

National Housing Data Agreement

**A subsidiary agreement to the
1999–2003 Commonwealth–State
Housing Agreement**

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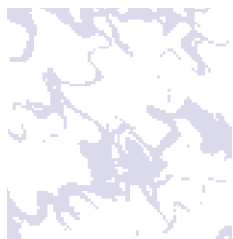
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Preface

In the interest of improving housing assistance outcomes, governments across Australia have jointly acknowledged the importance of consistent, accurate reliable and timely housing information.

The development of the National Housing Data Agreement (NHDA) recognises the need for national standards in housing information.

The NHDA was established as a subsidiary agreement to the 1999–2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare as Party to the National Housing Data Agreement, and secretariat to its Committees, has published this booklet to inform community discussion and debate and promote the aims and objectives of the agreement.

This booklet contains the National Housing Data Agreement as signed by the Parties. Contained in the Agreement are descriptions of the role and operations of the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group and the National Housing Data Development Committee.

Note: This publication is also available on line at <http://www.aihw.gov.au>.



Parties to the National Housing Data Agreement at 30 June 2000 were:

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services

Department of Health and Human Services (TAS)

Department of Housing (NSW)

Department of Housing (NT)

Department of Housing (QLD)

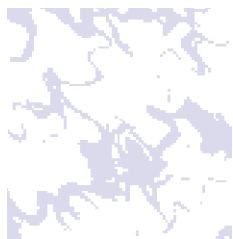
Department of Human Services (SA)

Department of Human Services (VIC)

Department of Urban Services (ACT)

Ministry of Housing (WA)

NSW Aboriginal Housing Office



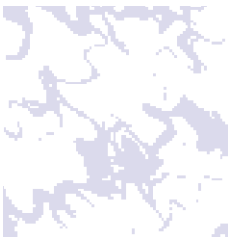
National Housing Data Agreement

Contents

1. Preamble	7
2. Purpose	9
3. Aims	9
4. Objectives	9
5. Context of the Agreement	12
5.1 Scope	12
5.2 Existing arrangements and agreements	12
5.3 Collection and maintenance of national housing information	13
5.4 Privacy of individuals and organisations	14
5.5 Ownership and dissemination of information	15
5.6 Standards for information	15
6. Management of the Agreement	16
6.1 National Housing Data Agreement Management Group (NHDAMG)	16
6.2 National Housing Data Development Committee (NHDDC)	17
7. Operation of the Agreement	17
7.1 Authority	17
7.2 Funding for national housing information	18
7.3 Duration of the Agreement	18
7.4 Variation to the Agreement	19
7.5 Termination of the Agreement	19
8. Roles and responsibilities of the Signatories	19
8.1 All Signatories	19
8.2 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)	20
8.3 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	20



9. Commencement of the Agreement	22
Schedule 1	23
Schedule 2	24
Schedule 3	25



1. Preamble

This is a multilateral agreement between signatories to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and national statistical agencies and provides the framework for a cooperative approach to national housing information development. This Agreement arises from provisions of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement operative from 1 July 1999.

The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement requires the establishment and funding of a subsidiary National Housing Data Agreement and, further, requires the Commonwealth and States to 'provide such data as specified in the Agreement, according to specified standards'. In particular, 'a core set of nationally consistent indicators and data' are to be specified in this National Housing Data Agreement.

In formulating the scope and aims of this Agreement, all information aspects of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement have been considered, as this is consistent with its strategic direction of providing 'appropriate, affordable and secure housing assistance for those who most need it, for the duration of their need, and to do so in the most efficient way: through better linkages between programs under this [Commonwealth State Housing] Agreement and other relevant Commonwealth and State programs, including those relating to income support, health and community services'. Linkages with the non-government sector are also advocated. In all, there is a clear vision that housing assistance under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement is integrated with and planned in the context of the overall provision of housing assistance, and according to national economic, social and environmental objectives.

The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement also commits the Commonwealth and States to support research and analysis of housing and related issues, and to produce nationally consistent housing data suitable for outcome measurement. Consequently for the purposes of this National Housing Data Agreement, 'national housing information' is defined as data or derived information, concerned with:

- a) the housing status and needs of individuals, communities and the Australian population as a whole; and



- b) the provision of housing and housing assistance services, either mainstream or targeted to special needs groups within the community (whether publicly or privately administered), including information on the uses, costs and outcomes of services and programs, on the type, location and condition of housing stock, and on the resources required to establish, maintain or improve services and programs.

The long-term goal of this Agreement is not only to have a workable means of obtaining nationally compatible housing data, but to do so in a way that is compatible and consistent with other information initiatives in Australia, such as the National Community Services Information Agreement and the National Health Information Agreement. This enables the compilation of nationally relevant data from locally useful data and reduces the respondent burden on data collectors. The framework provided by this Agreement aims to ensure that the collection, compilation, interpretation and dissemination of National Housing Information are done appropriately and efficiently. This will require the development of guidelines, incorporating ethical standards, and protection of individual privacy and confidentiality, and it will require processes set up to develop national data definitions, standards and classifications for housing and housing assistance. Consequently, the operation of this Agreement will reduce the likelihood of unnecessary data collection activities (e.g. duplication), and minimise data collection costs and workloads. This is in line with the important commitment under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement to 'minimise any duplication of planning and reporting' and the National Housing Data Agreement will uphold this commitment in relation to information management.

The Signatories agree in principle to the funding of the Agreement on the understanding that the specific annual funding requirements will be agreed by the Signatories in the future. The Signatories note the estimate of total funding will be approximately one million dollars per annum.



2. Purpose

To provide a framework for the collecting of information to enhance our understanding of how housing contributes to the achievement of whole of government outcomes, departmental outcomes and research agenda and priorities in each jurisdiction. Collection of housing data that is consistent with other programs, such as those relating to income support, health and community services, will enhance the breadth of compatible information available. The information collected will enable assessments to be made of the role of housing in contributing to the reduction of poverty, advancement of welfare, and quality of life for individuals and the community as a whole.

3. Aims

- 3.1 To ensure that nationally relevant housing data collected throughout Australia are consistent and compatible between the different collections; and otherwise
- 3.2 to improve the quality of and access to housing data at the national level and at the same time maintain and protect the confidentiality of the data for individuals and for signatories to the Agreement.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 The Agreement provides for the establishment of the national infrastructure and decision-making processes needed to integrate and coordinate the development of consistent national housing information. These processes are necessary to develop and improve national housing information and improve access to quality information by the community, service providers, housing assistance clients, and governments.
- 4.2 The broad objectives of this Agreement are:
 - to develop and improve the quality of, and access to, national housing data;



- to reduce duplication of data development and data collections; and
- to ensure the availability and use of compatible national data among agencies, within and across the different modes of providing assistance, across State, Territory and Commonwealth authorities and with other community and human service sectors including health.

4.3 The specific objectives are to:

- 4.3.1 provide a framework to facilitate, coordinate, plan, manage and to set priorities for national housing information developments, in order to–
- link data and data development to policy and program development,
 - identify and develop strategies to overcome data gaps and weaknesses in existing collections,
 - set priorities for data development activities,
 - coordinate data developments in both government and non-government agencies and facilitate partnerships between stakeholders,
 - develop agreed national uniform data definitions,
 - agree on a national minimum data set that can be used inter alia for outcomes assessment, for example, as the basis for performance indicators, and
 - reduce duplication of data development and collection by coordination with other community and human services sectors including health;
- 4.3.2 provide a structure for developing data standards, uniform definitions and classifications, that will–
- improve existing data, and
 - ensure data collections across the housing sector are consistent and comparable while retaining individual collections;



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- 4.3.3 develop a national housing data dictionary;
- 4.3.4 improve access to consistent and timely information between all levels of government, service providers, consumers and funders, whilst ensuring privacy and confidential requirements are met;
- 4.3.5 provide, where necessary, the means for data collectors to comply with agreed data definitions, standards and collection methods, including timely feedback and skills development;
- 4.3.6 to address, in the first instance, the acknowledged initial priorities, i.e.
- (a) a National Minimum Data Set (see Schedule 1),
 - (b) national performance indicators (see Schedule 2), and
 - (c) national data definitions and standards (see Schedule 3); and
- 4.3.7 within the third year of the Agreement,
- review the management and implementation of the Agreement and the operation of the structures, particularly the costs and benefits of the Agreement, and
 - make recommendations for the future operation of the Agreement.



5. Context of the Agreement

This section describes the context and underlying principles within which the Agreement will operate.

5.1 Scope

5.1.1 The Agreement seeks to provide a framework for housing information development that is nationally relevant, and wherever possible assists the aspirations of individual jurisdictions or agencies to develop their own specific local objectives, service standards, data or performance indicators.

5.1.2 National housing information is information collected on, or aggregated to, a national level, that has national coverage, or is of relevance for national planning, policy making and analysis and at the same time assists the planning and policy-making needs of regions, States and Territories.

5.1.3 The housing sector has multiple interfaces with a range of other sectors such as community services, education, justice, health, social security and labour market services. There is a strong and indivisible connection with infrastructure. Within the housing sector, the interrelationships between the ways clients receive assistance are complex and program boundaries are often blurred. By acknowledging these links, data development duplication or overlap can be identified. Close collaboration with other sectors will be required in order to ensure consistency in data development.

5.2 Existing arrangements and agreements

5.2.1 The Agreement subsumes, but does not replace, previous arrangements and agreements between the Signatories to the Agreement with respect to the subject matter of this Agreement.



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- 5.2.2 In the case of the concurrent Agreement on National Indigenous Housing Information, this Agreement will recognise data specifications concerned directly with Indigenous data developed under the processes of that Agreement. Where data specifications have general application, the provision of clause 5.2.3 applies.
- 5.2.3 Where inconsistencies arise between what is decided under this Agreement and what is currently required under existing agreements, the requirements of this Agreement will prevail.
- 5.3 Collection and maintenance of national housing information
- 5.3.1 It is intended that national housing information will be based where possible on data available from administrative data collections. Where appropriate, data from censuses or surveys of the Australian population will be used as well as administrative data contributed by the Signatories, their agents, or other agencies.
- 5.3.2 The development of national housing information must be responsive to the needs of policy makers, service providers and the community. Information will be collected and maintained under the authority of this Agreement on the basis of a national work program.
- 5.3.3 Signatories will release information collected and maintained under the Agreement in a way consistent with national protocols, definitions and standards agreed under the Agreement.
- 5.3.4 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will collate national data, which is not collected through Australian Bureau of Statistics population surveys or censuses. Signatories will provide the data in accordance with standards set and agreed under the Agreement, and in a form which meets the requirements of the particular collection.



5.4 Privacy of individuals and organisations

- 5.4.1 All Signatories will respect the rights to privacy of any person or organisation named or otherwise identified in any information source.
- 5.4.2 Information will be collected, disseminated, used and secured in such a way as to protect the privacy and confidentiality of any individual to whom and/or organisation to which it may refer. In particular, Signatories will comply with established ethical guidelines and practices.
- 5.4.3 The Signatories acknowledge that data collectors and holders will comply with the provisions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 as amended, and any other Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation relevant to the confidentiality or privacy of the data.
- 5.4.4 The concerns of individuals who are members of small community groups regarding privacy are acknowledged and advice on such concerns will be sought from appropriate authorities.
- 5.4.5 When individual data sets are too small for protection of privacy and/or reliable interpretation linked or other data sets may be used to contribute derived data.
- 5.4.6 Data will be linked only in accordance with legislation and agreed privacy and ethical guidelines. The signatories acknowledge that data collectors and holders will comply with the provisions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 as amended, and any other Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation relevant to the confidentiality or privacy of the data. Signatories will also take into account the privacy provisions contained in other Commonwealth or State/Territory legislation that may come into force during the existence of the Agreement.



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- 5.5 Ownership and dissemination of information
- 5.5.1 Signatories may also have custodial roles in respect of data they receive from and manage for other collecting bodies. If this is the case, Signatories are to apply the provisions of this Agreement to those data collections.
 - 5.5.2 Any transfer or storage of data for national collections will be in a manner that prevents unauthorised access.
 - 5.5.3 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare may prepare and publish reports based on data to which this Agreement applies, in accordance with its responsibilities under the provisions of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987, but only with consent of the Signatory providing the data under this Agreement.
 - 5.5.4 Information will be disseminated in accordance with agreed national protocols, definitions and standards.
 - 5.5.5 Users of data released into the public domain will be required to reference the original source of data.
- 5.6 Standards for information
- 5.6.1 All Signatories will cooperate in the development and ongoing review of a National Housing Data Dictionary. The dictionary will set out agreed data definitions, classifications and standards. It will be the ongoing authoritative source of national housing data definitions.
 - 5.6.2 Data standards adopted by Australian Bureau of Statistics and authoritative international organisations will be used unless an alternative is specified under this Agreement.
 - 5.6.3 All Signatories will comply with and use the agreed definitions and standards as specified in the National Housing Data Dictionary for data collected for the purpose of national information collections. This covers validity, format, completeness and timeliness standards.



- 5.6.4 Consistency between definitions in the National Housing Data Dictionary and other relevant national data dictionaries will be sought, in order to increase data compatibility between sectors.

6. Management of the Agreement

- 6.1 National Housing Data Agreement Management Group (NHDAMG)
- 6.1.1 The development and management of the Agreement and related structures and processes will be the responsibility of a National Housing Data Agreement Management Group, and carried out as directed by the Australian Housing CEOs.
- 6.1.2 The NHDAMG will be established under the authority of Australian Housing CEOs to:
- oversee the development, review and implementation of the National Housing Data Agreement and an associated Work Program;
 - make recommendations to Australian Housing CEOs on national housing information priorities, funding implications and other information policy issues;
 - establish and oversee a National Housing Data Development Committee, its operation and its work program; and
 - other housing information management as directed by the Australian Housing CEOs.
- 6.1.3 Each Signatory to the Agreement will provide a representative.
- 6.1.3.1 The Chair will be appointed by the Australian Housing CEOs for a two-year period.
- 6.1.4 Individual Signatories will meet the costs of their participation in the Management Group.



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- 6.1.5 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will provide secretariat support to the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group and support to the Chair.
- 6.2 National Housing Data Development Committee (NHDDC)
- 6.2.1 The Management Group will establish a technical advisory subcommittee—the National Housing Data Development Committee (NHDDC)—which will operate as directed by the NHDAMG.
- 6.2.2 The NHDDC will:
- develop and make recommendations to the NHDAMG on data definitions and standards for inclusion in a National Housing Data Dictionary, and associated data sets;
 - maintain a National Housing Data Dictionary as the authoritative source of data concepts, definitions, standards and classifications; and
 - other data development as directed by the NHDAMG.
- 6.2.3 A Chair, who will be a member of the NHDAMG, will be nominated by the NHDAMG for a period of two years.
- 6.2.4 Membership will be as directed by the NHDAMG.
- 6.2.5 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shall provide secretariat support to the Committee and support to the Chair.

7. Operation of the Agreement

- 7.1 Authority
- 7.1.1 The Agreement is a multilateral agreement between the Signatories and operates under the auspices of Australian Housing CEOs.



7.1.2 The Australian Housing CEOs will be the authority for resolving issues relating to the Agreement, including determination of national priorities and the national work program. A Management Group, consisting of representatives of the Signatories to the Agreement, will be responsible to the Australian Housing CEOs for the overall management of the Agreement and its Work Program.

7.2 Funding for national housing information

7.2.1 The Commonwealth and States have a responsibility for funding under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement s.3(3)b.

7.2.2 The costs of implementing agreed development projects will generally be met by the Signatories. However, arrangements may be made between the Signatories to meet the cost of specific needs for additional collections, specific analyses or provision of additional expertise. Generally, where all States are involved, costs will be distributed on an equal per capita basis as for the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

7.2.3 Proposals for additional resourcing will be developed where national benefit can be identified. Thus, funding will be sought under the Agreement where work on specific housing information issues imposes additional costs on an individual Signatory, where there are economies of scale to be gained, or where joint action of the Signatories contributes to meeting the objectives of the Agreement.

7.3 Duration of the Agreement

7.3.1 The Agreement will operate for the life of the CSHA and may be extended for a further period if agreed by all the Signatories.



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- 7.4 Variation to the Agreement
- 7.4.1 The Agreement may be amended at any time by consensus between all the Signatories.
 - 7.4.2 Additional Signatories may become Signatories to the Agreement if all existing Signatories agree.
 - 7.4.3 A Signatory proposing to withdraw should give six months notice. If a Signatory withdraws, the Agreement will continue to operate in respect of all other Signatories.
- 7.5 Termination of the Agreement
- 7.5.1 The Agreement may be terminated at any time by the agreement in writing of the remaining Signatories.

8. Roles and responsibilities of the Signatories

- 8.1 All Signatories
- Each Signatory will:
- 8.1.1 provide representation on the National Housing Data Agreement Management Group;
 - 8.1.2 act as the agency responsible for specific Work Program projects as agreed;
 - 8.1.3 maintain and provide information in accordance with agreed purposes, according to agreed data definitions, standards and data sets;
 - 8.1.4 collect data for national purposes under the authority of this Agreement, using agreed standard guidelines and consistent processes and formats, in order that the data will be timely and of appropriate quality;
 - 8.1.5 ensure the use of national definitions and data standards as endorsed under this Agreement in the collection, maintenance and analysis of data, and to ensure that information is capable of national comparison;



- 8.1.6 maintain the information collected under the Agreement so that it can be readily made available, subject to the conditions of this Agreement, to individuals, groups and authorities for purposes which require access to national housing information kept under the Agreement; and
 - 8.1.7 retain responsibility for the quality and completeness of contributed data.
- 8.2 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
The AIHW will, in addition to the provisions of s.8.1:
 - 8.2.1 convene meetings of the Management Group and provide secretariat assistance to the Management Group and the Data Development Committee;
 - 8.2.2 assist other Signatories to the Agreement in the use and interpretation of national housing information;
 - 8.2.3 ensure that quality control standards, encouraging accuracy and consistency in the collection and reporting of housing information such as national data dictionaries, are maintained and enhanced as agreed under this Agreement; and
 - 8.2.4 collate and maintain nationally relevant data (other than from censuses and surveys) collected under this Agreement.
 - 8.2.5 Other than the role and functions specified above, provision of any products will be according to the cost recovery policy of the Institute.
- 8.3 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
The ABS will, in addition to the provisions of s.8.1:
 - 8.3.1 develop statistical standards relevant to housing data collections;
 - 8.3.2 provide specialist advice in relation to statistics to other signatories;



- 8.3.3 assist and advise other signatories in the use and interpretation of national housing information;
- 8.3.4 ensure that quality control standards are maintained and enhanced as agreed under this Agreement, in order to encourage accuracy and consistency in the collection and reporting of housing data; and
- 8.3.5 facilitate, together with other Signatories, the review and development of housing data collections.
- 8.3.6 Other than the role and functions specified above, provision of any products will be according to the cost recovery policy of the Bureau.



9. Commencement of the Agreement

The Agreement will commence on 1 December 1999

In witness whereof this Agreement has been made the _____ day
of _____ 1999 and signed.

Signatories

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Mr Tim Skinner (Deputy Australian Statistician)

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Dr Richard Madden (Director)

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services

Mr Jeff Whalan (Deputy Secretary)

Department of Health and Human Services (TAS)

Mr J. A. Ramsay (Secretary)

Department of Housing (NSW)

Mr Andrew Cappie-Wood (Director-General)

Department of Housing (NT)

Mr Graham Symons (Chief Executive Officer)

Department of Housing (QLD)

Ms Linda Apelt (Director-General)

Department of Human Services (SA)

Ms Christine Charles (Chief Executive)

Department of Human Services (VIC)

Mr Howard Ronaldson (Director of Housing)

Department of Urban Services (ACT)

Mr Alan Thompson (Chief Executive)

Ministry of Housing (WA)

Mr Bevan Beaver (Executive Director Business Strategies)

NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

Mr James Christian (Chief Executive Officer)



Schedule 1

NATIONAL MINIMUM DATA SET

PURPOSE

S1.1.1 This is a Schedule to the National Housing Data Agreement between signatories to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

S1.1.2 This Schedule has been prepared in accordance with clause 4.3.6(a) of the National Housing Data Agreement ('the Agreement') to set out the processes and expectations for the development of a National Minimum Data Set for Housing.

S1.2 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

S1.2.1 As determined by the Data Management Group.

S1.3 KEY COMPONENTS

S1.3.1 As determined by the Data Management Group.

S1.4 IMPLEMENTATION

S1.4.1 Within the first 6 months of the Agreement:

- establish a process for determining the structure and content of the National Minimum Data Set
- establish a process for agreement on the inclusion of data elements in a National Minimum Data Set and on implementation procedures.

S1.4.2 Within the first year of the Agreement:

- develop a first version of the National Minimum Data Set(s)
- agree on a timetable for compliance with national data definitions, and implementation of the National Minimum Data Set(s)



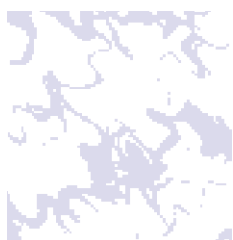
- report on progress on the development and implementation of an agreed National Minimum Data Set, including specification of the data set
- present recommendations on the implementation strategy for maintenance, review and further development of the National Minimum Data Set and associated National Housing Data Dictionary, data definitions, procedure documents and guides to the collection and uses of housing data.

Schedule 2

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

PURPOSE

- S2.1.1 This is a Schedule to the National Housing Data Agreement between signatories to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- S2.1.2 This Schedule has been prepared in accordance with clause 4.3.6(b) of the National Housing Data Agreement ('the Agreement') to set out the processes for the development of national performance indicators.
- S2.2 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
- S2.2.1 As determined by the Data Management Group.
- S2.3 KEY COMPONENTS
- As determined by the Data Management Group.
- S2.4 IMPLEMENTATION
- S2.4.1 Within the first 6 months of the Agreement:
- report on the feasibility of outcomes assessment for the current year by means of sets of performance indicators



- establish a process for agreement on a set of performance indicators for national purposes
- review existing performance indicator sets and draft a strategy for standardisation based on agreed data definitions and standards.

S2.4.2 Within the first year of the Agreement:

- agree on a timetable for compliance with national data definitions, and procedures for the collection and reporting of national performance indicators
- report on the status of performance indicator collection, and present recommendations on the implementation strategy for maintenance, review and further development of national outcome measures consistent with the National Minimum Data Set and associated National Housing Data Dictionary, data definitions, procedure documents and guides to the collection and uses of housing data.

Schedule 3

NATIONAL DATA DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

PURPOSE

- S3.1.1 This is a Schedule to the National Housing Data Agreement between signatories to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- S3.1.2 This Schedule has been prepared in accordance with clause 4.3.6(c) of the National Housing Data Agreement ('the Agreement') to set out the processes and expectations for the development of national data definitions and standards.



S3.2 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

S3.2.1 As determined by the Data Management Group.

S3.3 KEY COMPONENTS

S3.3.1 As determined by the Data Management Group.

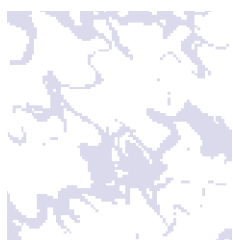
S3.4 IMPLEMENTATION

S3.4.1 Within the first 6 months of the Agreement:

- establish a process for data development and the production of data definitions and standards to support the National Minimum Data Set(s)
- establish a process for agreement on data definitions and standards and the inclusion of data elements in the National Minimum Data Set(s) and on implementation procedures
- report on priorities for the development of data definitions to support the National Minimum Data Set(s).

S3.4.2 Within the first year of the Agreement:

- develop an interim Work Program, specifically including consideration of the resource implications of data development work under the Agreement and make recommendations of the means and extent of funding the implementation of the Agreement
- establish a process and timetable for development of a National Housing Data Development Plan and a Work Program
- prepare a first draft National Housing Data Dictionary that is consistent with other relevant national data dictionaries and is based on national (and international) metadata standards to ensure the harmonisation of data development across platforms and agencies



- report progress and present recommendations on the implementation strategy for maintenance, review and further development of the National Housing Data Dictionary, data definitions, procedure documents and guides to the collection and uses of housing data.

S3.5 Within the first two years of the Agreement:

- produce the first edition of a National Housing Data Development Plan and a Work Program, to include estimates or forecasts of resource implications
- establish priority projects within a Work Program
- report on a strategy for outcomes assessment including recommendations for implementation
- report on progress on the development and implementation of an agreed National Minimum Data Set and associated National Housing Data Dictionary, data definitions, procedure documents and guides to the collection and use of housing data.



