

# FSDf SPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT POLICIES - CUSTODIANSHIP

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Objective: To provide consistent custodial arrangements so that spatial information is managed to appropriate standards and made available in the manner required by users.

This document is presented by ANZLIC – the Spatial Information Council, representing the Australian and New Zealand Governments, and the governments of the States and Territories of Australia.

*The Australian and New Zealand Foundation Spatial Data Framework:  
FSDf Spatial Information Management Policies - Custodianship.*

#### **About this document**

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Digital versions of this publication are also available on the ANZLIC website at [www.anzlic.org.au/FSDf](http://www.anzlic.org.au/FSDf).

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## Document Versioning

Date	Version No.	Description	Author
13 Nov 2012	0.1	First draft based on Victorian Spatial Council Document of 2009	OSP
27 Feb 2013	0.2	Added guidelines and sample Custodian Agreement	OSP
16 Jan 2014	0.3	Added Sponsorship Agreement and updated RET to Communications	OSP
31 Mar 2014	0.4	Contact Officer comments (VIC)	Spatial Policy Branch (SPB)

## FSDf Spatial Information Management Policies

### Custodianship

#### Part A

#### Background

1. This document defines the custodianship policy that has been established to support the implementation of the Australian and New Zealand Foundation Spatial Data Framework (FSDf). The principles of custodianship are central to spatial information management because they provide accountability for spatial datasets, and identify authoritative sources that give users a measure of consistency and certainty in the data they are using.
2. Custodial principles cover all aspects of managing spatial information including data quality, metadata, pricing, licensing, and access. In recent years these principles have been applied, either implicitly or explicitly, and to varying degrees, in many different organisations.
3. A priority of the FSDf and of these guidelines is to:
  - establish a more explicit framework and program for the implementation of custodianship for spatial information, and
  - help extend the custodial principles to the management of a broader range of spatial datasets, not only in the government sector but also in the private sector and academia.

#### What is Custodianship?

4. Custodianship of spatial information is the act of ensuring appropriate care in the collection, storage and maintenance of the information.
5. Custodianship is not synonymous with ownership. The differences between custodianship and ownership are significant and will be different within each sector – government, industry and academia. Within government, for example, the owner of a Department's spatial information is the Crown. Government Departments have custodial responsibilities on behalf of all stakeholders for the spatial data and information that those Departments collect, contract to have collected or are licensed to use.

6. Within government, the concept of custodianship has meaning at the Federal, State and local levels. It also has meaning within Departments and other agencies, and can be applied beyond government to other organisations.
7. At the national level, the definition of a custodian is as follows:

*A custodian of a dataset, or a component of that dataset, is an agency or other organisation having the responsibility to ensure that a dataset is collected and maintained according to specifications and priorities determined by consultation with the user community, and made available to the community under conditions and in a format that conform with standards and policies established for the national spatial data infrastructure*

8. Thus, in accordance with this definition, the concept of custodianship assigns to an organisation certain rights and responsibilities associated with the management of spatial information.

## The Need for Custodianship

9. Spatial information is a valuable resource and a major community asset. Spatial information plays a crucial role in achieving the objectives of government and other business programs. Many businesses and other organisations depend on particular spatial information being available, accessible, accurate, complete, current and consistent.
10. Spatial information can be used for an increasing range of decision making and other purposes. Different users could be left to collect spatial data in their own way and to meet their own needs, but this can lead to costly duplication of data and data systems, and to an associated inconsistency between data sources. It can also result in data that cannot be integrated with other data to produce value-added products. Given appropriate planning and coordination, data collected for one purpose can be used for other purposes with significant saving of costs. However, to take full advantage of this principle, the data must be consistent, it must be of an acceptable standard, its existence must be widely known, it must be accessible, and there must be an easily identified, single authoritative source for the data.
11. Custodianship is implicit in many of the information management practices within organisations. However, if the full benefit is to be obtained from an organisation's spatial information, arrangements for custodianship must be made explicit and must be implemented in a consistent manner within and between organisations. A number of separate actions will be required to achieve this, including:
  - Establishment of a framework for implementation of custodianship.
  - Selection a specific organisation to be custodian for a specific dataset and assigning to that organisation the responsibility to be the custodian of the dataset.

- Establishing of appropriate management frameworks for the effective implementation of custodianship within the custodial organisations.
- Implementation of the custodial responsibilities for each dataset.
- Maintenance of a register of custodians and of the datasets for which the custodians are responsible.

12. Each of these actions is outlined in the sections that follow.

## Benefits of Custodianship

13. Custodianship is central to spatial information management because it provides accountability for information products, and identifies authoritative sources that give users a measure of consistency and certainty. In addition, custodianship is also a means of:

- eliminating unnecessary duplication and cost in the collection and maintenance of spatial information products;
- managing information on behalf of others;
- providing a sound spatial information infrastructure;
- assisting the production and management of spatial information products;
- facilitating the collection of information products;
- improving awareness and availability of data;
- identifying single authoritative sources for data; and
- encouraging the extensive and effective use of data resources.

14. Collectively, custodian organisations manage spatial information as trustees in a partnership with national, regional and local providers and users to enable the integration of spatial information for the benefit of the entire community. Consequently, custodian activities, including negotiations with other organisations and users as well as information product development, are able to take place for the betterment not just for any single organisation but for the broader community as well. The overriding philosophy in all these activities should be one of the custodian being a trustee working in partnership with all participants. Custodianship reinforces the concept of one organisation, usually the producer, being ultimately responsible for an information product that others might use. This gives users confidence in the level of integrity, timeliness, precision and completeness of that information product.

## Principles of Custodianship

15. Custodianship assigns to an organisation certain rights and responsibilities for the collection of spatial information and the management of this on behalf of the community. The rights and responsibilities include the right to set conditions and fees

for the use of the information, and responsibilities regarding the maintenance and quality of the information and the provision of metadata. It also ensures accessibility of the information and provides a recognised contact point for the distribution, transfer and sharing of the information.

16. There are advantages in custodianship to be gained by organisations, government, industry and the community generally. Adoption of the principles and practices of custodianship within an organisation provides a means of accountability and reliability of source for designated data sets. There can be increased confidence that, for any particular dataset, the data is from the single authoritative source and that it is accurate, complete, identifiable and accessible. Custodianship also eliminates unnecessary duplication of capturing and maintaining spatial information, which allows funds that would otherwise be spent on data collection to be reallocated to higher priorities. For data users, custodianship lessens the confusion regarding sources of accurate information. Users can also receive more accurate advice on the source, currency, completeness and suitability of the data.
17. The principles of custodianship are described as follows.

### Principle 1 — Trusteeship

***Custodians do not 'own' data but hold it in trusteeship on behalf of the community.***

18. Under this principle, custodian organisations become the trustee not the owner of the datasets that they hold. This results in an emphasis upon cooperation in sharing information amongst organisations rather than competition. This does not mean that the interests of the custodian are subordinate to those of others, but that the custodian is required to consider the interest of all.

### Principle 2 - Standards

***Custodians, in consultation with users, are responsible for defining appropriate standards.***

19. The setting of standards to determine how the information will be collected, described and used is the most important commitment that an organisation makes when agreeing to become a Custodian. Custodians must seek input from users to assist in defining appropriate standards for information in their custody, and propose standards for ratification. These include standards for access, collection, classification, description, accuracy, quality, format and structure of the information.
20. In cases where users require standards that exceed the Custodian's own requirements, the Custodian would not be expected to provide the funds and other resources needed to achieve the higher standards. Opportunities for collaboration and funding from other sources would normally be pursued.



### Principle 3 – Maintenance of data

***Custodian organisations, in consultation with users, must prepare and implement plans for the collection, conversion and maintenance of data.***

21. Dataset maintenance is the process of ensuring that the dataset conforms to its specified standards. In preparing and implementing plans for the collection, conversion and maintenance of data, Custodians must liaise with users and any other affected parties when making any significant information management or dataset changes, so that the impact upon users can be assessed. The custodian organisation is also responsible for negotiating the terms and conditions under which other organisations collect and maintain the spatial information on its behalf.

### Principle 4 – Authoritative source

***The custodian becomes the authoritative source for the dataset in its care.***

22. In acting as the authoritative source, the custodian organisation becomes the preferred supplier of this information. This lessens confusion for users and overcomes the accuracy and reliability problems that may be encountered when supposedly identical information is held separately by several organisations, where several organisations contribute information to a common database, or where information provided by different organisations is combined. By virtue of its development and maintenance plans the custodian is also likely to have more current information than other organisations. As the organisation responsible for setting the standards, the custodian is also in the position of being able to advise the user on the source, currency and completeness of the information.

### Principle 5 - Accountability

***The custodian is accountable for the integrity of the data in its care.***

23. A custodian may delegate any or all of its responsibilities for a fundamental dataset in its care to another organisation. It will, however, still remain accountable for the integrity of the fundamental dataset. The custodian must ensure that through any delegation its full responsibilities can still be met. Where a custodian organisation agrees to another organisation marketing its information, or producing a value-added service or information product, it should draw up a formal agreement with the other organisation to ensure that no loss of data integrity occurs.

### Principle 6 – Data Collection

***Collection or conversion of information can only be justified in terms of a custodian's business needs.***

24. Custodians are not expected to collect or convert information for which they have no business requirement. Collection must be justified in terms of their own needs. These

will generally reflect either the organisation's Government priorities or statutory responsibilities. If other organisations require further information to be collected, they can either;

- wait until the custodian can justify the collection/conversion;
- contribute the required resources to the collection/conversion of the information by the custodian;
- contribute to a submission by the custodian for more funds for the collection/conversion of the required information; or,
- collect/convert it themselves.

25. If an organisation collects or undertakes work on any spatial information which is under the custodianship of another organisation, it must do this according to the custodian's standards and provide the custodian organisation with a copy free of charge and according to an agreed transfer standard. The custodian will then be responsible for future maintenance.

## Principle 7 – Maintain access

***A custodian must maintain access to the datasets in its care at the level agreed with users.***

26. At all times, the custodian must ensure that appropriate information management arrangements are in place to maintain access and sharing of the data according to specifications agreed with users.

## Custodianship Policy

27. A spatial information management framework is based on the application of consistent information management principles across a distributed network of autonomous data custodians operating throughout the whole spatial information community.

28. All spatial data will be managed by custodians according to formal custodianship principles.

29. These goals are expressed in the policy that has been set out in the spatial information management framework:

***Datasets managed by participants in the framework will have designated custodians who will manage them according to the information management principles established by the framework. Custodians will provide the means to make the data discoverable and accessible.***

30. The policy for custodianship is designed to formalise what is, in effect, good practice in data management. The implementation of the policy is covered by the guidelines that follow.

## Document History

31. The original 1998 ANZLIC Guidelines for Custodianship as part of the process for establishing an Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure provided the basis for the first Geospatial Information Custodial Guidelines for Victoria published in 2000. The Victorian guidelines contributed to this process by providing a practical guide for data custodians, including a description of custodial roles and responsibilities.
32. They were used to establish explicit custodial arrangements for a range of datasets in the government sector, including the eight framework datasets that were first identified in the Victorian Geospatial Information Strategy 2000-03. The guidelines were updated in the expanded Policy framework published by the Victorian Spatial Council in 2009.
33. This policy was then drafted largely on the 2009 Victorian Spatial Council document, amended for a national level context.

## The Guidelines

### PART B

Custodianship is implicit in many of the information management practices within organisations. For many datasets, there are already “de facto” custodians that, to a greater or lesser extent, are already managing the datasets in accordance with the custodianship principles and practices described in these Guidelines.

However, if the full benefit is to be obtained from spatial information, arrangements for custodianship must be made explicit and these arrangements must be implemented in a coordinated and consistent manner, not only **between** but also **within** organisations.

To help bring this about, a national Custodianship Program has been established by ANZLIC. One of the main components of the Custodianship Program is the establishment of a national framework for custodianship. The aim of the national framework is to facilitate coordination **between** organisations. Working under the auspices of ANZLIC, the Office of Spatial Policy within the Department of Communication have been allocated specific roles and responsibilities for the national coordination of custodianship that are outlined in the guidelines below.

The guidelines also address the need for coordination **within** participating custodial organisations. The guidelines include suggestions that could be used as the basis for the specification and delegation of custodial roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

## Guidelines for custodianship

### 1 — National framework for custodianship

**ANZLIC will establish and oversee the implementation of a national framework for custodianship of spatial data within the Foundation Spatial Data Framework.**

The ANZLIC Secretariat within the Department of Communications (Communications) will be responsible for implementing the national custodianship framework. Communications will exercise the following specific roles and responsibilities:-

- Promotion of the concept of custodianship and of the Spatial Information Guidelines for Custodianship in particular
- Operation of the national framework for custodianship.
- Design of standard processes, tools and documentation for custodianship.

- Establishment and maintenance of a register of custodians.
- Brokering and negotiation of new custodianship agreements.
- Provision of advice to custodial organisations.
- Oversight, coordination and review of implementation of custodianship.

## 2 — Selection and appointment of custodians

**Communications will establish and implement a process to select and appoint custodians and to formally allocate to that organisation the responsibility for custodianship of specific datasets.**

Selection of the most appropriate organisation to undertake the custodial responsibilities for any particular dataset will need to include the consideration of criteria such as:

- Is the organisation willing and able to accept the responsibilities?
- Does the organisation have statutory responsibility for the capture and maintenance of the data?
- Does the organisation have the greatest business need for the data?
- Does the organisation already maintain the data?
- Is the organisation the best able to capture and/or maintain the data?
- Is the organisation well placed to obtain the resources needed for the collection and maintenance of the data?
- Does the organisation have the highest quality standards for the data?

In some cases, particularly when the dataset is complex and the data is used by several different organisations, it may be appropriate for the custodian to establish an arrangement where the custodial responsibilities are shared. For example, while still retaining the lead custodial role and overall responsibility, the custodial organisation could reach an agreement with other organisations for them to take subsidiary responsibility for particular components of the dataset. Once the custodial organisation has been selected, the appointment as custodian will need to be formally ratified. This will normally be done by means of an Agreement (or other appropriate instrument) negotiated between the body with lead responsibility for the management of spatial information and the head of the organisation selected as custodian. A sample of a Custodianship Agreement is given in Annex A.

## 3 — Management framework for custodianship within custodial organisations

**Custodians will establish a suitable management framework within their organisations to facilitate the effective implementation of custodial roles and responsibilities within the custodial organisation.**

Once an organisation has agreed to accept the responsibility for custodianship of particular data, the responsibility and accountability for the custodianship will rest with the head of that organisation. Within the organisation, the various custodial roles and responsibilities will need to be explicitly defined and documented, and then be formally delegated to the most appropriate group or individual. The key “players” will need to be adequately briefed and resourced to perform the roles allocated to them. The responsibilities associated with each of these roles will need to be defined and agreed. The issue of coordination of custodianship within the organisation will need to be addressed. The extent of coordination required will vary from organisation to organisation, but the work could include

- Documentation of the arrangements for custodianship within the organisation, including descriptions of a management framework for the effective implementation of custodianship within the organisation, custodial roles and responsibilities, standard processes and documentation
- Promotion of custodianship within the organisation
- Advice to participants within the organisation
- Negotiating custodianship agreements within the organisation
- Oversight, coordination and review of implementation of custodianship within the organisation

#### **4 — Implementation of custodial responsibilities for specific datasets**

**The custodial organisation will implement the custodial responsibilities for each dataset, taking into account not only the needs of the users of the data but also the significance of the dataset.**

In implementing their custodial responsibilities for a particular dataset, the custodial organisation will need to establish and maintain an appropriate mechanism to determine the needs of the data users both within the custodial organisation and beyond. The custodial organisation will also need to ensure that the specific custodial roles are delegated to appropriate staff, and that appropriate management and resources are provided.

The exercise of the custodial responsibilities will need to take into account the needs of data users and will include work in the following categories:

- preparation and maintenance of a data product specification or equivalent descriptive documentation of the dataset
- preparation and maintenance of metadata
- assessment of data quality and development of quality standards in consultation with users of the data

- setting user fees and licensing arrangements
- establishing appropriate arrangements for access to the dataset

The other Spatial Information Guidelines should be used as a resource to assist with documentation, metadata, data quality, pricing and other aspects of this work. For any particular dataset, the amount of effort required to exercise the custodial responsibilities will vary according to the significance of the dataset. While the general thrust of the requirements for custodianship will be the same for all datasets, some aspects of the detail may be modified to an extent determined by the significance of the particular dataset. Communications will provide advice to custodians in this regard.

## 5 — Register of custodians

**Communications will maintain and provide access to a register of custodians and of the datasets for which the custodians are responsible.**

The data for the register of custodians will be drawn from the information contained in the metadata records contained in the Australian Spatial Data Directory (or its replacement). The register of custodians and the information within it will be fully accessible and freely available.

### Annexes:

- A. Template for a Custodial Arrangement



## Annex A - Template for a Custodial Arrangement

### CUSTODIANSHIP AGREEMENT [INSERT NAME OF DATASET TYPE]

This Agreement is made between the [Insert position and department name, e.g. Secretary, Department of Communications (the body responsible for the implementation of the ANZLIC Spatial Information Management Framework)] and the [Insert position and name of department, e.g. Secretary, Department of Defence (the Custodian).]

The Agreement is made in the context of the Framework and the associated ANZLIC Spatial Information Custodianship Guidelines. The Agreement relates to the custodianship of the dataset/s set out in the attached Schedule/s.

By virtue of this Agreement, the Custodian agrees to accept the custodial responsibilities outlined in the attached Schedule/s.

The Agreement will be reviewed at the end of a period of two years from the date of signing, or sooner if required by either party.

**Custodianship allocated by:**

.....  
[Insert position]  
[Insert department]  
Date: .....

**Custodianship accepted by:**

.....  
[Insert position]  
[Insert department]  
Date: .....



**DRAFT SCHEDULE**

<b>DATASET NAME:</b>	
<b>DATASET DESCRIPTION:</b>	
<b>CUSTODIAN:</b>	
<b>CUSTODIAN CONTACT:</b>	
<b>CUSTODIAL ROLES &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES:</b>	<p>The Custodian is the organisation primarily responsible for the development, storage and maintenance the dataset. The Custodian is responsible for ensuring accuracy, currency, storage, security, and for providing access to and distribution of the data.</p> <p>The Custodian has primary responsibility for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a description of the dataset, its uses and its users;</li> <li>• developing appropriate quality standards, in consultation with the users of the dataset;</li> <li>• developing and maintaining metadata for the dataset;</li> <li>• ensuring that the dataset is maintained in accordance with agreed standards;</li> <li>• determining pricing and licensing conditions;</li> <li>• developing and implementing, in consultation with the users, plans for the maintenance and further development of the dataset;</li> <li>• developing and maintaining arrangements for providing users with appropriate access to the dataset.</li> </ul> <p>In exercising these responsibilities, the Custodian may arrange for other parties to carry out various tasks on the Custodian's behalf. The conditions that apply to this dataset are set out in the relevant Metadata Record.</p>
<b>METADATA RECORD ID</b>	
<b>DATA MAINTENANCE</b>	
<b>DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS CONTACT</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	