Fact of death
Frequently asked questions

1. What is the fact of death?

The fact of death (FOD) file is a compilation of death records from each of the State and Territory Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (RBDMs). The FOD contains full name, date of birth and residential address details of all persons who have died in Australia. The FOD is provided to approved agencies to cleanse administrative records of deceased individuals.

The FOD is only available through the Australian Coordinating Registry (ACR) and the ACR only supplies FOD as a national output. Agencies wishing to obtain single jurisdictional FOD e.g. WA FOD only, are asked to contact the relevant jurisdiction.

Note: FOD cannot be used for research or statistical findings.

2. How are deaths registered?

The FOD is registered by the State of death, not by usual residence e.g. a person who died interstate (in Queensland) with a usual residence of New South Wales will be registered under the State of Queensland. A registered death reflects the State in which the death occurred.

The completion of FOD registrations is dependent on conclusive information provided by an agency such as, the State Coroner's Office. Incomplete records will not be included in the FOD file until all information is provided to jurisdictional Registries.

3. What and who are the data custodians?

Data custodians are the agencies which are responsible for the collection, use and disclosure of information in a data set. For the FOD, the jurisdictional RBDMs are the collective data custodians as they each contribute data to the FOD. Data custodians may grant access to information they contain, however data custodians have an obligation to protect the persons to whom the information relates from unjustified intrusion on their privacy. Data custodians are sometimes referred to as data source agencies or data owners.

4. What is the Australian Coordinating Registry?

An Australian Coordinating Registry (ACR) is the jurisdictional RBDMs that has been appointed by all Australian Registrars as the ACR to carry out a particular function. The ACR appointed for the FOD is the Queensland (Qld) Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. In this role the ACR for the FOD has developed the necessary principles and processes for release of data.

Note: The appointment of a Coordinating Registry does not void the responsibilities of each individual jurisdictional RBDMs in regard to their respective RBDMs legislation or other jurisdictional requirements.

5. What services/products will the ACR offer?

The ACR's role is to facilitate access to the FOD. The ACR will only offer the FOD as a national data set and subsets are not available through the ACR.

6. Can any of the data custodians release the FOD or parts of it?

The data custodians (RBDMs) have agreed that the national FOD will be released by the ACR. Apart from the Qld RBDM, each RBDM holds their own jurisdictional life event records.

7. What is the FOD used for?

FOD is used for the purposes of cleansing administrative data within an existing database by validating records against the corresponding FOD data; subsequently reducing the risk of identity fraud and/or unnecessary correspondence to deceased individuals and/or families of the deceased.

8. Am I eligible to access the FOD?

The FOD contains identifiable information relating to an individual's personal information at their time of death. As such the FOD is only available to approved applicants for the purpose outlined above (refer to question 7).

Approved use is determined by the ACR, and when deemed necessary the data custodians. Agencies must meet the eligibility requirements through an application process administered by the ACR.

FOD will only be approved for release under the following circumstances:

- **purpose of data access is in the public good e.g. the applicant must establish a clear link between the intended use of data and the benefits to the community, both of which are well defined in their request for access**
- data released to an agency must be appropriately managed by approved users to protect individuals from unreasonable intrusion on their privacy
- benefits of using the FOD data will outweigh any privacy risks
- approved data users must be able to satisfy the data custodians of the following
  - use of the data must have **merit under public scrutiny.**

The applicant must apply strict protocols to ensure the confidentiality of the information has appropriate data security measures.

Currently the FOD is only available to government agencies. Access to private sector agencies is currently under consideration.

9. Are there any restrictions on how I use and store the FOD?

Yes there are restrictions on how the FOD data can be used and stored.

These restrictions are provided to ensure that the data custodians meet their obligations in relation to providing access to their data. This includes that the agreed **Data Access Principles** have been met and they have full visibility and responsibility related to the use of the data within an agency.

Restrictions and obligations of the use of the FOD data will be outlined in the Application and Agreement.

10. Can I on-provide the FOD?

No. Onward provision of data is not permitted. Any on-provision will be in breach of the Agreement unless explicit consent has been given by the ACR.

11. Can I use the FOD for research for statistical reporting purposes?

No. The FOD is designed for administrative purposes only and cannot be used for statistical reporting. If you require data for statistical purposes (a separate data set exists for this purpose) please contact the ACR for further information bdmfod@justice.qld.gov.au.

12. Who should complete an application for the FOD?

A "Primary Contact" person within the agency who has the authority to make assurances on behalf of all users of the FOD data. They take responsibility for the use and secure management of any data provided by the ACR. The application allows for the agency to nominate a central access and coordination point to manage the FOD.

Throughout the application process the applicant agency must nominate an "Authorised Person" (Applicant). The Applicant must be someone in the agency who has the authority to act on behalf of the agency (e.g. Director-General/Secretary to Director General, etc.). The Applicant must declare their authority to bind the agency, including individuals specified in the application to the terms of the Agreement.

Nominated representatives take full responsibility for the confidentiality assurances of all staff in the agency that use or access the FOD data.

13. Why does the FOD application require such detail?

The FOD is a sensitive data set and disclosure of the information contained in the FOD can only occur if the legislative requirements governing the data are met.
As far as practical, the data custodians must protect the persons to whom the information relates from unjustified intrusion on their privacy.

The application form has been designed to ensure that all information relevant to the data custodians making a decision regarding disclosure is collected. This includes the requirement for the data custodians to ensure that release of information is in the best interest of the public and that they meet all privacy requirements.

To make this assessment the data custodians require transparency of the intended use of the data, including details of the applicant(s).

14. What is included in the FOD?

The following data items are available:

Base product	Mandatory data item
ACR number	
State (death place)	*
Registration year	*
Surname	*
Given name(s)	
Date of birth	*
Date of birth string	
Date of death	*
Date of death string	
Residential address line 1	*
Residential suburb/town	*
Residential state	*
Residential postal code	*
Notes:	

1. Residence address line 1 and 3 (if supplied) will concatenate into Residence address line 1.

Additional data items
Residential country
Also known as (alias)
Sex
Age at death
Age qualifier
Birth suburb
Birth state
Birth postal code
Birth country
Notes:

1. Particular additional data items requested must accompany justification for the requirements as stipulated in the FOD application (excludes residential information and alias details).

Historical data items 1992 to 2015 (Mar)
Residential country
Also known as (alias)
Sex
Age at death
Age qualifier
Birth suburb
Birth state
Birth postal code
Birth country
Notes:

1. 1992 to 2015 will be available via yearly or monthly flat files. Complete year files are available from 1992 through 2014.
2. For 2015 to 2016 data, please refer to the **Base Product** for available data fields - periods of 2017 may be included where requested (additional fees may apply).
3. Historical data files are available in five year blocks or as a bulk file (1992 – current). Please refer to the FOD Application and Application Guide for applicable fees.

15. Will all data items be included in the FOD?

No. The ACR will only include records as per the information provided by jurisdictions. At minimum, the data set will include the mandatory base product data items as per page four (4), however a death registration in some cases may only contain a single name in the surname field (for example).

The national FOD is not available from the ACR prior to 1992. If your agency wishes to obtain FOD data prior to 1992, please contact the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages in the jurisdiction you require the data from.

For deaths abroad, jurisdictions can register a death that occurred overseas for a person who is a normal resident of that jurisdiction in certain circumstances. Otherwise, The Office of Regulatory Services within the ACT is responsible for the maintenance of the register of deaths abroad (under the *Registration of Deaths Abroad Act 1985 (Cwlth)*). Deaths that are included in this register will not be included in the national FOD file.

16. What is the available delivery transfer method for the FOD?

The preferred and **only** method of transfer for the FOD is by Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP).

What is SFTP? SFTP is an extension of the SSH secure shell protocol that sends data, usernames and passwords over a network using strong encryption and allows the use of public/private keys for user authentication and system identification. SSH provides secure communications such as data transmission over insecure channels whilst retaining encryption throughout the entire login session to ensure data security is maintained. If firewall changes are required to access the SFTP service, your firewall should allow outgoing traffic on TCP port 22 to the Queensland SFTP server.

SSH public keys need to be generated for authentication purposes between servers and this can be done on Windows systems using PuTTYGen which can be found at the link below. Keys can be generated from the command line on UNIX/Linux/Mac OSX systems using the ssh-keygen command line utility e.g. **ssh-keygen -t rsa -b 2048 -f ~/.ssh/id_rsa.**

SSH Public Key must be at least a 2048 bit

SFTP client software is generally built into all UNIX, Linux and Mac OSX systems. Windows based SFTP client and key generation tools can be found at the following links:

Winscp http://winscp.net/eng/index.php
Filezilla https://filezilla-project.org/
PuTTY http://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~sgtatham/putty/

17. What file formats are available?

Comma Separated Value (CSV) and Delimiter Separated Value (Pipe Delimited) file formats are available. The file extension is .csv

Please note, some subscription frequencies are only available in CSV format, please contact the ACR for available options

18. Timeframes with data provision to agencies?

Data provision for subscribers is offered daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly. Applicable charges apply pending the agency subscription basis and data requirements.

The provision of historical data should be discussed with the ACR.

19. Can I retain the FOD data for long periods?

No. The FOD is used for the purpose of cleansing administrative data within a database and should be destroyed upon validation.

For agencies requesting FOD data retention, the requirement should be clearly identified in the FOD application and include the use of examples e.g. FOD retention is required for the purpose of 'xyz' to assist with 'xyz'. Reasonable justification is required before approval will be granted including data retention timeframes.

20. Are there subscription costs for the FOD?

Yes. If your agency subscribes to receive the FOD, fees will be incurred (as determined on a cost recovery basis). The fees do not include charges for the data itself, but does include the recovery of the costs of disseminating the FOD to data users. This includes quality checks that need to be performed by each of the data custodians at various stages and the costs associated with running and maintaining ACR processes. I

The current subscription fees can be found in the FOD Application and Application Guide. The fees for the FOD may be reviewed on an annual basis.

21. Are there subscription costs for the Historical FOD?

The fee for the FOD will be based on the data requested and the subscription service entered. A subscription incentive will apply for agencies subscribing to daily or weekly data provision. Approved agencies will receive the historical FOD (dating back to 1992 – 2015) free of charge (initial daily and weekly subscriptions **only**).

Please refer to the FOD Application and Application Guide for historical fees.

22. Do I need to inform the ACR of any changes to personnel working on the cleansing of administrative records?

Yes. Any changes to specific personnel within your agency that is accessing the FOD data (as per the information provided in the application) should be communicated to the ACR within three business days; particularly technical and invoice contacts as this is a subscription service and requires accurate information relating to any personnel privy to the FOD.

23. There is something wrong with my data, who do I contact?

Please contact the ACR through bdmfod@justice.qld.gov.au.

24. I have discovered a breach in protocol, what do I do?

Please contact the ACR through bdmfod@justice.qld.gov.au.

25. What if my application is not approved?

The ACR aims to assist all eligible applicants to obtain the FOD data for administrative purposes that meet the data custodians' requirements and Data Access Principles. Before providing an agency with the FOD application, the ACR will hold initial eligibility discussions with FOD applicants. At this stage the ACR may suggest alternate options for obtaining RBDM data if the FOD is not deemed suitable and/or the agency does not fit the eligibility criteria. The ACR will recommend, where possible, alternative solutions and provide feedback to the applicant on the basis of ineligibility.

26. What is the process with submitted FOD applications?

Once an application has been received, the ACR will undertake an initial compliance check to ensure all necessary questions are answered and documentation is included before the applications are assessed by the data custodians/ACR. The ACR will manage further correspondence between the data custodians and the data applicants where additional information is required, and provide notification of application outcomes.

27. Can overseas agencies apply for the FOD if their usual place of business is not based in Australia?

Currently the FOD is only accessible to Australian based government agencies and is not permitted for use by overseas agencies.