

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2012-2013**

Outcome 4 – Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0938_13

Senator Abetz asked on 13 February 2013 , Hansard page 109

Question

Work-Life and Family Survey 2013

Senator ABETZ: It is about as meaningful as 'working families'. When we asked for definitions of working families we never seemed to get one in the parliament. Then it was, thank goodness, dropped. We have now had 'modern family'. I am sure if we were to ask in the parliament as to the definition we would get the same non answers. Given the government's commitment to modern families, the government's commitment to being concerned about work-life balance et cetera, Parliamentary Secretary, can you explain to us why, because of budget cuts, we are now having the work-life and family survey 2013 not being pursued? If this was core business for Labor, if this was core business for the government it is not in your portfolio, the department— Senator Jacinta Collins: There you go. Senator ABETZ: This is to the parliamentary secretary: why is the government allowing that survey to be cut by the Australian Bureau of Statistics? Senator Jacinta Collins: Senator Abetz, as you said, this is not in my department, but I will take on notice for you why this particular aspect of the ABS work program has not proceeded. Senator ABETZ: Because they do not have enough money, but you have got other priorities in leaking money everywhere. Senator Jacinta Collins: No, there is a range of work in this area occurring in other areas aside from— CHAIR: Let us get back to asking some questions. Senator Jacinta Collins: the ABS. Dr Morehead: For example, Senator, it does help fund a work-family survey that will next be done in 2014 and the Fair Work Commission has done. Senator ABETZ: Who are they? Dr Morehead: That is by the University of South Australia. It is a small survey. It is not an expensive survey. Senator ABETZ: Please; we are not trying to compare it with an ABS survey. Please do not insult us. Dr Morehead: It is a nationally representative survey of some 2,500 employees. Senator Jacinta Collins: Let me take it on notice because there is also other census work that the ABS do which incorporates over time some work that they do in different series. I would like to provide you with a more comprehensive answer.

Answer

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has provided the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations with the following response.

The ABS has cancelled the implementation of the Work, Life and Family Survey (WoLFS) for 2013. The cancellation of the Survey was one of two major adjustments to the ABS work program to meet its budget profile for 2012–13 and 2013–14.

A range of options to manage the operations and financial position of the ABS were considered by the Australian Statistician and this Survey was one which was within

the timeframe required for budget savings, was not a key economic indicator, did not currently supply data to high level government reporting and was not supported by external funding sources.

The next WoLF Survey is scheduled for 2019, however, the ABS is considering options for measuring the key components earlier. For example, the ABS is liaising with key stakeholders with regard to their immediate and future information requirements. They are also advising them of other key information sources, including:

- 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing
- 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (results to be published end 2013)
- Labour Force Survey (monthly)
- 2011-12 Survey of Income and Housing (results to be published mid 2013)
- 2010 Survey of Voluntary Work (part of the General Social Survey)

Further to that, a set of national gender indicators has been developed by the ABS in partnership with the Office for Women and the former Commonwealth, states, territories and New Zealand Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women (MINCO).

The ABS released the first Gender Indicators, Australia, July 2011 (ABS cat. no. 4125.0), which presents key indicators across seven domains representing major areas of social concern for gender equality: Economic security; Education; Health; Work and family balance; Safety and justice; and Democracy, governance and citizenship. Gender Indicators, Australia is updated on a six-monthly basis, with the last release in January 2013.

Consultation is also underway for the collection of information in the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. One aspect that is being considered are improvements to income measures which will improve the analysis of peoples economic wellbeing in Australia, especially for small areas and small population groups. While Census content for 2016 is currently being reviewed, the 2011 and 2006 Census did collect information on unpaid work (time spent on household work, caring and voluntary work).