

# Introduction

Since the establishment of the National Community Services Information Agreement in 1997, there have been many changes in the development and management of national community services information. The first version of the *National community services data dictionary* ('the dictionary') was published in 1998. Since then, both the scope and content of the subsequent versions of the dictionary have expanded. With support from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the National Community Services Data Committee (NCSDC) has compiled this dictionary, under the broad direction of the National Community Services Information Management Group (NCSIMG).

The dictionary is the authoritative source of information about endorsed national data standards for use in community services data collections, where national consistency is required or desired. The dictionary provides the basis for consistent national data and is seen as necessary for achieving a nationally coordinated approach to the development of information for community services. All members of the NCSIMG have committed their jurisdictions to adopt the dictionary definitions, wherever possible.

The aim of the dictionary is to provide a 'common language' for data for agencies and organisations involved in community services. It is designed to improve the comparability of data across the community services field. It is also designed to make data collection activities more efficient by reducing duplication of effort in the field, and more effective by ensuring that information to be collected is appropriate to its purpose.

The objectives of the dictionary are to:

- communicate a coherent set of data standards that improve the availability and maintenance of high-quality data about the needs of the community, the services provided, and the outcome of these services, including any unmet demand
- give priority to the development of quality performance information that can be reliably compared across jurisdictions and between services through adoption of common terminology, definitions, classifications and code sets.

These objectives provides a basis for ongoing data development activity in the community services sector, with a clear focus on the need for enhanced comparability, quality and utility of data through the application of consistent, reliable data standards.

## The National Community Services Data Committee

The NCSDC is a standing committee of the NCSIMG, a body established under the National Community Services Information Agreement to oversee the implementation of this agreement. All data elements included in the dictionary are endorsed by the NCSIMG.

The main role of the NCSDC is to assess data standards proposed for inclusion in the dictionary and to make recommendations to the NCSIMG on revisions and additions to each successive version of these standards. In particular, the NCSDC's role is to ensure that the dictionary definitions comply with endorsed existing data standards and that all data standards being considered for the dictionary have undergone sufficient national consultation with recognised experts and stakeholders in the relevant field.

The rules applied to each data standard are designed to ensure that each definition is clear, concise, comprehensive and provides sufficient information to give all those who collect, and use the data a common understanding of its meaning.

The organisations represented in the NCSDC are detailed in Appendix 4. In summary these include:

- Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
- state and territory government community service authorities
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Health Data Standards Committee
- three representatives from non-government organisations.

The NCSIMG appoints the chair of the NCSDC who is also a member of the NCSIMG. A list of committee members with their contact details is provided in Appendix 4.

The NCSDC does not normally develop data standards directly. It provides a channel through which data standards emerging from nationally focused data development work are documented and endorsed by NCSIMG for implementation in national data collections and made more widely available to stakeholders in the national community services information arena. The range and relevance of the data standards included in the dictionary largely depend on the material submitted to the NCSDC by the expert working groups that are actively developing data collections in the community services field.

More information about the NCSDC and its processes is available from the Secretariat (see the address at the end of this section) or through the NCSDC website:

[www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsd/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsd/index.cfm)

## **METeOR**

METeOR is the AIHW's online metadata registry.<sup>2</sup>

METeOR is based on the 2003 version of the ISO/IEC 11179, titled *Information Technology – Metadata Registries (MDR)*.<sup>3</sup> This standard was applied to provide a detailed registry architecture in which data standards can be better defined, navigated and managed throughout the data development lifecycle.

METeOR includes the following tools:

- data search and browse tools allowing navigation of data standards of varying levels of endorsement and across the health, community services and housing assistance sectors
- data view, collation and download tools

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<sup>2</sup> The previous electronic registry was called the Knowledgebase.

<sup>3</sup> The forerunner of METeOR, the Knowledgebase, was designed using an earlier version of the international standard for data element definition, *ISO/IEC 11179-3:1994, Information technology – specification and standardization of data elements*. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization.

- data development tools including areas in which multiple data developers may collaborate on the development of data standards
- data submission tools which enable data developers to submit draft data standards for consideration as national standards
- data management tools which allow the registrar to change the registration status of data standards under authorisation of one or more registration authorities
- comprehensive guidelines to assist metadata development and review.

As Australia's online metadata registry of national community services data standards, it provides Internet-based access to the data standards currently endorsed by NCSIMG, as well as to the data standards that are still being developed or are no longer current.

METeOR also contains data standards endorsed for national use by endorsement bodies equivalent to NCSIMG in the health and housing assistance sectors: the National Health Information Group (recently renamed as National Health Information Management Principal Committee) and the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group.

To view the national data health standards endorsed by NCSIMG, go to:  
[meteor.aihw.gov.au](http://meteor.aihw.gov.au)

Most available web browser software does not require 'http://' at the beginning of the URL.

Click **Find metadata** on the top navigation bar.

Select the **Community Services** 'registration authority' and press **Search**.

## Differences between the *National community services data dictionary* and METeOR

All data definitions that are included in this latest version of the *National community services data dictionary* (as well as previous versions of the dictionary) are available on METeOR. The main differences between data standards in this version of the dictionary and METeOR are:

- METeOR is more up to date: it reflects the most recent committee decisions, while the Dictionary contains current decisions at 17 May 2006
- METeOR contains all current, past and proposed data standards, while the dictionary contains current standards at 17 May 2006
- METeOR permits data standards to be browsed by name or searched on a number of criteria, while the data collections included in the dictionary are ordered alphabetically.

### Feedback

Please feel free to contact the AIHW by any of the means listed below.

## **National Data Development and Standards Unit**

For further information about the *National community services data dictionary* and for any comments and suggestions about national standards development processes, please contact the National Data Development and Standards Unit at the AIHW.

Contact: Data Development Hotline

Phone: (02) 6244 1222

## **Secretariat**

For further information about the NCSDC and its processes, please look up the committees page on the AIHW website ([www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsdc/](http://www.aihw.gov.au/committees/ncsdc/)) or contact the National Community Services Data Committee Secretariat.

Email: NCSDC sec@aihw.gov.au

Post: NCSDC Secretariat  
c/- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
GPO Box 570  
Canberra ACT 2601

# **The *National community services data dictionary, version 4***

## **Changes to the format of the dictionary**

The publication format for version 4 of the dictionary differs from the previous version:

- This is the first published version of the dictionary presenting data elements based on the format outlined in the second edition (2003) of the International Standard ISO/IEC 11179.
- All data elements existing before 17 May 2006 have been re-engineered into the new data standard format.
- All new data elements are also described using this new format. An overview of the new data standard format is explained in Appendixes 1 and 2.
- This publication is presented as a single volume, paper-based book and a CD-ROM that contains the data elements and supporting data standards endorsed by the NCSIMG as at 28 April 2006.
- Each data element in the dictionary is presented with its associated data element concept and value domain.
- Information about data elements specific to particular data set specifications can now be found in the attribute 'Implementation in data set specifications'. Previously, such information was interspersed throughout various data element attributes.
- Supporting data standards including object class, property, classification scheme and glossary items are included.

This hard copy publication of version 4 contains only data elements that are standards endorsed for use in the community services sector on a national level at 17 May 2006. Data standards are ordered alphabetically, grouped by data standard type (for example, data element, object class).

## **Summary of changes to data standard content**

In summary, the changes to data elements from version 3, not related to the implementation of the new data standard format, consist of:

- the addition of 27 new data elements
- the modification of 23 data elements.

The tables below identify the data elements that are new to this edition of the dictionary or that have undergone change in content.

The data elements that have undergone change only as a result of the new data standard format outlined in Appendix 1 are not separately identified. All data elements which were endorsed as national standards before the METeOR launch in May 2005 have been assigned the new registration status date (date of endorsement as a national standard) of 1 March 2005

or a later date. All data elements that were previously available in the Knowledgebase are now accessible on METeOR via hyperlinks to the archived Knowledgebase version.

## New data elements

The following tables list data elements that have been endorsed by the NCSIMG as national standards since the last version of the dictionary (Version 3). In METeOR, data elements are uniquely identified by METeOR identifiers. The new data elements are presented as two tables: one sorted by commonly used name order (Table 1) and the other in technical name order (Table 2).

**Table 1: New data elements in commonly used name order**

Commonly used name	Technical name	Date of endorsement
Address type (person)	Person (address)—address type, code N	30/09/2005
Address type (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—address type, code N	30/09/2005
Address—country identifier (person)	Person (address)—country identifier, code (SACC 1998) NNNN	30/09/2005
Date accuracy indicator	Date—accuracy indicator, code AAA	4/05/2005
Date of death	Person—date of death, DDMMYYYY	30/09/2005
Electronic communication address (person)	Person (address)—electronic communication address, text [X(250)]	30/09/2005
Electronic communication address (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—electronic communication address, text [X(250)]	30/09/2005
Electronic communication medium (person)	Person (address)—electronic communication medium, code N	30/09/2005
Electronic communication medium (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—electronic communication medium, code N	30/09/2005
Electronic communication medium (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—international postcode, text [X(10)]	30/09/2005
Electronic communication usage code (person)	Person (address)—electronic communication usage, code N	30/09/2005
Given name sequence number	Person (name)—given name sequence number, Code N	30/09/2005
Name suffix sequence number	Person (name)—name suffix sequence number, Code N	30/09/2005
Name title sequence number	Person (name)—name title sequence number, code N	30/09/2005

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**Table 1 (continued): New data elements in commonly used name order**

<b>Commonly used name</b>	<b>Technical name</b>	<b>Date of endorsement</b>
Name type	Person (name)—name type, code N	30/09/2005
Name type (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (name)—name type, code N	30/09/2005
Non-Australian state/province (person)	Person (address)—non-Australian state/province, text [X(40)]	30/09/2005
Organisation end date	Service provider organisation—organisation end date, DDMMYYYY	30/09/2005
Organisation name	Service provider organisation (name)—organisation name, text [X(200)]	30/09/2005
Organisation start date	Service provider organisation—organisation start date, DDMMYYYY	30/09/2005
Postal delivery point identifier (person)	Person (address)—postal delivery point identifier, {N(8)}	30/09/2005
Postal delivery point identifier (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—postal delivery point identifier, {N(8)}	30/09/2005
Postcode—international (person)	Person (address)—international postcode, text [X(10)]	30/09/2005
Postcode—international (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—non-Australian state/province, text [X(40)]	30/09/2005
Provider occupation category (self-identified)	Individual service provider—occupation (self-identified), code (ASCO 2nd edn) N[NNN]{-NN}	4/05/2005
Provider occupation end date	Individual service provider—occupation end date, DDMMYYYY	30/09/2005
Provider occupation start date	Individual service provider—occupation start date, DDMMYYYY	30/09/2005

**Table 2: New data elements in technical name order**

Technical name	Commonly used name	Date of endorsement
Date—accuracy indicator, code AAA	Date accuracy indicator	4/05/2005
Individual service provider—occupation (self-identified), code (ASCO 2nd edn) N[NNN]{-NN}	Provider occupation category (self-identified)	4/05/2005
Individual service provider—occupation end date, DDMMYYYY	Provider occupation end date	30/09/2005
Individual service provider—occupation start date, DDMMYYYY	Provider occupation start date	30/09/2005
Person (address)—address type, code N	Address type (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—country identifier, code (SACC 1998) NNNN	Address—country identifier (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—electronic communication address, text [X(250)]	Electronic communication address (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—electronic communication medium, code N	Electronic communication medium (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—electronic communication usage, code N	Electronic communication usage code (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—international postcode, text [X(10)]	Postcode—international (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—non-Australian state/province, text [X(40)]	Non-Australian state/province (person)	30/09/2005
Person (address)—postal delivery point identifier, {N(8)}	Postal delivery point identifier (person)	30/09/2005
Person (name)—given name sequence number, code N	Given name sequence number	30/09/2005
Person (name)—name suffix sequence number, code N	Name suffix sequence number	30/09/2005
Person (name)—name title sequence number, code N	Name title sequence number	30/09/2005
Person (name)—name type, code N	Name type	30/09/2005
Person—date of death, DDMMYYYY	Date of death	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (address)—address type, code N	Address type (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (address)—electronic communication address, text [X(250)]	Electronic communication address (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (address)—electronic communication medium, code N	Electronic communication medium (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (address)—international postcode, text [X(10)]	Electronic communication medium (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (address)—non-Australian state/province, text [X(40)]	Postcode—international (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005

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**Table 2 (continued): New data elements in technical name order**

Technical name	Commonly used name	Date of endorsement
Service provider organisation (address)—postal delivery point identifier, {N(8)}	Postal delivery point identifier (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (name)—name type, code N	Name type (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation (name)—organisation name, text [X(200)]	Organisation name	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation—organisation end date, DDMMYYYY	Organisation end date	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation—organisation start date, DDMMYYYY	Organisation start date	30/09/2005

## Modified data elements

The following tables list data elements that have undergone content change since the publication of version 3. Data elements which replace outdated data elements are identified by the 'Supersedes' relationship documented in the attribute 'Related metadata references.' Comparisons between two data elements can be viewed by clicking on the 'Compare items' hyperlink within METeOR. Comparisons between different versions of the same data element can be viewed within METeOR by clicking on the 'Compare versions' hyperlink.

Modified data elements are presented as two tables: one sorted by commonly used name order (Table 3) and the other in technical name order (Table 4).

**Table 3: Modified data elements in commonly used name order**

Commonly used name	Technical name	Date of endorsement
Address line (person)	Person (address)—address line, text [X(180)]	30/09/2005
Address line (service provider organisation)	Service provider organisation (address)—address line, text [X(180)]	30/09/2005
Case management plan indicator	Client—case management plan indicator, code N	29/04/2006
Communication method	Person—communication method, code N	29/04/2006
Days per week of operation	Service provider organisation—number of service operation days (7 day period), total N[N]	29/04/2006
Disability group	Person—disability group, code N	08/05/2006
Eligibility status	Person—eligibility status, code N	29/04/2006
First language spoken	Person—first language spoken, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	29/04/2006
Geographic location of organisation	Service provider organisation—geographic location, code (ASGC 2005) NNNNN	29/04/2006
Geographic location of person	Person—geographic location, code (ASGC 2005) NNNNN	29/04/2006
Goods and equipment received (service episode)	Service episode—type of goods and equipment received, code N	29/04/2006

*continued*

**Table 3 (continued): Modified data elements in commonly used name order**

<b>Commonly used name</b>	<b>Technical name</b>	<b>Date of endorsement</b>
Goods and equipment received (service event)	Service event—type of goods and equipment received, code N	29/04/2006
Informal carer existence indicator	Person—informal carer existence indicator, code N	29/04/2006
Interpreter services required	Person—interpreter service required, yes/no code N	10/04/2006
Legal order	Person—legal order/arrangement type, code N	29/04/2006
Level of highest educational attainment	Person—level of highest educational attainment, code NN	29/04/2006
Main language other than English spoken at home	Person—main language other than English spoken at home, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	29/04/2006
Person identifier	Person—person identifier, XXXXXX[X(14)]	25/08/2005
Preferred language	Person—preferred language, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	29/04/2006
Relationship in household	Person—relationship to household reference person, code NN	29/04/2006
Religious affiliation	Person—religious affiliation, code (ASCRG 2005) N[NNN]	29/04/2006
Source of income	Person—source of cash income (all) code NN	29/04/2006
Source of principal income	Person—source of cash income (principal), code N	29/04/2006

**Table 4: Modified data elements in technical name order**

<b>Technical name</b>	<b>Commonly used name</b>	<b>Date of endorsement</b>
Client—case management plan indicator, code N	Case management plan indicator	29/04/2006
Person (address)—address line, text [X(180)]	Address line (person)	30/09/2005
Person—communication method, code N	Communication method	29/04/2006
Person—disability group, code N	Disability group	08/05/2006
Person—eligibility status, code N	Eligibility status	29/04/2006
Person—first language spoken, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	First language spoken	29/04/2006
Person—geographic location, code (ASGC 2005) NNNNN	Geographic location of person	29/04/2006
Person—informal carer existence indicator, code N	Informal carer existence indicator	29/04/2006
Person—interpreter service required, yes/no code N	Interpreter services required	10/04/2006
Person—legal order/arrangement type, code N	Legal order	29/04/2006
Person—level of highest educational attainment, code NN	Level of highest educational attainment	29/04/2006
Person—main language other than English spoken at home, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	Main language other than English spoken at home	29/04/2006
Person—person identifier, XXXXXX[X(14)]	Person identifier	25/08/2005
Person—preferred language, code (ASCL 2005) NN{NN}	Preferred language	29/04/2006
Person—relationship to household reference person, code NN	Relationship in household	29/04/2006
Person—religious affiliation, code (ASCRG 2005) N{NNN}	Religious affiliation	29/04/2006
Person—source of cash income (all) code NN	Source of income	29/04/2006
Person—source of cash income (principal), code N	Source of principal income	29/04/2006
Service episode—type of goods and equipment received, code N	Goods and equipment received (service episode)	29/04/2006
Service event—type of goods and equipment received, code N	Goods and equipment received (service event)	29/04/2006
Service provider organisation (address)—address line, text [X(180)]	Address line (service provider organisation)	30/09/2005
Service provider organisation—geographic location, code (ASGC 2005) NNNNN	Geographic location of organisation	29/04/2006
Service provider organisation—number of service operation days (7 day period), total N[N]	Days per week of operation	29/04/2006

# Data standards use in data collections

The development of data elements useful at the national level is a considerable challenge. There is often a conflict between being general enough to be applicable to all community services areas while at the same time specific enough to meet the needs of individual data collections. Some level of detail required in some data collections may not be required or appropriate in other collections.

Most data elements in the dictionary are intended to be applicable across all areas of community services. These data elements tend to be broadly defined, containing value domains that are an appropriate minimum level for national collection. The level of detail contained may not be specific enough for individual data collections. In these cases data collectors are encouraged to develop their own more specific subcategories (and subsubcategories if required) within the broader categories in the dictionary. This means that the data can still be mapped to the value domains in the dictionary and will still be comparable with data obtained through other collections. In other words, individual collections can develop their own codes and categories to suit their purposes but still be comparable with other data. Table 5 contains an example of a collection that has a more detailed value domain than the dictionary but which is able to be mapped to the dictionary.

**Table 5: Example of mapping from the dictionary to an individual collection**

National community services data dictionary categories	Example collection value domain
1. Couple family with children	1. Couple family—dependent children 2. Couple family—independent children
2. Couple family without children	3. Couple family without children
3. One-parent family	4. One parent family—dependent children 5. One parent family—independent children
4. Other family	6. Other family
9. Not stated/inadequately described	9. Not stated/inadequately described

Each data element contains the minimum procedural information necessary to achieve national consistency and comparability. The dictionary does not necessarily contain all of the details required for the reporting and administration of a national data collection over time. For example, those responsible for the ongoing management of a national data collection may also need to issue additional guidelines or instructions on data validation processes, file structures, data collection methodologies, and so on, to ensure that information collected meets the needs of their collection. Additional information may also be required on use and collection methods for specific collections. Ongoing monitoring is required to ensure that data collections change in conjunction with changes to community services programs, clients, service providers, supportive products and technologies.

Feedback and suggestions to improve the dictionary from all interested parties are encouraged. To be useful, the dictionary must reflect concurrent development and change within the community services sector and the nation as a whole. Therefore, it is expected that version 4 will be the basis for further consultation, revision and testing. Wider dissemination and consultation with agencies not directly represented in the process will be a feature of these ongoing arrangements.

The NCSDC (see Appendix 4) invites comment and suggestions on any aspect of the dictionary.