



Client Confidentiality and the new SAAP Statistical Linkage Key

The new SAAP Statistical Linkage Key (SLK)

The new SAAP SLK, which comprises the alpha code derived from a client's name, their sex, and full date of birth, has been implemented for two reasons:

- to improve longitudinal analysis of the growing number of SAAP clients. That is, it will enable research about repeat use of SAAP and the period(s) of time that a client needs SAAP services over a lifetime. With the linkage key that had been used in SAAP prior to July 2005, reliable estimates of the number of repeat users of SAAP over many years were not possible due to high duplication rates (different clients with the same alpha code). Research into inter-generational homelessness will now be possible.
- The new SAAP SLK is made up of the same elements as other community and health services data collections. This creates the potential to examine patterns of usage between other service systems such as mental health, aged care and corrective services, and to tackle such issues as service system interaction. It will provide a better picture of pathways, transitions, and gaps in service provision for homeless people.

Every linkage project with other data collections will require sector consultation, and approval by one or more ethics committees.

Sector consultation will also occur in order to develop an agreed set of protocols to govern the linkage of SAAP data with other program data. Data linkage between programs will not occur until these protocols are finalised.

How the NDCA protects client confidentiality

The NDCA ensures that individual clients will not be identified from data in the collection by:

- using an alpha code on data forms, not the client's name
- not storing alpha codes in any database
- only storing encrypted linkage keys (the scrambled combination of alpha code, date of birth and sex) that are non-identifiable

HOW A NAME BECOMES A STATISTICAL LINKAGE KEY (SLK)

Name:	ROSANGELA MERLO
+ Sex:	Female
+ Date of birth:	10 th December 1969
= SLK:	OSEROF10121969
Encrypted SLK:	^*~?T~XX*)7&`{

As part of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the NDCA is bound by law to ensure the confidentiality of individual client data

Section 29 of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987* ensures that:

- the NDCA cannot release any information that can be used to identify an individual – an unauthorised release of information is punishable by fine and/or imprisonment
- publications produced by the AIHW will not identify any individual
- any information released to other persons or organisations will contain only statistical information that can not identify an individual. Such information will only be used for statistical purposes. It will not be used for any legal, administrative or other purposes.