



Ms. Susan Linacre
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16 February 2007

Dear Sue,

Re: 2006 PES, Indigenous component – Final report

As you know, in July 2006, the then Australian Statistician (Dennis Trewin) approached me with the request to independently overview the 2006 PES Indigenous component. In this request he asked me to:

- Meet with a representative(s) of the ABS to discuss the project in detail
- Review and provide comments on the proposed procedures for matching PES records from discrete Indigenous communities with Census records
- Provide information on the procedures used by ICHR for linking and matching data
- Observe processing of PES records at the Data Processing Centre (DPC) in Melbourne
- Meet to discuss issues arising from the matching process.

I have now completed the major tasks associated with formulating an independent overview of the 2006 Post Enumeration Survey, Indigenous Component. To date this has entailed: 1) Reading and commenting on the following documents:

- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey- discrete Indigenous communities Community Level Questionnaire
- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey – September 2006, Discrete indigenous Community Form PIE06
- Information Paper: Measuring net undercount in the 2006 Population Census, Australia, 2006 (Cat. 2940.0.55.001)
- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey (PES): Processing User Guide
- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey (PES): Processing Manual

- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey: Discrete Indigenous Community Component, provision of expert advice on data match and search, and
- 2006 Census Post Enumeration Survey progress report to the Population Technical Workshop held in Sydney on 30 October 2006

and, 2) a site visit to the Melbourne DPC on 10 and 11 January 2007. The site visit entailed:

- Meeting with project leaders to discuss the PES processes (Meryl Henden and David Blair)
- Detailed briefings and practical illustrations of the mainstream and Indigenous components and specific processes of the PES
- Direct personal observation of the mainstream and Indigenous PES processing
- Opportunities to meet with Mr Paul Lowe, Executive Director of the DPC and with Ms Norah Sloane, EO1, Indigenous Census Component
- Opportunities to meet processing staff and observe their work and discuss or query aspects of this with them.

Independence of process

I found all supplied documents extremely helpful, meticulously prepared, and highly pertinent to what was requested of me. They were comprehensive and unselected. My specific comments on these documents were transmitted to Meryl Henden in my letter to her on 11 December 2006 and I would not propose to repeat these here other than to note that on the basis of the supplied documentation, I could not discern any specific threat to the integrity of the estimates derived through these processes nor pinpoint any weaknesses that would result in unintended bias that would favour greater (or lesser) differential precision in the PD or Indigenous communities components of the PES.

I found the visit to the DPC and opportunity to observe the PES matching processes (both mainstream and Indigenous) enormously helpful. It is important that I note that these processes were still underway at the time of my visit and not so fixed that improvements or corrections could not be undertaken if suggested. I had was at liberty to see any process, and examine all materials and ask questions as they arose. I was not restricted in my contact with any of the staff. For the sake of economy I have organised my report to cover some general points as well as a specific evaluation of the matching process and likely outcomes.

General points

- The PES Indigenous component represents a significant undertaking by the ABS to address an area of previous neglect that has made the ABS increasingly vulnerable over the years to user criticism from the Indigenous community specifically, and the wider sphere of users in academic and government agencies. It is difficult to under-estimate the

importance of the exercise for the reputation of the ABS and for the sheer value of any knowledge gained through the attempt.

- My general impression is that the current effort in implementing the PES Indigenous component is on track to contradict the “received wisdom” that a PES Indigenous component is “too hard” or that it “cannot be done” on the basis of the common claims of Indigenous population mobility, changes in names, and difficulties in access to Indigenous communities. From what I can observe, none of this has been insurmountable, and indeed the pragmatic aspects of the PES Indigenous implementation have largely contradicted the customary belief that the enterprise cannot be done for the reasons.
- I was particularly struck at the ease with which names matched. There has been considerable concern expressed that the PES process might sustain particular problems around the reported use of multiple (and different) names by Indigenous people. Broadly this is not proving to be a significant issue or threat. This may reflect changes in practices by Indigenous people – particularly in remote areas – with a growing understanding on their part of the importance of “official” or “government” records and the need to use one’s “official” name. This, of course, is conjecture on my part. The point I would make here is that this problem is not proving to be significant in the current PES matching and that the practical experience contradicts common expectations.
- The current PES effort is methodologically innovative. Even a failure to produce useable outcomes (this is unlikely) would be an advance over the past failure to do anything constructive to address the lack of information in this area.

Specific evaluation

- In my opinion and based on my observations, the present approach is cautious and seeks parity with the mainstream PES methods.
- Importantly the method of the PES Indigenous component allows specific estimates of effects that might be deemed to be at variance with the mainstream effort. The principal methodological difference in the Indigenous component occurs where the staff are required to use the Community Level Questionnaire as a supplementary search strategy for the purposes of matching a person. However, data that are matched as a result of the CLQ are identified as such, allowing specific method variance to be estimated relative to the mainstream PES. Current observations would suggest that this will be very small if not negligible. The point here is that this process is subject to specific data capture.
- The Quality Assurance component, if documented carefully, will allow the calculation of a coefficient of concordance (ie reliability) or “reproducibility” of the matching method and consistency of workload processing. This is an estimate of considerable value and of potential significance to the

calculation of overall PES estimates and onward population estimates. It represents a source of method variance. Certainly it should be reported in the main report of the PES Indigenous component.

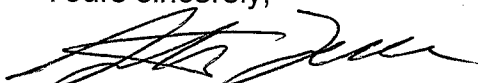
- I could not see that any of the current processes required modification. In my opinion, there is a minimal to negligible threat to the parity between mainstream and Indigenous component PES processing. Moreover, I believe the current method could, in all probability, pinpoint the contributions of specific processes (notable the use of the CLQ) where these might be deemed to be at variance with the mainstream process.

I think it is worth noting that I believe that the release of an ABS publication on the PES would be a very valuable addition to the literature on Indigenous survey methodology. The report should document the various components of the PES matching findings.

Finally, I would like to thank Merilyn Henden and David Blair for their support of my involvement in this process. The PES timetable is demanding and the effort load on Bureau staff is high. Arrangements entailed ensuring that my involvement met the requirements of the Census Act as well as considerable administration support through the provision of extensive materials not to mention the added burden of a site visit with its necessary preparation. All of this took time and was met by Merilyn, David and their staff with gracious and professional diligence and enthusiasm for excellence.

I hope this report is of some use and should there be any queries or further requests for clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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