

## Richard Alldritt – DUG Conference 2008 – Panel Session

Subtext or conclusion – there are existing admin sources in government which could be, but are not being, adequately exploited to meet the needs of users of statistics – and so deliver added public value.

I believe this to be true, do you(?), although not seen as much hard documentary evidence as I would like.

If it is true we need to ask why and get the evidence in a form to drive things. Why are those who control the admin data not making them available? And why are those who might create the statistical product not able, or not willing, to force the issue?

The SRS Act does something to reduce the statutory obstacles but there are probably other obstacles –

- The bodies that control admin data do not like to let any of it out; whether disclosive or not. Recent scandals will have made that worse. They will parade their objections as ethical (not); as respect for the will of Parliament (could be); or an obligation to the citizen (which if it is, it should not be).
- The costs of turning admin data into stats are considerable, particularly the first time it is done. Are the funders being persuaded?
- The user voice may not be loud enough or clear enough?

The last point is almost a universal truth on statistical issues. Except where the user voice is inside government, it is often hard to hear, poorly documented.

Need to fix this problem before we can fix the others. We must present the funding bodies with the evidence in persuasive form. We then need to hit the legal, and supposedly moral, objections with evidence and resources.

We haven't got this right yet. My proposal is that we somehow need to boost the user voice – and I have a few ideas of what the SA might do...