



Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 4 Consultation

NGAA Submission

Note: The submission was made via an online questionnaire hosted on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website.

Introduction

1. *Name of respondent?*
Anne Hurni
2. *Select the category that best describes you or the organisation you represent (if applicable)?*
National Growth Areas Alliance is a national peak body and member-based organisation representing local governments in outer metropolitan growth areas.

Using the ASGS - Part 1

3. *What do you use the ASGS for (please select all that apply)?*
 - Accessing Census of Population and Housing data
 - Accessing other social data from the ABS
 - Accessing economic data from the ABS
 - Accessing agricultural data from the ABS
 - Accessing data from other sources
 - Linking data by location
 - Creating custom geographies
 - As a framework for data collection
 - Supporting policy or service delivery
4. *How often do you use the ASGS or data linked to the ASGS?*
Weekly
5. *How is the ASGS used by you and/or your organisation? For example, informing policy formulation; assisting with targeting certain audiences; as an education resource? Please provide details on how you use the ASGS.:*

The National Growth Areas Alliance represents more than five million people living in Australia's fast-growing suburbs, united by the shared experiences of population growth rates at double the national average and long-term under-investment in vital infrastructure.

We advocate to state and federal governments regarding growth area challenges and opportunities. We take an evidence-based approach, with a Policy Platform built on the foundations of our comprehensive research strategy and the Alliance Councils' deep knowledge of their communities.

We also help to develop Alliance Councils' capacity to deliver good growth through best practice case studies, policy discussions and comprehensive networks.

The NGAA relies on the ASGS and ABS data to identify socio-economic trends that inform our policy formulation. Our member Councils rely on the ASGS and ABS data to inform policy, community strategic and land use planning, emergency and resource management, and service delivery. They rely on the ASGS and ABS data for their advocacy to state and federal governments and grant applications.

Using the ASGS - Part 2



6. *Which parts of the ASGS do you use? Select all that apply.*
Mesh Blocks, Statistical Area Level 1, Statistical Area Level 2, Statistical Area Level 3, Statistical Area Level 4, State/Territory, Australia, Greater Capital City Statistical Area, Significant Urban Areas, Indigenous Locations, Indigenous Areas, Indigenous Regions, Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State Range, Section of State, Remoteness Areas, Local Government Areas (ABS Mesh Block approximations), State Electoral Divisions (ABS Mesh Block approximations), Commonwealth Electoral Divisions (ABS Mesh Block approximations), Destination Zones, Postal Areas (ABS Mesh Block approximations), Suburbs and Localities (ABS Mesh Block approximations)
7. *Which part of the ASGS do you use the most?*
Local Government Areas (ABS Mesh Block approximations)
8. *The ASGS is available via multiple channels and in multiple formats. Please select which of the following you use to access the ASGS, and include in the comments any other formats you would like supported.*
Shapefile, Geopackages, ABS Maps, TableBuilder, QuickStats, Community Profiles, Interactive mapping. Also accessed data through third party data compilation platform - Profile .id (informed decisions)

ASGS Main Structure

9. *How suitable or unsuitable is the Main Structure of the ASGS for your needs?*
Suitable
- Please provide details on your views of the Main Structure and, if applicable, any improvements you would like to see implemented.:*
- The main structure allows closer analysis of demographic and socio-economic data at the smaller scale Meshblock and SA1 level. As well as approximations for LGA and Suburb and locality level data.
10. *How suitable or unsuitable is the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA) for your needs?*
Very suitable
- Please provide details on your views of the GCCSAs and, if applicable, any improvements you would like to see implemented.:*
- The Greater Capital Cities cover the areas of greatest interest for our members.
11. *For ASGS Edition 4 (2026), the ABS plans to make minor changes to SA3, SA4 and GCCSAs. The ABS intends to undertake a major review of SA3, SA4 and GCCSAs for ASGS Edition 5 (2031). Please provide details if you have any significant concerns with this approach.:*
- Consistency is important for NGAA members who are located at the periphery of GCCSAs. Major changes may impact monitoring of population growth and change, and how outer ring growth areas are classified, which in turn may impact their eligibility for funding from state and federal grant programs.

Indigenous Structure

12. *How suitable or unsuitable is the Indigenous Structure for your needs?*



Suitable

13. *Are there other geographies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that you would like the ABS to consider for future editions of the ASGS?*

Yes

Please provide details on which geographies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples you would like to have included in the ASGS, and why.:

It would be good to see the ABS work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to consider naming the Indigenous regions, areas and localities with traditional terms for Country, if culturally appropriate. see

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

Non ABS Structures

14. *The ABS plans to remove Tourism Regions from the Non ABS Structure and instead support this geography through the creation of correspondences and allocation files. Do you have any significant concerns with this approach?:*

Tourism is an important part of many local economies, as well as nationally. The removal of tourism regions from the Non-ABS Structure may not have a major impact for local government, if reporting of official statistics is available at scale that is regionally and locally relevant.

15. *The ABS plans to remove Australian Drainage Divisions from the Non ABS Structure and instead support this geography through the creation of correspondences and allocation files. Do you have any significant concerns with this approach?:*

Drainage Divisions are likely to be relevant for local government planning, as well as nationally from a water conservation policy perspective. The removal of Australian Drainage Divisions from the Non-ABS Structure should be retained or, if not, the ABS should ensure reporting of official statistics is easily available at a scale that is regionally and locally relevant.

16. *If Tourism Regions and/or Australian Drainage Divisions were removed from the ASGS, would you like the ABS to consider including other geographies in the Non ABS Structure? Please provide details on which alternative geographies you would like to see included in the ASGS Non ABS Structure.:*

The NGAA would like the ABS to consider developing a Metropolitan Accessibility classification similar to the ARIA + and the Ring classification for 5 largest capital cities in 2021 (infrastructure.gov.au) to differentiate the social and economic variations within GCCSAs.

17. *Are there any other geographies you would like the ABS to support through the provision of correspondence and allocation files? Please provide further details.:*

Geographies related to native vegetation/biodiversity protection, water catchments/supply, agricultural production and natural hazards prone areas (bushfire and flooding) would be helpful for local governments in outer ring areas if they were supported, these are the areas where changes to these geographies is happening rapidly and should be able to be monitored easily at the local and regional scale.

Remoteness Structure

18. *How suitable or unsuitable are the existing five categories of Remoteness Areas across Australia for the release of statistics?*



Suitable

Please provide further details regarding your views on the five classes of Remoteness Areas within the Remoteness Structure.:

Remoteness structure is helpful for areas outside major cities. The NGAA would like to see a metropolitan accessibility classification developed for areas within major cities/GCCSA similar to the Ring Classification used by BITRE and BCARR (see <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/bcarr-city-rings-placemat.pdf>).

19. *For ASGS Edition 4 the ABS is planning to design the Remoteness Structure as it has done for previous editions of the ASGS. However, the data sources used to create the Remoteness Structure may not be available for ASGS Edition 5 and beyond. The ABS is therefore planning to revise the Remoteness Structure for ASGS Edition 5. Please provide details if you have any significant concerns with this approach and, if applicable, any improvements you would like to see implemented.:* The ASGS Ed 5 Classification on accessibility and remoteness should seek to apply average remoteness score to Meshblocks to better align them to the main ASGS Structure. Classifications by remoteness could also be better integrated with sections of state structure and applied to labelling of Urban centres and localities - for example to differentiate 'remote bounded localities' from 'inner regional bounded localities'. The NGAA would also like to see an accessibility classification applied within major cities to capture differences in service accessibility within metropolitan areas (as noted above). Urban Centres and Localities, Section of State and Significant Urban Areas
20. *Please provide details if you have any significant concerns with the ABS adopting the new UCL design criteria for ASGS Edition 4.*
New UCL Criteria Concerns:

The NGAA supports the use of Meshblocks to create UCLs. However, the NGAA has some concerns with the current application of the Rural Residential classification because a large area of the Rural Residential classification in each state applies to the periphery of the significant urban area of Greater Capital Cities and lie within NGAA council boundaries. The NGAA recommends that the ABS refine this classification so that it can be used to monitor changes to residential development at the local scale, where change has a more significant impact on communities, as outlined below:

- The use of the term Rural Residential may be confused with specific land use patterns in some states, such as NSW where the term was until recently used for Land Use zoning. In some cases, these low-density settlements proposed in the experimental boundaries include areas of agricultural primary production and could be considered as 'small lots' for farming, (so not purely 'residential') while in other regions, they are considered 'large lots' for residential housing only (so not really 'rural').
 - The NGAA prefers the use of the term 'Low-density settlement' LDS (or similar description) for the Rural Residential category.
- The low-density settlements in outer metropolitan areas are qualitatively different from those low-density settlements that have been identified in other areas of each



state, some of which are highly isolated while others are near localities or other urban centres. Under the proposed classification, the main defining criteria for a Rural Residential mesh block is that it has " a population density of being greater than or equal to 25 persons per km²" and is not included as an Urban Centre or Locality.

- The NGAA recommends that there be further differentiation of low-density settlements, proposed as Rural Residential, that relate to their location relative to major urban centres, other urban centres and regional localities.
- The proposed Rural Residential category forms one area of discontinuous geographic units in each State and Territory. Although users will have the ability to cross-classify census data on Rural Residential with other ASGS regions, it will not be easy for NGAA councils to differentiate populations which are within their jurisdiction from the rest of the population to be classified as Rural Residential in the State or Territory. For example, Serpentine, WA is classified as an Other Urban Centre with a local population of 1,412 people, while its surrounding areas to be classified as Rural and Residential areas have the State-based population of 102,936 people. Greater differentiation at the local level in the reporting of population would be more helpful for planning purposes.
- Rural Residential areas are not to be separately identified or named within each State or Territory. However, as noted in the criteria these areas 'typically utilise the services and infrastructure provided by more densely settled nearby UCLs'. It makes sense to identify those low-density settlements that are adjoining or nearby to a UCL to be separately and uniquely identified and named with them.
 - To address these concerns, the NGAA recommends that
 - (i) the ABS use finer grained classifications for Rural Residential areas that relate these low-density settlements to their corresponding Section of State classification. This can be built into the existing structure. For example, where the proposed Rural Residential mesh blocks are contiguous with Major Urban Centres they are named as such Major Urban - LDS (low density settlement), to be distinguished from Other Urban - LDS; Bounded Locality - LDS; Isolated LDS, and Remainder of State/Territory.
 - (ii) Where UCLs are named, then any contiguous or nearby LDS mesh block is also labeled with the same name but with an LDS identifier. For example, Jarrahdale, WA is a bounded locality, its surrounding low-density areas could be named Jarrahdale - Bounded Locality - LDS.
 - (iii) after refining the proposed Rural Residential category into appropriate locational sub-categories, it is further recommended that Census data and statistics for low density settlements be made available for these more localised areas. In this way, it is easier for local government to monitor change in population and settlement, and for State or Territory governments to readily understand changes in settlement patterns across different Sections the state.

Alignment

21. Do you have any specific concerns about ASGS alignment to State and Territory cadastres that you would like to highlight?



Cadastral Concerns: The NGAA does not have any specific concerns about ASGS alignment to State and Territory cadastral systems at this point.

Concluding Questions

22. Do you have any other feedback relating to the ASGS that you would like to provide?

Other Feedback or Comments:

The NGAA congratulates the ABS on their efforts to be continuously improving its ASGS, data collection and reporting and their ongoing public engagement.

The NGAA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the ASGS Edition 4 Consultation. With further refinement the development of the ASGS will provide valuable information for our council members to help them manage the rapid population growth and change being experienced by their communities.

We would be pleased to discuss the NGAA response with the ABS and can be contacted by email below.