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Emerging Issues and Core Topics, Dissemination of Census Data, and use of
Technology in Census Field Communication: Comments from Australia*

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I. TOPICS OF EMERGING POLICY RELEVANCE IN AUSTRALIA

A. Place of Usual Residence/International Migration

1. An internationally consistent definition of usual residence is required if comparable statistics are to be produced on population and migration. This is increasingly important with the globalisation of the labour market and the attendant policy interest in both the country's resident population and in former residents now living in other countries.

2. There is also a need to improve consistency or relatability between the definitions of residence used in economic and social statistics so that measures derived using data from both fields (e.g. GDP per capita, income per capita, wealth per capita) or used in analyzing multidimensional issues such as living standards or wellbeing are more coherent. This need has been recognised at international levels and is being examined in the current process for updating the international standards for national accounts and balance of payments.

3. The United Nation international migration definition (page 18 *Recommendations on Statistics for International Migration*, Revision 1) counts as usual residents, people who have lived in the country for more than one year as well as people who are in the country for 3 months to 12 months and the purpose for the stay is not "recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage".

4. This latter part of the definition is not only confusing and difficult to operationalise but could lead to double counting as, in any one year, a person could have multiple usual residences.

5. For the purposes of being counted as part of the Australian population, Australia defines usual residence as being resident in Australia for a year. Within Australia, the usual residence is the address at which the person has lived or intends to live for six months or more in the reference year. While there are some operational issues in implementation, this definition is well accepted as the basis for the official population estimates. A different definition of resident based on 'centre of economic interest' is used for purposes of economic statistics. Investigations are proceeding within ABS to identify the conceptual and practical issues involved in harmonisation or reconciliation of these different approaches.

6. Usual residence based population estimates are considered the most appropriate population for most policy and planning purposes as this represent a base population that is likely to be consuming services in any particular area. However, it is recognised that there are other population concepts that may be more appropriate in certain situations. Census data can be used in determining some of these other populations such as working population, derived from work place address.

B. Marital Status

7. Australia continues to collect data on legal marital status (and divorces) as a social indicator. For family and household statistics, questions on living arrangements are used to

determine a social marital status (that separately identifies legally married from de facto). Social marital status is the concept of most policy relevance.

C. Families and Households

8. A number of suggestions made for extending the range of questions on families aim at identifying caring relationships. Direct questions on this topic would be preferable to attempting to stretch family classifications from which only inferences could ever be made.

D. Ethnicity and Indigenous Peoples

9. These two topics should be treated separately. The policy and planning, as well as collection issues, are quite different for Indigenous populations than for the mainstream populations. In Australia, the question on Indigenous status is asked separately from questions on ethnicity.

10. Australia has developed a separate enumeration strategy and prepares special census tabulations for the Indigenous population.

E. Disability

11. Australia conducts a survey, approximately every six years, on disability. This survey provides reliable data at the national and state level on the incidence of disability.

12. The ABS has long recognised the need for reliable information on disability for small geographic areas for the planning and location of services. The position of the ABS is that questions should only be included on the census if the results are reliable. ABS conducted an extensive program of question development and testing in the lead up to both the 1996 and 2001 Censuses to devise a question that would provide reliable data on disability. The question testing yielded large numbers of false positives and negatives and this topic was excluded from these censuses.

13. Consultation with users since 2001 has determined that the priority small area data requirement was to identify those disabled people who needed assistance with activities such as self care, mobility and communications. Testing of possible questions indicated that while false negative responses remain high, false positive responses were negligible. Evaluation of the data on need for assistance with activities such as mobility and communications has shown a high level of correlation between the census test and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Caring findings.

14. As a consequence, ABS will be recommending the inclusion of a question on disability in the 2006 Census.

II. PROMOTION USE AND DISSEMINATION OF CENSUS OUTPUT: BEST PRACTICE ISSUES

A. Project Management

15. Project management is as important for census dissemination activities as for the other parts of the census. Planning and resourcing for dissemination should be an integral part of overall census planning.

B. Understanding User Needs

16. Processes should be in place to continually monitor the data needs of users to assist in both the selection of topics for the census as well as the nature of the output.

17. Understanding the technical sophistication and preferences of users will enable appropriate products and services to be developed.

18. The ability to provide specific tabulations to meet particular needs is also required.

19. Basic census data should be made available to the general public at minimal or no cost. This can be done through the media, libraries and schools.

20. Ensure that the output program provides for meta data products (eg census dictionary, classifications, quality statements) as well as statistical products.

C. Marketing and Public Relations

21. Marketing activities should be undertaken, whether the census outputs are priced or not. This is to ensure that widest possible use is being made of the census data by the community.

22. A marketing plan will identify the different types of users and potential users, the products and services that might best meet their needs and how the users should be informed about the products.

23. There is community interest in census data. Undertake a "census launch" of the first results of the census to attract media interest. Continue to promote census stories as the data are released.

D. Evaluation

24. Evaluation of the success of the products and services in how they met user needs and of the operational processes should be undertaken in preparation for the next census.

25. Ensure that processes are in place to capture information about the volume of use of the products and services.

26. Undertake qualitative studies of use of census products and services by focused discussions with a variety of users.

III. USE OF TECHNOLOGY: THE 2006 CENSUS FIELD COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

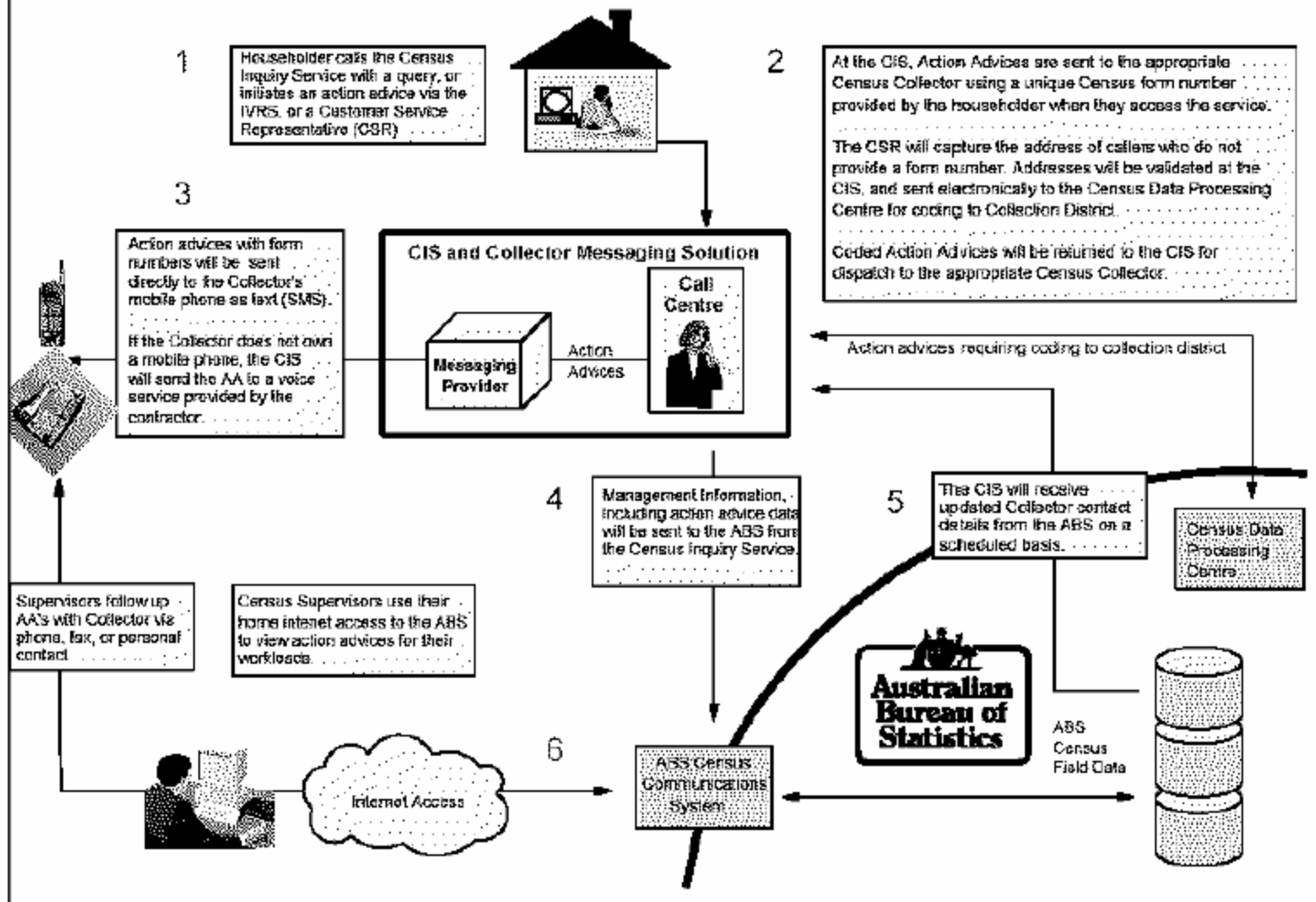
27. Australia conducts a traditional drop-off pick up census with collection control being undertaken by the local collector and the use of a record book. With the introduction of internet return of forms (and the extension of possibility of mail back for some householders) a system needed to be developed to provide advice to the collector in a timely fashion that a form had been received for a particular household.

28. The solution was to develop an integrated Census Inquiry Service that would bring together all activities and tasks involved in providing information and advice to the public during the census, and dissemination of information from the Australian public to census field staff.

29. This involves the development of a solution to facilitate communications between the Australian Public, Census Management, and census field staff. The solution will involve the application of an Integrated Voice Response System (IVRS), call centre facilities, a multi-lingual telephone interpreter service, a deaf and hearing impaired service (TTY), and a connection to an ABS server for the communication of management information to supervisory field staff (District Managers, and Area Supervisors) and be integrated with the electronic registers that will record the receipt of either eCensus form (one delivered by the internet) or a mail back form.

30. The schematic below provides a broad overview:

2006 Census Inquiry Service and Field Communications - overview



31. The Census Inquiry Service is required to comfortably handle up to 800,000 calls and is expected to cope with periods of intense demand and continuous "spikey" call arrival patterns during its operation.

32. The CIS will require:

- A telephone and web based solution for facilitating the flow of inquiries from the Australian Public via the CIS;
- Provision of management information in a format compatible with an ABS centralized Census Field Management Information System;
- An offline testing environment;
- Routing of public inquiries via Integrated Voice Response Systems, Recorded Voice Announcements, and Census web page to reduce demand for direct call centre services;
- Communication of Action Advice messages to Census Collectors via a messaging system in response to householder inquiries to the CIS:

Examples of these actions include requests for:

- (a) Delivery of a Census form
 - (b) Delivery of additional forms
 - (c) Collection of Census forms
 - (d) Privacy envelopes
 - (e) Mailback envelopes
 - (f) Help with the Census form
- Integration with the Census eRegister which records receipt of eCensus forms received at ABS servers, and receipt of Census forms mailed to the Data Processing Centre by householders;
 - Messaging to Collectors of advice regarding receipt of mailbacks and eCensus returns;
 - A close relationship between the CIS and the eCensus help desk; and
 - A fully developed solution in time for Dress Rehearsal scheduled in August 2005.

33. SMS messaging to Collector mobile phones was chosen as a means of delivering action advices to Collectors for the 2006 Census because of its demonstrated:

- Delivery speed;
- Usability, and acceptance on the part of Census Collectors;
- Maturity of the technology; and
- Integration and compatibility with existing infrastructure.