

# 1 Introduction

A new Commonwealth–State/Territory Disability Agreement National Minimum Data Set (CSTDA NMDS) was launched nationally in October 2002. This report describes the process of redeveloping the existing Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set (CSDA MDS) and the information that will be available from the new CSTDA NMDS collection.

The CSTDA NMDS redevelopment project was jointly funded by National Disability Administrators and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Considerable resources were committed to the project over a number of years. This enabled an extensive and iterative consultation process to be undertaken, involving the specification of information needs by stakeholders, careful development of suitable data items, definitions and collection materials, and field testing. As a result, the final CSTDA NMDS is a policy relevant collection that will provide a wide range of stakeholders with essential information about disability services and the people they support in the coming years.

## 1.1 Time for a new CSDA MDS

Before the first CSDA MDS there were no nationally comparable data on disability services. From 1994, the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set (CSDA MDS) comprised both:

- a set of data items, together with their definitions, agreed by Disability Administrators to be of significance for national collation and reporting purposes under the CSDA; and
- an agreed method of collection and collation.

Many uses of the data have been detailed in various reports (e.g. AIHW 2002a; AIHW 2002b). The data have been essential in order to report on services provided under the CSDA, a \$2.5 billion program in 2000–01. Without such data it would not have been possible to estimate the extent of unmet need existing in the disability services sector (AIHW 1997; 2002b). Nor would it have been possible for the field to contribute in a timely manner to the *Report on Government Services*, an annual publication designed to report on the performance of services across a broad range of areas, including education, health, justice, community services and housing (e.g. SCRCSSP 2002).

The disability services field in Australia is a scene of ambitious policy goals and change. This dynamic environment has seen significant developments in recent years in the:

- nature of services and service delivery methods, in particular the trend towards more flexible services focusing on individual needs;
- information needs and capabilities of the field, including the need for greater accountability and the development of performance indicators and performance based contractual agreements; and
- available technology and the greater sophistication in its use across the disability services field.

These goals and changes are represented in the second Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement (CSDA 1998) and the third Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA 2002) still under negotiation in February 2003.

In 1999, in view of these changes, the National Disability Administrators (NDA), comprising senior administrators responsible for the CSDA, in cooperation with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) began a process, to review and redevelop the CSDA MDS and related data collections.

## **A vision**

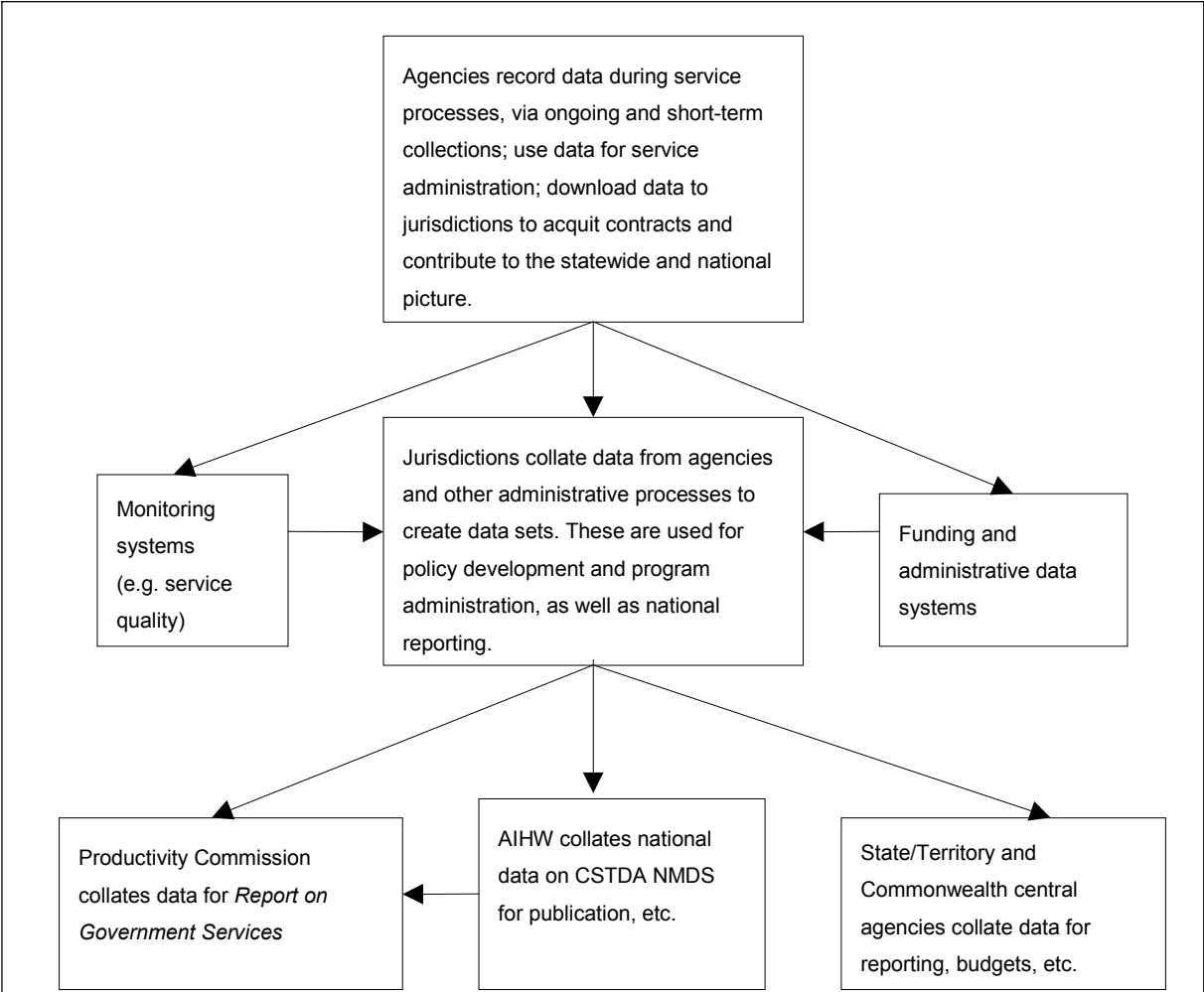
The vision for a new CSTDA NMDS was agreed to encompass:

- a CSTDA NMDS that meets critical information needs across the disability field, and is consistent with other major data developments;
- data collation methods that are integrated with the day-to-day operations of agencies and funding departments (see Figure 1.1); and
- the continued use of statistical linkage keys to enable data from various sources to be related and collated without duplication of effort.

There would still be two key components of the new NMDS—agreement on nationally significant data items, and agreement on a framework for collection and national collation.

The vision for the new collection is to provide better information and outcomes to all major stakeholders:

- For people with disabilities: data that permit an evaluation of services received, in terms of accessibility and appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness, and ultimately lead to improved services and service outcomes;
- For service delivery agencies: data that are more relevant to their own information needs and easier to record and collate, with the assistance of better software tools and support;
- For governments: data that better inform planning, service development and service delivery as well as meet other critical information needs.



**Figure 1.1: The vision for a new CSTDA NMDS: data collection ‘integrated with day-to-day operations’**

**Redeveloping the CSDA MDS**

The process of redeveloping the CSDA MDS into the CSTDA NMDS was conducted in two stages:

- Stage 1: Preliminary CSDA MDS redevelopment project 1999; and
- Stage 2: CSTDA NMDS redevelopment and implementation project 2000–02.

Both stages were collaborative efforts involving the AIHW and the NDA.

## **Stage 1**

The AIHW first began working with the NDA to redevelop the CSDA MDS in 1999. Broadly, this first phase of redevelopment involved an examination of recent and emerging changes to policies, funding arrangements and service structures, and their implications for administrators' data needs, as well as an examination of the main methodological issues facing each jurisdiction, including sampling and enumeration issues, and technological change. Information for Stage 1 was obtained via questionnaire, ongoing liaison and a number of consultative workshops with all jurisdictions. Administrators were asked to articulate what they required from a redeveloped disability services data collection. A closely related body of work to develop key indicators (of costs, outputs and outcomes) in the disability services sector was also a crucial part of the preliminary redevelopment work (AIHW 2000a).

## **Stage 2**

In March 2000, the AIHW presented the results of Stage 1 and resulting proposals for redeveloping the collection to the NDA for consideration. A workshop involving all major stakeholders was subsequently held in April 2000. This workshop further developed the AIHW redevelopment plans into a detailed redevelopment project plan, agreed by stakeholders and the NDA. This project plan formed the basis of the CSTDA NMDS redevelopment project.

Chapter 3 contains more detail on the processes involved in redeveloping the CSTDA NMDS.

## **1.2 Report outline**

This report focuses on the redevelopment work undertaken during 2000–02, while drawing where relevant on the earlier data development and conceptual work undertaken.

The report:

- showcases the key information available from the new CSTDA NMDS (Chapter 2);
- outlines the stages and phases of the redevelopment, in relation to the project plan (Chapter 3);
- summarises the purpose, methodology and main outcomes for each round of field testing (Chapter 4);
- provides an overview of the data items selected for the final CSTDA NMDS, including a discussion of every data item originally on the table for inclusion (Chapter 5);
- describes the key products available relating to the CSTDA NMDS – the Data Guide (including Privacy and Data Principles), Service Type Outlet and Service User forms, Data Transmission and Technical Guide, Data Dictionary, Network Guide and training materials (Chapter 6);
- discusses the process of developing the CSTDA NMDS Privacy and Data Principles and includes a copy of the principles (Chapter 7); and

- discusses some of the specialised data development areas, namely: service type, organisational units, agency identifiers and CSTDA funding; disability and functioning; support needs; and the development of indicators of outputs and outcomes, including a trial individual participation module (Chapter 8).

The report aims to be a document of record, of interest to the disability field and to future users and managers of the resulting data set.