

A legislative framework for spatial information

The Victorian Spatial Council believes that legislation is needed to tackle the lack of a consistent, up-to-date, overarching management framework for the supply, management, and delivery of spatial information in Victoria.

Why do we need reform?

There have been significant advances in Victoria in the management and delivery of spatial information, based heavily on cooperation particularly between State and Local Government. However, the Victorian Spatial Council is of the view that there is a need to address the coordination and integration of the whole spatial information environment, to simplify and streamline the provision and management of spatial information and ensure it is accessible and useable.

Among the critical issues are:

- A lack of coordination in developing spatial information resources, resulting in duplication and inconsistencies in the way data is held, managed and made available.
- Inconsistent recognition of the value of formal information management because information is often created as a by-product of an administrative activity.
- agencies responsible for the creation of critical spatial information not being required to report new or changed information for addition to Victoria's framework spatial data. (For example, Local Government has a legislative responsibility to create an address, but no requirement to maintain an authoritative record of it, or to notify government of changes or corrections.)
- Open data initiatives and the increasing demand for it to be available, accessible and accurate.
- A lack of standardisation and consistency of data.
- Demarcation of roles between state and local government agencies.
- A lack of a clear 'supply chain' for spatial information.
- Duplication of effort, which means that resources are being diverted to unnecessary tasks.
- Multiple and inconsistent definitions of terms.

The Council believes that these issues can be addressed through a new authorising environment that formalises roles and responsibilities for managing spatial information, defines a set of fundamental or core information, and sets out requirements for exchanging and making available spatial information.

Why legislation?

This authorising environment should encompass a new framework of rules relating to the creation, provision, management and use of spatial information in Victoria. This framework should include legislative change, that incorporates a regulations-making power, and is supported by guidance materials that help participants comply with their requirements.

Legislation is the best means for achieving this because it provides certainty about expectations, clear principles against which objectives can be measured, and consistency in approach among all stakeholders.

What kind of legislation?

A new **Spatial Information Act** should be enacted to establish the principles and framework for managing spatial information.

Legislative reform should involve a new Act rather than solely seek to amend existing Acts, many of which are interdependent in complex ways.

The legislation should be primarily concerned with the collection, management and distribution of the 'data' associated with spatial information by custodians across all sectors, including state and local government and the private sector.

The Council favours a principles based approach to legislation, as it will focus on outcomes and give greater flexibility and durability to the rules that will be developed.

Such legislation should provide for:

- An Information Management Framework (see also VSC Position Paper No.1)
- Defining Victoria's core spatial information and the principles for its management, and
- Protocols for exchanging spatial information and making it available

The new Act should be established in concert with amendments to existing legislation to ensure it accords with the new framework.

The new legislation should:

- be primarily principles-based
- play an 'enabling' role for the creation and management of spatial information
- promote the sharing of spatial information
- set a framework for spatial information standards and guidelines, and for consistency and inter-operability between datasets
- clarify and standardise terminology
- clarify roles and responsibilities, and reduce overlap
- establish powers to make regulations and issue guidelines (for example, regulations would specify core datasets)
- provide a formal basis for nominating custodians of spatial information datasets, and for specifying and performing custodianship roles

Further reading:

Basic Act on the Advancement of Utilizing Geospatial information, Japan

<http://www.gsi.go.jp/kokusaikoryu/kokusaikoryu-e30004.html>

Act No. 54 of 2003: Spatial Data Infrastructure Act, 2003, South Africa,

<http://www.sasdi.gov.za/About/SDI%20Act.aspx>

S.740 - Geospatial Data Act of 2015, United States

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/740/text>

Victorian Spatial Council, *An Information Management Framework for Victoria*, Position Paper No.1



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