

## **TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST**

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WORK WITH PURPOSE 2025: Mapping the nation: The Digital Atlas of Australia

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**David Pembroke:**

Hello everyone and welcome once again to Work with Purpose, a podcast about the Australian public sector and how it serves the Australian people. My name is David Pembroke. Thanks for joining me.

As we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, and pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging, and acknowledge the ongoing contribution they make to the life of our city and this region. I'd also like to acknowledge the custodians of all the lands from where anybody listening to this podcast today is joining us from.

Today we are back with the second of our APS Reform in Action series, which is being delivered in partnership with our good friends at the Australian Public Service Commission. In this series, we are exploring the projects, the programs, and the strategies that the APS is implementing to strengthen the capability of the service. And today we're going to discuss the Digital Atlas of Australia.

Now, the Atlas is a service wide initiative led by the clever people at Geoscience Australia. What the Atlas does is to provide interactive maps that include population, socio-economic, and income support data to support better informed place based policy. It's a complex project, highly dependent on effective collaboration, and it showcases the importance of data and evidence based decision-making and the power of place based solutions to improve things like social services, emergency management and resource management.

Today I'm joined in the studio by two of the leaders of this excellent project. Lisa Bush is the head of Geoscience Australia's National Location Information branch, which is leading the government's efforts to enhance our nation's geospatial capabilities and projects like the Digital Atlas of Australia. While Lisa's formal academic qualifications are in geographic information systems and environment management, her job really focuses much more on

collaboration among government, industry and academic partners in the geospatial sector, working every day to align and to integrate the many geospatial initiatives across the many diverse sectors in pursuit of a single vision for the future. Lisa, welcome to the program.

**Lisa Bush:**

Thank you very much for having me.

**David Pembroke:**

Maree Wilson is the head of the Place and Communities Division at Geoscience Australia, where she leads GA's initiatives on community safety, foundational spatial information, seabed geography and geology. Maree's geospatial career has spanned many organisations including the Department of Defence, Geoscience Australia, and Esri Australia. Maree is the current chair of ANSLIC, the Spatial Information Council Chair of the Australian Government Location Interdepartmental Committee and chair of the University of Southern Queensland Surveying GIS Advisory Committee. Maree, welcome to you.

**Maree Wilson:**

Thank you David. Great to be here.

**David Pembroke:**

So Maree and Lisa, can we just set the table for this chat and perhaps Maree, to you first, what is geospatial data and why is it important for government? And indeed why is it important for the Australian people?

**Maree Wilson:**

To go back to the definition, if you like, of geospatial. Spatial is how things relate to each other and geo means how it relates to the earth. So we're really looking at data that's referenced to a place on the earth.

The really cool thing about geospatial data is that we can tie a lot of information about a location to so much other data. There is so much data out there that's collected by government, that's maintained by government that has some sort of location reference in it. So it might be an address, it might be a building location, it might be an agricultural field, for example.

Geospatial data and information underpins just about everything that we do, and we can analyse it in time and space to see trends over time to build bigger pictures around what kind of services that the government, for example, is delivering to the community.

The reason that it's so important for government is that things like the Digital Atlas can bring all of that disparate data together based on that location or that place. There's a lot of data out there that's created as geospatial data, it starts its life as geospatial data starting with that location point. But there's also a lot of data out there that doesn't start its life as that. It starts as information maybe about a person or something, but it actually does relate back to place. So this connective tissue that geospatial data can bring to government is why it's so very important, not only to us to deliver the services to the community, but it's also very important to the community to understand the kinds of services they can get, what's happening in their community and maybe what will happen in the future in their community.

**David Pembroke:**

So in terms then of geospatial data that you collect and pull together, does it cover the whole of Australia? Every last square mile of the country?

**Maree Wilson:**

Yes. In some point, yes. Certainly for Geoscience Australia, we are the national mapping organisation for the country so we do some level of data over every place, not only on the terrestrial side of Australia, but also into the seas as well, including our offshore territories and the Australian Antarctic Territory. So yes, we do map it all.

The level of mapping varies, it's what we call the resolution, so how coarse it is. We work very closely with the states and territories as well because they also have mapping responsibilities in their jurisdictions to collect that data as well. So we work together to make sure that we're continually updating and building that mapping picture of the country.

**David Pembroke:**

In terms then of what Australia has, in terms of its geospatial data, how sophisticated and how comprehensive is the data that government policy decision makers have in order to inform their decisions?

**Maree Wilson:**

I'd say it's a little bit variable. In some cases it's really quite advanced. In other cases, maybe the investment isn't keeping up with the actual change on the ground. So some data is a little old, in some other areas that recognition of geospatial data as being something that they're maintaining is not even there. So the sophistication across government is incredibly variable and certainly something that Lisa and her team are working to try and uplift that capability and the awareness across government.

**David Pembroke:**

So Lisa, to you, there's the issue of openness and accessibility so people can get this data, whichever form it's in, to be able to help inform decision-makers. Why is it so important that it be open and that it be in a form that is accessible so people can use it to make better decisions?

**Lisa Bush:**

I think you've kind of gone two separate parts of your question there. There's a part about being open and ability to share it, but there's also a piece about accessibility. From a Digital Atlas of Australia perspective we're really focused on making sure we apply those Q-FAIR principles. Making sure we've got the highest quality of data and we understand the quality in the data, that it's findable, it's accessible, it's interoperable and it's reusable.

To go back to the first part about open is, as a nation, but also as a federal government and across all levels of our society we want to make more informed data driven decisions. And the way to do that is to provide trusted quality data accessible to all those different sectors so that you can make better policy decisions in federal government, so you understand the interactions with multiple levels of government, so that emergency managers have the same foundation data. I guess it's all about enabling better data driven decision-making across multiple different sectors. And the way to do that is to have quality trusted data.

**David Pembroke:**

It sounds technical, it sounds complex, sounds important, so what are the challenges in getting it right, in pulling it together?

**Lisa Bush:**

Lots. What I might focus on, I guess, is Digital Atlas itself as a capability, noting that data really is the lifeblood of Digital Atlas. But if I look on Digital Atlas itself, it is, as Maree talked about before, it is that connective tissue. It's built, it's created on something called integrated geospatial infrastructure. And basically it's providing a digital ecosystem to be able to connect, share, and integrate national data or data of national significance.

What that means in real terms is there's no giant bucket of data sitting anywhere. We're providing the digital infrastructure to be able to connect, share, and integrate, but the responsibility of creating that data and maintaining that data and sharing that data lies with the data custodian. And that's really game-changing in how we connect and share our data. Generally it's sitting in silos, particularly across federal government. Sitting in silos, if you can find it in the first place, then how do you actually connect it and use it.

In addition, Digital Atlas Australia is not only connecting all those quality trusted data sets, but it's also providing a range of tools and accessibility for geospatial capabilities that lots of users just don't have access to. Traditionally, in federal government, but in other areas as well, you need to be able to do some basic mapping. You need to find a geospatial technician somewhere in the bowels of your organisation somewhere, convince them of the work that they need to do is really, really important, and you might wait months to get an outcome. Whereas, you've got an application with numerous trusted data sets in there, you've got build them up functionality sitting in there, you've got analytics sitting in there and you're providing that at the fingertips of a whole range of different users, most of which will have no geospatial knowledge at all. And it means you can get to products and decision-making in minutes rather than months. And I guess that's one of the great joys of Digital Atlas of Australia.

**David Pembroke:**

Is it available to just federal government employees? Or a state government can use it, local government can use it?

**Lisa Bush:**

There's two digital interfaces of the Digital Atlas of Australia. There's Digital Atlas for everyone or Digital Atlas Public. So if any of your listeners go on Google-

**David Pembroke:**

Anyone?

**Lisa Bush:**

... anyone can access, anywhere. And there is also a government only interface of the Digital Atlas or information domain, if you will, and that is available. We now have over 1000 users across multiple levels of government, noting that we only went live May last year. We've had a massive uptake across in the first instance federal government, but we've been able to build that out to multiple levels of governments across the states and territories as well. So accessible for anyone everywhere, Digital Atlas Public, and accessible for government users with a greater level of functionality and data in Digital Atlas for Government.

**David Pembroke:**

What's the history of the project? When did it start? When was the idea there that this was something that was needed to be done, and how long did it take to build?

**Lisa Bush:**

Some excellent questions. I think there's been recognition for a while that there is a need to be able to connect trusted data across national data, I guess. But also from the geospatial community, we intimately understand the power of geospatially enabling data that's not traditionally seen as geospatial. Our population information, where we spend our money, our funding lines, a whole range of environmental factors. There's a whole range of different things that is not traditionally seen as geospatial data, but certainly the geospatial professionals for quite some time being advocating at multiple levels Australia and internationally that hey, this is the secret of tying all this different information together, is geospatially enabling it and connecting it.

It'll be four years ago now, some funding was identified from federal government to be able to establish the Digital Atlas of Australia. We are now, we're delivering, it's our third, or we're now into the fourth year, sorry, of Digital Atlas. It took a year and a half to work out, well, what are we actually creating? And to get the foundations into play, so to speak. We then had a series of milestone deliveries in rapid succession and helped me go grey earlier than desired, but released a beta version of both Digital Atlas for Government and Digital Atlas for Public. And to give you an idea for Digital Atlas for Government, we had 10 users and 10 data sets. And that's where we started, demonstrate the art of the possible, make sure that we work out

the bugs and then... Bugs is not the right word, work out the teething problems. And then-

**David Pembroke:** Experience, I suppose, is trying to understand-

**Lisa Bush:** Well, also it's cutting edge technology. There is no national example of integrated geospatial infrastructure anywhere in the world.

**David Pembroke:** Oh, we're first.

**Lisa Bush:** We are world leading.

**Maree Wilson:** World leading, and that's a really exciting thing. The integrated geospatial infrastructure comes out of the UN, so the global group of experts on geospatial information management, which I sit on. And yes, we are leading the world in the implementation of this. The idea has been around for a little while, but it's hard, because we're trying to, as Lisa said, keep the data owned and maintained by the custodian that made it.

In the past we've done other programs where we have taken other people's data and then we host it to be the place to bring it together. But the burden on the secondary host, if you like, becomes big because the data's no longer maintained and all of those things. The really cool thing about implementing this UN framework in Australia is we're absolutely demonstrating to the world that it is possible, and we're getting some great benefits across government for the model because it puts the onus back on the maintenance of that data right where it should be, which is the people that own it.

**David Pembroke:** So in terms of improving the skills of those people who are the custodians who need to be able to do it, how are you going about that? How are you going about teaching people to use the tool to greatest effect?

**Maree Wilson:** I think from the simplest example of touching the tool and what buttons do I press, Lisa's team have done some amazing work to do some how-to videos around that, but sitting behind that are a lot of standards. We've put a lot of work into understanding what those minimum requirements are for our data custodians so that they can meet them and maintain them, which is not insignificant. I think over time, as we're bringing

new departments on, so great example is Department of Social Services.

Their data was sitting in spreadsheets. They didn't really understand that it was fundamentally geospatial. Lisa mentioned before, grants, data and money that government pays out. Where does it go? Who's it going to? What's the geospatial distribution of that? They didn't really know, they could sort of work it out from their spreadsheet. Now that that data is now being exposed through the Digital Atlas, that's been a capability uplift within DSS for their staff to understand what that means, how to translate that, but also then the power of it as well. How that data interacts with say, the Bureau of Statistics population data for example. So say the uplift in capability and learning is happening across many levels, across many level organisations and we're trying to continue to make that learning available at every level it needs to be.

**David Pembroke:**

Is it just government data or are you getting access to say the big data sets out of the banks and out of the big supermarkets and richer, more widespread data, which could obviously feed into better fidelity around what you're looking at?

**Lisa Bush**

I'll take that question, but before I do, I'm just going to go back to Maree's piece there.

**David Pembroke:**

Sure.

**Lisa Bush:**

That in terms of working with stakeholders, both as a producer of data and some people, some organisations or areas that we're working with have quite developed in that and then other areas aren't. So it's different for each of the different relationships that we have, but it's also of users of the capability.

And again, we often have some really high end users that are geospatial professionals, but the majority of our users, whether they're in government or whether they're mom and dad trying to put in a new hockey ground application are not geospatial specialists. And so really looking at how do we understand and meet the needs of those different stakeholders and we can't do it all, so trying to prioritise what's going to give the greatest value for this capability in the near and future.

**David Pembroke:**

And before we do get to the data question, I'm interested in that in terms of how sophisticated is it now and how much more

work do you think needs to be done from a user experience, as you say, from mom and dad at home, looking to see what they need it for all the way through to highly skilled professionals who may be really driving significant output?

**Lisa Bush:**

We've had some excellent feedback with users indicating that the usability and accessibility is so much higher than other capabilities sitting at the national level, but also a whole heap of areas to reduce that barrier of entry even further, to increase the ability to get in there and create your own product, to find data in different ways than we have thought about.

**Maree Wilson:**

We're investigating the use of AI, the plain language searches for example. Because as geospatial professionals, we are used to working with a map in a particular way. How can we open this up so, Dear Digital Atlas, please make me a map of my suburb and have that put in as a plain text language version to get an outcome. So we're investigating all of those things.

Another really neat feature of the Digital Atlas of Australia is our ability to create what we call web apps. Within the whole, you can go directly to a web app, which is curated content for a particular purpose already. Where we know that people, take grants data for example, I want to know where the money's going versus the population. We can and have set up web apps for that. So if that's just your questions, they're ready for you. So you don't have to go find the population data or the grants data, it's curated there ready for you. As we continue to grow, we'll get more of those web apps that are meeting some of those regular queries that we're getting from either government or the public.

**David Pembroke:**

Just back to the question then around the private sector data, the financial data, the supermarket consumption data, do you have access to that and is that incorporated into the Atlas or is that part of the roadmap?

**Lisa Bush:**

There's a few different components of that. Upfront, I'll say that we, Maree talked about some of the data standards and minimum standard of data to go into the Digital Atlas. So that often actually excludes data in the first instance, it needs to be uplifted to be able to meet the minimum standard of that. But it's also important to note that we have data sharing arrangements with each and every data custodian, whether that is... In the most instance, it's mostly federal government data,

although it's not exclusive. We do have some commercial data in the Digital Atlas of Australia. We don't have any examples of industry created. So you're talking about supermarket or insurance data for example, that's not currently sitting in the Digital Atlas at the moment. However, we do know that those sectors are drawing down on some of the national data sitting in the Digital Atlas.

To get back to the main part of your question, we have 222 data sets sitting in the Digital Atlas of Australia right now for anyone to be able to access. And that includes some examples of commercial data, but the majority at this point in time is federal government data and it's predominantly at the national scale, although there's a few examples of nationally important data sets that don't have complete coverage.

**David Pembroke:**

There's obviously, this is going to be an ongoing process of continued refinement and improvement, but does it sit there somewhere in your roadmap in the future that you're looking-

**Lisa Bush:**

In terms of improving the data?

**David Pembroke:**

Yeah.

**Lisa Bush:**

Yes, absolutely.

I guess importantly, the Digital Atlas of Australia had a four year create and bring into service, which we're absolutely on track, and under the original plan it transitions into sustainment and we have a very modest but workable at the current capability ten year sustainment line. To be able to put significant amounts of data into the Digital Atlas requires the custodian to create and share that data, or it requires a federal government approach to how we're doing filling some of our priority national geospatial data holes I guess, if you will, some of our deficiencies in terms of coverage or currency that Maree alluded to in the beginning.

That's a really long way of saying yes, there's absolutely a forward work program within our current resourcing remit, but we're always looking about how we can deliver greater value for all Australians through the Digital Atlas of Australia.

**Maree Wilson:**

And I think we're aware of other parts of government having really robust discussions with the likes of the banks, insurance industry, supermarkets, et cetera, about accessing some of that data. My assessment of that is those conversations are still

pretty new at this point in time, but absolutely if we can get it sorted out around licencing and sharing of that data amongst government users, then Atlas is certainly a place that that could go. So as those discussions mature and some of the processes on how we can reassure the owners of that data that it won't be misused is probably one of the pieces that we need to work through but it's entirely doable.

**Lisa Bush:**

The technology's there, the governance is there, we just have to work through the data showing arrangements, and in many instances, who owns the cost of whatever that data is to initially create and also maintain.

**David Pembroke:**

Maree, you gave some good examples there before from social services around grants, but around Digital Atlas say in the areas of emergency management and resource management, do you have other examples of how public sector workers are using the Atlas to make improvements in those areas?

**Maree Wilson:**

Absolutely. Emergency management has been a pretty heavy user of geospatial information for a very long time, so they're a reasonably easy one, although the responsibility for emergency management generally sits at the state level. So one of the projects that we have recently done is about the national bushfire boundaries. This is all of the current fires which are running plus also historical fires. And the challenge with that was bringing the data from the states. Each state does things differently, so trying to bring that together to see as a national picture was done as part of a project with assistance from CSIRO and others, but that's out there now, publicly available, bushfire data sets. That's just one example.

**David Pembroke:**

But how does that translate into better services to the citizens?

**Maree Wilson:**

Those data sets are available within the individual state. As far as emergency response goes, the states already have that and are responding to that. The value that the Atlas brings is again, that national picture. Understanding, for example, relief payments. Someone like NEMA or Department of Social Services Services Australia, how do they get the payments to the right people? Where was the bushfire? What are the communities that are affected by that? We do the boundary, but then the key bit of Geospatial is what's the community under it? How many schools are in that area? What's the infrastructure affected by it? That's the power that Digital Atlas brings to that.

**Lisa Bush:**

It also puts that information in the hands of mums and dads around Australia. You can go and look about where you might want to build a house or purchase a property or send your kids to school, and you can look at the historical bushfire boundaries back to 1899, and you can do that in minutes. It would be very difficult to do that in any other way if you just wanted your own situational awareness to start the line of conversations that you need to have or further investigation. So it really puts it into the fingertips of not just policymakers or environmental considerations, but just everyday Australians. I think that's part of the power of the Digital Atlas of Australia.

**David Pembroke:**

In terms of the Digital Atlas of Australia, and I mentioned it in the introduction that a lot of your work, Lisa, is around this collaboration piece and getting people working and looking to partnerships and looking to people. How does that work? How does that go at the moment? How hard is it for you to get people involved? Maree, I think, earlier mentioned around silos and some of the difficulty is that there are data sets that are sitting in different places. So how hard is it to get the government, different parts of the government to work together?

**Lisa Bush:**

There's hard bits and there's easy bits.

**David Pembroke:**

What are the hard bits?

**Lisa Bush:**

I guess as a geospatial professional of many years now, a big part of my job is being able to marry up strategic intent and be able to convert the technical into a simple yet compelling argument that is not technical. In English, what I'm really saying is understanding what the policy drivers or the key outcomes for different stakeholders are across government or across other sectors, understanding that, and then working with them to identify opportunities to help accelerate or deliver against outcomes that they couldn't previously do.

I'm not talking to stakeholders to say, "Hey, put your data in the Digital Atlas of Australia. It's amazing." What I'm doing is, "Talk to me about what your policy drivers are. Talk to me about what you must deliver in your priority areas against this government reform or this government initiative, and let me work with you to be able to make better decisions, to be able to extract greater value from your very hard-earned data to do the things that you need to do."

Yeah, it's difficult, but it's also, this is what we do and there is incredible joy in seeing the pieces of the puzzle start to come together and being able to enable people to draw down on what's available from the Digital Arts Australia, so they're not going and doing that themselves, and they can concentrate on their core business rather than trying to get to the start state, which... There's a lot of churn across multiple levels of government and industry and just in the, I guess, community trying to get to the start state of information. How about I give you the start state and then you concentrate on the core business of your team or your area? And also it's just magic when you start to see that high value data or product or service coming into the Digital Atlas and it's being used in a whole range of ways that we haven't even considered yet, and that will continue to grow and develop.

**David Pembroke:**

How do you scale that though, across the whole of the Australian public sector and the private sector as well and into the community? It sounds like there's a lot.

**Lisa Bush:**

Massive. That's why it's taken us... I mean, I know the time period doesn't look very much in the scheme of comparison across federal government, but it's really felt it from my perspective. I've seen where I want to get the team to and what we can potentially deliver, but it's taken us quite some time to get the fundamentals in play. And it's not just the technical fundamentals, it's not just the fundamentals of the first of type of a data set, it's around the governance piece, it's around the data sharing so that we can scale and scale at speed. What it comes down to now is making sure we've got those fundamentals in play. I think I'm confident that we do, and then it's about bringing people along for the journey and making sure that we've got the resources to do it holistically.

**David Pembroke:**

And Maree and your responsibilities, looking at where the program is at the moment, how do you observe it?

**Maree Wilson:**

Very much so. I think it's very much been a build it and they will come kind of project as it has turned out. Talking about some of the harder conversations we've had. I'd say some of the harder conversations have been with some of the more technically advanced geospatial organisations because they're like, "But we don't need that. We already have our capability." And the easier conversations have been with the ones, as Lisa was

saying, that bring us joy to see their data brought to life in a whole new way that they never thought about.

I think going forward in the scalability piece, those bigger organisations with that embedded capability are already going, we're missing out now as opposed to we don't need you. That's where I really see my role is again, continuing to bring that together. More and more data means more and more ways of looking at it and more and more use cases that, as Lisa said, we've not even thought of before, and the ability to just do that in minutes as opposed to it being really, really hard.

Certainly over the next 12 months, looking for greater investment into Digital Atlas to make sure that it is a well supported capability into the future. There are some key underpinning components of that. As I said at the beginning, it's that relating it back to the earth, but you need that foundational data. Where is that road? Where is that school? Maintaining that is a lot and it takes a fair bit of investment and we need a top up of that to make sure that that fundamentals that sit underneath Digital Atlas continue into the future so that with every new data set that we get from partners across federal government or wherever has that location to link back to.

**David Pembroke:**

You mentioned stories of joy. I love stories of joy. Can you tell me a story of joy that you were able to observe in the public sector?

**Lisa Bush:**

There's many. Really, it's about working with partners to be able to move their data from an Excel spreadsheet or a Post-it note or some whiteboard markers with a piece of paper on the screen, marking dots on a map with a piece of paper, literally over a computer screen, and being to uplift their data and to give them capability that they didn't even know existed, let alone that was at their fingertips.

**David Pembroke:**

You're saying there's lots of examples of this.

**Lisa Bush:**

And Maree, you've made a really good point there in terms of some of our greatest success stories have been those that don't have their own organic geospatial capability and they're doing excellent work, but they're not looking at their data as a geospatial component. That's fine, why would they? But what we can do is come in and work with you and we can open up all

these opportunities of fusing a whole range of different data sets that you thought there was no way of relating those unless you put it in a 500 page document. Now we can synthesise that or fuse it into the one picture, so to speak.

**David Pembroke:**

Do you continue to get surprised about the applications? Because it sounds to me like you think, okay, well this might work, but then it gets applied in a particular area and it comes back and you just look at it and go, oh God, I didn't realise that we'd be able to do that. That's really good.

**Lisa Bush:**

No, because I have been a geospatial professional for a long time, so I don't think that I'm surprised. Sometimes I'm surprised at how long things take us to get them over the line in those initial stakeholder engagements and getting people, I guess, to see the bigger picture. You've got a bit of pain now, but this is the opportunities that we can help you capitalise on. But I'm just thinking about some examples within our own portfolio, for example.

Working with Questacon, for example, to build out dashboarding so that instead of someone having to go through tables and tables and tables of numbers to see where school groups are coming in from and plot that onto, I don't know, a marker pen on a wall somewhere, being able to build dashboarding so that they can work out and see exactly where they've got school groups coming from across Australia. And then if they've got a policy outcome to be able to improve science in certain demographics or certain locations, then that information is at their fingertips in a purpose built dashboard and literally able to answer questions that was taking months to answer previously. And you can redo it with a different scenario five minutes later. It's extraordinary seeing some of those wins.

**David Pembroke:**

What a great example. You talked about the road map before, but where would you like to be in, let's say, three to five years time? Maree, to you first. Where would you like to think that you've been able to move this particular Digital Atlas of Australia to?

**Maree Wilson:**

I think probably my top one, which is personal, is across the federal government where you have multiple departments collaborating on a single issue and that just instinctive-

**David Pembroke:**

Thinking about straight away.

**Maree Wilson:**

... response goes straight, we need to use Atlas. We're starting to see that. One of my joy pieces is where we've had some reluctance between departments that we don't want to share our data, we don't know what they're going to do with it type thing. And breaking down those barriers and seeing some of those web apps to meet, it's quite a wicked problem, based on disparate data. So having that as a, we should go to Atlas as the first solution that people think of in order to solve some of these wicked problems, that certainly would be something for me in three to five years would be a wonderful thing to see.

**David Pembroke:**

And for you, Lisa?

**Lisa Bush:**

Yes, I'll concur with that. I want Digital Atlas Australia to be the one-stop shop for national data. That's where you go first. And whether the data's there or whether it takes you through to wherever that lives, and that's where you start your journey, that's where you start that collaboration across multiple different areas of government. There's a few other areas that I want to say. Sorry.

We talked about we've got over 1000 users across multiple levels of government. I'd love to say tens of thousands of users across federal government for the government interface. I want where 222 data sets. I want to see thousands if not tens of thousands of data sets sitting in the Digital Atlas of Australia. I want to make sure that the program is sustainably funded to be able to get after not just the data, but also about emerging technologies in real terms.

Maree talked about AI and being able to use large language models to be able to type in questions, in three to five years I want to, "Hey, Digital Atlas, build me a map of X, Y and Zed" "Hey, Digital Atlas, I don't like the colour of it. I need more purples and green." "Hey, Digital Atlas, I want you to print me a Geo PDF and embed it in this document." Technically, we're not that far off it. It's about putting all the checks and balances in play and making sure that we're working with federal government to make sure that we can work about the application of AI in capabilities such as this. So yeah, I'm pretty excited.

**David Pembroke:**

A final question again to both of you. The audience is largely made up of public sector workers, Australian government workers in the public service. What is your urging, what is your ask, what is your request of your colleagues that they will do to

enable you to achieve these three to five year goals? What do you want them to do?

**Lisa Bush:**

In the first instance, if you haven't been to Digital Atlas, I urge each and every one of you to take the five minutes to give it a quick Google search. It'll take you through to the public interface. If you like what you see, then reach out and we'll talk about getting you on Digital Atlas Australia for government. So in the first instance, awareness.

The second, if you are creating national data or you're using national data and you are a government employee, then we'd really like to have a chat to you about how we can help you do your business. And I guess if you are not a government user, but you're playing in this space either as a big data provider or a big user of national data, we'd also like to have a conversation to be able to understand what your opportunities and needs are and see how we can work that in the forward work program.

**David Pembroke:**

Great. And Maree, for you?

**Maree Wilson:**

I think for me, it's around that policy question that Lisa was talking about earlier. As new policies are being considered and looked at, Digital Atlas is an amazing communication tool as the impact that your new policy or your new program is looking to achieve. It's a great way to communicate how the money is being spent, where the money is being spent, the community that it's being spent on or uplifted or all of those things. That would be something that I'd love to see, is that consideration policy. How can we use Atlas to communicate the great work that we've done for what we're doing, but how do we get it out there and how do we demonstrate to others? There'd be a great one. Turn up to estimates tomorrow and say, no, Senator, I'm not going to answer your question because the answer's on Digital Atlas and you can go find it out yourself. That would be great.

**David Pembroke:**

Well, I think we'll finish on that note because that sounds like a great outcome. Maree and Lisa, congratulations. This obviously in both of you, you can feel the passion and the enthusiasm and the purpose around your work, so congratulations on that and thank you on behalf of everyone for the good work that you are doing. And long may it continue because you're never going to run out of the need for more fidelity and information and for better information again, for policymakers, so it would seem an

easy thing for people just to really jump down that rabbit hole for a little while and to discover what's there because it sounds to me that little time invested sounds like a big impact's not too far away. So a big thanks to Lisa and to Maree from Geoscience Australia for joining us today.

And to you, the audience, a big thanks once again for coming along to listen to us again today. Another great episode featuring the wonderful, talented people that we have in the Australian Public Service. And indeed, you can go back and listen to 120 plus episodes wherever you do listen to your podcasts. But while you're there, while you're there having a listen, a rating or a review. It does help the program to be found, and we have lots of ratings and reviews and they're all generally pretty good. So if you could take a small amount of your time, and I know it's very valuable time, but if you could, that is a real service to us. So thank you very much in advance for helping us.

If you are interested, as many of you are, in what is going on with Work with Purpose, you can follow along at contentgroup and IPAA ACT on LinkedIn that will help you to stay up to date. And indeed, we are always interested in your views about the topics and the people in the Australian Public Service who you would like us to talk to. So please get in contact with us and we will do our very best to meet your needs.

Work with Purpose is produced in collaboration between contentgroup and the Institute of Public Administration of Australia ACT. And this particular series, APS Reform in Action is produced in partnership with our good friends, the Australian Public Service Commission. We'll be back with a regular Work with Purpose episode next week, but my name is David Pembroke and for the moment, it's bye for now.

**Voice Over:**

Work with Purpose is a production of contentgroup in partnership with the Institute of Public Administration Australia, and with the support of the Australian Public Service Commission.