

Logan uses government data to transform kindergarten



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Government data is transforming the lagging kindergarten system in Queensland's Logan City, sparking calls for the release of more top-level data to help regional communities manage social issues and effectively direct funding.

Over the past 12 months, Logan Together collated government data ranging from underperforming childcare centres to prohibitive transport routes.

That information was then mapped over the LGA, giving community-led organisations concrete insight into how they can re-design programs and systems to boost everything from infant mortality rates to primary school readiness.



Dr Michelle Lucas says government data gives communities the power to make practical and powerful decisions to help people. **Peter Wallis**

“We could suddenly see where the real problems were, where the money was being allocated, and obstacles for families,” Dr Michelle Lucas, executive director of community-led group Logan Together, said.

“Because Logan’s children certainly weren’t thriving, there was a big community push to get our hands on any available data and putting that all together has meant we are making a real practical difference.”

The new Albanese government has indicated it will significantly boost the use of data [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/data-to-drive-design-and-control-of-social-programs-20220604-p5ar3v>] to design and track social policy programs.

The new head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Glyn Davis, is also pushing strongly for much greater use of data evidence to design government programs and to evaluate which measures are effective.

But Kristi Mansfield, founder of Seer, the data platform that underpins much of Logan’s data transformation [<https://www.afr.com/technology/how-government-data-is-helping-to-save-a-rural-town-20211207-p59fhm>], says access to government data is still very difficult.

As it stands, the Data Availability and Transparency Act, which commenced in April this year [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/end-to-multiple-forms-as-tell-us-once-becomes-possible-20220401-p5a9z9>], excludes not-for-profit organisations from accessing the population data that often enables these kinds of transformations.

“This needs to change because not-for-profits are delivering billions of dollars of services on behalf of governments every year,” Ms Mansfield said.

“The federal government needs to loosen the reins more and be willing to share more because communities want to manage for themselves.



Kristi Mansfield, founder and CEO of Seer Data & Analytics. The tech company uses data insights to manage social issues. **James Brickwood**

“There is a much greater sharing policy environment at the state levels, for instance, and a culture of collaboration. This makes a huge difference to practical outcomes for people.”

The Act will be up for review in three years.

Over the last several years there has been an Australia-wide push to secure community-data that Ms Mansfield and operators like Logan’s Dr Lucas say belongs to the people living in that district.

“The essence of the community data sovereignty movement where they want access, ownership and control over their own data is growing fast,” Ms Mansfield says.

“Once people see how quickly they can make better decisions and then measure the effectiveness of the changes, they are very much on board.”

All government data is in aggregate and is not linked to personal data.

While Logan not only boosted the number of children getting to kindergarten and directed funding to where it’s needed most, they also discovered the spots where midwifery services were missing.

Logan Together then set about establishing maternity and child health hubs and beefing up isolated childcare centres with maternity services. Within months of establishing the hubs, infant mortality rate fell from between 1 and 5 per cent to 0.3 per cent.

“It’s not just about physical access to services, it’s about ensuring they’re culturally welcoming and don’t alienate people once they walk in the front door,” Dr Lucas said.



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