

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ACT 1975: sub-section 6(3)

PROPOSAL NO. 8 OF 2021 BY THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES, AUSTRALIA

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) proposes to collect information, on behalf of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, for the purpose of fulfilling the reporting requirements specified in the *National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)*, 2020-25; specifically, the unit level data described in 'Schedule D' of the NLAP.

Data collection, funded by the Attorney-General's Department, will be conducted in two 'phases':

- A test exercise will be conducted during 2021 – mid 2022; and
- The main collection, as per NLAP (Schedule D) reporting requirements, will commence on 30 September 2022, and be collected on an annual basis.

The information will be collected from the administrative data records of the legal assistance sector, including Legal Aid Commissions (LACs), Community Legal Centres (CLCs) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) in each state and territory. It will be provided to the ABS via a secure digital transfer mechanism.

The information to be collected includes a range of characteristics about the clients who received a legal assistance service, and the nature of the services provided to individuals. The specific data items are described in the NLAP (Schedule D).

The information collected will be used for two key purposes:

- To fulfil the reporting requirements described in Schedule D of the NLAP; and
- Establish an evidence base for the legal assistance service sector.

The ABS expects to make statistical and related information from the collection available annually from mid-2023. The legal assistance service data will enhance/fill gaps in the existing collections, including data about civil and family law matters, and additional information about clients with a matter involving some element of family or domestic violence.

The principal users of the information the ABS produces will be:

- The Commonwealth and State/Territory Attorney-General's Departments, for the purposes of policy and resource planning;
- Legal assistance service providers, for the purposes of service planning and delivery; and
- Academics and research bodies concerned with the function and services provided across the legal assistance sector.

To assist in determining the feasibility of the collection and to understand and manage respondent burden consistent with the Government's Regulator Performance Framework, the ABS:

- has considered what existing information is available;
- has consulted with relevant stakeholders from the legal assistance sector, including the LACS, CLCs and ATSILS, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, and the relevant Attorney-General's/Justice departments in each state and territory; and
- is undertaking the aforementioned test exercise to assist the data providers to meet the reporting requirements in Schedule D of the NLAP.

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Statistical Services Group

12 November 2021