

Report on the conduct of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey 2017





From the Australian Statistician

The ABS is pleased to present this report on the conduct of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (AMLPS).

While the ABS conducts many statistical collections, including some very large in scale (and some of which include asking people about their views), the AMLPS was unique in many ways. It was designed and conducted in fewer than 100 days and comprised a single question asked of just over 16 million eligible Australians. Particular effort was made to ensure the survey was simple and could be completed by those travelling or living overseas, those in remote communities, people with a disability, and those who speak different languages. It was the first ABS survey conducted as a result of a direction from Government, as allowed for in our legislation.

This report sets out the processes designed and implemented by the ABS to conduct the AMLPS. It chronicles the planning, systems, procedures, integrity measures and costs of the AMLPS. The report documents the considerable achievements of those who helped deliver the survey and serves to inform the design and conduct of relevant future statistical activities and other public/private sector services beyond statistical collections.

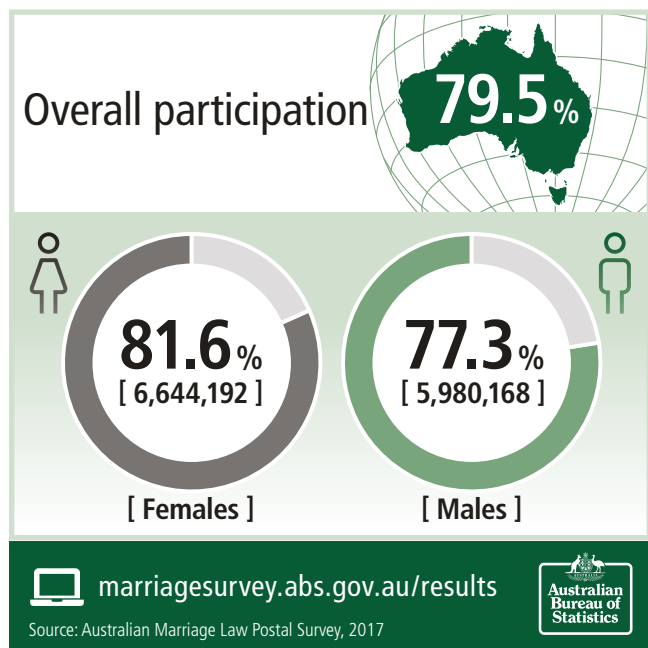
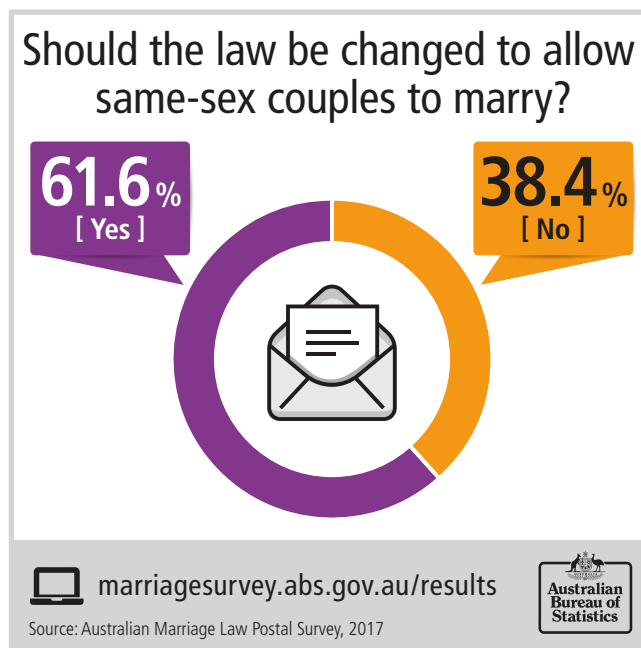
In presenting this report the ABS acknowledges the contribution and professionalism of all Taskforce staff, ABS support staff, contractors, commercial providers and third parties, government departments and agencies, peak bodies, stakeholders and media outlets involved in the successful delivery of the AMLPS.

David W. Kalisch
Australian Statistician

Summary of outcomes

An overall participation rate of 79.5 per cent or nearly four out of every five people, with consistent distribution across age groups, gender and geography, is a strong indicator of quality. This high participation rate was achieved because of Australians' significant interest in this topic combined with the statistical collection design and process which made participation easy and ensured quality and integrity, in particular:

- » A simple survey form containing a single question, supported with straightforward instructions that made it easy for participants to understand and respond.
- » The very high proportion of participants complying with the form's instructions, enabling accurate coding of responses (with accuracy reviewed by external observers).
- » Rigorous survey methods that included quality controls and integrity checks which were subject to independent review and assurance.
- » Protections against fraud that included mechanisms to guarantee only one response was counted for each participant.



"The approach adopted by the ABS was innovative, thorough and comprehensive and has supported the transparent and rigorous management of risks to the Survey."

Protiviti – Protiviti was engaged to provide independent assurance of the rigour and quality of survey processes.

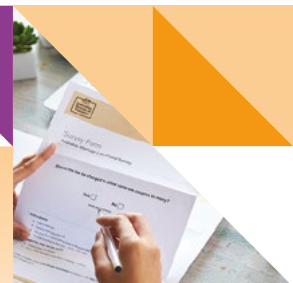
"The ABS proactively engaged with the disability sector in order to determine best practice supports... appropriate adjustments were also made available within a relatively short period of time. In my view, this set the Bureau apart as a leader in implementing accessible alternatives on a national scale."

Alastair McEwin Disability Discrimination Commissioner

For further information regarding the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, please contact the [National Information and Referral Service \(NIRS\)](#) on 1300 135 070.

Photographs and still footage taken and provided by MediaLink Productions and Missing Bits Productions.

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1. Overview of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey



1.1 Government direction to the ABS

Prior to the Australian Federal Election campaign of 2016, the Liberal-National Coalition Government made a commitment that it would provide the Australian people with an opportunity to have their say on whether the law should change to allow same-sex marriage.

The Government's preference was to deliver on that commitment through a compulsory attendance plebiscite, pursuant to a framework set out in the *Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016*. This bill was voted down by the Senate on 7 November 2016 and a motion to restore the Bill to the Senate Notice Paper was negated on 9 August 2017. Prior to the second Senate debate on a plebiscite model, the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and the Minister for Finance, Mathias Cormann announced that rejection of the bill by the Senate would result in a Government initiative to conduct a voluntary postal vote to give all Australians their say on the issue of whether the law should be changed to enable same-sex couples to marry, thus fulfilling the election commitment.

The government announced that it would use its powers under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* to direct the Australian Statistician to request statistical information from all eligible Australians on the electoral roll as to their views on whether or not the law in relation to marriage should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry.

The Prime Minister also announced that a Yes response recorded in the postal survey would facilitate the introduction of a Private Member's Bill to legalise same-sex marriage.

On 9 August 2017, the Treasurer directed the Australian Statistician, David W. Kalisch, to undertake a statistical collection. Under paragraph 9(1) (b) of the *Census and Statistical Act 1905*, the Minister can, by notice in writing, direct the Australian Statistician to collect statistical information in relation to 'prescribed matters'. The Direction requested the collection of:

- » statistical information about the proportion of electors who wish to express a view about whether the law should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry;
- » statistical information about the proportion of electors who are in favour of the law being changed to allow same-sex couples to marry; and
- » statistical information about the proportion of electors who are against the law being changed to allow same-sex couples to marry.

The Direction also requested that the statistical information include information about participating electors at the national level, at the level of each State and Territory and at the level of each federal electoral division, and that the statistical information be published on or before 15 November 2017.

On 9 August 2017, the Minister for Finance made an *Advance to the Finance Minister Determination (No 1 of 2017–2018)* (the Finance Direction) to increase the departmental item in the relation to the ABS by \$122 million to fund the AMLPS.

On 16 August 2017, the Minister for Finance, acting with authority delegated by the Treasurer, tabled an amended Direction to clarify the statistical information to be published and to clarify eligibility for participation in the statistical survey as those persons who would be entitled to vote in a federal election as at the close of rolls. All people enrolled on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll (or those who had made a valid request for enrolment) by 24 August 2017, and being 18 years of age, and not serving a prison sentence of three years or longer were eligible to participate in the AMLPS.

Participation in the AMLPS was voluntary.

1.2 Role of the ABS

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency, providing trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia. The ABS has an important leadership role, coordinating statistical activities and collaborating with official bodies in the collection, compilation, analysis and distribution of statistics.

The ABS is supported by a legislative framework that determines the functions and responsibilities of the ABS and establishes the independence of the Australian Statistician. The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* and the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* set out the primary functions, duties and powers of the ABS. Its purpose, as outlined in the ABS 2017–2018 Corporate Plan, is to inform Australia's important decisions by delivering relevant, trusted, objective data, statistics and insights.

The ABS operates independently from government when undertaking statistical collection activities to ensure that ABS statistics remain objective and impartial. While the government can direct the Australian Statistician to undertake a statistical collection, the manner in which statistics are collected is ultimately the decision of the Australian Statistician.

The ABS leveraged expertise, skills and knowledge within the organisation including considering 2016 Census lessons learnt and subsequent improvements. The ABS also used its extensive network of community contacts to design and implement the AMLPS.

1.3 Role of other agencies

Support from other government departments and agencies was integral to the conduct of the AMLPS. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) provided skills, expertise and advice and played a significant operational role in providing a snapshot of the Commonwealth electoral roll. From the announcement of the AMLPS to the close of the roll (24 August 2017), the AEC processed over 900,000 enrolment transactions, of which 90,000 were additions to the roll. The AEC also provided support to silent electors throughout the survey. The ABS established a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the AEC to facilitate an electronic copy of the Commonwealth electoral roll being provided to the ABS. The MOU also covered the arrangements for the four seconded AEC staff on the Marriage Collection Taskforce.

The ABS worked closely with Australia Post from the onset of the survey to ensure the effective delivery and return of up to 32 million letters over a short time frame.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provided ABS a designated Information Line and the support of DHS services in remote and regional Australia. A letter of agreement between DHS and the ABS covered DHS support.

The ABS also entered into MOUs with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for support services in remote and regional Australia.

The Attorney-General's Department provided access to the Document Verification Services that were required to support ABS online forms and an Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) officer joined the Taskforce to provide legal counsel.

The Prime Minister's Cyber Security Advisor, the Australian Signals Directorate and the Digital Transformation Agency provided support for data security and system design.

Appendix A lists key departments, agencies and stakeholders involved in the AMLPS.

1.4 Scope of the AMLPS

The AMLPS was a voluntary survey of all eligible Australians who were on, or had made a valid application to join, the Commonwealth electoral roll at close of business 24 August 2017. It asked: *“Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?”* The AMLPS was conducted primarily through the postal system, with an online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system available to support participation of those who could not access the postal system.

Between the announcement of the AMLPS on 8 August 2017 and the close of the electoral roll on 24 August 2017, a communication campaign called for all eligible Australians to enrol or update their details on the Commonwealth electoral roll. Following the roll’s close, the AEC provided the ABS with a copy of the electoral roll which was used to generate personally addressed letters and individually barcoded survey forms for all eligible Australians.

The survey collection was open between 12 September 2017 and 7 November 2017. 12,727,920 million people or just over 79.5 per cent of the 16,006,180 eligible Australians participated.

Eligible Australians living in Australian territories including Norfolk Island, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and the Australian Antarctic Territory were supported to participate. People overseas during the survey were also able to participate through an online or the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response option (with those registered as overseas with the AEC sent a specific letter with clear instructions and a Secure Access Code).

The ABS engaged with over 200 communities in remote areas in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia and established 27 regional pickup locations to assist people living in remote and regional areas. Eligible Australians were also able to utilise over 600 existing government facilities administered by DHS across Australia including designated agents, access points and remote service centres, which provided self-service computers and/or phones. Form pickup and drop off locations were also established in nine ABS offices across the country to support those living in capital cities who were homeless or travelling domestically (and unable to access their home post).

The AMLPS involved a core Taskforce of more than 100 staff from the ABS and 6 seconded staff. There was also additional support staff from within the ABS numbering around 300. More than 20 Government agencies were involved in conducting the survey (refer Appendix A).

2. Context

It is important to understand the context in which the AMLPS was conducted. The topic of same-sex marriage was a sensitive, polarising issue in the community with strongly held views and opinions on both sides of the debate.

2.1 Yes and No Campaigns

A number of peak groups on both sides of the debate played an active role in raising awareness of the survey. The ABS needed to remain neutral while also maintaining open channels of communication with all interested parties.

Due to previous public discussion on the plebiscite proposal for ascertaining public views on same-sex marriage, two formalised peak groups had already been formed to represent the opposing Yes and No perspectives on the survey question.

Following a request from one campaign group to feature AMLPS materials (i.e. envelopes, letter, survey form) in their advertising, the ABS developed guidance and conditions of use of these materials. This guidance applied to advertising by any campaign or third party that sought permission to use official ABS survey materials.

The ABS met with representatives of the Yes and No campaigns over the course of the AMLPS and representatives from the Yes and No campaigns were invited to a secure lock-up immediately prior to the release of the survey result on 15 November 2017.

2.2 High Court Challenges

The AMLPS was the subject of two High Court challenges lodged on 10 August 2017.

- » The first case challenged the determination under s10 of the *Appropriation Act (No 1) 2017–2018* to increase the departmental item for the ABS by \$122 million to fund the AMLPS.
- » The second case also contended that the appropriation was invalid, and further challenged the Treasurer's direction of 9 August 2017 on the basis of an argument that the opinions that were being sought by the AMLPS were not statistical information within the meaning of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* and the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* and that the Electoral Commissioner is not authorised by the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to conduct or participate in the conduct of the AMLPS.

In response to concerns that the survey might proceed before High Court consideration of the challenges, the ABS provided on 11 August 2017 an undertaking to the High Court that the ABS would not request or direct any person to complete or supply a survey form or answer a question for the purpose of collecting statistical information before 12 September 2017.

Both matters were referred for consideration by the Full Court. The Full Court of the High Court heard legal arguments on 5, 6 and 7 September 2017 and handed down its ruling on 7 September 2017.

The High Court found that the Finance Direction which increased funding to the ABS by \$122 million was valid and that the ABS did have the authority to collect statistical information in the form of the AMLPS. The full reasons of the High Court's finding were released on 28 September 2017.

2.3 Senate Inquiry

On 14 August 2017 the arrangements for the AMLPS was referred to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report.

The terms of reference of the Inquiry covered:

- » the type of information being collected
- » the legislative basis for the survey, departments and agencies involved
- » protections for communities
- » storage and control of data
- » risk management
- » the use of the statistical information collected

The ABS appeared at public hearings on three occasions; 17 August 2017, 7 September 2017 and 15 September 2017 and answered a number of questions on notice. The ABS has provided three written submissions to the Inquiry (including this report). Submissions to the Inquiry close on 31 January 2018. The Inquiry is due to table its report by the second sitting Tuesday in February 2018.

Details of the Inquiry including the terms of reference, committee members, hearing details including Hansard and submissions is available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Finance_and_Public_Administration/postalsurvey

2.4 Safeguards legislation

To ensure that the survey had a comprehensive suite of safeguards in place to allow the expression of free and informed views, to allow persons to hold and express views without being vilified and ensure that public communications were clearly authorised, so people knew who was communicating with them, and to prevent undue influence through bribery, threats and misleading or deceptive publications, the Government introduced the *Marriage Law Survey (Additional Safeguards) Act 2017*.

This legislation complemented existing safeguards, including obligations and privacy protections, on officials conducting the survey including under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* (the Census and Statistics Act), the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, and mail and telecommunications offences in the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Criminal Code).

The ABS also engaged with the Australian Federal Police and each state and territory police service regarding potential fraud and other matters.

3. Key features of the survey

3.1 Participation

The ABS understood that the level of participation in the AMLPS would have a bearing on the integrity of the data and outcome. From the onset of the process, the ABS used a number of mechanisms to maximise participation. These included:

- » promoting high levels of awareness across the community
- » making completing the survey simple and easy for people by applying a behavioural focus on encouraging fast return of responses
- » providing alternative options for people unable to access the mail service
- » transparently communicating clear, simple information about the process
- » Rapid and public response to issues that might undermine confidence in the integrity of the survey

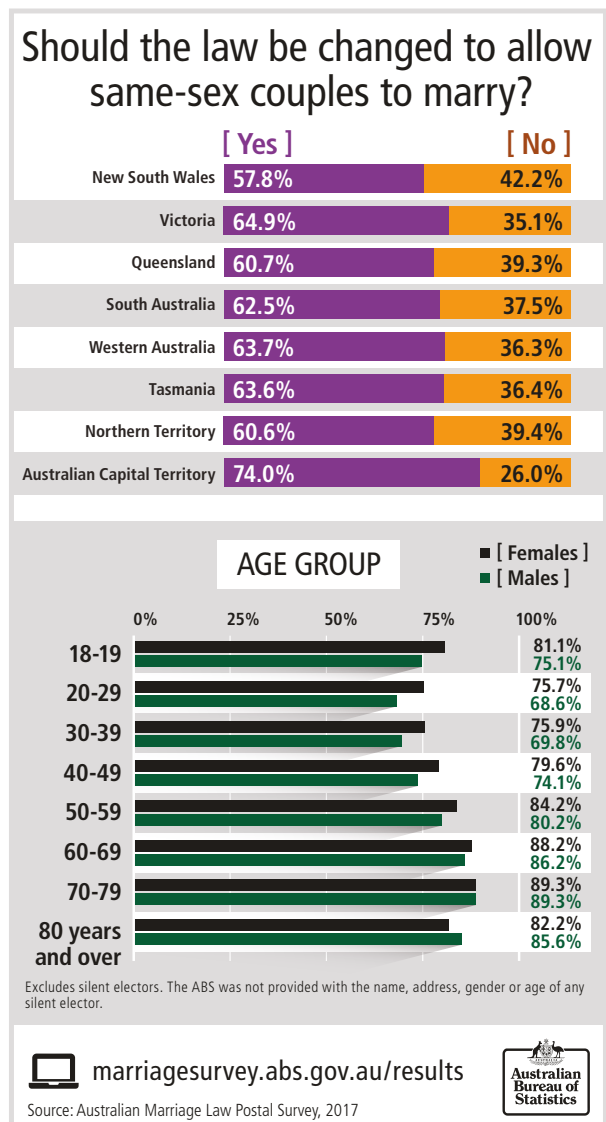
Survey forms began to be returned from 13 September 2017, with the bulk of returned survey forms arriving in the first few weeks.

Given the high levels of interest in the AMLPS the ABS published weekly estimates of participation rates between 3 October 2017 and 7 November 2017. The primary input to the first three weekly estimates was the weight and number of containers of sorted envelopes delivered by Australia Post, rather than counts of individual forms with adjustments for paperless responses and an allowance for forms that are damaged or invalid. On 24 October 2017, the ABS moved to report the estimate based on counts of processed forms.

Table 1: Weekly public estimates of participation

Week ¹	Estimated responses	Estimated rate of response
3 October	9,200,000	57.5 per cent
10 October	10,000,000	62.5 per cent
17 October	10,800,000	67.5 per cent
24 October	11,900,000	74.5 per cent
31 October	12,300,000	77.0 per cent
7 November	12,600,000	78.5 per cent

In total 12,727,920 million people, representing 79.5 per cent of eligible Australians participated in the survey. Being a voluntary survey, this represents a very high participation rate and a strong indicator of the integrity of the results.



¹ Announcements were made on Tuesdays about the estimated number of survey forms received as of the preceding Friday.

3.2 Highlights

The AMLPS was conducted from 12 September 2017 to 7 November 2017 and reached over 16 million eligible Australians. While planning for the Census commences over five years prior, planning for the AMLPS commenced on 9 August 2017 with many processes needing to be settled in extremely short time frames and the entire process completed in fewer than 100 days. Key highlights include:

- » the largest single mail-out that Australia Post has ever undertaken. Approximately 29 million items were handled by Australia Post (around 16 million envelopes were sent to eligible Australians with almost 13 million envelopes returned)
- » a collaborative, whole of government approach involving 27 departments and agencies
- » a final cost of around \$80.5 million
- » an extensive communication campaign was undertaken throughout the survey period to raise awareness of the survey, key dates and how to participate
- » fast preparation of a simple, clear survey form and effective instruction letter that was tested to deliver a fast response (and ensure ABS could receive and scan all returned forms and compile the statistics in time to meet the results deadline)
- » inclusion strategies were developed for silent electors and people overseas, in rural and remote locations or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with a disability, who did not speak English, experiencing homelessness, and in aged care facilities and prisons
- » information on the survey was translated into 15 languages on the back of the survey letter
- » engaged with more than 200 communities in remote areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia for people to receive replacement forms or Secure Access Codes between 25 September 2017 and 20 October 2017
- » replacement survey forms were also available at pick-up and drop-off locations in all Capital Cities as well as 27 regional locations across Australia
- » paperless (online and Interactive Voice Response telephone) response options were developed for those who could not access the mail service
- » an Information Line operated from 14 August 2017 to 24 November 2017 seven days a week. The Information Phone Line received 208,894 phone calls over this period with an average 12 second answer time
- » a specific website provided information on the survey process, frequently asked questions, inclusion strategies, privacy policy, key dates and online enquiry forms. A total of 134,113 online enquiries were made, with 109,455 replacement forms issued and 16,464 Secure Access Codes
- » excellent levels of support from a range of stakeholders to support fraud prevention and quickly investigate incidents including Australia Post, online market places and social media sites, and policing authorities
- » external observers were invited to witness randomly selected sample batches of survey responses to view how the survey responses were coded
- » on release day the statistics were announced at 10.04am with the statistics live on the website less than one minute later. At peak (10:07am), there were 297,000 requests per minute to the marriage survey website. This equates to approximately 21,000 page hits per minute. Over the course of 5 minutes 20.5 GigaBytes of traffic (GB) engaged the website as Australia (85 per cent of the traffic) and the rest of the world (15 per cent of the traffic) accessed the marriage survey data on the ABS website
- » an analysis of Australian media coverage produced in the 99 days between 9 August and 15 November 2017 found 15,574 items. This coverage reached a cumulative audience of 427,197,563
- » an analysis of Australian media coverage produced in the two days between 15 November and 16 November found 2,166 items. This coverage reached a cumulative audience of 49,021,703
- » advertisements were translated into 38 languages, including seven Indigenous Australian languages
- » the Marriage Survey media team responded to more than 750 media enquiries
- » over the course of the survey, ABS spokesperson Jonathan Palmer was interviewed on radio and television more than 105 times

3.3 Challenges

The AMLPS presented a number of challenges due to the complexity of the exercise, the tight time frame and the involvement of multiple agencies to deliver the AMLPS. Key challenges included:

- » fewer than 100 days to plan, design and implement a large logistical exercise including IT operations, electoral roll updating, silent elector management, survey design, response collection, high volume printing, mail dispatch, return and scanning, community engagement, stakeholder engagement, advertising, communication and media inquiry handling, public engagement and service delivery, identity verification, fraud management, statistics production and publication, physical and data security
- » rapid development of systems and processes that would sufficiently automate the handling of large volumes of materials
- » supporting participation of those eligible Australians unable to participate through the postal service
- » continuing to deliver on ABS business as usual work
- » public expectations of a plebiscite-like process (around integrity of the process and opportunity to participate)
- » prevention of fraud in ways that would not discourage participation
- » promoting understanding and confidence in the steps taken to ensure anonymity of survey responses
- » ensuring high levels of physical, IT and data security across multiple sites
- » undertaking a large scale competitive procurement exercise in very short time frames
- » operating sensitively and neutrally in an emotionally charged environment attracting high levels of media and social media attention alongside political and community debate
- » coordinating across multiple departments and agencies
- » this was the first time the ABS had undertaken a postal survey of this scale

3.4 Innovations

Whilst the AMLPS posed a number of challenges, it also provided opportunity to develop new and innovative processes and systems, as well as utilise existing systems. The following innovations were used:

- » behavioural economics principles used in the 2016 Census were applied in the design of the survey forms, instruction letter, outgoing and return envelopes and advertising campaign
- » an anonymous single use mark-in barcode system was employed to ensure that only one survey result was counted per respondent
- » an online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system was developed in partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) using contemporary cloud computing technology to securely receive anonymous responses from people unable to respond using the postal service
- » an automated online facility was developed to verify identity and enable survey forms and Secure Access Codes to be ordered, and mailing addresses to be updated
- » extensive use of encryption to protect data
- » a combination of online and offline technology was used by field officers working in remote and regional locations to check the electoral roll and issue replacement forms
- » a new user friendly website was developed solely for the AMLPS to ensure people could easily access simple clear information, enable them to request replacement forms and provide a mechanism for feedback
- » the Taskforce took an agile approach including twice daily stand-up meetings leading to quicker and pragmatic decision making, collaboration and shared purpose
- » judicious use of existing technology and capability and the outsourcing of services to third parties with strong ABS oversight to minimise risk
- » independent assurers for the entire process and for privacy safeguards

3.5 Endorsements

The ABS received a number of endorsements relating to the conduct and management of the AMLPS.

Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Alastair McEwin, commended the Australian Bureau of Statistics on their approach to ensure people with disabilities were included in this survey. He noted, *“The ABS proactively engaged with the disability sector in order to determine best practice supports... appropriate adjustments were also made available within a relatively short period of time. In my view, this set the Bureau apart as a leader in implementing accessible alternatives on a national scale.”*

Commonwealth Ombudsman, Michael Manthorpe, congratulated the Australian Statistician on the manner in which the AMLPS was run, noting that *“Given the enormous public interest in the recent survey conducted by the ABS about same sex marriage, I anticipated that some volume of complaints might come our way about its administration.... In the end we received just three complaints about the ABS’s management of the survey”*.

Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils Australia (FECCA) made a submission to the Senate Inquiry on the conduct of the AMLPS acknowledging the ABS’ work to support participation by multicultural communities of Australia, *“FECCA would like to commend the ABS for their role in ensuring that Australians from CALD backgrounds were able to full participate meaningfully in what has been a historic process.”*

Protiviti was engaged to provide independent assurance of the rigour and quality of survey processes and commented that *“The approach adopted by the ABS was innovative, thorough and comprehensive and has supported the transparent and rigorous management of risks to the Survey.”*

Malcolm Crompton AM, Managing Director, Information Integrity Solutions Pty Ltd, and Privacy Commissioner of Australia 1999–2004 provided the following statement: *“The ABS has taken a strong ‘privacy by design’ approach to protecting the privacy of Australians in designing the survey. I am satisfied with the range of privacy measures that the ABS has embedded into the design of the survey and supporting functions. I am also satisfied that the mitigation strategies and response plans are effective and appropriate in the context of the survey.”*

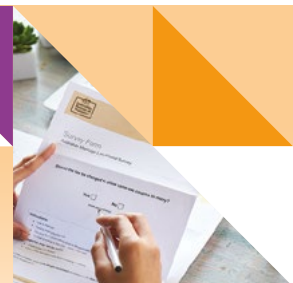
Endorsements are detailed in Appendix B.

3.6 Timetable

Table 2: Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey timetable

Dates	Event
8 August 2017	Announcement of Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey
9 August 2017	Direction issued
13 August 2017 to 24 August 2017	Advertising campaign (enrol/update your details)
16 August 2017	Amended Direction issued
24 August 2017	Close of electoral roll
5 September 2017 to 7 September 2017	High Court Challenge (hearings and decision)
11 September 2017 to 20 October 2017	Advertising campaign (survey process: what to do/how to order replacement materials)
12 September 2017 to 25 September 2017	Mail-out of survey forms
25 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response options available - Replacement survey forms able to be issued
25 September 2017 to 20 October 2017	Implementation of remote and regional inclusion strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including capital cities
3 October 2017	External Observer process commenced
20 October 2017	Final day to request Secure Access Code (to access online and IVR system response options) or replacement survey form
21 October 2017 to 5 November 2017	Advertising campaign (survey closing soon)
27 October 2017	Date ABS encouraged participants to lodge survey response
7 November 2017	Close of survey
15 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication of the results of the survey response and participation data - Publication of Statement of quality and integrity

4. Planning and design



Immediately following the direction from the Treasurer to Australian Statistician, David W. Kalisch, on 9 August 2017, the Marriage Collection Taskforce was formed with Deputy Australian Statistician, Jonathan Palmer, appointed as the Taskforce lead.

On the same day, experienced and expert staff from within the ABS were recruited to crucial early roles.

- » A secretariat was formed immediately to manage program initiation (on-boarding staff, arranging physical and technology infrastructure, and managing project coordination).
- » A dedicated communications team was formed to set the tone for survey communications and develop clear and consistent messages.
- » An information line was established within 4 days to provide an avenue for public enquiries and to re-inforce consistent and clear messages.
- » A team of experts in procurement and logistics was formed to progress early preparations for delivering a large scale mail-out operation.

In addition, crucial discussions occurred with key partner AEC to inform early thinking on aspects of the survey process. This leveraged some early AEC planning around a possible plebiscite, elements of which were relevant to the survey.

Within the first week of the Taskforce a mass communications campaign had commenced, an information line was operational and public information made available online. Significant progress had also been made on defining the details of the survey process (including detailed inclusion strategies), procurement of mail-house services and design of survey materials.

Due to the extremely tight timeframe within which to conduct the survey, much of the planning happened in parallel with the design.

4.1 Principles

Some core principles were developed and set early, and comprised:

- » smooth public experience
- » providing all eligible Australians with the opportunity to participate
- » data integrity – ensuring the results are not influenced by fraud or errors in processing, and protecting the data in all systems by implementing robust security arrangements
- » leveraging existing ABS experience including Census experience and systems
- » privacy by design

4.2 Stakeholder engagement

The Taskforce engaged early in the survey design process with a range of organisations in order to ensure the best possible strategies to support participation were in place, including:

- » community organisations representing diversity groups (e.g. COTA Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils Australia, Vision Australia, Disability Youth Network, Human Rights Commission)
- » employers with large numbers of staff offshore (e.g. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Defence, Australian Antarctic Division, BHP Billiton and Santos)
- » the Yes and No campaigns

This early engagement led to improvements in strategies and created some 'buy-in' from these stakeholders in the process. When issues arose during the survey, the earlier engagement supported direct contact between ABS and one of these groups, or vice versa, which supported more timely and effective resolutions.

The ABS made some materials available to the campaigns to ensure that their advertising was accurate around core details relating to the AMLPS. This arrangement let the ABS leverage their campaigns to deliver clear and consistent messages.

4.3 User-centred design

The ABS established a telephone Information Line operated by DHS, and website to answer user inquiries and requests. The ABS adopted a user-centred approach to designing the workflows and scripts for the Information Line, and in developing the structure and content of the Marriage Survey website. This required an upfront investment of time to explore why, how and when citizens might engage with the Information Line or website, and then developing scripts and services to aim to resolve the issue in that interaction (i.e. no escalation or need to contact back). This also meant more frequent – and often wholesale – changes to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) scripts and web content which reflected the different stages of the campaign. The expertise and knowledge of DHS contributed significantly to the development of a successful user-centred Information Line.

A dedicated website for the Marriage Survey also demonstrated a more user-centric approach – allowing easier access to the desired information away from other irrelevant ABS website content, regular updates of the most relevant information and easy access to key information on the first page. This website content also provided easy answers to common questions which reduced the need for calls to the Information Line.

4.4 Behavioural Economics

The Taskforce engaged behavioural economists from Insight Analytics to work together with the communications team to develop all AMLPS contact materials. These materials included the approach envelope for the survey, the letter, survey form, reply paid envelope, and material for specific audiences such as eligible overseas Australians and silent electors. These materials focused on the actions that the reader had to take, rather than the details that were more important to the ABS.

4.5 Privacy

The survey had privacy and legal specialists embedded in the project from an early stage, supporting privacy consideration early in the design and development process. This ensured that privacy considerations informed system and process design and development. The survey also gained value from using an external and eminent privacy expert, Malcolm Crompton, to review the design principles and issue a public statement of assurance. The privacy policy was very clear on the website and could be accessed through the information line.

4.6 IT development/systems planning

The AMLPS information technology had the following key elements:

- » a statistical survey frame (a snapshot of the Commonwealth electoral roll)
- » online and Information Line request option for anyone on the survey frame to request a replacement survey form or Secure Access Code
- » survey frame look up facility for ABS staff to match respondents to the frame and generate a replacement survey form or Secure Access Code
- » an online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response option
- » a dedicated marriage survey website
- » data capture facility of paper survey forms
- » response receipt, data processing and dissemination of results

The short time frames for the development of technology applications and infrastructure to support the AMLPS were met through the reuse and adaption of existing ABS developed systems – primarily 2016 Census systems. These systems were adapted quickly and formed a robust base for the survey.

The use of a loosely coupled, service-oriented architecture allowed the Taskforce programmers to develop and test each part independently and in parallel greatly expedite development time frames.

The ABS engaged early with a number of key IT and technology stakeholders in the APS to seek support and assistance. These included the Prime Minister's CyberSecurity Advisor, Australian Signals Directorate and the Digital Transformation Agency.

4.7 Methodology

The methodology used by the ABS for the survey was consistent with standard statistical processes for any collection. The survey included the following statistical techniques:

- » design and testing of collection materials
- » establishment and management of collection against a survey frame
- » classify and code responses (refer to Appendix C, Coding Guidelines)
- » quality gates to ensure integrity of process
- » calculating aggregates for federal electoral division, State/Territory and national level tables
- » reporting of participation by available demographic and geographic variables
- » web-based dissemination of results
- » published data quality statement

In designing the AMLPS, the ABS carefully considered the use of a range of statistical techniques – including the use of sampling and adjustment for non-response. The use of a sample was not consistent with the Government direction that the ABS seek the view of all eligible Australians. In essence, the AMLPS was a Census of eligible Australians.

The statistical methodology that was applied was essentially the same as that used for the voluntary Religious Affiliation question asked in the Australian Census of Population and Housing. This question was not adjusted for non-response as the ABS was not confident that the characteristics of those who didn't respond were the same as those who did respond. For the same reason, the AMLPS was not adjusted for non-response.

The survey response data provide the views of those eligible Australians who chose to respond. The survey participation data provide the age and gender characteristics of those eligible Australians who chose to express a view through the survey. In total over 20,000 data fields were published by the ABS on 15 November 2017.

4.8 Procurement

As noted, a key challenge was the procurement of essential services from external contractors in very short time frames – in particular the need to have survey forms, instructions and envelopes printed and ready for mailing by 12 September 2017 in order to meet the government's timeframe for the conduct of the survey and the production of results. This timeframe allowed 24 business days to undertake two key procurement exercises and have contractors in place to develop, test and implement processes.

The two initial procurement exercises were for printing and mail-house services and for data capture.

Procurement of printing and mail-house services

Fuji Xerox Document Management Solutions Pty Limited (FXDMS) was selected to undertake printing and mail-house services. The ABS had in place an existing contract with FXDMS which had provided these services for the 2016 Census. The amended contract was able to be varied to accommodate the short time frames.

The contract provided significant benefits including:

- » immediate commencement to meet time frames
- » reduced administrative burdens and overheads, contract terms and conditions
- » a comprehensive risk management strategy
- » five capital city processing sites to allow 'same state' bulk postage charges and the spreading of risks across five sites for the production of printed items, folding, inserting, and lodgement of survey materials
- » operations could be moved to alternative sites to minimise the risk in delays;
- » multiple sites across Australia leading to reductions in delivery time by Australia Post and subsequent mail-out
- » standard secured business practice and extensive experience in handling confidential personal information

This approach complied with the requirements under ABS and Commonwealth procurement policy, including the requirements under Clause 10.3 b of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules which allowed cases of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseen by the relevant entity for goods and services to be obtained under limited tender.

The paper used for survey materials was:

- » sourced from Australian Paper
- » produced with Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) certification
- » sourced from certified managed forests
- » from an ISO14001 certified paper mill under the Environment Management Systems

Procurement of data capture services

For the procurement of data capture services, the ABS decided to conduct a competitive process rather than use existing contract or panel arrangements which may not adequately cover all requirements of the AMLPS. The procurement options that were available involved an approach to market through an open tender process, a prequalified tender process or a limited tender process.

Given the time frame, a limited tender process was considered most feasible.

Desktop research and analysis identified two market leading companies with the capability and capacity to provide the services needed for a data capture solution. Services included; receipt, sorting, scanning, and data capture of survey results. Both these companies participated in the tender process.

This approach retained competitive tension and comparison of the solution and pricing, with an evaluation undertaken against set criteria to ensure a value for money outcome. Evaluation of tender responses was undertaken by a panel which included experts drawn from the ABS and other APS agencies (including the Australian Taxation Office and the Department of Finance). The limited tender process exceeded the compliance requirements under ABS and Commonwealth procurement policy, including the requirements under Clause 10.3b of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. FXDMS was evaluated as providing the best value for money option and was contracted to provide the services.

5. Collection process



The collection process included updating the Commonwealth Electoral Roll and address details, creating a statistical survey frame; designing, testing, printing and despatch of survey forms, providing online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response options in limited circumstances, validating identity for replacement materials, scanning returned survey forms, coding and anonymising responses, validating automatic and manual coding accuracy, and storing data safely and securely.

5.1 Method of collection

Addresses from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll provided the basis of communication with eligible Australians.

The ABS considered the appropriate mode (paper, online or both) for the collection and it was quickly decided that the primary mode should be a paper survey form sent and received via the post. A paper-based process where a survey form was mailed out (rather than an online code) would increase the likelihood of participation and a fast response (open the letter, complete the form, insert it in the reply paid envelope, mail it back).

Nevertheless, it was clear that not everyone would be able to participate in a postal survey and paperless options would be needed by some groups in the community. The ABS considered the pros and cons of an online form vs an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and decided that both were needed to maximise participation. Some disabled people would be best served by the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) option while other eligible Australians, particularly those travelling overseas, would be more likely to use the online form. The ABS contracted Amazon Web Services (AWS) to provide system infrastructure to host online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system options.

In designing the survey form, simplicity and timeliness of printing were key objectives. The ABS used Australian recycled paper, a simple A4 size and standard DL envelopes that allowed printing and scanning to be completed quickly and easily.



5.2 Eligibility

All people enrolled on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll (or those who had made a valid request for enrolment) by 24 August 2017, and being 18 years of age, and not serving a prison sentence of three years or longer were eligible to participate in the AMLPS.

Participation in the AMLPS was voluntary.

5.3 Enrolment process

Following the announcement of the AMLPS, all eligible Australians were encouraged to enrol or update their enrolment details. The electoral roll remained open until 24 August 2017. During that time the communication campaign encouraged people to enrol or update their enrolment details.

Following the initial provision of the electoral roll, the AEC subsequently made a number of administrative adjustments. This resulted in additional electors' records being provided to the ABS for inclusion in the survey.

At the close of rolls, more than 16 million Australians were enrolled marking the highest electoral enrolment rate since federation.

5.4 Silent electors

A person can register as a silent elector if they believe having their address on the electoral roll would put them or their family's safety at risk. Once a person is granted silent elector status, only their name is shown on the publicly available electoral roll. For this reason, the ABS did not receive any name or address information for silent electors.

To ensure that silent electors, and Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Australian Federal Police (AFP) personnel who were registered with the AEC as deployed overseas, were able to participate in the AMLPS, the AEC undertook the role of printing and dispatch of survey materials to those groups. This ensured that at no time was the ABS provided with the name, address, gender or age of any silent elector or registered ADF or AFP personnel. The ABS reviewed the AEC's proposed instruction letter to ensure it maintained consistency with the instructions for other Australians.

The AEC maintained a separation between ABS processes and silent electors' personal information by using the print/mail-house supplier that is used for AEC roll-related mailing (CanPrint). The AEC worked with the ABS and CanPrint to print and test forms to ensure that they scanned as per the required specification. At no time was ABS in direct contact with CanPrint.

The AEC also established a dedicated Hotline as a single point of contact for silent electors.

The ABS only received voter ID numbers for silent voters (without identity information like names or addresses). This allowed the ABS to manage replacement forms, while preventing any individual voter from returning more than one response.

5.5 Statistical survey frame

To administer the AMLPS and ensure integrity of the responses received, the ABS created a statistical survey frame. The Commonwealth electoral roll formed the basis of the survey frame, providing details of eligible electors (including names and addresses, division, date of birth and gender). In the case of silent electors the frame contained only a "unit identifier" and no other individual information. The survey frame ensured that each eligible person was issued with a survey package and that only one returned response per person would be counted.

The survey frame allowed the ABS to check details where a person made contact seeking a replacement survey form, or to provide an alternative address for the survey form to be posted to or to request a Secure Access Code.

5.6 Survey forms

Survey form design

Survey materials were developed by the ABS and informed by public testing. Designs were focussed on ensuring the survey form was simple and easy to complete, instructions were impartial and easy to follow, and content and design were neutral and process-focussed.

The survey envelope and letter, along with the survey form, were informed by behavioural economics principles, and advice provided by contracted behavioural economics experts, Insight Analytics.

The covering letter advised people about the survey and how to participate using simple and directive instructions. Information was carefully structured and ordered to create urgency, maximise immediate response and ensure recipients keep their survey form safe (to reduce the likelihood of theft or fraud).

The letter included translated information about how to receive in-language assistance from the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) in the top 15 languages for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) participants.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Survey Form
Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?

Yes No
(mark one box only)

Instructions:

- Use a dark pen
- Clearly mark only one box
- Put your form (and nothing else) in the enclosed Reply Paid envelope (no stamp needed)
- Put that envelope in the mail... today if you can!

A response may not be valid:

- if both boxes are marked
- if the printed barcodes on this form is missing or altered.

If you make a mistake, go to www.abs.gov.au/contact or contact us on 1800 572 113 for a replacement survey form straight away.

For more information go to abs.gov.au or call 1800 572 113

This information is collected under the authority of the Census and Statistics Act 1955.
The Privacy Statement is available at www.abs.gov.au.

The ABS encourages you to return this form straight away.
ABS cannot accept forms received at the address after 5pm: 7 November 2017.

These materials were tested with the public. Feedback from the testing was overwhelmingly positive, with these materials viewed as direct and immediately communicating the purpose of the mail. They provided straightforward instruction on the upcoming survey and how to participate and elicited no negative feedback from potential respondents.

The ABS liaised with both the Yes and No campaign on the design of the survey form. The decision to place the Yes box first was based on previous approaches to Yes/No questions such as in referendums. The horizontal alignment of the boxes ensured neutral positioning.

The ABS decided to be unspecific as to the nature of the mark (tick, cross, line) that should be placed in the Yes/No boxes on the survey form. This decision would avoid inadvertent invalidations caused by a misunderstanding of the instructions.

Survey forms for silent electors were identical however were printed and dispatched from a different location than the one used by the ABS, and the AEC letter was informed by the same behavioural principles.

The design of the online survey form and the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system were largely based on the paper survey version with small changes required to optimise user experience across different modes. The ABS consulted with the DTA and Vision Australia to ensure the paperless response options were fit for purpose and as accessible as possible within the timeframe.

Generation of survey forms

Each survey form contained a barcode. The barcode was a single use, anonymous code to ensure that returned responses were legitimate and remained anonymous. The barcodes were created using an algorithm that generated more than two quintillion combinations of letters and numbers in order to produce a set of highly secure barcodes.

The barcode was used to link a specific form to an eligible Australian and their electoral division and was used for 'mark-in' purposes only. The barcode had no other identifying information (such as a name or address).

Barcodes for silent electors and registered ADF and AFP personnel were provided to the AEC (along with unallocated barcodes for reissuing and Secure Access Codes). As with all other respondents the survey form itself contained only the barcode and did not contain names, addresses or any identifying information. This ensured that anyone with access to a completed survey form was unable to identify the respondent.

Generating the survey forms occurred between 7 September 2017 and 20 September 2017.

In total, around 64 million documents were printed including; survey forms, instruction letters, envelopes and return envelopes for every eligible Australian on the electoral roll.

Mail-out of survey forms

The AMLPS package comprised of a survey envelope, a survey form, instructions on how to complete the survey form and a reply paid envelope. Survey packages were mailed out between 12 September 2017 and 25 September 2017 to the address recorded on the electoral roll.

Where Australians had provided a postal address to the AEC, in addition to the person's enrolment address, this was used. The recorded postal address is not always maintained by electors, and is also not visible to electors through the AEC's electoral roll lookup service. This led to some confusion, however the ABS made online and phone based services available to request a replacement form to a different address.

Survey materials followed standard Australia Post delivery procedures for personalised mail (i.e. containing name details, and not 'to the householder' or similar), specified redirection processes and standard procedures for mail sorting, and community mail agent counter collection where street delivery was not available.

In the case of silent electors and registered ADF and AFP personnel, the AMLPS package also contained a letter from the Electoral Commissioner which informed them that the AEC was mailing their packs on behalf of the ABS to ensure their privacy was protected.



For many remote residents, including those living in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, mail was held by registered postal agencies for collection where individual mail delivery services were not possible or available. Partner agencies helped communicate to those communities that the forms were available for collection and worked with leaders in those communities to raise awareness.

Over 16 million survey forms were issued through the postal system.

The AEC lodged around 123,000 of these survey packages between 19 September 2017 and 20 September 2017.

Priority post was used for all mail delivery and receipt. Early dispatch was used for remote areas followed by regional areas and major cities. This ensured that most forms were received around the same time, coinciding with a peak in the ABS advertising campaign. The majority of survey forms were delivered by late September 2017.

Where mail wasn't available an online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system option was available. Special arrangements were also in place for Australians overseas. Refer to Inclusions strategy, Section 7.



Australians with overseas addresses

Some eligible Australians had an overseas postal address as part of their enrolment. Given it was not clear how long it would take for post to return to Australia, the ABS created a distinct letter containing a Secure Access Code for these Australians. There were 34,783 survey letters and Secure Access Codes mailed out between 12 September 2017 and 25 September 2017 to overseas addresses.

Additional strategies were put in place to support other Australians overseas to participate in the AMLPS (refer Section 7.1).

Reissued survey forms

Where an eligible Australian did not receive a survey form or their survey form was lost, damaged or destroyed, a new survey form could be requested. The replacement survey form contained a new barcode and their original survey form barcode was invalidated. This ensured that only one valid response was counted for each person, and that a potentially stolen form would not be counted.

People could request a new survey form or a Secure Access Code in order to submit their response online or through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system between 25 September 2017 and 20 October 2017.

In some cases, people requesting a replacement survey form at an ABS pickup location chose to provide the completed survey form to ABS officers rather than using the postal service. In these cases the ABS officers posted survey forms as soon as practicable. In some ABS locations Australia Post provided a short term locked mail box for the survey.

In total 148,155 replacement survey forms (or 0.9 per cent of eligible electors) were issued including 1,224 replacement survey forms for silent electors and ADF and AFP personnel registered as deployed overseas.

Verification processes

Before survey forms were issued, a person would need to provide sufficient identifying information to verify their identity and that they were eligible to participate. In some instances, people who requested a replacement form via the Information Line or at the pick-up locations were unable to be verified on the survey frame. If the person was confident that they should be eligible, the ABS staff member noted their details in the system and flagged them for investigation. The person was then handed a survey form and advised that the form would only become valid if the ABS reviewed their details and were able to verify them as eligible. Members of the Taskforce reviewed these records and determined the validity of their request for a replacement form.

ABS staff also provided AEC enrolment forms to people in these circumstances so that they could become enrolled for future purposes should their details not be confirmed on the roll.

5.7 Supporting inclusion strategies

To ensure that all eligible Australians had the opportunity to participate in the AMLPS, the ABS implemented a number of inclusion strategies. The ABS engaged with a wide range of government departments, agencies and other key stakeholders during development and implementation of these strategies to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness. Refer to Inclusion Strategies (Section 7) for further detail.

These inclusion strategies include; access to an online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response option, use of a trusted person to assist in completing the survey form and the use of pickup locations.

Many of the stakeholders the ABS engaged with during the development of the inclusion strategies also provided support in promoting the survey within the relevant community group.

Online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system options

An online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system was available for people to submit a response to the survey. The following groups of people were able to use this service:

- » people overseas
- » people in aged care facilities
- » people with a disability, injury or illness
- » people unable to access mail or living in a remote area with less frequent mail service
- » people experiencing homelessness
- » people in an institution with no mail access

These groups of people could request a Secure Access Code (a unique 16 digit code) that could be used to provide an anonymous survey response online or through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

The online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system was available from 25 September 2017 to 7 November 2017.

In total 34,447 eligible Australians responded to the survey through the online (33,889) and the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems (558).

These services were designed, built, hosted and secured in partnership with AWS providing a low cost, contemporary and cyber resilient user experience for the survey.

Trusted person

Where a person was unable to access or complete their survey form (for example, if they were overseas, they were ill, did not speak English well or suffered from a disability), that person was able to ask another person whom they trusted to assist them to complete the survey on their behalf. This concept of a trusted person has been successfully used as part of Census processes and has been proven to be a successful technique to ensure eligible survey respondents can participate.

A trusted person was usually a friend, family member or another person that could be trusted to complete the form on another person's behalf and represented that person's view. The Marriage Survey website provided guidance on the role of a trusted person including:

- » You do not need to complete a formal process to appoint a trusted person to complete the survey on your behalf.
- » This is a private arrangement between the eligible Australian and the trusted person – a friend, family member or another person that you trust.

You do not need to notify the ABS on your private arrangement, unless you are nominating them to receive your form on your behalf at a different address, open it, complete it based on your instruction, and return it to the ABS.

Where someone completes a survey on someone else's behalf, the ABS expects that the eligible Australian would:

- » Specifically authorise that trusted person to open their postal survey envelope.
- » Communicate their survey response to the trusted person so this can be accurately marked on the survey form.
- » The trusted person would then seal the form in the Reply Paid envelope and mail it back to the ABS.

A person cannot self-declare or claim themselves to be a trusted person for someone else.

Pickup locations

Recognising that postal arrangements may not suit everyone, the ABS established several hundred designated pickup locations in cities, regional and remote areas for people to engage with ABS officers, collect and submit survey forms. Details of pick-up locations, dates and times were published on the ABS Marriage Survey website.

Pickup locations were able to:

- » engage with community
- » provide information about the survey and how to complete the survey form
- » provide translated material
- » issue paper survey forms upon confirmation of identity
- » issue Secure Access Codes to enable participation online or through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system
- » accept completed survey forms

Drop-off locations

The ABS implemented a form drop off strategy in anticipation of members of public still wishing to return forms to an ABS office up until the 7 November 2017 deadline.

ABS offices (which are in all capital cities and Geelong) were advertised as drop off locations on the Marriage Survey website and this service was promoted on social media and by ABS media release, Yes and No campaign promotion, and media coverage. From 30 October 2017 to 7 November 2017, ABS offices were able to receive completed survey forms from members of the public. All forms received were stored securely until after close of business on the 7 November 2017 when they were transferred by an ABS staff member to the most convenient Fuji Xerox site. Nearly 1,000 forms were received at ABS offices under this strategy (including over 500 on the day the survey closed) with all of these forms being processed.

6. Service channels



To ensure maximum participation, the ABS and the AEC established designated call centres, an online facility to handle enquiries and a designated website to ensure clear and targeted messages.

6.1 Information Line

One of the first priorities for the Taskforce was to establish an Information Phone Line to answer queries from the public. The need for this service was immediately apparent, with both the ABS and AEC experiencing an increase in the number of calls and emails from the public as soon as the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (AMLPS) was announced by the Government. The Australian public were very keen to know more about the survey process and to update their enrolment details.

A designated Information Line was established to handle all public enquiries about the AMLPS. The Information Line operated from 14 August 2017 to 24 November 2017 seven days a week from 8.00am to 8.00pm local time (and until 6.00pm after the close of the survey on 7 November).

The Information Line was staffed by DHS and was supported by a Consumer Assistance Team (CAT) within the Taskforce. In total, 710 DHS service officers completed the training package and were able to work on the Information Line, and 47 ABS staff worked on the CAT.

Over the period of operation the Information Line handled 208,894 calls.

Where people required a translator, the Information Line accessed the Translating and Interpreter Service (TIS). This ensured that all eligible Australians had access to information about AMLPS and had the opportunity to participate in the survey. Overall there were 301 calls to TIS during the Information Line operation. The top 5 languages provided during the AMLPS were Greek, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese.

6.2 Online information

In addition to the Information Line, an online enquiry form was developed enabling people to self-help and alleviating pressure on the Information Line. The Document Verification Service enabled people to verify their identity (using for example, their driver's licence or passport details) and request a new form independently and at any time.

Overall there were 134,113 enquiries through the online form, with 125,919 (or 94 per cent) of these being requests for a replacement survey form or secure access code that were automatically processed and responded to. Over 97 per cent of online enquiries were responded to within 48 hours.

6.3 Silent elector Hotline

A designated Hotline was established for silent electors and ADF and AFP personnel registered with the AEC as deployed overseas. It operated from 22 August 2017 to 20 October 2017 Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 5.00pm AEST (and to 6.00pm AEDT from 2 October 2017).

The Hotline was operated by AEC staff, in total 14 staff worked on the Hotline throughout its operation.

Over the period of operation the Hotline handled 4,684 calls, arranged for 161 survey forms to be mailed to an alternative address as part of the bulk mail-out, issued and dispatched 1,224 replacement survey forms, and issued 252 Secure Access Codes.

AEC Hotline activity	Number
Calls taken	4,684
Alternative addresses for bulk mail-out	161
Replacement survey forms issued	1,224
Secure Access Codes issued	252

6.4 Marriage Survey Website

The ABS published AMLPS material on the www.abs.gov.au website from early August and decided to establish a specific website to ensure ease of publishing (and avoid constraints associated with the ABS website's strict lock down procedures for securely publishing statistics). The marriage survey website <https://marriagesurvey.abs.gov.au> went live on 9 September 2017. This was a specially designed website separate from but linked to the ABS website.

The website was developed collaboratively in a constrained time frame by ABS with assistance from an experienced Treasury staff member, and in partnership with Department of Finance, Acquia and Technocrat. It was hosted on the whole of Government cloud platform, GovCMS, and used Drupal Services technology. The results pages of the marriage survey website were created using Drupal on AWS, which enabled the scaling required for the peak load immediately after the release of results.

The website featured strong user-centred design and structure, and included comprehensive, plain English information about the survey process, how to participate, inclusive strategies for particular population groups, the AMLPS privacy policy, and frequently asked questions.

Content and key messages communicated via the website were updated over the course of the survey period to align with operational phases, key events and dates, and in response to public and stakeholder feedback. For example, major reviews and updates to website content were made at the time of release of requests for replacement forms (15 September 2017), release of requests for Secure Access Codes and the online survey response form (25 September 2017), close of requests for replacement forms and codes (20 October 2017), survey closure (7 November 2017) and the release of the survey results (15 November 2017).

The website was designed to be accessible on a variety of screen sizes, operating systems/platforms and internet browsers. For mobile users, the website was fully responsive and was tested to work in conjunction with mobile platform in-built accessibility settings (such as voice over, text to speech, zoom, inverted colours etc.).

The marriage survey website was decommissioned on 13 December 2017 but content continues to be available on the ABS website and also through the Australian National Library's web archive site ('Pandora').

7. Inclusion strategies



Following initial stakeholder engagement the ABS created tailored information for specific groups in the community to ensure they were aware of arrangements in place to help them participate. This information was published on the marriage survey website and communicated through stakeholder networks.

In addition, these audiences were exposed to the AMLPS communication campaign, through media and advertising that reached all demographics and markets, including overseas markets via digital and search advertising to raise awareness among eligible Australians travelling, working or living overseas, and through all media channels.

7.1 Australians overseas

The ABS had in place mechanisms to allow Australians temporarily or permanently overseas to participate in the survey including Australian Government, ADF and AFP personnel on overseas posting. This included:

- » completing the survey form before or after traveling overseas (the period of time to submit the survey form was around 6 to 8 weeks)
- » authorising a trusted person to complete the survey form on their behalf
- » using an online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response option

In a limited number of cases where a person had an overseas postal address as part of their enrolment, the ABS (and AEC where applicable) sent letters to the overseas address advising them of the survey along with a Secure Access Code and information about how to use the Secure Access Code to submit a response online or through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

A fact sheet was prepared for eligible Australians overseas, and distributed via the website and stakeholders, including Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). In addition, DFAT supported the survey by regularly posting bulletins via their embassy wire service and Smartraveller website.

7.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The ABS undertook extensive communication and outreach efforts to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote and regional areas were aware of the survey and had the opportunity to participate if they chose to do so.

Working closely with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), the Australian Electoral Commission, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Australia Post, the ABS developed and implemented a comprehensive inclusion strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The strategy was designed to address the unique challenges posed in these geographical locations.

The inclusion strategy assisted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to:

- » receive their survey form in a timely manner
- » have access to a location where they could speak with an ABS officer and complete their survey form if required
- » be aware that they can ask someone they trust for assistance with completing their form
- » be able to easily lodge their completed survey form



- » have access to information about the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey through radio, print media, online and telephony services
- » have access to ABS officers and translated material or local translators where possible
- » be able to request a new survey form if required
- » have access to complete the survey on the phone or online
- » be able to participate in the survey in a safe environment

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were able to participate in the survey through postal arrangements, pickup locations, DHS service points, online and telephony services. They could also obtain an AEC enrolment form if they were not enrolled.

Community visits

Community visits and regional shop fronts were in place over a four week period from 25 September 2017 to 20 October 2017.

Engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities (via phone, email, face to face) were conducted prior to and during the community visits.

Promotional and media activities were also undertaken to ensure that people in regional and remote Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were made aware of the locations, dates and times. The pickup locations were staffed with ABS authorised officers with experience in supporting the collection of information. Staff engaged to work in remote communities were selected based on their prior experiencing working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In a limited number of cases, and usually in the case of “sorry business”, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requested that the ABS not visit their community. In respect of these requests, these communities were omitted from any visit schedule.

Details of community visits are provided in Appendix D.

Service points

There were over 600 DHS agents, access points and remote service centres across Australia, that provided self-service computers and/or phones for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to freely access the survey Information Line and the ABS Marriage Survey website via internet or telephony services. These facilities allowed a person to request new materials from the ABS and to participate in the survey using online or telephony options.

Details of the DHS service points were available on the DHS website as well as the ABS Marriage Survey website.

Communication and engagement strategy

An important aspect of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ inclusion strategy was the extensive communication and engagement strategy that was used to raise awareness and provide information on how to participate.

The first phase of the communication strategy focused on encouraging all Australians to enrol or update their enrolment details in order to participate in the survey. The ABS ensured advertising in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media including a range of media outlets across Northern Australia (including Aboriginal TV Darwin, NITV, Aboriginal radio). Advertising was also translated into a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The subsequent phases of the communications strategy focused on participation in the survey and provided eligible Australians with information on how to complete the survey form, where to obtain information, and in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, promotional material explained how the survey forms were distributed, how to request a survey form and how to access online and telephony services.

The AMLPS was advertised through radio, print media, social media and television. After phase one of the campaign, specific materials such as posters and audio files with easily understood key messages were translated into a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. This information was made available on the ABS Marriage Survey website, at pick-up locations, at DHS service points and distributed via stakeholder networks.



In accordance with existing ABS standards when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, protocols such as seeking permission to enter community, were followed. Recognising that the AMLPS was a voluntary survey and that the survey may have been culturally sensitive in some communities, the ABS was respectful and mindful to explain the AMLPS. The ABS provided assistance where required ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were informed about the survey and offered an opportunity to participate through various mechanisms. The ABS engaged directly with communities where possible with various members, boards and service organisations and community providers to assist in raising awareness and managing sensitives.

The inclusion strategy also included robust controls for the protection of personal privacy, particularly keeping all survey responses anonymous and not collecting any personal or identifying data.

7.3 People with a disability

There was a range of support available for people with an illness, injury or disability who may have found completing a postal survey more difficult.

The ABS worked in partnership with the National Relay Service (NRS) to help people who were deaf or had a hearing or speech impairment to complete the survey. The NRS is a confidential, 24-hour service, available anywhere in Australia. The ABS also worked closely with Vision Australia to ensure that appropriate measures were in place to facilitate participation by people who were blind or had low vision.

People with an illness, injury or disability were also able to respond to the survey online or by the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Alastair McEwin, commended the ABS on its approach to ensure people with disabilities were included in the survey. He noted,

“the ABS proactively engaged with the sector in order to determine best practice supports”, and that “Appropriate adjustments were also made available within a relatively short period of time. In my view, this set the Bureau apart as a leader in implementing accessible alternatives on a national scale.”

7.4 People from multicultural backgrounds

For people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with limited or no ability to read or speak English, the survey letter included information translated into the top 15 languages about how to access in-language help by calling the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National).

Overall there were 301 calls to TIS during the Information Line operation. The top 5 languages provided during the AMLPS were Greek, Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese.

Television advertising was translated into seven languages, press into 15 languages, and radio and digital into 25 languages. A media release advising people of the 20 October 2017 deadline for ordering replacement materials and Secure Access Codes, along with other survey key messages, was also translated into the top 10 languages and distributed to multicultural media.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils Australia (FECCA) made a submission to the Senate Inquiry on the conduct of the AMLPS acknowledging the ABS' work to support participation by multicultural communities of Australia, *“FECCA would like to commend the ABS for their role in ensuring that Australians from CALD backgrounds were able to full participate meaningfully in what has been a historic process.”*

7.5 People experiencing homelessness

The ABS engaged with peak homeless bodies to explain the survey process and ways in which people experiencing homelessness could participate. The ABS asked these organisations to use their networks to promote the survey. To support key messages being communicated, the ABS developed a factsheet about how people experiencing homelessness could participate in the survey. This was included on the marriage survey website, as well as being distributed to service providers via the homeless peak bodies.

Homeless service providers were again contacted while the survey was in the field to promote the pick-up locations across the country.

7.6 Prisoners

There were approximately 10,000 enrolled Australians serving custodial sentences of less than 3 years who were eligible to participate in the survey. It was recognised that these people may have found it difficult to participate, largely because the majority of people in custody do not update their address on the electoral roll, and may not have had access to the other means of participation that were available.

The ABS worked with the Corrections departments in each State and Territory to conduct a mail-out directly to eligible people in the corrections centre where they were in custody.

7.7 People in aged care facilities

People in aged care facilities were able to complete the survey independently through the postal service, by requesting the assistance of someone they trust, or through a paperless response.

Like all eligible Australians, survey materials were posted to aged care facility residents' addresses on the electoral roll or to an alternative address advised to the ABS. People in aged care facilities were also able to participate using an online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response option.

The ABS met with peak aged-care bodies to explain the survey process and ensure awareness and understanding of participation options. Fact sheets were distributed to aged care facilities with information about how residents could participate. The ABS also provided guidance to aged care facilities regarding expectations and obligations of staff acting as a trusted person for someone in their care.

7.8 External territories and Australians offshore

The ABS engaged with local authorities on Christmas, Cocos (Keeling) and Norfolk Islands to ensure they were aware of the steps the ABS had taken to enable residents of these islands to participate in the survey. Due to the longer delivery times, the ABS worked with Australia Post to ensure priority of delivery of mail to these islands (to maximise the amount of time available for survey forms to be returned). The ABS also kept in contact with people on these islands to understand mail delivery times and monitor any delays. The online and telephone Interactive Voice Response (IVR) response options were also available if required.

Eligible Australians working in Antarctica and Macquarie Island were unable to receive their survey form by post. The ABS worked closely with the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) to ensure every opportunity was available for people in these areas to participate in the survey. To this end, the AAD:

- » promoted the survey prior to the close of roll date so that individuals could either enrol to vote or update their electoral details
- » provided information about the 'trusted person' and online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) inclusive strategies developed which would support people working in Antarctica and Macquarie Island to participate
- » made the survey Information Line and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) number a free call number to reduce barriers to participation

The ABS also engaged with companies with staff working offshore, to ensure they were aware of their options to participate. Australians working offshore were advised of the ability to use a trusted person to help complete the survey form or the paperless response channels.

8. Communications campaign



The AMLPS was a high profile initiative and in some parts of the community a highly sensitive issue. The topic of the survey, the Government decision to conduct the survey and how the survey was being conducted (including by the ABS) were all issues of considerable public interest. The AMLPS attracted very high levels of traditional and social media coverage during its operation.

A communication campaign was therefore an essential component of the AMLPS. The communications campaign comprised integrated paid advertising, media and public relations, social media and online communication, stakeholder communication, special audience advertising and communication and the development and distribution of information materials.

While there were high levels of awareness of the issue, there was a clear need for comprehensive, factual and neutral communication to maximise participation and inform the public of the following:

- » the need to be enrolled to vote or have up-to-date details on the Commonwealth electoral roll to be eligible to participate
- » the survey collection process, key dates and how to participate in the survey
- » the need to respond in a timely manner

All campaign material was ABS branded and authorised, and was deliberately designed to raise awareness. The communication campaign was conducted in an already crowded market with competing campaigns and information. Belowtheline communication, including the marriage survey website design, featured ABS corporate branding in an orange colour palette, to avoid association with any political party, the Yes and No campaigns, and other community or stakeholder campaign or brands.

8.1 Campaign development

On 10 August 2017, the Minister for Finance, in his capacity as acting Special Minister of State, exempted the ABS from the *Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities* (the Guidelines) in relation to any necessary campaign advertising activities for the AMLPS.

This exemption was agreed on the basis of the urgent need for the Australian community to be informed about the conduct of the survey, and to ensure that all eligible Australians were aware of how to participate. This exemption meant the campaign did not require review by the Independent Communications Committee and assisted in getting the campaign in to market quickly in the required time frame.

All phases of the campaign were developed and received necessary Government approvals in compliance with Commonwealth procurement policies and principles of the Guidelines administered by the Department of Finance. In line with the Guidelines, the Australian Statistician certified that each campaign phase complied with the Guidelines and relevant government policies².

The Department of Finance was engaged throughout campaign development, and provided communications and process related advice, including lists of agencies to assist with campaign development from its Communication Multi-Use List. All campaign advertising was placed through the Government's Central Advertising System, administered Dentsu Mitchell.



² The Statistician's certification statements were published on the marriage survey website following the launch of each campaign phase.

The following external agencies were contracted to support the AMLPS campaign:

- » With Collective – (for phase one creative only)³
- » BMF – advertising agency for two and three creative
- » Whereto Research – developmental/informative research and advertising creative concept testing
- » DBM – benchmark and tracking research for campaign evaluation

A full evaluation of the campaign was conducted progressively and finalised at the end of the campaign. It included evaluation of outcomes against the communication objectives, using benchmark and tracking research. The research undertaken is set out in Section 8.5.

8.2 Campaign structure

AMLPS advertising was rolled out across all demographic and geographic markets in three major phases across television, radio, press, outdoor and online (search, digital and social). Search and social advertising ran in overseas markets to raise awareness among eligible Australians travelling, working or living overseas. In addition, advertising appeared throughout the campaign in rural and regional markets, complementing targeted below-the-line media activity to promote strategies supporting people in regional and remote locations who were unable to use the postal service, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see Inclusion Strategies).

Phase one of the campaign ran from 11 August 2017 to 24 August 2017. This phase clearly communicated that the AMLPS was about to start, and included strong calls to action to enrol or update details on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll in order to participate in the survey. While there was no time to publicly test advertising materials for this initial phase, the ABS reflected the messaging and communication approach used by the AEC in its advertising for the most recent federal election, and advice from the creative agency and Government's Master Media Agency, Dentsu Mitchell.

Phase two and three of the campaign focussed on the survey process and strongly encouraged eligible Australians to fill out and mail back their survey form quickly. Advertisements prominently featured survey materials to raise awareness and build recognition.

As outlined in the Inclusion Strategies (Section 7), phase two and three advertising was translated for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences, and placed in CALD and Indigenous media across television, radio, press and online. Television commercials for CALD audiences were translated into seven languages, press advertisements into 15 languages, and radio and digital advertisements into 25 languages. Indigenous radio was translated into seven languages.

8.3 Media engagement and coverage

The AMLPS media strategy was developed and implemented to align with key phases in the overall survey process from the announcement of the survey to the release of the results. It aimed to harness the reach and power of 'free media', recognising the intense national interest in the issue.

As the ABS did not learn of the AMLPS until the day before it was publicly announced, the media strategy was informed by the survey process. There was no time for the pre-planning of strategies. The media team was required to hit the ground running from day one.

Like the rest of the AMLPS Taskforce, the media team faced the early challenges of a rapidly evolving process. This required deft media management: providing media with clear, accurate responses to questions about a process which was still very much in the planning stage.

For example, by day two of the survey (10 August) media inquiries were both constant and far ranging in their subject and included many requests for television and radio interviews. Questions ranged from enrolment details and cut-off dates to arrangements for silent electors and people travelling and living overseas. Again, many of these details were still being finalised so our challenge was to give the Australian people as much information as we could, via the free media, in parallel with process development.

3 With Collective is a full service creative agency arm of Dentsu Mitchell. Under the Whole-of-Government master media services deed with Dentsu Mitchell, there is a 'break glass' provision for the ad hoc provision of creative services. Department of Finance agreed on 10 August 2017 that With Collective can provide sub-contracted advertising services under the deed for phase one of the communications campaign.

The AMLPS Media Team used the principles of risk communications and acknowledged areas of uncertainty to the media, telling them what we knew and underlining clear steps that were underway to find answers to their questions.

Because of the paucity of some survey details at the start of the process, the AMLPS Media Team outlined to media the principles that underpinned the survey. These guiding principles, which included inclusiveness, privacy, security safeguards and quality assurance, informed the media of the central pillars, which supported the development of details.

Phase One Enrolment to first mail-out of forms (9 August – 12 September)

In the weeks immediately following the public announcement of the survey, the ABS was determining and finalising arrangements for the many elements required to carry out the project.

There was significant media interest in matters that were still being fine-tuned (such as overseas participation, silent electors), and the media team was required to manage expectations on these topics, provide as much information as was available at the time, and keep the focus on Phase One's key messaging.

Prior to the close of the electoral roll, there was one clear message:

- » Eligible Australians wanting to participate need to make certain they are enrolled on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll by 24 August.

During this phase, new arrangements and new details were published on the survey's website on an almost daily basis. The media team worked to transmit this information to journalists, and respond to follow-on questions in a clear and concise manner.

To support this, an ever-expanding Q&A document was drafted and was constantly added to and updated. The website was also an invaluable resource.

By mid-August, the media was asking questions on many fronts, for example the ineligibility of 16 and 17-year olds to participate, codes on survey forms, secondment of staff from other government departments or agencies, and arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, people overseas, and prisoners.

In some instances, detailed information wasn't yet settled. In others, newly released information needed to be circulated in order to address previous media reports. The big picture goal was to ensure that there was no time lag or information gap between what the ABS had finalised and placed on the survey website, and the public discussion in the media.

The AMLPS media team accepted that during Phase One there was some ambiguity and ambivalence caused by imprecise knowledge and found ways of dealing with it by stressing the ABS's credibility and commitment to give as many Australians as possible the opportunity to participate in the voluntary survey.

Phase Two Collection period (12 September – 7 November)

The collection period involved initially distributing the 16 million survey forms, and then maximising awareness about how to respond to the survey.

As detailed arrangements for the survey were confirmed and publicised during this time, the media team was able to supply more information to the media.

As finalised and published details steadily increased, it became possible to offer interviews to the media. AMLPS Taskforce Lead Jonathan Palmer was designated as the ABS media spokesperson, and he participated in over 100 media interviews over the course of the survey, ranging from live national television, to remote community radio. These interviews enabled the ABS to repeat key messages, respond to issues of the day, address matters of local interest, and to put a face to the survey process.

Key messaging during distribution of forms (12–25 September):

- » The forms are being posted out, and you will receive your form by 25 September.
- » If you haven't received a form by 25 September, you can then contact us to request a replacement form.
- » Complete and return your form right away.

With 16 million survey forms out in the field, there was significant media interest in lost or stolen forms, incidents of potential misconduct in local communities, conduct of the Yes and No campaigners, and other anomalies in the distribution and collection process.

The media team was in regular consultation with the AEC, police, Australia Post, and other relevant authorities to assess the issues, and supply clear and timely responses to media. There was a need to ensure that eligible Australians clearly understood the survey process and guidelines, the safeguards in place, and how to request a replacement survey form if they required one.

On 3 October, the ABS released the first of its weekly estimates of number of survey forms received.

This weekly update enabled the media to tell the story of the strong level of response to the survey, and provided an opportunity to reiterate the other key dates and messages relevant to the week. The story of strong response and progress also enabled any negative, isolated incidents to be placed in appropriate context. The weekly updates coincided with (and were a likely cause of) a spike in interview requests and also served to inform reasonable public expectations about the likely final level of response. These announcements consistently received high levels of positive/neutral traditional and social media coverage.

Significant efforts were made during the collection phase to engage with media outlets in rural and remote communities, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media outlets. The media team made over 50 proactive approaches to local media to promote awareness of regional/remote location visits, and around a dozen proactive approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio outlets in order to maximise participation nationwide.

The ABS's inclusive approach involved reaching out to not only rural and remote communities. Other groups included: people with a disability; people from multicultural backgrounds; people experiencing homelessness; people in aged care facilities; silent electors; Australians overseas.

Key milestones in the survey process were highlighted in the media to remind people who had not already done so to return their surveys. Media messages contained clear calls to action to generate awareness and a sense of time is running out and they needed to act now.

The Media Team used media releases that contained in-house generated audio and video messages for media outlets to use as they saw fit. This proved to be an effective approach because networks, particularly radio AM and FM, used the ABS audio, which contained key messages and drew attention to upcoming milestones.

Requests for replacement forms could be made until 20 October. After that date, the primary focus was on promoting awareness of the closing date of the survey, and encouraging people to participate.

Phase Three Survey closure and release of results

After the 7 November closure of the survey and the release of the last participation numbers, media interest moved to the counting and release of results. At this point media attention focused on the technical arrangements for the release of the survey results.

Following the decision to announce the results at a media conference at ABS House on Wednesday 15 November, all major media outlets were contacted. In recognition of the national significance of the announcement, television and radio networks opted for a live broadcast with the television networks agreeing to 'super pool'. In the days leading up to the announcement there was stringent technical testing and two pre-announcement, media run-throughs to ensure the success of the broadcast.

The announcement of the results by Australian Statistician David W Kalisch was followed by the opportunity for media questions. The media conference was attended by representatives of the following media outlets:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| » AAP | » Keating Media | » West Australian |
| » ABC TV | » Macquarie | » 2SM |
| » The Australian | » News.Com.Au | » MediaLink Productions |
| » Australian Financial Review | » News Limited | » Auslan Services |
| » BuzzFeed | » Nine Network | » Missing Bits Productions |
| » Canberra Times | » SBS | » Nova Multimedia |
| » SMH/Age | » Seven News | » Getty Images |
| » Courier Mail | » Sky News | |
| » Daily Telegraph | » Ten News | |

The ABS issued 30 national media releases and media alerts during the survey, to communicate key messages and calls to action in line with survey operational phases and key dates. All media releases were published on the marriage survey website <https://marriagesurvey.abs.gov.au> and issued directly to media via the ABS' contracted media monitoring provider, iSentia, which also provided AMLPS media monitoring throughout the survey. A further 30 localised media alerts were distributed to promote regional visits by ABS staff. As well, proactive approaches by the media team were made to local radio stations and newspapers to promote the 27 regional visits.

An analysis of Australian media coverage produced in the 99 days between 9 August and 15 November 2017 found 15,574 items. This coverage reached a cumulative audience of 427,197,563.

An analysis of coverage produced in the two days between 15 November and 16 November found 2,166 items. This coverage reached a cumulative audience of 49,021,703.

Media and social media monitoring showed that coverage of the ABS and the survey process was mostly positive or neutral in tone.

The ABS responded to more than 750 media enquiries about the survey, and the Marriage Collection Taskforce Lead and spokesperson, Jonathan Palmer, was interviewed around 105 times. Having a single spokesperson reduced the risk associated with potentially inconsistent information being communicated in this rapidly and fast moving activity.

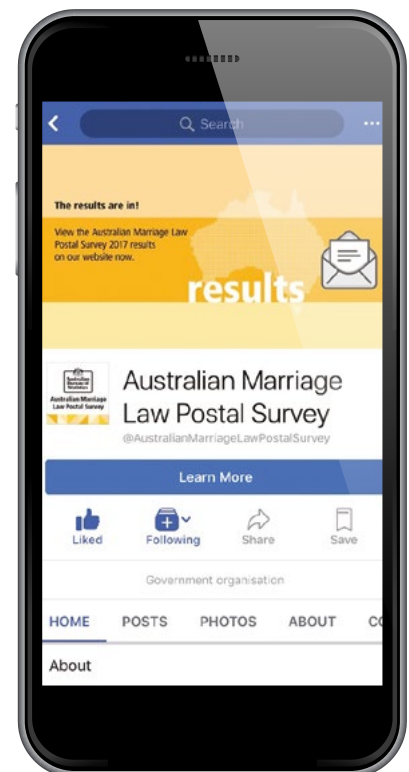
8.4 Social media

The AMLPS advertising campaign included social media and digital advertising across all phases. This channel was particularly important for targeting young people and was also effectively used to target eligible Australians overseas.

The ABS successfully broadcast thematic messages and calls to action (via 'pinned' posts and tweets) aligned with survey advertising and operational phases through a 'ghost' Facebook account, through the ABS Twitter account, and by serving advertising without profile via Twitter. This enabled comments to be disabled in this channel to avoid direct connection to partisan discussions on the issue of marriage, and to help manage trolling and limit commentary that may be negative or 'fake news'.

This approach aimed to push service delivery to the website and Information Line channels (where they could be handled sensitively and privately), restrict the volume of conversation about the survey process and present a neutral position on the issue and by extension a neutral position towards the ABS. It was also important that the ABS be seen as apolitical and impartial through its conduct and in turn through its communications campaign. Given the significant interest in the survey, where questions were asked in social media, helpful individuals and campaigns often got involved in the conversation to answer and provide advice and links to the marriage survey website.

Content was moderated to ensure that it meets the Facebook Content Policy (and community standards). Dentsu Mitchell's social team assisted with monitoring and moderation of social media advertising, providing weekly moderation reports while social media advertising was in market.



8.5 Research

The ABS conducted market research to focus test phases two and three advertising creative and materials, and to evaluate the campaign.

Advertising research found that the campaign was extremely strong and effective against its objectives. Overall the advertisements were found to:

- » make the survey process very clear
- » convey simplicity of task to maximise participation
- » have appropriate information hierarchy to assist comprehension and direct messaging without overwhelming or confusing audiences
- » use a good level of visual story-telling
- » be calm, neutral, impartial and engaging in tone and language

During testing, there was no misinterpretation or distraction among audiences and no concerns raised about privacy.

AMLPS advertising campaign research comprised benchmark, tracking and final evaluation phases. The benchmark was conducted prior to the commencement of the campaign during the enrolment phase of advertising and prior to the start of the survey.

Continuous tracking research was conducted throughout the campaign from 11 September 2017 to 6 November 2017 to provide ongoing public sentiment information. Final campaign evaluation research was conducted from 8 November 2017 to 15 November 2017.

Total results from tracking research as at 25 October 2017, prior to the commencement of the final reminder phase of advertising, showed overall awareness of the survey was almost universal at 99 per cent, up from a 96 per cent benchmark. Close to half (43 per cent) of respondents were aware that the ABS was conducting the survey.

More information about the campaign evaluation research can be found in Appendix E.

9. Processing of survey responses



9.1 Return of paper survey forms

Paper survey forms were mailed back to five Fuji Xerox sites across Australia. Safe, secure and efficient procedures were established to handle the mail and extract the survey forms. These included:

- » survey forms received and weights reconciled with Australia Post expected weights
- » survey forms stored in a dedicated secure area at the Fuji Xerox sites with security guard supervision
- » mail sorting to identify and quarantine suspicious (or non-standard) mail for safe handling prior to being taken into the processing room
- » damaged forms isolated and either repaired and processed or photocopied/transcribed and scanned (under ABS supervision)
- » automatic opening of standard mail envelopes and survey forms manually extracted and batched ready for scanning
- » forms scanned in batches and electronic images immediately uploaded to the central Fuji Xerox processing site in Moorebank, Sydney
- » scanned batches updated with tracking information then boxed, loaded to pallets, wrapped in plastic and securely stored until destruction
- » quality checks performed by Fuji Xerox and ABS staff on both extraction and scanning processes, and daily reporting of progress



9.2 Processing of paper survey forms

Scanned images from each Fuji Xerox scanning site were securely uploaded to a central system where a combination of Optical Mark Recognition and Optical Character Recognition software was used to capture the barcode and the marks on the form in digital form.

Where the marks on the form were simple (i.e. where one response box only was marked and no other marks were made on the form) the form was automatically coded to the appropriate response. Where the marks on the form were more complex (i.e. both response boxes were marked, or a combination of response boxes and other marks existed) the form was referred for manual coding. Manual coding involved a human operator making a determination on the appropriate response, subject to supervision, independent observation and computer coding to detect operator error or bias. Coding staff followed a set of guidelines that were developed in consultation with two committees of parliamentarians and the Australian Electoral Commission. Where a response was unable to be coded, it was escalated for review and decision by an ABS officer.





Survey Form

Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?

Yes

No

(mark one box only)

Instructions:

- Use a dark pen
- Clearly mark only one box
- Put your form (and nothing else) in the enclosed Reply Paid envelope (no stamp needed)
- Put that envelope in the mail... today if you can!

A response may not be valid:

- if both boxes are marked
- if the printed barcode on this form is missing or altered.

If you make a mistake, go to www.abs.gov.au/contact or contact us on 1800 572 113 for a replacement survey form straight away.



For more information



abs.gov.au






1800 572 113

This information is collected under the authority of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

The Privacy Statement is available at www.abs.gov.au

The ABS encourages you to return this form straight away.

ABS cannot accept forms received at the address after 6pm 7 November 2017.

-  Optical Character Recognition (OCR) – Character recognition
-  Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) – Pixel threshold
-  Barcode read

Coding guidelines

For a survey form to be automatically coded, it needed to have only a single response box marked, have no amendments made to the survey question or survey answers, and have no other marks made in the white spaces to the left and right of the response boxes.

Where a survey form was unable to be automatically coded, it was referred for manual coding. The ABS used conservative guidelines, referring any survey returns which contained marks in the spaces to the left of the Yes response box, or the right of the No response box, marks on and around the question, and marks on or around the response text for manual coding. This was done to ensure that any survey returns that may have had additional comments written on the form, that may have been relevant to the capture of the survey response, could be reviewed (for instance where a person crossed out and re-worded the question that they were responding to). These guidelines had an unexpected impact on the number of forms manually reviewed due to the placement of the No box on the right hand side of the form closer to the edge. Forms where respondents marked the No box with 'long tail' ticks that extended outside the response box were referred for manual coding because the automatic coding system identified them as potentially having additional markings. Due to the placement of the Yes box closer to the centre of the form, this did not occur for Yes responses with a 'long tailed' tick.

While this slightly increased the level of scrutiny applied to some forms, it had no effect on the result of the count.

A set of coding guidelines (Appendix C) were developed to provide guidance to ABS staff and Fuji Xerox operators on the interpretation of survey responses that required manual coding including where the response was not clear and there was ambiguity as to the intent of the respondent. The coding guidelines were finalised following consultation with the two committees of parliamentarians set up for the observer program, and the AEC. The basis of the coding guidelines was to judge if the intent of the survey respondent was sufficiently clear and then code the response accordingly. Where the intent of the survey respondent could not be established, the survey form was coded as 'response not clear'.

Changes to the question wording, which did not change the intent of the survey question (i.e. replacing the survey question with '*Should the law be changed to allow marriage equality?*') did not invalidate the response, and the survey form would be recorded as Yes or No as appropriate. However, changes to the question wording that did change the intent of the question (i.e. replacing the question with '*Is this survey a waste of money?*') would result in the form being marked as 'response not clear'.

Other coding rules clarified cases such as where forms had been marked with both a tick and a cross (the tick takes precedence), numbered (the lower number takes precedence) as well as other examples of how marking in both boxes should be coded.

Coding of a survey response as 'response not clear' commonly occurred where the forms were vandalised, where no attempt to answer the question had been made, or where both response boxes were marked with similar marks.

As indicated on the form and instructions, any form marked clearly but had a missing, obscured or obliterated barcode was not counted because it was not possible to confirm the eligibility of the response.

Quality of coding

- » 12,056,512 (95.0 per cent) of **paper** responses were automatically coded
- » 636,961 (5.0 per cent) of **paper** responses were manually coded; 4.3 per cent coded to a Yes or No, and 0.7 per cent coded to Blank or Response not clear
- » 24.0 per cent of manually coded records were quality assured (separate to the External Observer process) and in 99.7 per cent of cases the records were verified as correctly coded

9.3 Online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system responses

In cases where a person could not access or complete a paper survey form, eligible Australians could obtain a Secure Access Code through the Information Line or the ABS website. The Secure Access Code allowed a person to provide an anonymous response through a secure online form or the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

Responses through the online or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system were captured and stored using Amazon Web Services (AWS). Unlike paper survey forms, only a valid Yes or No response could be recorded; it was not possible to record an invalid or unclear response using these methods.

In total, 18,682 people requested a Secure Access Code.



*Some eligible Australians had an overseas postal address as part of their enrolment (refer Section 5.6).

9.4 Storing and transferring survey data

Data from the survey comprised of two streams; participation data and response data.

Participation data was used to verify the eligibility of responses and enabled the calculation of participation rates. Participation data was transferred to the ABS from both Fuji Xerox and AWS on a daily basis and included only the barcode of the processed form, a unique scan ID (paper forms only) and a date and time stamp referring to the time it was scanned (paper form) or submitted (online and IVR). Participation data did not include the response to the survey question, as responses were saved in separate secure data sets.

Response data refers to the coded response of the submitted form; Yes, No, Blank, Response not clear. Response data was encrypted as soon as it was coded and stored securely at either Fuji Xerox (paper forms) or AWS (online and IVR) until requested by ABS. There were two production transfers of response data during the survey.

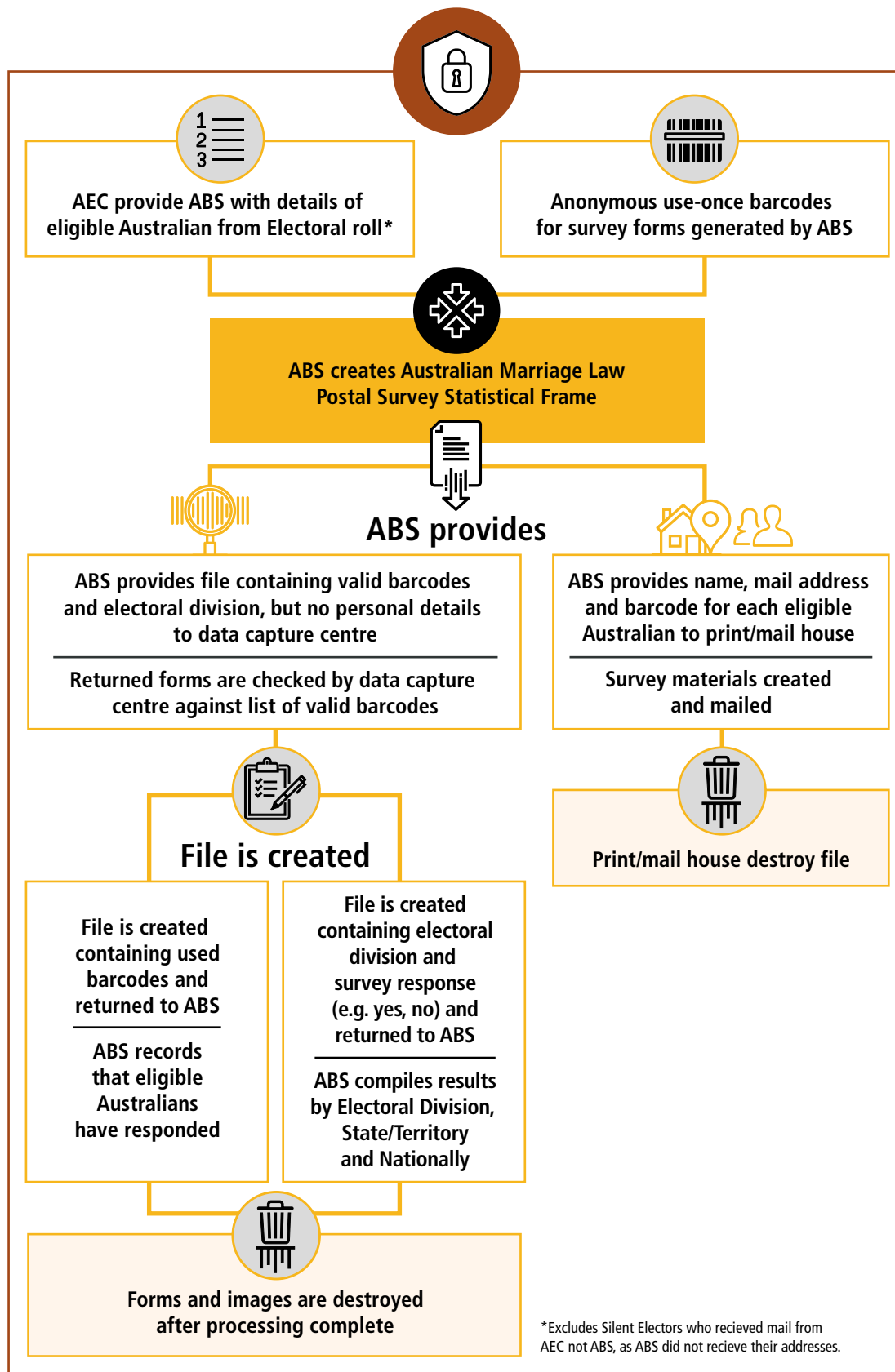
Data for both participation and response were encrypted and transferred via secure file transfer protocol (SFTP) servers.

9.5 Generating the survey results and ensuring anonymity

The barcode on the survey form was a single-use, anonymous code and provided the mechanism for ensuring that forms could not be counterfeited or duplicated. They also served to ensure that only one response was counted for each eligible person. If a person requested a new form, they were issued a new barcode and their original barcode was marked as invalid. If a person tried to submit more than one response using the same barcode, only one of the responses was counted. Where barcodes were not able to be read (damaged or defaced) the form was not counted.

Verification of responses was undertaken at the ABS. A file containing a list of barcodes only from returned forms was sent to the ABS daily from both Fuji Xerox and AWS. Each barcode was reconciled against the survey frame to determine eligibility of the response and enable the production of participation figures.

After the close of the survey, a list of verified and valid barcodes and their associated electoral divisions was sent from the ABS to the Processing sites (Fuji Xerox and AWS). The Processing sites used the list to update each response record (Yes, No) with their associated electoral division. A file was then generated listing only responses (Yes, No) and electoral divisions, and no barcode, and sent back to the ABS. It was this method of operation that enabled the ABS to ensure all responses were both legitimate and completely confidential (refer to diagram below). At no time was it possible to connect the identity of the elector to their response, as the Processing sites did not hold names and addresses and the ABS only received responses (Yes, No) associated with electoral divisions.



9.6 ABS site observers

The Fuji Xerox sites hosted ABS observers every day to oversee the processes, practices and operations from receipt of mail, handling, extracting, batching, scanning, storing and ultimately destruction of survey forms and other survey material.

The role of the ABS site observers was to observe, monitor, perform and record quality assurance checks on all aspects of the handling of AMLPS materials.

The Fuji Xerox Moorebank site hosted four ABS staff. These staff performed the site observer role as described above as well as overseeing the quality of the manual coding process. This was to ensure that the coding rules were being adhered to, that changes to coded survey forms were processed accurately, and to provide a point of escalation where Fuji Xerox staff were uncertain how to code a particular response. An ABS Director was also on site at Fuji Xerox Moorebank each day and was responsible for overseeing the quality of the scanning and coding operations, as well as checking daily quality assurance reports from all Fuji Xerox scanning sites.

9.7 System testing procedures

An extensive program of testing was undertaken by the ABS for all systems and these were aligned with and signed off in quality assurance gates designed by ABS and independently assured by Protiviti.

The functional testing included a range of user acceptance testing for each system and then the integration of them to form joined up processes. The public facing systems such as for dissemination of results and respondent enquiries (for replacement forms or access codes) to the paperless response options, received a range of compatibility and accessibility testing. Compatibility testing involved usage on a range of mobile devices and browser configurations and highlighted a number of mostly minor issues that were subsequently resolved. The accessibility aspects of these systems were tested by Vision Australia and received positive feedback.

A range of security testing was a key component of all systems and processes, some of them conducted by two vendors (Cordelta and Saltbush/UXC). The ABS IT Security team produced security risk assessments following all security reviews.

Performance testing was primarily conducted by ABS staff in consultation with Revolution IT and was in all cases tested to significantly larger numbers than what was actually received during the survey period. The testing of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) response channel was conducted by Cyara who are specialists in telephony testing. A significant Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) test was conducted on the Amazon Web Services online response channel and on the marriage survey website by the vendor, Redwolf and demonstrated all DDOS controls on the infrastructure were working well. No significant performance issues were identified during the operations period for any of the systems or services mirroring the results identified in the tests.

9.8 Online form and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) decommissioning

As key milestones were met throughout the AMLPS process a number of systems were commissioned and then decommissioned. This included the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and the online response form.

System decommissioning was an important step to ensure that the information obtained as part of the survey was quarantined and protected from interference until it was safely destroyed.

System decommissioning occurred following the close of the online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response options (after 20 October 2017) and involved the following:

- » written confirmation from the Taskforce Lead of the official close of online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system options
- » marriage survey website ready to receive redirected enquires from people attempting to access the online response option
- » Interactive Voice Response (IVR) automated message tested and in place at the close of the IVR system
- » Information Line and Customer Assistance Team (CAT) had updated scripts to reflect the close of online and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system response options
- » API gateway on AWS site disabled
- » access to survey form blocked to the public

9.9 Survey form and data destruction

The AMLPS Privacy Policy (which was published on the Marriage Survey website) committed the ABS to deletion of survey materials:

All information from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll, survey forms, images of survey forms, unique form codes and other information collected to confirm your identity, will be destroyed as soon as the work it is required for has been completed and will not be used for any other purpose outside of the Marriage Survey. This information will be destroyed no later than 60 days after the scheduled release of the survey results.

An exception to this destruction regime may apply where the information forms a body of evidence that may support the ABS in pursuing penalties against individuals for unlawful activities including, but not limited to, fraud.

The ABS will destroy all information in accordance with the Administrative Functions Disposal Authority and the relevant records authority (2001/00000540).

All materials from the AMLPS were securely destroyed in accordance with this policy.

Industry best practice, industry quality assurance standards, and all relevant requirements of the Australian Government's Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF) were adhered to. Hard copy materials included, envelopes (used and unused), spoils from the print process, unused pick-up form/envelope packages, completed survey returns, return to sender mail, and returned covering letters.

Physical destruction of survey forms

Completed survey forms, return to sender mail, and returned letters were handled, transported, and destroyed in accordance with Australia Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) T4 recommendations. An authorised ABS officer was present for the destruction of all materials. A Certificate of Destruction was received and logged for each individual destruction process.



Destruction of data

The destruction of data covered off all data held by third parties (Fuji Xerox and AWS) and data held by the ABS. The secure storage and destruction of data held by third parties was guided by Australian government security policies and external security experts from government and industry. The key controls included data encryption and media sanitisation (secure wiping).

AWS data

Participation and response data was held by AWS. Content on storage devices was destroyed in accordance with AWS security standards. The AWS decommissioning process involved the following steps:

- » removed AWS access to AMLPS site
- » obtained final MI extraction from AWS
- » exported all system security logs from AWS
- » deleted all data encryption keys on AWS
- » deleted all API endpoints on AWS
- » deleted all logs, databases, configuration rules, users, groups and rules, certifications and accounts on AWS
- » removed DNS delegation to AWS

The ABS IT Security staff and independent security experts provided oversight of the AWS data deletion and decommissioning processes which was conducted by ABS technology infrastructure staff and AWS personnel.

Fuji Xerox data

Fuji Xerox held AMLPS data in their main data storage facility and also backed up at a second disaster recovery site. Both sites had systematic and thorough deletion undertaken which was overseen by an ABS IT Security staff expert and verified by independent security firm Cordelta. Deletion included:

- » databases used for processing
- » response data and XML data
- » scanned images of survey forms
- » security ABS encryption and decryption keys
- » servers and storage used for processing AMLPS
- » backups held onsite and at the disaster recovery site

ABS staff and third party auditors also oversaw FujiXerox processes and procedures for data destruction which included:

- » the deletion of sensitive data files during dispatch processing and printing
- » the secure shredding of paper based material at an accredited materials destruction facility
- » the erasure and degaussing of encrypted storage media and its subsequent secure destruction at an accredited materials destruction facility

ABS data

ABS data stores maintained participation and response data for a range of support systems such as for public enquiries through online forms and the call centre.

The data was held in databases, file shares and system logs. All data related to individuals and responses has now been deleted from all of these stores including the backups and on laptops that were used in the field.

10. Release of survey results



The Australian Statistician released the AMLPS results at a media conference at ABS House at 10am on 15 November 2017. The short speech explained the task, direction and participation rate to ensure Australians could have confidence the results were representative, before the results themselves were announced.

The final results of the AMLPS showed that of the eligible Australians who expressed a view, the majority indicated that the law should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry, with 7,817,247 (61.6 per cent) responding Yes and 4,873,987 (38.4 per cent) responding No. Nearly 8 out of 10 eligible Australians (79.5 per cent) expressed their view.



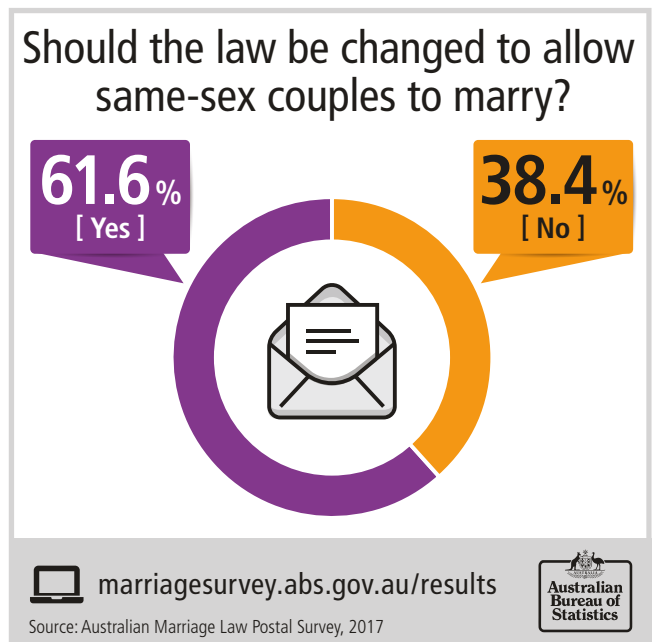
The release of the survey results was live broadcast by some media and received significant coverage across media and social media. Shortly before the media conference, the Australian Statistician briefed the Minister for Finance (Minister responsible for the AMLPS). The ABS also provided the survey results and quality and integrity report to a small number of representatives of the Yes campaign (the No campaign declined the offer) in an embargoed lock up on Wednesday morning prior to the media conference. The lock up ended only after the Australian Statistician's announcement of the results. No other embargoed briefings (i.e. of officials or media) took place.

During the media conference, and less than one minute after the Australian Statistician announced the national overall result, the detailed results and quality report were published on marriage survey website, with links provided from the ABS website, and a media release issued to media. The ABS promoted the time of the media conference to the public, media and stakeholders, rather than the website release time, to help manage load on the website due to expected high levels of interest in the results.

The marriage survey website provided easy to access to all the statistics (results and participation at electoral division, state/territory and national levels) as well as infographics that were widely used to communicate the survey results. At peak (10:07am), there were 297,000 requests per minute to the marriage survey website. This equates to approximately 21,000 page hits per minute. Over the course of 5 minutes 20.5 GigaBytes of traffic (GB) engaged the website as Australia (85 per cent of the traffic) and the rest of the world (15 per cent of the traffic) accessed the marriage survey data on the ABS website.

In advance of the release, the ABS released the final spreadsheet templates it would use for the participation and response results. The templates showed the standard table layout for the statistical information available as part of the survey results to allow people and organisations to plan for the release and build data visualisations and other reporting mechanisms.

Participation rates and results were released at a national level, State/Territory level, and federal electoral division level.



11. Quality assurance



The ABS undertook extensive and comprehensive quality assurance in the running of the AMLPS to promote confidence in the integrity of the design, implementation and execution of the survey. The assurance program provided the ABS with the confidence that:

- » eligible Australians on the electoral roll were all given a reasonable opportunity to participate
- » every valid survey form returned was processed and counted
- » no person was able to participate more than once in the survey
- » controls were in place to reduce, detect and remove fraudulent activity
- » appropriate security around the data was in place throughout the survey
- » separation of response and personal information was maintained throughout the survey
- » all physical and electronic data was destroyed at the end of the survey

A designated Quality Assurance Lead was also established to oversee the development and implementation of the assurance program. The ABS also contracted Protiviti as an independent auditor to provide additional quality assurance of the survey process covering critical aspects of the project including; technology and security, operational logistics, fraud, the handling of personal information and integrity controls.

11.1 Integrity

Recognising many in the community expected the ABS to ensure that the survey had plebiscite-like characteristics to assure the integrity of the process, the ABS included a number of special integrity measures in the conduct of the AMLPS:

- » independent assurance of quality and integrity controls
- » an 'external observer' program through which observers nominated by two (Yes and No) committees of Commonwealth parliamentarians reviewed the way ABS coded the marks on more than 600,000 survey form responses
- » a Fraud Control Plan and fraud control measures

Integrity control

Integrity control was managed through a series of 'integrity gates', which acted as checkpoints at critical places in the survey process. There were 43 gates in total; six of which were managed by the AEC. Refer Box X.

Each gate was designed as a series of checks that needed to be passed for the gate itself to be passed. The placement of the integrity gates as well as the detail of the checks was agreed by the Quality Assurance Lead, Protiviti and the relevant Taskforce members responsible for the gate. As a result of these ongoing discussions, integrity gate checks continued to evolve and be refined throughout the delivery of the AMLPS.

Integrity assurance activities were designed to support and validate the operations of the AMLPS. Integrity assurance was in place to ensure that processes were executed in accordance with their design and executed to a high quality. Protiviti were engaged as an independent assurer for this process and their role comprised two elements:

- » design assurance – to assess whether the integrity gate checks were appropriately designed to address risks faced
- » process assurance – to determine whether the checks were executed as specified

The completion of integrity gates was an iterative process consisting of multiple discussions between the independent assurance provider and responsible Taskforce members. Once concluded, the results of the assurance review were provided to the Quality Assurance Lead through a formal sign off letter. The sign off letters contained an overall statement as to whether the checks within an integrity gate had been completed, passed, failed or were appropriately executed.

Once assurance had been provided, the gate was signed off by the AMLPS Program Manager. In some cases, this sign-off required the Program Manager to accept a level of residual risk and this was noted where relevant.

“The approach adopted by the ABS was innovative, thorough and comprehensive and has supported the transparent and rigorous management of risks to the Survey.” Protiviti

AMLPS Integrity gates	
- AEC Electoral roll hand over process	- Readiness for first extract
- Mail dispatch file preparation	- Initial response file receipt – Fuji Xerox
- Mail dispatch file preparation – Overseas	- Readiness for final response request
- Mail dispatch file receipt	- Final response file receipt – Fuji Xerox
- Readiness for lodgement	- Final response file receipt – AWS
- Mail dispatch file destruction	- Publication ready for dissemination
- Mail lodgement validation	- AWS electronic file deletion
- Supplementary mail process	- FX electronic file deletion
- Ready to commence form pick up – capital	- Privacy Plan has been followed
- Ready to commence form pick up – regional	- Service channel closure
- Ready to commence form pick up – remote	- Fuji Xerox paper file deletion
- Closure of form pick up process	- Project closure
- Secure Access Code Generation	- ECCA Decommissioning
- Secure Access Code request process	- Office 365 and Telstra Messaging decommissioning
- Ready to open paperless response channels	- Result Calculation
- Ready to begin processing	- AEC suppressed mail file creation process
- Closure of paperless response channels	- AEC mail dispatch file receipt
- Closure of paper form receipt	- AEC mail lodgement validation
- All survey returns processed	- AEC mail dispatch file destruction
- Ready to commence external observation	- AEC and Canprint file deletion
- Closure of external observation	- AEC data deletion
- Design of processing response code	

External observer process

The Australian Statistician is responsible for determining the method of collection of statistics and for ensuring high levels of integrity and accuracy of the data collected. Given the sensitivities around the AMLPS, the Australian Statistician invited external observers to witness a key aspect of the process, namely the interpretation of responses from completed survey forms and to provide feedback on the process.

The role of external observers was different to that of an election scrutineer in two key features:

- » external observers did not have the ability to view every survey form; and
- » external observers did not have the ability to seek an administrative review of the survey form result validity.

Observers were nominated by two cross party committees formed by the Commonwealth Parliament, representing the Yes and No positions. The observation process involved equal numbers of nominees from both Committees.

Observers were shown randomly selected, sample batches of survey responses representing; Yes responses, No responses and unclear responses. Observers were able to specify if they agreed or disagreed with the survey result that the ABS recorded.

All observers were over the age of 18 years and signed a deed of confidentiality. The deed of confidentiality required observers to agree to maintain the anonymity of responses, and to not make public comment on the integrity of the survey before destruction of survey forms, rather to provide any comments to the committee chairs, or the ABS. By signing a deed of confidentiality observers agreed to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner while undertaking the role of observer and to maintain confidentiality of the survey process. The total number of forms examined was considerably above the initial ABS target for observation of between 200,000 and 230,000 forms.



Observers were able to discuss the survey process with other observers including the Head Observer, with their respective Parliamentary Committees and with any other Parliamentary Committee. Observers were not able to comment on any aspect of the survey with anyone else.

The observation period ran from 3 October 2017 to 8 November 2017. During that time observers witnessed 606,991 responses representing 4.8 per cent of all survey forms. This figure included 92 per cent of survey forms that had an unclear response. Observer feedback established that the coding of survey responses was 99.99 per cent accurate. This accuracy was largely due to large majority of respondents completing the survey form correctly and the use of intelligent coding software.

In total observers provided feedback on:

- » 2.6 per cent of all automatically coded survey forms
- » 46 per cent of survey forms manually coded as Yes or No
- » 92 per cent of blank forms
- » 92 per cent of survey forms coded as response not clear

Observers indicated for each form image, if they agreed or disagreed with the coding decision of the ABS. If a disagreement was raised, then this was recorded, along with the proposed coding outcome (i.e. both observers could agree that an unclear coded form should have been coded as a Yes response, for example).

The results of the observation process were that:

- » there were 311,318 automatically coded survey returns observed with only one instance where both observers disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS. The observers concluded that this should have been recorded as a No response
- » there were 131,049 manually coded Yes returns observed, with 236 instances where both observers disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS. In an additional 40 instances, just the No observer disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS
- » there were 130,269 manually coded No returns observed, with 101 instances where both observers disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS. In an additional 47 instances, just the Yes observer disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS
- » there were 33,995 blank or response not clear returns observed. There were 654 instances where both observers disagreed with the coding applied by the ABS, 151 instances where just the Yes observer disagreed; and 148 instances where just the No observer disagreed

Extrapolating these disagreements across the entire set of returned survey forms, we would expect to have had 1370 instances where both observers disagreed with the ABS coding across all survey returns. This indicates that the rate of agreement with ABS coding is 99.99 per cent, representing 9 disagreements per electoral division.

If the survey responses were changed by the ABS to reflect the observer's recommendation, the net effect at the national level would equate to an additional 56 No responses. The most common cause of observers raising disagreements were cases where both response boxes had been marked.

Consistent with the normal practice of transparency and quality, along with the survey results the ABS published a statement of quality and integrity which included feedback received from the external observers.

Fraud control

The ABS was conscious that fraud, or the perception of fraud, had the potential to undermine the public's confidence in the ABS and the AMLPS processes as well as impact on the quality of the statistical information produced. A designated Fraud Examiner was appointed to the Marriage Collection Taskforce and was responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining a Fraud Control Plan to prevent, detect, assess, investigate, respond to and report on potential fraud. The Fraud Examiner was also responsible for leading the coordination of and assisting with fraud responses.

The controls implemented to prevent fraud in the AMLPS included:

- » the enactment of the *Marriage Law Survey (Additional Safeguards) Act 2017* which included provisions against fraud, including around the sale or purchase of survey forms
- » physical security of survey materials at all processing locations
- » use of secure access codes and single use 'mark in' codes for individual forms to prevent counterfeiting of survey responses
- » reconciliation using the unique barcode on each survey form to ensure that only one response would be counted for each eligible respondent
- » cyber security controls including extensive use of data encryption
- » identity checks before issuing secure access codes and replacement survey forms
- » all staff involved in the AMLPS signed personal undertakings to remain impartial
- » all ABS staff were subject to the *Marriage Law Survey (Additional Safeguards) Act 2017*, the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* and the APS Code of Conduct

In developing the Fraud Control Plan the ABS undertook a comprehensive risk assessment of all operations associated with the AMLPS.

The Fraud Examiner worked closely with the Risk Manager throughout the process to monitor and review changing risk profiles in relation to fraud risks.

In addition to fraud controls, the ABS took a proactive approach to managing fraud risks including:

- » responding quickly to resolve issues
- » engaging with online market providers to block and remove attempts to sell survey forms and responses
- » encouraging members of the public to report suspicious or criminal behaviour
- » raising awareness through the media of the serious penalties for fraud
- » guidance on the marriage survey website about the Safeguards Act and how to raise complaints
- » referring suspected cases of fraud to the relevant authorities

Throughout the survey period, issues reported to the ABS accounted for fewer than 500 individual survey forms (less than 0.0032 per cent of over 16 million forms issued). These issues related to allegations of mail theft, attempts to offer survey forms for sale, persons attempting to influence the response of vulnerable people, and the intention to respond to the survey on another person's behalf without their authorisation to do so. There are no known incidents of fraudulent responses being counted in the survey.

11.2 Risk management

A designated Risk Manager was assigned to the Marriage Survey Taskforce from commencement to identify key program risks and assess the strength of the controls in place to mitigate risks.

One of the first priorities of the Risk Manager was to understand each of the operational components of the AMLPS. This involved the Risk Manager meeting with all relevant stream leads to identify key areas of risk. The Risk Manager was also responsible for:

- » developing and maintaining a risk register
- » assisting relevant work streams in developing and brainstorming detailed risks and controls specific to their work area
- » weekly catch ups with the relevant risk and control owners to ensure risks and controls were being monitored and managed

- » coordinating with the risk and control owners to ensure that risks were accurately defined and that controls were developed, implemented and operating effectively
- » updating the Marriage Survey Taskforce Management Committee weekly on any changes to the status of risks and controls

Once the risks had been identified two risk workshops were held to establish a common understanding of how risks should be defined and how to develop robust controls to assist in risk mitigation. The workshops were particularly useful in getting the different work streams to talk about the risks and controls that impacted more than one stream. This allowed the work streams to effectively communicate and coordinate with each other when new updates and changes were made during the development and implementation of processes.

In total there were at any one time 51 risks being monitored on the risk register and included; survey operations, security, cyber security, integrity and operating capacity. Due to the specific and unique nature of the program, risk and controls were continuously reviewed, reprioritised and updated. The risk register was regularly updated to reflect changes including where risks were added or closed or there was a change in the risk rating or risk impact.

The management of risks for the AMLPS was consistent with the ABS Risk Management Framework and the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy.

11.3 Privacy

The ABS took a 'privacy by design' approach to the AMLPS and imbedded a range of proprivacy measures to minimise risks around the collection, use, access and disclosure of personal information. Specifically, the ABS collected the minimum amount of personal information necessary to conduct the survey. The pro-privacy measures assisted the ABS to support eligible Australians to participate and control against fraud and other attempts to unduly influence the survey.

An independent privacy expert was engaged to prepare a privacy assurance statement regarding the adequacy of privacy management in the survey. The statement considered the survey design, compliance with privacy obligations, privacy impacts and handling of personal information. Malcolm Crompton AM, Managing Director, Information Integrity Solutions Pty Ltd; Privacy Commissioner of Australia 1999–2004 provided the following statement:

"The ABS has taken a strong 'privacy by design' approach to protecting the privacy of Australians in designing the survey. I am satisfied with the range of privacy measures that the ABS has embedded into the design of the survey and supporting functions. I am also satisfied that the mitigation strategies and response plans are effective and appropriate in the context of the survey."

The ABS also worked closely with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) regarding the management of personal information and consideration of privacy impacts.

The AMLPS Privacy Policy was available on the marriage survey website and provided information on; the personal information that the ABS collected, how privacy was being protected such as through the unique barcode, what the information was being used for; security, retention and destruction of personal information and how to make a privacy complaint.

11.4 Issues management

The ABS established a comprehensive issues management framework to categorise, manage, coordinate and respond to issues arising from program operations. This included appointing a designated Issues Manager and a small team comprising at any time between 4 to 6 staff members.

The issues management team established strong working relationships across all work program and developed issue management plans for each work stream. These plans were in place early in the process to enable the efficient handling of issues as they arose.

Risk Logic and Protiviti were contracted to provide external expertise in business continuity and issues management and to assist with developing issue recovery plans. These plans complemented the issues management framework and provided independent assurance over processes.

The Issues Manager worked closely with the Risk Manager to monitor emerging issues that potentially required a risk management strategy to resolve. Equally there was a strong working relationship with the Fraud Manager in the event that issues involved suspected fraud.

The issues management framework ensured a common understanding of terminology amongst all work streams and a clear understanding of the escalation path.

Figure 1: Issues management process

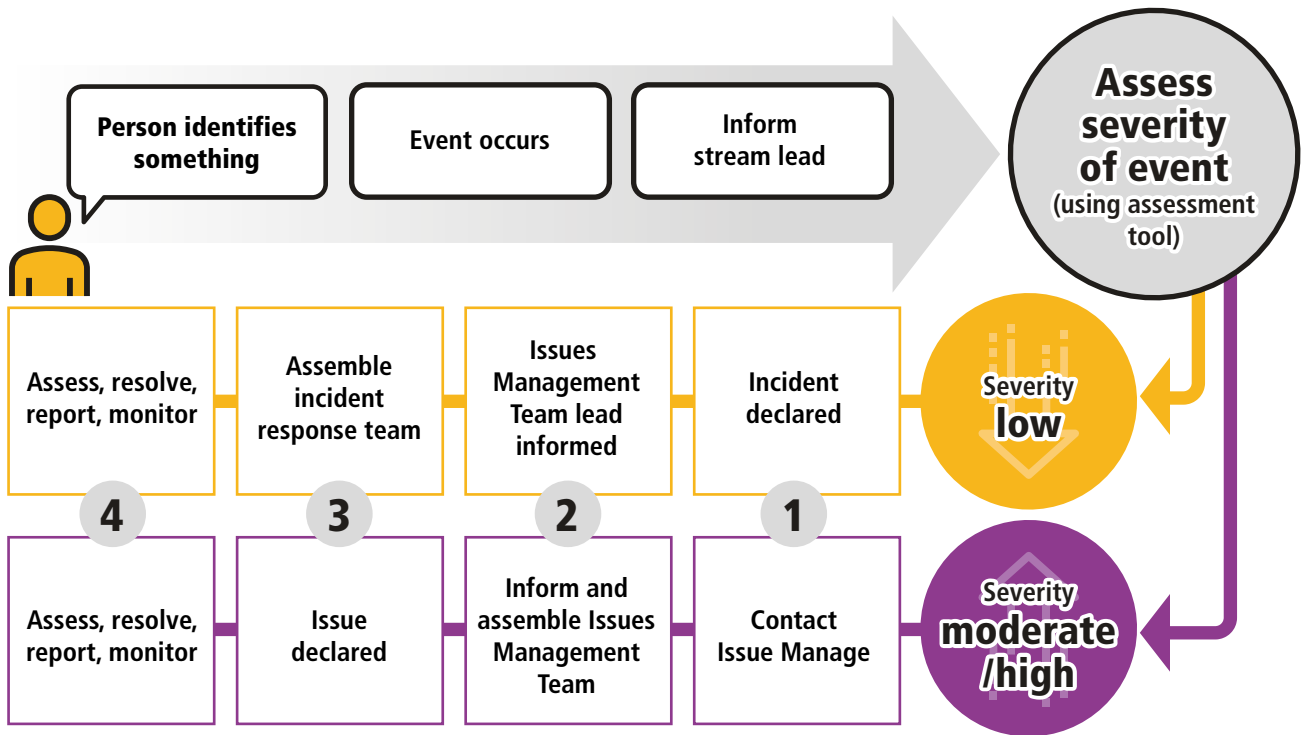
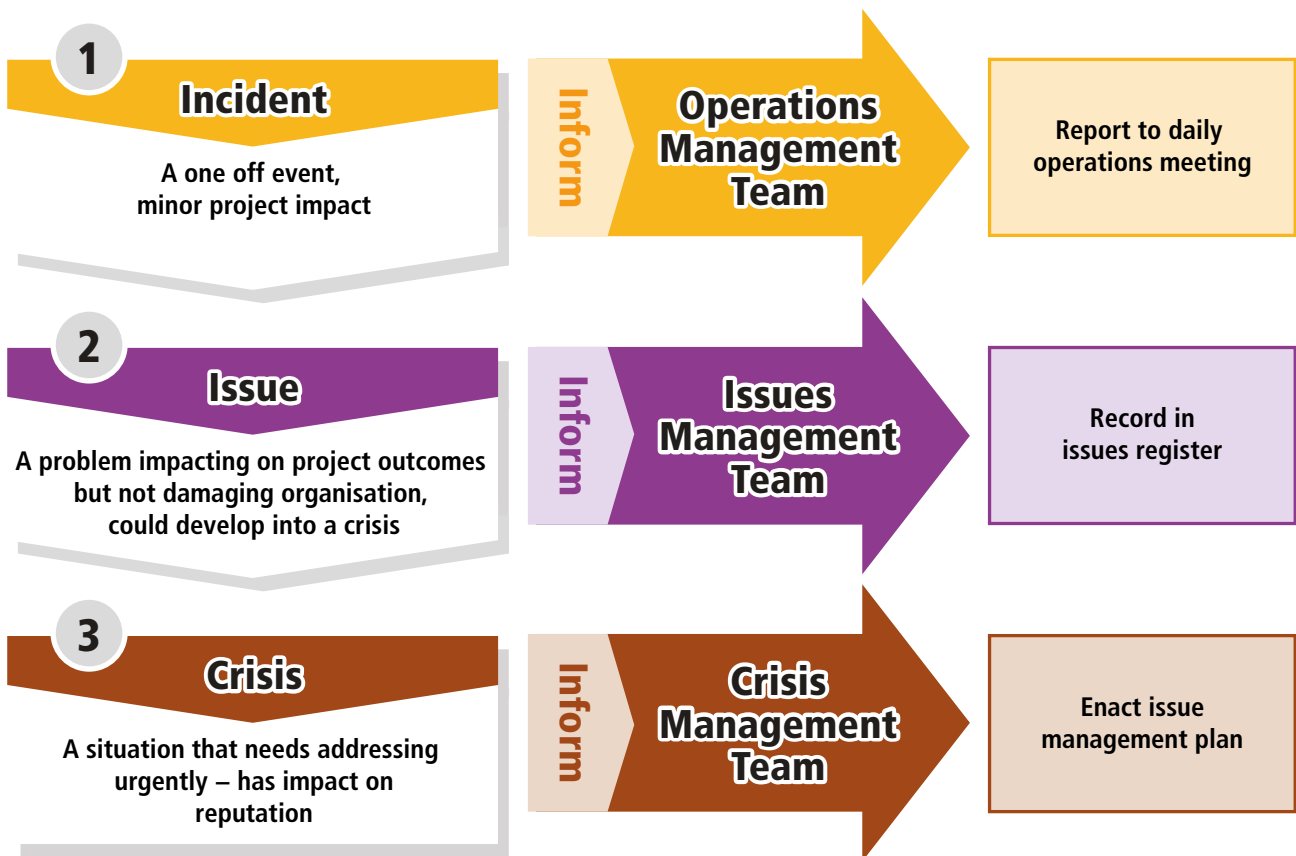


Figure 2: Issues management framework



The Operations Management Team included all work stream leads and was responsible for reporting issues at the daily operations meeting. This ensured that all work streams were aware of the issue and any possible impact on other work streams.

The Issues Management team was responsible for:

- » overseeing the execution of issues management plans and determining actions required to delegate and respond as appropriate
- » monitoring the resolution of issues
- » identifying crises for escalation to the Crisis Management Team

The Crisis Management Team was responsible for ensuring business continuity in the event of an issue impacting on the organisation's reputation.

The issues management framework adopted agile processes to work through issues and used a Kanban board to facilitate conversations with the Issues Management Team and work through the priority areas; people, security, integrity of data, communication and reputation, processing, customer experience and business as usual. This process was useful in identifying key priority areas requiring action and quick resolution of issues.



Issues Management Kanban

To effectively and efficiently manage issues that occurred outside business hours, a secured virtual conference number was established, with a supporting 'virtual' Kanban board to guide the discussion.

Issue Management 'virtual' Kanban

AMLPS Issue Management		
Key points to remember when managing an issue		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Declare the issue 2. Identify who the IMT lead is for the issue 3. What do we know? Eg. Where did the event come from and who 4. Who needs to be involved to help resolve the issue? 5. Identify the key priority areas and identify which of these areas are impacted by the issue 6. Discuss what the outcomes need to be to resolve issue 7. When will actions be likely to be completed; when do IMT need to reconvene again 8. Assign which IMT lead will manage outcome 		
Key Priority areas		
Priority area	Outcomes	Outcome owner
People		
Security		
Integrity of data		
Comms & reputation		
Processing		
Customer experience		
RAI		

An Issues Response Room was established and equipped with video conferencing; communications media monitoring; workstations; whiteboard to allow the Issues Management team to work through issues in a secure location. Utilisation of tools such as Skype Chat Rooms; SMS group contacts; and external conferencing enabled communication to flow effectively and efficiently.

A total of 8 issues arose during the operations of the AMLPS with the majority of issues occurring in the early stages of the program, in particular the period where survey forms were being mailed out (between 12 September 2017 and 25 September 2017). All issues were resolved well before the close of the survey, with the majority closed within a day of the issue occurring.

Throughout the AMLPs there were no issues elevated to a crisis situation.

Issue management case study: 1

Offensive language in randomly selected barcodes

On Saturday 16 September 2017, a journalist contacted the ABS to query a survey form barcode that included an offensive word. The codes used to generate the unique barcodes used an algorithm generating more than two quintillion combinations (2,000,000,000,000,000,000) of letters and numbers in order to generate highly secure barcodes. Within 40 minutes of the query the ABS was able to identify that the code was authentic and issue a public statement acknowledging the issue, apologising for not undertaking an offensive word check on the barcodes and offering the opportunity for anyone affected to have their code/form replaced. Investigations were made to confirm that this was a computer-generated code and no human intervention had occurred.

The ABS ensured that all existing bar codes with offensive words were not issued. The story appeared in the media 4 days later (20 September).

There was only one reported issue of this type.

Issue management case study: 2

Attempts to sell survey forms online

On 30 August 2017 the media reported the sale of survey forms online via sites such as eBay and Gumtree. This action raised serious security concerns.

The ABS engaged quickly with online marketplaces such as; eBay, Facebook, Gumtree, Amazon, Alibaba and Digital Industry Group seeking their assistance to remove any listing and an assurance that future listings would be blocked and promptly removed.

The sale and/or purchase of survey materials or responses may be an offence under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* or the Commonwealth Criminal Code. Penalties for these offences range from fines to imprisonment.

All allegations of fraud or criminal actions were investigated by the ABS and where appropriate referred to the relevant authorities for investigation. A total of 18 matters were referred to police for investigation.

Issue management case study: 3

Bogus Australia Post worker using torch to identify No responses

On 13 September 2017 an individual claiming to be an Australian Postal worker tweeted that they were using a torch light held against the reply paid envelope to see the response on the survey form and throwing out No response surveys. This raised issues around tampering with survey responses, privacy concerns and the integrity of Australian Postal workers.

Australia Post investigated and confirmed that the person was not an Australia Post employee and noted that tampering with mail is a Commonwealth offence and carries serious penalties. Examining the contents of a person's mail that is not approved to do so is punishable and could face imprisonment of up to two years. The criminal consequences were highlighted in responses to media questions and in media appearances by the Taskforce lead.

There was no visible identifying information on any response form such as a name or an address to identify an individual and therefore there was no breach of privacy.

This fake claim about Australia Post's handling of forms was an isolated report and there were no such incidents at any point in the process.

Crisis management simulation

The ABS engaged SOCOM Strategic Outcomes to facilitate an issues workshop to test the Issues Management team readiness to prevent, prepare, respond and recover in a crisis situation. A set of scenarios were used that focused on the management of likely crises and the efficiency and effectiveness of the public and internal communication channels.

The scenarios ranged in complexity and covered threats to physical security, data integrity, sabotage, staff safety and theft. This approach proved highly useful and was able to inform the ABS's approach to risk management, issues management and fraud control.

Complaints

Members of the public were able to lodge feedback with the ABS through the marriage survey website. The ABS received 800 complaints from the public through this form. The complaints related to:

- » the fact that the survey was being conducted
- » concerns about personal privacy
- » a broadcast SMS message sent by a campaign
- » skywriting by a campaign

Where appropriate the ABS referred complaints to relevant areas within the ABS and to relevant government departments and agencies.

The *Marriage Law Survey (Additional Safeguards) Act 2017* (the Safeguards Act) commenced on 14 September 2017 and provided safeguards to allow the expression of free and informed views and to allow persons to hold and express views without being vilified.

The Safeguards Act also ensured that public communications were clearly authorised, so people knew who was communicating with them, and prevented undue influence through creating penalties for engagement in bribery, threats and misleading or deceptive publications.

11.5 Security

The ABS drew on existing strong security controls and its security personnel, as well as engaged with key departments and agencies including; the AEC, the Department of Defence, the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA), the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) in developing a robust security strategy for the AMLPS process.

The ABS contracted Ernst & Young to provide independent assurance of cyber security architecture and process and seconded senior staff from the ASD and the DTA to ensure implementation of the best cyber security arrangements. The ABS also worked with the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on Cyber Security, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Cyber Security Centre. The ABS maintained regular communication with these entities to share intelligence and agree action plans thereby allowing the ABS to respond quickly to issues.

Consistent with the approach to risk management and fraud control, a designated Security Manager was assigned to the Marriage Survey Taskforce and was responsible for:

- » a thorough security risk assessment and accreditation for all systems and signed off by IT and business system owners, explicitly acknowledging and accepting residual risk
- » continually reviewing residual risk exposures across AMLPS operations with IT directors and system owners and implementing additional risk treatments where possible

A number of measures were put in place to ensure the security of physical documents and data. These included:

- » additional physical security at all Fuji Xerox sites
- » high level encryption of data
- » daily validation of controls and security logs at the Fuji Xerox sites by ABS representatives
- » implementing and testing systems to deal with denial of service attacks

- » conducted risk assessments for AMLPS systems – lightweight security assessments, system security plans, security risk management plans, architecture & design reviews, vulnerability assessments, code reviews, penetration testing, DDoS/DoS testing
- » external capabilities (ASD and AFP) were utilised to assist with monitoring the ABS’s externally facing systems risk posture
- » heavy use of file system auditing capability to monitor sensitive file access on windows file shares
- » new capabilities were implemented with Oracle to prevent and audit access to sensitive data

All ABS officers, as well as officers seconded to the ABS from other agencies and contractors to the Marriage Survey Taskforce, signed an undertaking of fidelity and secrecy consistent with the Census & Statistics Act. This binds staff to a lifelong obligation to not disclose information collected under the Census & Statistics Act unless authorised by law. All ABS officers, including staff that were seconded to the ABS, are also bound by the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct which includes a requirement to behave honestly and with integrity.



12. Marriage Survey Taskforce

12.1 Structure

A designated Taskforce was established immediately following the Government's direction to the ABS to undertake the AMLPS. The Taskforce was initially small as key staff and resources were identified, and secondees from the AEC, Treasury and the Department of Finance were part of this.

At its peak the Taskforce grew to just under 500 staff (excluding call centre staff) and remained at relatively high staffing levels through 20 October 2017 and then the close of the survey on 7 November 2017. Appendix F acknowledges the stream leads and executive involved in the running of the AMLPS.

Taskforce staff operated across a number of ABS sites with the majority based in Canberra. IT technology allowed for staff in other cities to be involved through the use of conference calls for daily stand-up meetings and skype for team members to regularly communicate.

The Taskforce comprised the following key work streams:

- » Management
- » Secretariat
- » IT systems operations
- » Inclusion strategies
- » Legal/Privacy
- » Enumeration systems
- » Dissemination
- » Communication
- » Information line
- » AEC operations
- » Logistics
- » Security
- » Remote strategies
- » Quality assurance
- » Processing (Fuji Xerox and AWS)

Governance arrangements were put in place to ensure clear lines of responsibility and communication. An overarching Marriage Collection Taskforce Management Committee chaired by the Australian Statistician was established comprising of ABS Executive and key SES involved with the Taskforce. Management meetings were held weekly covering; operations, progress of milestones, project costs and risks.

Deputy Australian Statistician Jonathan Palmer was appointed as the Taskforce Lead and was the 'Senior Responsible Officer' accountable for the overall delivery of the AMLPS. Program Manager Duncan Young was appointed and responsible for all AMLPS operations. Within the various work streams governance arrangements were put in place to ensure clear lines of accountability through to the Program Manager and Taskforce Lead.

12.2 Agile approach

Agile is an approach used to assist organisations with the iterative delivery of products and services in a way that maximises value delivery to customers. Agile ways of working encourage regular inspection and adaptation of processes in the spirit of continuous improvement. The ABS has experience with Agile, most significantly with the ABS' Statistical Business Transformation Program. The dynamic nature of the AMLPS project lent itself easily to further adopting agile approaches and the Marriage Collection Taskforce decided early in the process to apply an agile approach with a designated agile coach being appointed to the Taskforce in the first few days.

Some of the agile practices, mindset elements and behaviours adopted by the Taskforce were intentional, whereas others occurred naturally as a consequence of good work practices for any project that needed to be delivered efficiently and effectively and within a short timeframe.

Given the rapid speed at which the Taskforce and the various work streams came together, it was prudent to enable people to continue to work at a high pace without imposing new rigid ways of working that would reduce productivity. The Taskforce adopted a selection of agile practices that added value to the team and supported high performance in the delivery of AMLPS products.

Agile practices adopted by the Taskforce centred around the following themes:

- » visualisation of work through the use of Kanban board⁴ to monitor the progress of tasks
- » short and fast feedback loops across all work streams
- » retrospection and continuous improvement throughout the life of the AMLPS project
- » strong collaboration and engagement amongst work streams

Visualisation of work

A simple Kanban board was created which included three high level categories of 'To Do', 'In Progress' and 'Done'. All work streams were assessed against these categories during twice daily stand-up meetings with the board providing a useful focal point for the Taskforce and all the work stream leads. To ensure Taskforce staff operating in other locations had access, the Kanban board was mirrored electronically as a project in JIRA software.

In addition, many work streams developed their own Kanban boards to track their own work in more detail. Their work tasks were grouped into larger categories on the Taskforce level Kanban board.

Toward the end of the project and to reflect the evolving nature of the program, a new Kanban board (with fewer re-organised workstreams) was created to capture the *Data Release and Decommissioning* phases of the AMLPS.

Other visual artefacts were displayed around the work area including high-level timelines, business process diagrams, customer journey maps etc.

Short and Fast Feedback Loops

Twice daily stand-up meetings (known in agile methodology as 'the daily scrum') were used to great effect in the AMLPS project. At stand-ups all work streams reported progress and dependencies, and identified key priorities for the day while also facilitating collaboration and coordination between teams and across the ABS generally (through the attendance of non-Taskforce ABS staff as guests/conduits to other teams).

Daily stand-ups were held at 08:30am and 4:30pm (and at least once over weekends for the first 6 weeks) with a maximum duration of 30 minutes. The meetings were very well attended with 55+ people in attendance. Daily stand-ups involved each Taskforce work stream lead speaking to the standard question format:

- » what had the team achieved since the last stand-up?
- » what did the team plan to achieve before the next stand-up?
- » will the work impact on another team?
- » did the team need any assistance?

Internal issues and concerns were raised and clarifications provided swiftly through stand-ups. The daily stand-ups provided a high degree of transparency into the work and its current state to all who attended. Spontaneous meetings were commonly called immediately after stand-ups, taking advantage of the presence of senior managers, allowing decisions to be made quickly to remove roadblocks and progress work.

Toward the middle of the program when most work streams had moved from development mode to operations mode, the Taskforce scaled back the frequency of the stand-up meetings and combined them with the daily operations meeting. In preparation for the release of the survey results, stand-ups were reinstated on a twice-weekly basis.



4 A Kanban board is the Japanese word for signal card.

Retrospectives

Throughout the AMLPS, agile retrospectives were held to reflect on what was working well and not, to inspect and improve work processes both at a Taskforce level and within work streams. The agile practice of retrospection enabled continuous improvement and allowed team members to discuss and analyse their processes, how well they have performed and to seek opportunities to leverage change. Retrospectives were held every few weeks with some teams also undertaking ad hoc retrospectives.

Retrospectives informed process change throughout the AMLPS' conduct and were also used to analyse and improve how the Issues Management Team responded to issues.

While the Taskforce adopted a light touch approach to agile practice, the concept was very well received, contributed significant value to the Taskforce and generated an enjoyable and collaborative working environment. Through the AMLPS, the profile of agile practices in the ABS has been raised beyond its existing operation in the Statistical Business Transformation Program, and interest and demand for coaching support to enable agile ways of working in teams across the organisation has grown considerably.

12.3 Personal undertakings

Given the sensitive nature of the AMLPS and its importance to the community, it was essential that the public had full confidence in the ability of the ABS to undertake the survey and to do so with the utmost integrity. ABS staff were not compelled to work on the AMLPS.

Early in the AMLPS all staff on the Taskforce signed a personal undertaking to:

- » avoid commenting on the Government's decision to conduct the AMLPS or on individual parliamentary members' views on the issue
- » not publically express support for or against changing Australian marriage law
- » ensure that use of social media was in accordance with the APS values and Code of Conduct
- » not do anything that could be construed as having the intention of influencing the content of the AMLPS response

These responsibilities were reiterated in Taskforce meetings, via all staff messages and through a variety of ABS town hall and staff meetings.

12.4 Welfare and safety of staff

Marriage Survey Taskforce

Many staff on the Taskforce worked long hours including across weekends, especially in the early stages of the AMLPS process. Nevertheless, staff morale remained high throughout the project due to the team's agile working approach, that promoted collaboration and information sharing, and the personal challenge and motivation associated with achieving something so demanding yet important to the Government and the country.

The Taskforce had a relatively flat structure to support rapid action. Taskforce members appreciated the empowerment and opportunities to take responsibility for their work while also supporting risk and issues management. The Taskforce displayed very high levels of commitment, professionalism and genuine interest in the wellbeing of their fellow team members.

Staff wellbeing was a key focus of daily meetings with staff encouraged to take care of themselves and each other, and take sufficient breaks. To mitigate wellbeing risks during the AMLPS, ABS' Employee Assistance Program service was regularly promoted to staff and specific support mechanisms were established like 'wellness checks' and transition coaching at the project's end.

The ABS' operation of the AMLPS had the potential to generate strong private emotions in staff who had a personal interest in the outcome of the survey (one way or the other). To support staff in the ABS, messages promoting EAP services were promoted broadly across the ABS, to managers and leaders and also whenever any AMLPS information was promoted.

Field staff

One of the key success criteria that was embraced by the Taskforce from the start of the survey was “nobody gets injured/ hurt”. Work Health and Safety (WHS) of ABS staff in the field was of paramount importance and a thorough risk assessment was undertaken for the pick-up and drop off locations, with additional consideration given to staff travelling to regional and remote areas. This work built on the success of the 2016 Census WHS guidelines and procedures (which resulted in the safest Census ever). The risks and controls were monitored daily while staff were in the field.

Risks to personal security and safety of officers working at pickup and drop off locations in the regional or remote locations were managed through a range of controls including:

- » ABS officers working in pairs
- » specific WHS training including ‘de-escalation’ techniques for all field staff
- » appropriate set up of pick-up location sites
- » explicit instructions to ABS staff empowering their ‘right to cease unsafe work’ and to close a pick-up location or cease collection operations if it was assessed as unsafe, with work only to recommence if the pickup location was considered safe
- » formal check-in/check-out procedures operating for all staff at start and the end of work, with regular supervisor check-ins
- » appropriate vehicle and equipment for remote environments (including satellite phone, vehicle tracker, personal location beacon, first aid kit)
- » duress alarms and documented response procedures for ABS staff
- » access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with regular promotion of its availability
- » security guards working in all ABS CBD locations
- » engaging with local police in regional locations

During the survey period there were zero notifiable incidents under OHS legislation.

13. Costs



In August 2017, the ABS was provided \$122.0 million in funding, through an Advance to the Finance Minister (AFM), to conduct the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey.

The Survey was completed in November 2017. At the time of publication, total costs of the Survey were still being finalised, however they will not exceed the \$80.5m reported in the Mid Year Economic Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO). The balance of the AFM (\$41.5m) has been quarantined, and is no longer available to the ABS. A breakdown of costs is detailed in the following table.

Table 3: AMLPS – Estimated costs at MYEFO

Expense	Amount (\$m)
Postage	\$26.5
Media and communications	\$20.5
Mail-house services, printing and data capture	\$12.3
MCT Taskforce	\$7.0
DHS contact centre	\$3.7
Australian Electoral Commission	\$3.7
Assurance	\$1.1
Other*	\$5.7
Total reported at MYEFO	\$80.5

*Other includes an allowance for invoices yet to be issued to the ABS by Vendors.

In line with Commonwealth policy, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported all AMLPS contracts and amendments, valued at \$10,000 or more, on AusTender (www.tenders.gov.au) within 42 days of entering into or amending such arrangements.

14. Evaluation



The ABS engaged Nous group to assist with the evaluation of the conduct of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, and to draw out insights and recommendations. Nous Group conducted interviews and workshops with AMLPS Taskforce members and key internal stakeholders to identify key lessons and recommendations for the future. Their report makes 11 recommendations:

1. Build a baseline literacy among SES in agile methodologies and identify opportunities to implement agile in incremental and flexible ways.
2. Build on the success of the Taskforce model by establishing 1–2 fluid multi-disciplinary teams that work on high priority agency issues.
3. Experiment with shorter and less formal communications to General Managers and Executive Board.
4. Encourage Deputies and General Managers to be highly visible and interact with staff in frequent and informal ways.
5. Investigate how focus can be increased on expertise and contribution, rather than levels (e.g. internal communications, job design and structure).
6. Maintain relationships established through the AMLPS with senior stakeholders across government.
7. Assess whether existing risk management governance and reporting arrangements provide sufficiently independent and cross-ABS views of risks.
8. Assess the costs/benefits of employing integrity gates for Census 2021.
9. Broaden the application of behavioural economics insights in ABS business.
10. Adopt the Taskforce's approach to issues management for other ABS programs, while tweaking some of the facilitation and implementation practices and establishing shared issues management practices and infrastructure.
11. Establish an ABS cloud working group to explore the use cases for the further applications of cloud based solutions.

15. Appendices



Appendix A – Key Departments, Agencies and Stakeholders

The ABS worked and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders as part of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey and would like to acknowledge and thank them for their assistance and support.

Government Departments and Agencies

- » Attorney-General's Department
- » Austrade
- » Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
- » Australian Federal Police (AFP)
- » Australia Government Solicitor (AGS)
- » Australia Post
- » Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)
- » Australian Signals Directorate (ASD)
- » Corrections Victoria
- » Corrective Services NSW
- » Department of Defence (Defence)
- » Department of Environment and Energy's Australian Antarctic Division
- » Department of Finance
- » Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- » Department of Health
- » Department of Human Services (DHS)
- » Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP)
- » Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (DIRD)
- » Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)
- » Digital Transformation Agency (DTA)
- » Electoral Commission of South Australia
- » Electoral Commission of Queensland
- » National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- » Northern Territory Government
- » Northern Territory Electoral Commission
- » Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)
- » Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service
- » The Treasury
- » Western Australian Electoral Commission

External Stakeholders

- » Advance.org
- » Aged Care Guild
- » Aged and Community Services Australia
- » BHP Billiton
- » Blind Citizens Australia
- » Corrective Services Administrators Council
- » COTA Australia
- » Council to Homeless Persons
- » Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- » Leading Aged Services Australia
- » National Association of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- » Santos
- » Vision Australia
- » Woodside Energy Ltd

Appendix B – Endorsements

The ABS engaged global consulting firm Protiviti to provide independent quality assurance of AMLPS processes, and they provided the following statement:

“The ABS designed and implemented integrity controls over the end to end processes for managing and delivering the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (the Survey). These integrity controls included Integrity Gates at all critical points of the process.

Protiviti provided assurance over the end to end processes for delivery of the Survey. This encompassed more than 30 Integrity Gates that spanned processes in the Survey from the initial mail despatch through to the compilation of statistical outputs.

Protiviti provided assurance over the design of the Integrity Gates (whether the design of the Integrity Gate was appropriate to the task being checked and whether the checks were appropriate for the risks faced) and the application of the Integrity Gates (whether the checks were executed as intended). The assurance included consideration of the third parties supporting the end to end process. A key aspect of the independent assurance performed by Protiviti was the provision of formal sign off letter for each of the Integrity Gates.

The approach adopted by the ABS was innovative, thorough and comprehensive and has supported the transparent and rigorous management of risks to the Survey.”

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11 September 2017

David Kalisch
Australian Statistician
Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABS House
45 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617

Dear Mr Kalisch

Independent Statement on privacy and the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

Thank you for inviting me to provide an independent statement on the approach being taken in the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey.

I have had access to appropriate documents regarding the design of the Survey, security protections to be implemented and supporting assurance programs. I have also held discussions with relevant staff and managers of the Survey whose responsibilities extend to developing, implementing or managing any collection, use, security, assurance or publishing of information.

On the basis of the information provided, I have prepared the statement on privacy and the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey that is attached to this letter.

I remain available to provide further input on privacy aspects of the Survey should you need further assistance.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Crompton
Managing Director
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MCrompton@IISpartners.com

Independent Statement on privacy and the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

This statement expresses my opinion on the privacy practices and management of personal information that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has applied when designing the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey in accordance with the *Census and Statistics (Statistical Information) Direction 2017* (the Direction).

This requires that I consider the ABS' practices against the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), the Australian Privacy Principles as contained in that Act, and my understanding of how the community would expect the ABS to conduct itself in collecting, securing, using and disposing of their personal information.

In expressing an opinion, I have had access to appropriate documents regarding the design of the Survey, security protections to be implemented and supporting assurance programs. I have also held discussions with relevant staff and managers of the Survey whose responsibilities extend to developing, implementing or managing any collection, use, security, assurance or publishing of information.

Opinion

In my opinion, the design of the Survey effectively addresses likely community concerns that would arise around collecting, using and disposing of personal information about them in a secure and transparent manner that respects privacy.

In forming this opinion, I note the decision of the High Court to dismiss two challenges to the legality of, and the authority of the ABS to conduct, the Survey. I consider that the ABS is authorised under Australian law to collect and use, in a manner consistent with the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, the Privacy Act and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the personal information set out in the ABS privacy policy for the Survey.

The ABS has also taken a strong '[privacy by design](#)' approach to protecting the privacy of Australians in designing the Survey. I am satisfied with the range of privacy measures that the ABS has embedded into the design of the Survey and supporting functions such as the Information Line. I am also satisfied that the mitigation strategies and response plans are effective and appropriate in the context of the Survey.

The measures introduced by the ABS to address community concerns include the following:

- the survey and its supporting functions collect the minimum amount of personal information reasonably necessary to ensure that individuals can participate in the Survey, to produce quality statistics, to comply with an individual's request to update their details and to minimise the risk of fraudulent behaviour.
- technical design and strong access controls are in place to ensure that no employee or contractor will be able to link an individual's identity to their response, or to re-identify an individual from their response.
- existing practices and knowledge from the Australian Electoral Commission and the ABS have been adopted to ensure that the survey is inclusive of all Australians who are 'electors' within the meaning of the Direction.
- the AEC and not the ABS interacts with silent electors and members of the Australian Defence Force or Australian Federal Police who are deployed abroad to provide continuing protection of their identities yet also be able to submit their response.
- ABS officers who will engage with remote communities have direct experience in working with such communities.

- the ABS will apply standard processes to ensure that outputs maintain the privacy of Australians.
- all personal information, including physical copies, images and data back-ups from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll, survey forms, images of survey forms, unique form codes and other information collected to confirm elector identity, will be destroyed as soon as the work for which it is required has been completed. None of this information will be used for any other purpose outside of the Survey. This information will be destroyed no later than 60 days after the scheduled release of the survey results.
- there are strong physical and IT security protocols to reduce the risk of personal information being handled in an unauthorised manner.
- any organisations engaged by the ABS or the AEC (including any sub-contracted organisations) will only use Australian-based sites and at no time will any personal information collected or used in the Survey be disclosed to an overseas recipient.
- all parties involved in designing, conducting or assessing the survey are required to sign legal documents requiring their adherence to strict guidelines on how they may use personal information, and imposing penalties if their actions result in inappropriate use, access, loss or disclosure of personal information.

I have reviewed the privacy impacts identified in the Survey by the ABS and the strategies to mitigate possible negative privacy impacts. I consider that the ABS has taken a holistic approach to identifying privacy risks, encompassing all flows of information and their final destruction.

While it is reasonable to expect that refinements will be made to the survey process, I am comfortable with the refinements that are likely be made and the control processes around them that are in place.

Need for ongoing assurance

As at 11 September 2017, the ABS had engaged independent assurance experts, including engaging with the Australian Signals Directorate to complement its internal assurance process throughout the operation of the survey and beyond.

This strategy completes a comprehensive assurance approach to assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of privacy protection measures from the start of the survey through to its completion, publication of statistics and destruction of all personal information collected.

I will provide further assurance to the ABS if changes have a significant impact on any of these matters.

Malcolm Crompton
Managing Director
Information Integrity Solutions Pty Ltd

11 September 2017



Disability Discrimination Commissioner
Alastair McEwin

2 November 2017

David W. Kalisch
Australian Statistician
Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABS House
45 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617

By email: danielle.ferguson@abs.gov.au

Dear Mr Kalisch

Accessibility issues and the same sex marriage postal survey

I write to you to commend you and your colleagues at the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the way in which you made the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey accessible for many Australians with disability.

I have been pleased to hear from disability advocacy organisations that the Bureau proactively engaged with the sector in order to determine best practice supports.

I am also pleased to note that a range of options were made available to cater for people who are blind or have low vision, people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, and people with intellectual disability. Information about how to vote using alternative methods was also published and in formats that were easy for many Australians to understand.

Appropriate adjustments were also made available within a relatively short period of time. In my view, this set the Bureau apart as a leader in implementing accessible alternatives on a national scale.

It is deeply encouraging to see the Bureau's commitment to accessibility. Article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides for the right of people with disability to exercise freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others.

As a result of the hard work of the Bureau, people with disability were able to experience fulfilment of this right. Subsequently, people with disability were able to focus on the subject matter of the Survey itself, rather than on any barriers they needed to overcome to participate.

Australian	Level 3	GPO Box 5218	General enquiries	1300 369 711
Human Rights	175 Pitt Street	Sydney NSW 2001	Complaints infoline	1300 656 419
Commission	Sydney NSW 2000		TTY	1800 620 241
ABN 47 996 232 602			www.humanrights.gov.au	

This would have been very significant for many thousands of Australians with disability - to know that in an important national conversation, their needs had been recognised and their thoughts and ideas valued; in other words, they were included.

Please accept my sincere congratulations to you and your team. Further, I urge you to continue to work towards full inclusion of people with disability in your work.

Yours sincerely



Alastair McEwin
Disability Discrimination Commissioner

T +61 2 8231 4208
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E disability@humanrights.gov.au

Arrangements for the postal survey
Submission 25



31 January 2018

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Inquiry into the arrangements for the Postal Survey

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations, and promoting issues on behalf of its constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA strives to ensure that the needs and aspirations of various cohorts of Australia's CALD population are heard by policy and decision makers, as well as the broader public.

FECCA commends the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees for providing this opportunity to comment on the arrangements made for the postal survey to collect views of all Australians on the electoral roll on whether or not the law should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry.

Key message:

FECCA is writing with particular regard to the efforts made by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to attend to the needs of Australia's CALD communities. The ABS consulted FECCA as the peak national body representing CALD Australians to seek advice on the relevant key issues such as:

- ensuring information about the postal survey was distributed through channels used and trusted by CALD Australians (such as SBS and FECCA's extensive network),
- ensuring that in-language options were available for assistance in filling out the postal survey via a multilingual telephone advice service,
- ensuring that information was provided in ways that were accessible to a range of literacies (eg English language literacy, civic literacy) and abilities.

FECCA was impressed with the seriousness and importance that the ABS placed on the ability for *all* Australians to be able to participate fully in the postal survey regardless of their background. It was gratifying to see the ABS put into practice the solutions to access and equity challenges which face many Australians from migrant and refugee communities.

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

FECCA House, Unit 1, 4 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600 • PO Box 344, Curtin ACT 2605

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ABN 23 684 792 947

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FECCA continually advocates for these solutions to a range of government departments and agencies via our annual Access and Equity report and through direct consultation and advocacy. The high rates of CALD communities' participation in activities coordinated and managed by the ABS (such as the Census) is testament to their cultural competence and commitment to equity in civic participation for all Australians.

FECCA would like to commend the ABS for their role in ensuring that Australians from CALD backgrounds were able to fully participate meaningfully in what has been a historic process. We look forward to working with other government departments and agencies to ensure that in all other areas of civic participation or service provision that Australians of CALD backgrounds have the same access as their fellow Australians.

For further information please contact FECCA Director

Appendix C – Coding Guidelines

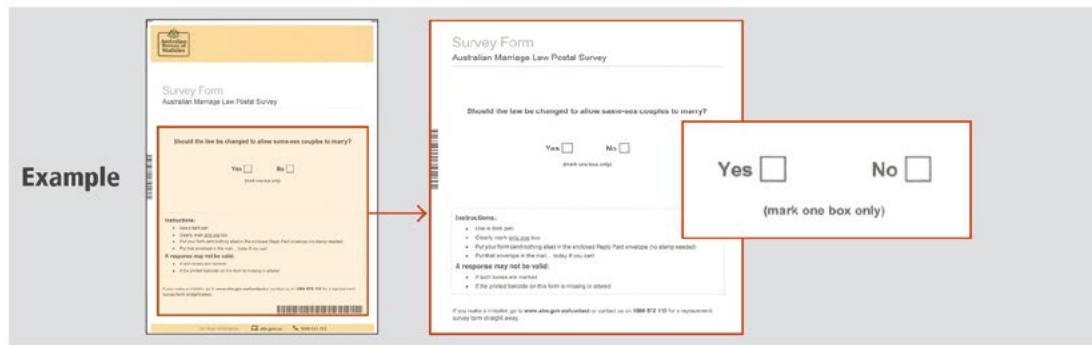
Page 1 of 7



Guidelines for automatic coding of survey forms

1. Form is recognised, and
2. Form ID validates, and
3. One only of the Yes or No boxes is marked, and
4. The question or the response box words have not been altered, and
5. There are no marks in the blank spaces to the left or right of the response boxes.

Guidelines for automatic coding of survey forms



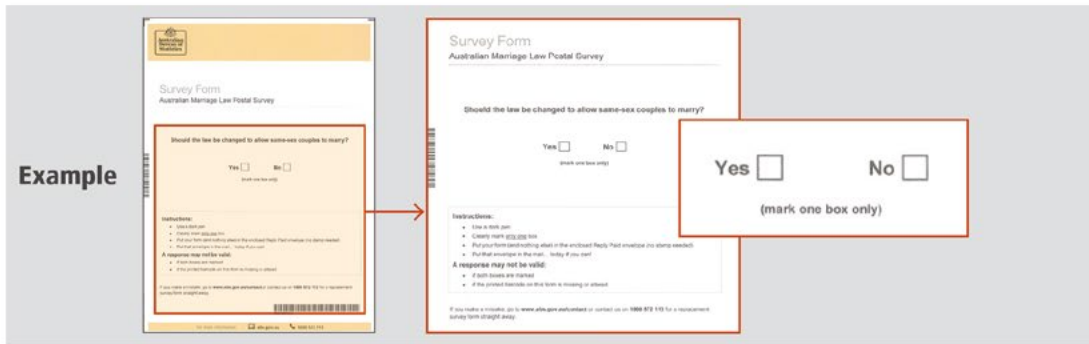
Auto-coded	Response coded as
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Yes
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Yes
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Yes
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No



Guidelines for manual coding of survey forms

1. The overarching principle for manual coding of survey responses is to determine whether the intent of the respondent is clear.
2. Where ticks and crosses are used on the same form, it is reasonable to interpret the tick as the preference and the cross as the last choice.
3. Where numbers are used, it is assumed a lower number (e.g. 1) represents the first choice.
4. If the combination of written text and marks in the response boxes makes the intent of the respondent unclear, the response is coded as 'Response not clear'.
5. If the operator is unable to make a determination on the clarity of response, the record/form is escalated to a supervisor for review.

Guidelines for manual coding of survey forms



Manually coded	Response coded as	Reason
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Blank	No clear response
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	No clear response
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	No clear response
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intention
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intention
<p>Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry? <i>respondent inserts a different question or tampers with question wording?</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	Question text altered to modify meaning of the question
<p>Should the law be changed to allow <i>marriage equality</i> same-sex couples to marry?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Intention of the question is maintained, so the response is clear




Guidelines for manual coding of survey forms

Manually coded	Response coded as	Reason
<p>Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry? <i>and not allow them to adopt children</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	The question has been added to but the intention of the respondent is still clear
<p>Yes No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	Unclear intent
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	If response text left intact this is considered valid marking of the 'no' response
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	The mark in the 'no' box is small and likely to be a mistake
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent
<p>Yes Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent
<p>Yes No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent

Guidelines for manual coding of survey forms

Manually coded	Response coded as	Reason
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent
<p>Yes Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent with written text No box looks like a scribble
<p>Yes Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	Unclear intent
<p>Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry? I, John Smith. do not agree... Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent Self-identification does not invalidate the response (unlike an election)
<p>NO Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent
<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO (mark one box only)</p>	Response not clear	Unclear intent
<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> go tigers (mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent Extraneous text ignored

Guidelines for manual coding of survey forms

Manually coded	Response coded as	Reason
<p>Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?</p>  <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent Extraneous pictures ignored
 <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	Yes	Clear intent
 <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(mark one box only)</p>	No	Clear intent

Appendix D – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community visits

Locations	Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities		
	Visited/assisted	Engagement occurred but no visit	Total
Northern Territory	85	24	109
New South Wales	2	2	4
Western Australia	61	13	74
Queensland	29	6	35
South Australia	13	8	21
Total	190	53	243

Reason for no visit	Total
Cultural	11
Requested no visit	29
Operational reason	13
Total	53

The ABS acknowledged during survey planning that the level of mail services and electoral addressing, access to services, and language and cultural considerations could impede people in remote communities knowing about and participating in the survey. To overcome this, the ABS reached out to local authorities that represented over one hundred remote communities, town camps and out-stations locations.

Ultimately 190 Aboriginal Communities across the country agreed to the ABS request to visit their area, to provide additional support for anyone wishing to obtain a form or survey information.

There were around 50 communities that were not visited out of respect to the community's feedback or through response to local intelligence (generally in respect of cultural reasons or sensitivity of the topic).

Community visits were supplemented by regional pick up locations that operated for several days at a time in locations such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Broome, Kununurra, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, and through survey information and phone/web access being made available at hundreds of DHS outlets.

The ABS appreciated the strong assistance of local councils in raising awareness of the survey and facilitating survey form pick-ups by their residents, and in some cases even the delivery of forms directly to their homes from their community postal agents. In particular, the Tangentyere Council provided form deliveries to hundreds of households in of Alice Springs Town Camps.

Appendix E – Communications Campaign Evaluation Research

As part of its administration of the AMLPS, the ABS conducted a communications campaign with the key objectives of ensuring that all sectors of the community were aware of the Postal Survey, had the critical information they required, and were enabled and encouraged to participate. Research was conducted to understand the effectiveness of the ABS' campaign in meeting its key objectives.

Overall, awareness of the Postal Survey was extremely high, with 96 per cent of respondents in the initial Enrol Phase of the research having heard of it. After the first Phase, this rose even further to be nearly universal, with at a minimum 98 per cent of respondents saying they were aware of the Postal Survey. Awareness was also consistently high across all sectors of the community. When compared to the Australian average, there were no demographic groups (by age, gender, location, and whether a language other than English was spoken at home) that had a significantly different level of overall awareness at the end of the research.

Knowledge of key administrative details of the campaign was also high, and increased significantly as the campaign progressed, particularly as respondents began receiving and returning their forms. For example, during the Reminder Phase of the campaign, more than 90 per cent of those aware of the Postal Survey believed it was true that only Australians on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll were eligible (91 per cent), that the form included instruction and a reply paid envelope (99 per cent), that the form asked a single question (96 per cent), and that responses would be totally anonymous (91 per cent).

There were also relatively high levels of awareness that there were special arrangements to participate if people were unable to complete the survey by post (63 per cent in the Reminder Phase), and that replacement forms would be available (which increased from 65 per cent in the Enrol Phase to 76 per cent in the Survey Phase, when it was a key part of the messaging). When respondents were asked specifically if they were aware that replacement surveys could be ordered up to the relevant date, the proportion that agreed increased steadily from 8 per cent in the Enrol Phase to 60 per cent in the Reminder Phase.

While eligible Australians would have received information about the details of the Postal Survey from a range of sources, including external agencies, the form itself, and the communications campaign, it is clear that there were very high levels of knowledge about the Postal Survey overall. There were also very few statistically significant differences across the key demographics, indicating that this knowledge was consistently high across Australia.

The key objective of achieving high levels of participation was clearly met, with actual or intended participation found to be almost universal in this research. This reflected the high levels of actual participation reported at the end of the Postal Survey, but also potentially indicated that this research may slightly over-represent those who did return their Postal Survey forms. Because of such high levels of actual or intended participation, in the final Phase there were no significant differences between the key demographic groups against the total for this metric.

When looking specifically at the campaign, the incidence of hearing or seeing communications about the Postal Survey (from any source) was extremely high. In total, 9 out of 10 respondents (88 per cent) indicated they had seen something about the Postal Survey on television by the Reminder Phase. Within this, it is clear that the communications campaign had a strong reach. Without prompting, during the Survey Phase 17 per cent of those aware of the Postal Survey identified the 'ABS/Government/Organisers' as the source of at least one advertisement seen, and this rose significantly to 31 per cent in the Evaluation Phase. Among those who had seen the ABS advertisements, there were high levels of agreement that they were easy to understand, believable, and gave the information that was needed.

Overall, the results of this research, combined with the actual response to the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, indicate that the campaign was successful in achieving its objectives of high levels of awareness, knowledge, and participation across Australia.

Appendix F – Marriage Collection Taskforce Stream Leads and Management Committee

Stream Leads⁵:

- » Adam Harris
- » Aidan Kent
- » Andrew McGovern
- » Andrew Sillis
- » Annabel Cocker
- » Anthony Grubb
- » Barbara Thompson
- » Branko Vitas
- » Craig Lindenmayer
- » David Crisp
- » Duncan Young
- » Emily Walter
- » Georgia Chapman
- » Juliet Fallace
- » Kellie Browning
- » Ken Smith
- » Laura Neill
- » Liz Bolzan
- » Michelle Gordon
- » Michelle Hamlin
- » Michelle Hush
- » Michelle S Howe
- » Nicole McNaughton
- » Niki Ward
- » Peta Darby
- » Peter Clark
- » Scott Boulton
- » Sean Crick

Management Committee:

- » David W. Kalisch
- » Duncan Young
- » Jonathan Palmer
- » Kathleen O’Kane
- » Lily Viertmann
- » Luise McCulloch
- » Randall Brugeaud
- » Samantha Palmer
- » Steve Hamilton

5 Some names excluded for privacy.

