

**New Australian Government Data Sharing and Release Legislation**

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# Overview

The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak leadership organisation for university libraries in Australia. CAUL members are the University Librarians or equivalent of the 39 institutions that have representation on Universities Australia. University libraries are diverse institutions, which intersect core university business.

CAUL’s vision is that society is transformed through the power of research, teaching and learning. University libraries are essential knowledge and information infrastructures that enable student achievement and research excellence. CAUL makes a significant contribution to higher education strategy, policy and outcomes through a commitment to a shared purpose:

**To transform how people experience knowledge – how it can be discovered, used and shared.**

University libraries and library organisations broadly play a leading role in enabling fair, affordable and open access to knowledge. They are also instrumental in building society’s capacity for digital dexterity – fluency in the use of digital technology, skills and essential literacies.

Today the role of university libraries is expanding, especially with regards to data management. The CAUL community is acutely aware of both the opportunities and barriers to increasing research opportunities and impact through access to public and private research data. CAUL strongly supports the national agenda to make public data more open, across all levels of government.

CAUL is grateful for this opportunity to provide a response to the New Australian Government Data Sharing and Release (DS&R) Legislation consultation paper. Our response will focus on Question 8.

## Question 8: Do you agree with the stated purposes for sharing data?

We are pleased to see that the proposed test for the release of public data will allow the sharing and release of public data for the purpose of research and development:

‘with clear and direct public benefits, which could include research by government on a particular topic (unrelated to existing policy or programs), cross-disciplinary research, work by research institutions and academics’ (p.14).

However, we believe that the DS&R legislation can do more to make public data more open, across all levels of government by purposefully strengthening collaboration in data policy development, services, infrastructure and skills development across the research and government data domains.

For example, the work of the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) now part of the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)[[1]](#footnote-1), in partnership with the CAUL community, is positioning Australia as an international leader in research data policy, standards, services and infrastructure.

To ensure that this kind of work continues we recommend that the relationship between the proposed National Data Commissioner (NDC) and the ARDC be captured in the DS&R Legislation. This would help prevent any confusion about data responsibilities, improve efficiencies in the development of data management standards and skills, and help foster cooperation between existing and new data authorities.

The DS&R legislation should go beyond only the use and re-use of public sector data by ensuring that the data made available is also Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (F.A.I.R)[[2]](#footnote-2).

‘The FAIR Guiding Principles describe distinct considerations for contemporary data publishing environments with respect to supporting both manual and automated deposition, exploration, sharing, and reuse’[[3]](#footnote-3).

In the case of data used for research, this should extend to the research outputs as described in the Australian F.A.I.R. Access Policy Statement[[4]](#footnote-4) below.

# F.A.I.R. Access Policy Statement

All Australian publicly funded research outputs will be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Access to research outputs will accord with international practices that are well defined, secure and trusted, and delivered through sustainable, fair, and efficient dissemination models. Publicly funded researchers will be expected, supported and rewarded to disseminate their work in such a way that anyone can find and re-use research publications and research data for further research, policy development, innovation, education and public benefit.

The policy statement was developed with input from Australia’s major research funding agencies and relevant government department personnel.

## Principles

The following principles inform the application of this statement:

1. A commitment to the highest standards of excellence, impact and engagement in research practice, including the provision of support for effective and appropriate review processes and reproducibility.
2. Support for a diversity of financially sustainable, transparent and trusted dissemination models in recognition of disciplinary differences.
3. Support for approaches that encourage collaboration and the transfer of knowledge between researchers and users of research in industry, government and the general community.
4. A commitment to disseminate research outputs arising from public funding in a timely and easily accessible way that fosters social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits and promotes the development of human capacities.
1. <https://ardc.edu.au> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.force11.org/group/fairgroup/fairprinciples> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.fair-access.net.au/fair-statement> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)