



**Australian Government**

# Modernising Business Registry Services

Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. Are the ASIC registers being privatised?

No. In December 2016, the Government decided not to engage a private operator for the ASIC registry services, taking into account the overall financial benefits as well as the costs to Government. The Government is instead developing options to modernise the ASIC and other business registers within government. The reasons for the decision not to privatise the ASIC registry services is available [here](#).

## 2. Why does government want to improve the existing services?

The IT infrastructure underpinning the Australian government registry services needs to be addressed to meet growth in demand for these services now and into the future. This provides an opportunity for the Government to consider how business registry services across government could be improved to better meet the needs of the public, businesses, business intermediaries, researchers, software developers, information brokers, and regulators such as the ATO, ACNC, Austrac, ASIC, and AFSA.

## 3. What improvements are being planned for business registry services?

At this stage, the Government is seeking feedback from the public on the improvements they would like to see. This feedback will be used to identify how government can best deliver modern, cost-effective, secure and reliable registry services. No decisions have yet been made on the way forward. The Government will be consulting with a range of stakeholders in coming months.

For more information see question 13. *How will users of registers be consulted?*

## 4. Which registers are being looked at?

The Government is focused on the core registry services such as the Companies Register and Business Names Register (operated by ASIC), and the Australian Business Register (ABR) hosted within the Australian Taxation Office. Consideration is also being given to the additional 29 smaller ASIC registers that could benefit from modernisation.

## 5. What about other business registers?

The Government recognises there are other Commonwealth-level registers relevant to particular industries, as well as registers at the State and local government levels. However, it is expected, that only the ASIC registers and ABR will be within the initial scope of the current process. This aligns with the Government's [Digital Services Standard](#) which encourages smaller scale service improvements that are delivered earlier and then built upon over time to meet user needs.

## 6. Which agency/ies will be responsible for the business registers?

No decisions have been made around changes to business registers or to governance or management arrangements within government at this stage.

Feedback on how the Government could streamline its registry operation is welcome.

## 7. What does this process mean for ASIC Registry employees?

There will be no adverse impact on employees arising from any improvements made to the business registry services.

## 8. What will this mean for access to business data?

The Australian Government recognises the importance of the business data contained in the ASIC registers and the ABR. Optimising access to public data, while maintaining privacy and security, can improve transparency and accountability, support evidence-based policy and provide a platform for innovation.

Making more government data available is a key commitment of the Government. Open data principles will guide investment and design decisions to ensure that business registry data is appropriately collected, maintained, managed, and “open”, consistent with the Australian Government’s Public Data Policy Statement.

However, it is paramount that information contained in registers which is sensitive, commercially confidential, or restricted due to privacy or security, legislative, or other relevant considerations is securely stored and access is appropriately restricted.

For more information, see question 9. *How will privacy and security be protected?*

## 9. How will privacy and security be protected?

The Government understands that individuals and businesses are concerned about ensuring their data is secure and being used and stored appropriately.

Registry data is currently collected, managed and made public with consideration and appropriate attention to privacy, information security, intellectual property rights and legal concerns and this will continue to be the case under any changes to business register technology and service delivery.

## 10. Will registration costs change?

No decision has been made on any changes to current fee structures.

## 11. Will costs to search and access data be removed?

We invite discussions with stakeholders about fees, including fees for searching the registers to improve access to data and delivery of quality, sustainable services.

## 12. When will changes be made?

No changes have yet been decided. Registers will continue to operate the way they currently do.

The Government is engaging with key stakeholders to understand their needs, any concerns and the opportunities to deliver better services.

The Government will consider any future options for registries' functions and make any further announcements in due course.

## 13. How will users of registers be consulted?

We want to engage users early, and on an ongoing basis, to inform the development of the proposed registry improvements to ensure they meet the needs of users and government.

The Government has released a discussion paper to provide information to stakeholders and welcomes submissions from interested parties.

Submissions can be made via [Citizen Space](#) on the Treasury website.

The Government will also approach key stakeholders, including industry peak bodies, business intermediaries, academics, software developers, Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, and other users of registry services, to participate in a series of roundtables and user research activities. This will help to inform the options for modernising the business registers.

## 14. Will state and territory governments be involved?

The Government will consult with State and Territory Governments as part of the process to understand their interactions with Commonwealth business registers, recent or proposed changes to State-based registers, and any further opportunities there might be to work more collaboratively. State and Territory Governments will also be consulted on any proposed legislative changes that are required to modernise the registries in line with the Government's decisions.

It is expected, however, that only the ASIC registers and ABR will be within the scope of the current process.

## 15. Will there be changes to the law?

Currently some areas of legislation are worded in an outdated way that, for example, requires hard copy documents to be used even where new technological solutions can provide a better experience for the registry users.

The Government may bring forward some proposed changes to relevant legislation to enable more flexibility to allow modern technology and processes to be considered.