Australian Academy of Science | NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR DATA IN SCIENCE

Submission to the ASSA "State of Social Sciences Report Discussion Paper"

This submission provides input to the ASSA - "State of Social Sciences Report Discussion Paper" from the Australian Academy of Science's National Committee for Data in Science (NCDiS).

The rationale for updating the 2014 mapping document was that "it is time to look again at the social sciences" as we enter the 2020s. This is sensible as the landscape has changed dramatically over the past seven years. The section of the report the NCDiS is mostly interested in is "Research funding, infrastructure and outputs" (sections 5, 6 and 7).

The two questions from the Consultation that relate to this section of the report are fairly broad and we wish to submit a response to **Q17: Is the current research infrastructure fit for purpose? If no, what do you feel would serve you best?**

Our committee is concerned with the data that underpins research. This can take multiple forms, particularly in the social sciences. Data in the social sciences is *within itself* infrastructure.

If Australia is looking to a future where the data from publicly funded research is available in a FAIR manner (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) then there needs to be the facility and capacity within the research ecosystem to ensure this can occur.

There is currently no clear statement about the role of data in the social sciences within the Discussion Paper. If this is indeed central to the conduct of social sciences in Australia, as we argue it is, then there needs to be an explicit statement about this in any documentation identifying the future vision for the sector.

Considerations for managing data in social sciences include curation models for storage, and how information can be accessed. There are also confidentiality,

security and privacy considerations within the data generated from social sciences that open up issues that have not been well served in the past. Current scientific research infrastructure such as High Performance Computing has been designed within the framework of the physical sciences, without the in-depth consideration of some of the challenges associated with social sciences.

The skills and knowledge of the members of the NCDiS are broad and the committee includes a liaison with the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia. There are opportunities to share information and work together to achieve an effective future vision for FAIR data with appropriate infrastructure in the social sciences in Australia.

If you would like to get in contact with the NCDiS, please contact us via nc@science.org.au.