

# Terms of Reference

The 2016 Census, with particular reference to:

- a. the preparation, administration and management on the part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Government in the lead up to the 2016 Census;
- b. the scope, collection, retention, security and use of data obtained in the 2016 Census;
  - 1) Why does the census not contain questions that can shape the country by telling parliament what the people actually want? It costs nothing extra to add a question to the census (well there is a cost but it's shared across many other questions so it's a much smaller cost). Why should we have to have a plebiscite or a referendum at great cost when the same question could be asked when everyone is already answering questions? It is simply not good enough to have people controlling the country using their views to dictate what way the country will go. The politicians should be there to work out how to do what the majority of Australians want done and not telling Australians what they want.
  - 2) It's a great idea to have people able to use online methods for the collection of the data. It is a bad idea to make this the default method of collection. There are many people out there who do not have access to the net, some by choice, and some by other factors. Some who have access to the net and the ability to lodge the census that way will still not because they do not trust the net with any confidential information. I.e. there's plenty who will not use online banking or buy something over the net still so making it mandatory to request so much personal information over the net makes the results unreliable as do these people answer truthfully? The amount of time people got to actually get a paper copy before the census night was also inadequate given how long Australia post now takes to deliver letters. Also why was it better to not employ people to do the rounds and get some money out into the pockets of normal people? For students and unemployed people this little income could make a world of difference to them financially and mentally. Someone who is unemployed getting 3 weeks of work gives them self worth again as they feel like they can do something and are needed. An online only version can also never be recounted to verify the results. A paper copy can be recounted 500 times and the pages will have the same outcome and any difference detected will be human error. And yes humans make errors where the digital version does not but the humans can't change 500 entries in a second to get the outcome we want where a digital version can. A paper copy we can recount to verify the data but a digital one we cannot.
  - 3) When the police stop being charged with looking up information on people they have no reason to look up, then you can start thinking about holding all the personal information. Until then the system has to give people the option of holding the information and leave it in their hands. No matter how much encryption you put between the two halves of data there will be someone that will figure it out and look up stuff that they have no reason for knowing. It also needs to be outlined how the information will be disposed off. After all a paper copy you can shred and burn but a digital copy has many backups done on it over a 4 year period If they get a copy of the backup they might not do anything with it for some time but who knows if they don't use it 5 years

- down the track for the right or wrong reasons. Also what's in place to stop them from simply changing their mind and deciding to keep the information for a longer period than originally stated? Would they even tell us if they did?
- 4) Even high security prisons have problems with them. To think that something like the census isn't a target is just silly. Even with the best security available today it always has to be upgraded to stay in front of the next wave of threats. In a digital environment that can come from anywhere and at any time. So with this in mind it makes the retention of personal information an even greater problem. Are we suddenly going to end up with identity theft becoming a problem in this country? How would people be able to say that it wasn't from the census information being compromised? A good thief is a neat thief so finding them becomes much harder as by the time you notice something missing they are long gone but the damage is done.
  - 5) Where is the data used anyway? I don't think many will know other than to say it means the electoral boundaries might get changed by the data collected. As I said in the first part why should the data not be able to shape the country? If there is a paper copy you can always recount the data again and again by different people in different locations. With a digital version how can it be guaranteed that the data won't get changed and incorrect numbers won't be relied upon for the decision making purposes it was collected for?
- c. arrangements, including contractual arrangements, in respect of the information technology aspects of the Census;
- 1) Are these contractual arrangements drawn up by people who have no understanding of the job that has to be done and as such important details are overlooked and useless clauses' added that protect the wrong people? I think the Lawyers are the only ones to benefit from any outcomes that are found. We will be wasting lots of money chasing contractors for \$ because someone didn't know the difference between a denial of service attack and a Phishing attack and didn't state which one they should be protecting against.
- d. the shutting down of the Census website on the evening of 9 August 2016, the factors leading to that shutdown and the reasons given, and the support provided by government agencies, including the Australian Signals Directorate;
- 1) This is a big question. I also would like to know why I am getting visits from the ABS representatives when the above question has still not been answered satisfactorily. In simple terms I do not see any reason why you would shut down the web site because of a denial of service attack. This is the same as a business shutting shop because of a picket line out the front. Yes the picket line makes it harder for people to get through but some will. The second they took down the web site, the security of the information became a problem. Even if the information was never touched the perceived lack of trust in their own systems makes the people wonder. Why it stayed down so long and why the answers that I have seen have been vague are of big concern. Also when the decision was made to take it down, leaving a message stating to try again in 15 minutes is an insult. I personally wasted 2 hours trying again and again. Now if this was a Rope bridge and the person who owned the bridge went half way across and then come back and stopped everyone else from crossing the bridge and then just started telling people to cross said bridge 3 days later would you cross said bridge? Some will, some won't at first and some just want to get away from that bridge and will not have any trust in it again.

- 2) Why there was no backup plan in place to happen when the web site was taken down? Why was there not multiple sites handling the collection so if one got overloaded the traffic could be sent to the others? This is like a football field having only one gate open and when the lines getting to long closing the gate. It should have stayed open and the other gates alongside should have been opened and taken traffic away from the overloaded gate. It should have been easy to expect that the one gate would become overloaded when it's a sellout game so why plan for only one gate to begin with?
- e. the response rate to the Census and factors that may have affected the response rate;
- 1) The response rate will be lower as people like me who have concerns are not completing the census until questions above are answered. The data that is gathered is also inaccurate as many people who were home on the night or out on the night may have started travelling or finished travelling. Some will be in the country still some not. So even with people going out to collect the census now if they keep getting a empty house then they will put it down as empty even though on the night that house was occupied and now the occupants are travelling and staying in hotels not even thinking about a census that failed on the night. So with the data knowingly flawed pushing ahead with the collection of more data just makes the outcomes unreliable. Bad data is worse than no data as it can send you in the wrong direction entirely. This is what we should be trying to avoid at all costs. Imagine if the titanic had someone who saw the iceberg they were going to hit and yelled out turn the ship left. The outcome might have saved the lives on board. Now let's say the person shouts to turn but gives no direction. If the ship turned right it would have hit the iceberg at full speed head on and no lives might have survived at all. This is what is happening right now with the census still being collected. No data accepted = ship hitting the iceberg like history showed. Accurate data = ship would have missed iceberg altogether. Bad data = ship hits the iceberg head-on with a much worse outcome.
  - 2) Yes there are always some who do not want to do the census and some that will always answer wrongly. This is a small percentage we hope but I certainly don't remember constant news reminders getting issued to remind people they have to hand the papers in by x day or they will be fined in the past. This year is different because the ABS changed the system and it failed to explain the benefits and safeguards they had in place over previous census collections. What little information that was given out was not given until very late on and you don't earn trust by changing something right before actioning it.
- f. privacy concerns in respect of the 2016 Census, including the use of data linking, information security and statistical linkage keys;
- 1) These have never been answered. They relied on people believing in them saying that their systems were up to grade or the fact they will get fines to get what they want. This is nothing more than being bullied and it is still happening after the failure it became. Most people will answer the census just to avoid the fine but who's to say they answer it truthfully. Names have been changed, incomes and even the number of people in a house on the night. I myself have not even looked at the census forms and as such have no idea what other information is asked that people would change or lie about on the form. Now I myself have no information to hide. I'm not worried about someone looking my answers up and using it against me but there are people who are. I am however worried that someone will look up my personal details

and steal them. If someone can steal my credit card details and cause trouble imagine how many problems are made when they get all my personal details and take out loans and new credit cards under my name. To just say we have the best security and everything will be alright, is all they did. They really needed to give people an actual sense of security measures and be able to stand by them. They claimed it was secure yet they still took the web site down. Why would I believe them this time around? Yes the DoS attacks were designed to cause frustration and make their jobs harder but it should not have stopped their job from getting done on the night. Now that the night is over hackers will no longer be out to just cause trouble but will now be switching to trying to actually steal the data that was collected. Do you think that the cheating website (Ashley Maddison whatever) had the data stolen on the first day it was used? Not likely. But I don't think it would be stolen by a million people either. It just takes one person to sneak their way in and that data is now compromised little by little. Something as big as the census they should have been pushing the security by opening it up to hackers to find weak spots and then being able to say we never paid a cent out to any of the hackers that did try to get through as none were able to complete the required task. Even after the census was taken offline this sort of proof has not been offered.

- g. Australia's Census of Population and Housing generally, including purpose, scope, regularity and cost and benefits;
  - 1) This is addressed in section b, I believe it is a good thing to collect the data but the data that is being collected should be used for the country's political direction. All questions that are asked should have multiple options for the outcome not just one. Ie John Howard's referendum on leaving the commonwealth should have had 1 – don't leave, 2 – leave with politicians vote the president, 3 – leave with people vote in a president. By only having the first 2 choices, the outcome remained we stayed in the commonwealth but by having the third we might not have the same outcome. Now if the same question was asked just do we leave or stay then the outcome decides which way to start working towards which once again might have been the other direction from what we actually took. Something like gay marriage rights just needs a yes or no answer as there are no other options. Something like leaving the commonwealth needs multiple choices for the people to decide the best way forward. Options are always required and not looking at them biases the potential outcomes.
  - 2) What happens about all the people who are not living in a house on the night? Is it alright to just pass the homeless people by and not give them a say in the census? Some of the homeless people are earning incomes but simply can't find the money to rent a house. Why don't they get a say? The fact that these people don't get a say, says we are working with incorrect data again as an area with 100 homes and 220 occupants has an average income of say \$80,000.00 PA but if we included the 60 homeless people sleeping in cars and parks then the outcome is an average income of \$52,000.00. The \$ difference makes no real difference to things but the number of people should. The census should be about the people and not about the house they may or may not live in. After all why should we be ignoring the 60 homeless people in this example when the census could help us to actually find a fix to their homelessness once again correcting the working on bad data problem.
- h. the adequacy of funding and resources to the ABS;

- 1) Like all other government departments they will be under funded. It is no surprise the census was done the way it was because the cheapest potential way was always going to come back as the best way under tight budgets even if it is not the actual best way. This is why we as a nation are going backwards. Everything is down to the small picture of \$. The larger \$ picture might be the better way in the long run but the government only looks at the short term and not the long. A Higher cost to do something in Australia should always be the government's first choice. This means money stays in the country, people are employed who then buy goods and services from others and taxes are then collected to improve our budgets. Sending money overseas weakens the country and the cost savings to begin with become income hindrances in the future.
- i. ministerial oversight and responsibility; and
  - 1) Total lack of it you mean? Even the prime minister has taken no responsibility that I have heard for the debacle that happened under his watch.
  - 2) Why are they not pushing the case for a backup date to be used? They have learnt no lessons from this and are pushing ahead with it solely based on costs associated with doing it again correctly. That said time will tell if they actually saved money by pushing ahead but I myself wish I had the money to launch supreme court action over the data's authenticity and accuracy.
- j. any related matters.
  - 1) Why was there no plan for when they took the web site down? Not even a web page put up to advise people they had taken this action, which would have stopped millions of people from wasting their time for the rest of the night trying to get the census done when it was meant to be done.
  - 2) Why are they forcing the census even though the data will be flawed just by the lack of ability to chase those that flew out of the country after the night? Yes there is always some but do you think someone who has gone to Europe for a 6 week tour is really going to be thinking about doing the census again even though they tried for hours on the night?
  - 3) Why are they still threatening to fine people who with hold from completing the census when there is a lack of trust and questions which still have not been answered for them? When the web site was taken down, people who did trust that things were being done right, now have just cause to not trust the same person who told them it was safe in the first place.
  - 4) Even now 1 month after the failure of the census, the website has not got anything up relating to why it was taken down or what they have done since to relieve any concerns people might have. Once again it is simply a case of believe what we tell you in media reports or be fined if you don't.