

Privacy and Security

Privacy Legislation

SA NT DataLink, hosted by the University of South Australia, is required to comply with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988.

The use and transfer of personal data to enable privacy protecting data linkage activities within South Australia complies with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and South Australian Government data transfers comply with the SA Government Cabinet Administrative Instruction 1/89, also known as the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) instruction, Premier and Cabinet Circular 12, as amended by Cabinet 18 May 2009. This requires gaining IPP exemption approvals from the Privacy Committee of South Australia.

Within the Northern Territory, the use and transfer of data for data linkage activities is subject to the Information Act 2003 (NT).

Authorisations

Research projects using SA NT DataLink services must have data custodian permission and be approved by at least one National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) registered Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). In South Australia projects needing access to SA Government datasets need to be approved by the SA Health HREC.

NT ethics approval is through the Menzies School of Health Research Ethics Committee.

Personal demographic variables from each dataset are used to link records within the Master Linkage File. This promotes efficient and high quality extraction of linked data from multiple datasets.

To enable personal information to be added into the Master Linkage File formal approval is required, on a case-by-case basis, by the Privacy Committee of South Australia, as well as agreement between each Data Custodian and the Director of SA NT DataLink.

Data Security Protocols

SA NT DataLink's security protocols are in accordance with:

- Australian Government 'Protective Security Policy Framework',
- Population Health Research Network 'Information Governance Framework',
- NHMRC 'Code for Responsible Conduct of Research'.

All data security protocols have been developed in association with the Privacy Committee of South Australia and the Northern Territory Information Commissioner.

Physical Security Measures

A Commonwealth Government 'Protected Level' security standard ensures the personal data held within the Data Linkage Unit is secure. The unit meets the Australian Government's physical security requirements for an Intruder Resistant Area including separated area with heightened security, secure access control and alarm systems, CCTV coverage, and strict visitor supervision.

Within the secure 'Protected Area', data linkage activities are performed on a stand-alone network. There is no internet access to this network; all USB ports are disabled; and no mobile phones or wireless devices are permitted. The server is housed within an Australian Government Defence Signals Directorate specified 'C-Class cabinet' in a secure environment.

Secure File Transfer Method

Secure data transfer methods are used by SA NT DataLink. All data files are encrypted, password protected and received from data custodians either by Australian Government 'Safe Hands' deliver method or via secure electronic file transfer.

Separation of Duties

SA NT DataLink only receives data required to link individuals across multiple datasets. Only demographic information is provided to SA NT DataLink. An individual's detailed service records remain with the Data Custodian.

Security and privacy is paramount. Staff are potentially subject to severe penalties if confidentiality is breached, including jail terms, loss of employment, and loss of employer funded superannuation contributions.

All staff working within the secure Data Linkage Unit are SA Health employees. As state government public servants requiring access to personal information for their work, they all have police clearances, are bound by individual confidentiality agreements, and have undergone security awareness training.

The University of South Australia employs the SA NT DataLink staffs who do not have access to the secure data processing area, and are responsible for liaising and advising Researchers and Data Custodians on research proposals.

