senior Executive governance forums to amplify our bottom-up approach to build a culture of data driven and evidence-based policy design, program delivery and corporate support across the APS.

Key achievements

To achieve our aims, in 2020, the GDN:

- Organised four different workshops run by data specialists across the APS to strengthen the data capabilities of GDN working group members.
- Collaborated with the Data Champions Network to deliver the second Data Maturity Assessment of 28 APS agencies. This was an expansion from the 13 APS agencies captured in the 2019 pilot Data Maturity Assessment. This tested a set of minimum data governance standards for the APS and was delivered to the Deputy Secretaries Data Group in December.

Activities

In 2020, the GDN had over 90 graduates actively working on seven data related projects:

- Three reports that explored demographic issues: the Cultural and Linguistic Diversity report, the LGBTIQA+ Diversity report, and the Graduate Demographic Analysis report.
- The second APS Data Maturity Assessment report.
- A Crisis Response Handbook working group that collaborated with the Data Champions Network to establish a handbook that outlines guidelines for using data to respond to a crisis.
- Data Forums to engage graduates and new starters in compelling discussions about the use of data and data-driven technologies in the APS.
- A Communications working group to establish effective materials to promote the network and improve engagement.

Further information

For further information, please contact the 2020 co-chairs: Dylan Sutton (dylan.sutton@dese.gov.au) and Caroline Chong.