



Information Matching Bulletin

News from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner – June 2010

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Two overseas data matching reports have been released recently. We have summarised these below and provide links for those of you who would like to take a closer look.

Data Matching Best Practice Guidelines

In 2009, the Australian Attorney-General's Department published their best practice guidelines for data matching under the banner 'improving the integrity of identity data'.

The guide was developed with the assistance of the Commonwealth Data Matching Working Group (DMWG), and is largely based on the expertise of the members in the group as experienced data matching practitioners within the (Australian) government.

The guidance material, comprising 17 data matching principles set out under six categories, is a useful introduction to the intricacies of data matching. It covers aspects such as data transfer, validation processes, data quality, matching algorithms and result scoring.

An interesting and important point put forward is that no single agency is the authoritative source for information about data matching, and that agency isolation and a lack of opportunity for any 'cross-pollination' of ideas can result in a need to 'reinvent the wheel'. The DMWG suggest that agencies well practised in data matching can still benefit from the experience of others as well as provide benefits to others by sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The guide does not address the various legal and policy requirements that govern data matching activities.

The guidelines can be accessed from <http://www.ag.gov.au/Identitysecurity> under the sub heading 'Improving the Integrity of Identity Data - Data Matching Better Practice Guidelines'.

UK National Fraud Initiative Data Matching Report

The UK Audit Commission is a government-funded independent watchdog responsible for ensuring that public money is spent wisely on local services. The Audit Commission runs the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), which matches data within and between organisations to help detect fraud, overpayments and errors. The NFI runs within a legal framework, including the Data Protection Act 1998.

Since 1996, the Audit Commission has run the NFI every two years. The latest NFI exercise started in October 2008 with match results investigated during 2009 and early 2010. The NFI 2008/09 report, published in May 2010, explains that around 8000 datasets were matched from 1,300 organisations, including almost 100 from the private sector.

The matching process produced 3.5 million potential hits of which 5 percent were considered urgent as they showed a high risk of fraud. The three areas where most overpayments were identified related to housing benefits, council tax single person discounts, and overpayment of pensions where pensioners had died.

The latest Audit Commission NFI report can be accessed using the following link:
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nfi/reports/pages/default.aspx>

Centrelink and MSD Operate Similar Income Programmes

Centrelink is the Australian government agency responsible for delivering income support payments to beneficiaries and students much like MSD does in New Zealand under the 'Work and Income' and 'Studylink' brands. Centrelink, like MSD, uses data matching as a tool to detect fraud and ensure that individuals receive their correct income support entitlements.

The following information has been summarised from the October 2009 report titled 'Data-matching Program – Report on Progress 2004-2007' published online by Centrelink at <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/publications/co050.htm>. The report also has detailed statistics on the results achieved by the programme.

The *Data-matching Programme (Assistance and Tax) Act 1990* provided authority for the establishment of a virtual Data Matching Agency (DMA) within Centrelink. The DMA matches data supplied by the source agencies, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), and the 'Assistance Agencies', namely Centrelink and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. In New Zealand, the equivalent matching process is undertaken between MSD and Inland Revenue.

Both Centrelink and MSD operate under a set of guidelines or statutory rules to ensure fair information handling practices take place. These include the requirement to verify information matching results, initiate action within certain timeframes, and provide individuals with a written notice and an opportunity (notice period) to challenge the results of a match before the action is carried out.

Also common to both Centrelink and MSD operations is the regulatory oversight of a Privacy Commissioner. In Australia, the Privacy Commissioner's staff undertake audits on Centrelink offices and report back to them on good practice or areas of concern. In New Zealand, the Privacy Commissioner has produced an audit pack which sets out the minimum auditing requirements that agencies must complete to satisfy our reporting requirements.

End of reporting year fast approaching

The 2009/10 reporting year ends on June 30. Those of you who have responsibility for reporting data matching activity to this Office, now is an ideal time to start preparing! We ask that final reporting for 2009/10 be provided by 18 August 2010. Please contact Colin or Neil (contact details below) as soon as possible if reporting is expected to be past this date.

Information matching workshops

The half day workshops are designed to give some practical background knowledge about the Privacy Act along with more detailed information about preparing an Information Matching Privacy Impact Assessment. The cost is \$170 (inc GST).

The timing of the next workshop is dependent on having enough participants registered. To register interest in attending this workshop, contact Sharon Newton on (04) 4747590 or by email to sharon.newton@privacy.org.nz.

Publications

There are a number of other publications and reports available from the Privacy Commissioner that may be of interest to those involved in information matching. These are listed on the Privacy Commissioner's website, <http://www.privacy.org.nz/data-matching-introduction/>

Contacts

Wellington

109-111 Featherston Street
gen-i Tower, 4th Floor
PO Box 10-094
Wellington, New Zealand
Telephone: 64-4-474 7590

Neil Sanson

Data Matching Compliance Adviser
Direct Line: 64-4-474 7592

Rosie Byford

Team Leader, Policy and Technology
Direct Line: 64-4-494 7082

Colin Trotter

Senior Adviser, Data Matching Compliance
Direct Line: 64-4-494 7087

You can contact us by email. Our standard email format is first name.surname@privacy.org.nz