



WA Data Linkage Branch Newsletter

Issue: December 2017

The Data Linkage Branch (DLB) team wishes you a safe and happy festive season. We look forward to working with you again in 2018.

Christmas closedown

To enable us to focus on important development work, the DLB is not actively processing new applications or new project work from the 11th of December 2017 until the 8th of January 2018. This means there will be no further Data Custodian draft application review meetings in 2017. The first draft application review meeting for next year will be held on Thursday the 18th January 2018.

DLB will continue to progress existing applications and projects during the closedown period. A number of staff will also be on leave during the Christmas period, which might impact project timelines.

Website changes

Have you visited the [DLWA website](#) lately? Recent changes include:

- The results of the [2017 Security Review](#) are now available. See more information on this review on page three.
- A report on [Confidentiality and Security Standards](#) at DLB is now available.
- We have now released a series of [linkage quality statements](#) for routinely linked datasets. These contain a variety of linkage quality metrics, including the percentage of records linked, plus descriptions of the unique factors relating to linking each of these datasets.

Work has commenced to revamp DLB's website.

DLB funding, recruitment & appointments

Christmas came early for DLB this year when the Department of Health (DOH) boosted our core funding to address the growing demand for our specialist services. This will translate into six new positions across the Linkage, Systems, Client Services and Data Delivery teams. Two of these positions have been filled permanently; the remaining four will be filled in the coming months. All of these roles will require significant on-the-job training and mentoring from our current expert staff. DLB is confident this investment will result in improved capacity and demand management in linked data delivery for a variety of approved purposes.

DLB thanks linked data users for their prompt payment of linkage and project invoices throughout 2017. This revenue is essential to DLB planning and capacity and demand management activities.

Staff changes

During the year, the DLB has undergone significant staff changes.

Janine Alan has returned to her substantive Program Manager role.

Alex Merchant is currently on maternity leave, and you'll be glad to hear Alex and her daughter Paige are doing well.

We welcomed the following new staff members:

- Emma Douglas, A/Senior Project Officer
- Lolani Mwenda, Data Coordinator
- David Bray, Data Analyst

... and farewelled:

- Peter Cosgrove, Data Coordinator
- Owen Carter, Senior Data Linkage Consultant
- Jacqui Bauer, Linkage Officer
- Tim Finney, Data Analyst
- Matthew Hamilton, Data Analyst

We wish Peter, Owen, Jacqui, Tim and Matthew all the best for their future adventures and thank them for their contributions to DLB.

Find out more about our team on the [staff profiles page](#) of the DLB website.

Department of Health review of data linkage - update

Following the internal DoH review in 2016, DLB, the Data Collections and DOH HREC have implemented the following improvements:

- DLB and Data Collections have implemented escalation processes for non-research and high-priority or contentious requests
- The [DOH HREC Terms of Reference](#) (effective July 2017) has been revised
- Communication channels between Data Custodians and Data Stewards have been streamlined to more efficiently resolve issues relating to data disclosure
- DLB has delivered six Data Linkage Researcher Training workshops over the course of the year to provide data requestors with a good understanding of the data linkage process, governance requirements and the data application processes
- The DOH Data Collections delivered a pilot training course to provide detailed information about commonly requested data collections.
- *Health Services (Information) Regulations 2017* have recently been released to support the *Health Services Act 2016*.
- DLB has implemented improved record keeping processes.



Alex and Paige

News from the Linkage and Systems team

Completed linkages

It has been a busy year for linkages. These include the following new infrastructure linkages:

- Brightwater Care Group
- Child Development Information System
- Royal Flying Doctors Service
- Non-Admitted Data Collection
- WA Police Data

DLB also linked a number of large pathology datasets for the Renal Demand Modelling Project and worked with the Curtin Centre for Data Linkage on a pilot project to test the effectiveness of Privacy Preserving Record Linkage (PPRL).

In addition to all of DLB's routine linkages, several linkage updates were also completed, including:

- Dental Health Services and Oral Health Care WA
- Drivers' Licences
- Elective Surgery Waitlist
- Insurance Commission WA
- Intellectual Disability Exploring Answers database
- iPharmacy Dispensary data
- Main Roads WA crashes
- Reproductive Technology
- Silver Chain Nursing Association
- State Trauma Registries
- WA Cervical Cancer Prevention Program
- WA Notifiable Infectious Diseases Database
- WA Registry of Developmental Anomalies (Birth Defects Registry and Cerebral Palsy)

Other data news

ABS Cause of Death preliminary codes for 2015 are now available. The 2016 preliminary codes are expected to be released in 2018.

Santa bring new 'links master' for Christmas

The roll out of the new linkage system (DLS3) within DLB continues with a major cutover planned for the Christmas/New-year period. Great strides have been taken this year in DLS3's clerical review and links storage modules. With DLS3 entering the final development phase, DLB will next focus on publishing the achievements, lessons learned, and future prospects arising from this major data linkage development project.

This Christmas, Santa (or more probably his elves) will be hard at work validating the integrity of DLS3. During 2018, work will continue to validate and maintain the new system while also developing new features and enhancements. DLB gratefully acknowledges the financial support from LotteryWest as part of the WA Data Linkage Infrastructure Project.

Security Review of Data Linkage Systems

In January 2017, the DLB contracted an independent security review of its systems and processes as well as DLB's technical infrastructure and data handling protocols, carried out by Asterisk Information Security. The review found no high risk threat scenarios and provided some additional recommendations for further improvement. DLB is now working on implementing the recommendations presented in the final report.

A full report on [Confidentiality and Security Standards](#) at DLB, and the results of the [2017 Security Review](#) are available in the [Privacy and Security](#) section of the [Downloads](#) page.

www.data-linkage-wa.org.au

News from the Client Services and Data Coordination Team

Status of projects*

*As at 11 December 2017

The DLB received 39 formal data requests in 2017, consisting of 22 new projects approved by the DoH HREC and 17 data updates and amendments to existing projects. The DLB delivered on 58 data requests. A further 30 draft applications were received with 20 draft applications currently in progress.

CARES update

The Custodian Administered Research Extract Server (CARES) has been actively extracting service data for projects since mid-2013. The CARES server and associated database and software are used to store service data on behalf of participating data collections, which is then used to extract data for projects in a streamlined way. Further information about the CARES initiative and its impact on data extraction times is described in a [2014 DLB paper](#) written by Tom Eitelhuber and Geoff Davis. CARES now holds data from the following data collections:

- Hospital Morbidity Data Collection (HMDC)
- Cancer Registry
- Emergency Department Data Collection (EDDC)
- Midwives Notifications (MNS)
- Birth Registrations
- Death Registrations
- Electoral Roll
- Department of Education Attendance and Suspension data
- Department of Education Public NAPLAN data
- Schools Curriculum Standards Authority Certificate of Education data (WACE)
- Health and Community Care (HACC)
- Aged Care Assessment Program (ACAP)
- WA Register of Developmental Anomalies - Birth Defects (WARDA-BD)
- WA Register of Developmental Anomalies - Cerebral Palsy (WARDA-CP)
- WA Notifiable Infections Diseases Database (WANIDD)
- Child Development Information System (CDIS)

In 2018, DLB hopes to receive data from the Non-Admitted Data Collection.

Researcher training course

The DLB has delivered six Data Linkage Researcher Training workshops over the course of the year. A total of 167 participants attended courses that were delivered at the University of WA, Curtin University, Telethon Kids Institute and the DoH. More workshops will be offered in 2018, so keep an eye out on our website for more information in the new year.

This year, DOH Data Collection Training Course was also delivered by DOH Data Collections teams to provide detailed information about commonly requested data collections. The session included presentations from the WA Cancer Registry, Emergency Department Data Collection, Midwives Notification System & Reproductive Technology Register. Approximately 35 participants attended this session, and there are plans to offer more sessions in 2018.