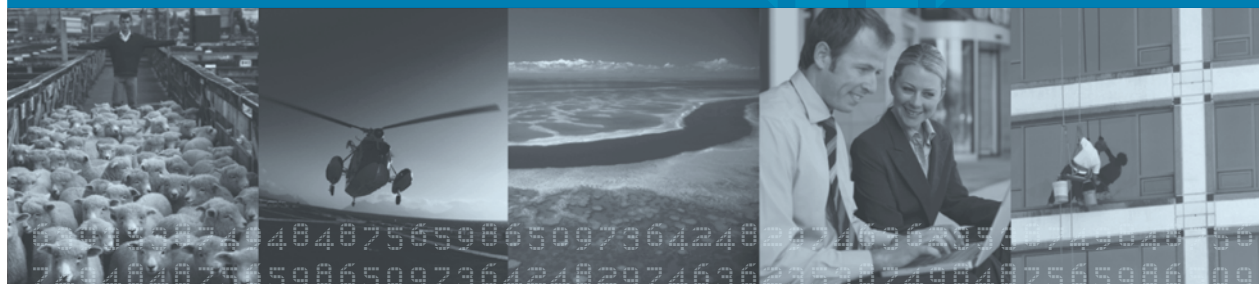




# Annual Report 2007–08

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS



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# Annual Report 2007-08

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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Access to guides to ABS services, and other selected documents, including a comprehensive range of ABS statistics, are available on the ABS website <http://www.abs.gov.au>

The 2007–08 ABS Annual Report is located at:  
<http://www.abs.gov.au>

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Design and typesetting by RTM Design.



Australian Statistician

The Hon Chris Bowen, MP  
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer  
Affairs

In accordance with the provisions of subsection 24(1) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, I hereby submit to you, for presentation to the Parliament, this report on the operations of the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year ended 30 June 2008.

This report complies with subsection 63(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, which requires that I, as Agency Head, must give a report to the Agency Minister, for presentation to the Parliament.

The report is dated on the day I approved the finalised text for printing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Pink".

Brian Pink  
Australian Statistician

26 August 2008



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# section ii

INTRODUCTION





# chapter 1

## Australian Statistician's review of 2007-08



*Australian Statistician, Brian Pink*

### Introduction

The ABS has continued to deliver a range of significant achievements over the past 12 months, in what have been quite challenging circumstances. The ABS continues to face a rapidly changing external environment. The new Australian Government has changed a range of policy priorities, changed the focus of its interactions with the state and territory governments, and is seeking input into its longer-term strategies at events such as the 2020 summit. As a result, the ABS must continue to work hard to be relevant and involved, to ensure it remains a key contributor of statistical information in this changing environment.

I am pleased to report the ABS remains well placed to continue meeting the mission we have set—assisting and encouraging informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service. We have some more challenges ahead, which I refer to later in my report, but I am confident that the team and the infrastructure I have around me, along with the support we receive from government and the community, will see us achieve our goals over the short and longer term.

## ABS activities in 2007–08

Following the organisational restructure, which came into effect in July 2007, the ABS has been carrying out some consequential activities, including a project focusing on re-aligning the roles and responsibilities for the executive team, and a review of the corporate governance arrangements. The ABS has also reviewed its planning and budgeting activities, to ensure that we are well placed to carry out our legislated role and can anticipate and respond effectively to future opportunities and risks.

Under the renewed approach to planning and budgeting, decision making about the forward work program is more closely aligned to the ABS budget. The cycle has been extended from three to four years, so that we have a better information base for the fourth year government appropriation. Corporate and resource centre business plans are being developed, with both a strategic and operational focus. The new process also embeds the risk management strategy into the planning and budgeting processes, and is looking at systems integration issues.

I will take this opportunity to pick out a few 2007–08 highlights now.

### Outputs from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing

The second release of the 2006 Census occurred on 25 October 2007, with data on labour force, hours worked, industry, occupation, journey to work, education and internal migration included in the release. The release generated substantial demand on the ABS website. Overall, the 2006 Census was highly successful and produced quality data, which has been very well received.

Coverage of the 2006 Census results by the media was extensive, and included a range of information, such as where we live, our age and how much we are paid.

In March 2008, the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, and I launched the 2006 Census Social Atlas Series at Parliament House in Canberra. The Social Atlas Series contains a common set of maps for each capital city covering population, ethnicity, education, families, income, labour force and dwellings. A brief commentary explaining the main features and characteristics also accompanies each map.

The Community Profile Series was released in 2007–08, containing six separate profiles aimed at providing key census characteristics relating to persons, families and dwellings and covering most topics on the census form. The profiles are excellent tools for researching, planning and analysing small and large geographic areas. They enable comparisons to be made between different geographic areas.

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) were released in March 2008. SEIFA is a product developed especially for those interested in the assessment of the welfare of Australian communities. The ABS has developed four indexes to allow ranking of regions/areas, providing a method of determining the level of social and economic wellbeing in each region. Each of the four indexes summarises different aspects of the socio-economic conditions of people living in an area; and each is based upon a different set of social and economic information from the 2006 Census. The indexes provide more general measures of socio-economic status than by measuring, for example, income or unemployment alone.

While not a highlight, I will mention that, following the 2006 Census, 4,955 Notices of Direction (NOD) were issued to householders who did not complete a census form. I am pleased to say that nearly 4,000 householders returned the forms as a result of being issued with a NOD. I forwarded 278 briefs to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) with the CDPP commencing prosecution on 232 householders. Of these, 116 cases proceeded to court, with five cases yet to be finalised and four found not guilty. Of the cases that did not proceed to court, most were withdrawn due to difficulty locating the defendant or serving documents.

On 13 September 2007, I handed over the Census Time Capsule to the Director-General of the National Archives of Australia (NAA). The NAA are now custodians of the information. A total of 11,256,886 people, or more than half the people recorded in last year's Census of Population and Housing, chose to have their name identified census information stored for 99 years.



*The Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, hands over the Census Time Capsule to the Director-General of the National Archives of Australia, Ross Gibbs.*

I am also pleased to report that the Census Data Enhancement project is proceeding in line with the statement of intention we published and you will find more information on 2007–08 progress in Chapter 13, Extended analysis of statistics. This project is an important development for the ABS, as we enhance the value of data collected, making it a more valuable asset for governments and the community.

## Progress on the National Statistical System

On 8 October 2007, the ABS unveiled the Children and Youth Statistical Portal, an online service that improves access to statistical information about Australia's children. The Children and Youth Statistical Portal is both a source of information and a collaborative forum for researchers. Other agencies contributing to the portal include Medicare, the Australian Drug Foundation, Australian

Transport Safety Bureau, Institute of Criminology, the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. The portal is a pilot project for the National Data Network (NDN), an online research and collaboration tool developed by an ABS led consortium of Australian government agencies, state bodies and research organisations. The NDN is to improve the accessibility and use of all Australian statistics. The concept of the Children and Youth Statistical Portal is just one of a number of similar, topic based portals planned under the NDN.

I also want to highlight another National Statistical System development, the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS). This is an NDN pilot study collaboration with the Victorian Government. The ABS has been working with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in a collaborative project, to test the suitability and viability of the NDN. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development hosts VCAMS, which draws together information in relation to early childhood development and youth, from across the Victorian Government. VCAMS is intended to underpin planning for improvement at a program, local government and statewide level, in relation to monitoring and reporting on the safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing of children and young people in Victoria. A small pilot study of 15 of the 150 VCAMS indicators, drawn from across various government agencies, was undertaken earlier in 2008. I am pleased to report that the peak governing body for the VCAMS project (Departmental Secretaries) recently met to consider the findings from the pilot study and gave in principle support for the use of the NDN, and endorsed continued work with the ABS. Discussions to take this project to the next phase are underway. This is an important test for the NDN and the National Statistical System, and I am closely monitoring progress on this project.

## Other launches and celebrations

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) has now been successfully monitoring and reducing the reporting burden on businesses for 10 years. The SCH is responsible for reviewing surveys involving 50 or more businesses conducted by or on behalf of Australian Government departments and agencies. The primary purpose of the SCH is to reduce the burden of Australian Government surveys on businesses by ensuring such surveys do not duplicate existing collections and are of sufficient quality to warrant the burden imposed. I would like to see this approach extended to household surveys, to also reduce the duplication and burden on householders.

In February 2008, the latest version of the Year Book Australia was launched. The guest speaker for the event was His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. I am also pleased to report that all the year books, commencing with the 1908 edition, are now available on the ABS website. This is a significant resource, which is now more easily accessible.

## New pre-embargo release arrangements

Another initiative I have introduced during 2007–08 is the new pre-embargo access arrangement. In order to ensure impartiality and integrity of ABS statistics, it is standard ABS policy and practice to make all our statistical releases available to all government, commercial

and public users of our statistics, simultaneously on our website from 11.30 am (Canberra time) on the day of their release. Prior to 11.30 am, all ABS statistics for release are treated as confidential and as 'under embargo'.

I am granting access through a secure lock-up, to a limited range of key statistical products under embargo when: there is high public interest in an issue of direct and substantial relevance to the statistics being released; a relevant government minister is highly likely to be asked to provide public comment on the statistics shortly after their official release; and/or the release is sufficiently complex that some advanced analysis of the key statistics and preparation of a ministerial brief by officials is considered essential. This is to ensure that initial comments made by relevant ministers regarding the headline features are well informed, thereby minimising the risk of misleading the public or, particularly, the financial markets, on an issue of national importance.

Access to statistical products under embargo will be facilitated through a secure lock-up or, in the case of the quarterly release of the *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product* (ABS cat. no. 5206.0), by means of a restrictive pre-release arrangement with the Australian Government Treasury.

The new arrangements are only provided to authorised government officials and Ministerial staff. Authorised persons attending a lock-up are required to remain in the secure room managed by ABS staff, and are prohibited from communicating any information from the statistical release to anyone outside the room, until the embargo is lifted at 11.30am (Canberra time). Attendees at the lock-ups are required to sign security undertakings, which include provision for prosecution under the *Crimes Act, 1914* for breaching the lock-up conditions.

Although these arrangements have not been universally welcomed, government agencies do understand the rationale for the change, and are adapting their briefing processes accordingly. In introducing these new arrangements, I undertook to review the experience of the operation of this new environment after six months of operations. This will be in consultation with all departments (federal, state and territory) that have participated in lock-ups to that time.

## International work

The ABS is an active member of the international statistical community, contributing its efforts and resources across a wide range of activities and statistical fields. One key focus of our activities is on building the capacity of developing countries' statistical systems, especially in the Asia-Pacific Region, as well as the development of international statistical standards and approaches. There are many international demands for ABS expertise and a strategy is being developed to guide the ABS leadership role in international statistics.

I am pleased to report that in 2007–08, the ABS continued to provide project management training as part of the Pacific Governance Support Program, funded by AusAID. Overall the training has gone well, with good appreciation of the training from the countries involved and positive outcomes in terms of running a specific survey as the basis for training. ABS officers have visited the Solomon Islands, Nauru, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, as part of this project.

The ABS continues to have a constant stream of visitors from countries in the region. For example, during the last few months the ABS has hosted a number of visits from representatives of government agencies in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and China.

More information on our international work can be found in Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure, and Chapter 15, International engagement.

## Going forward

### ABS strategic directions

The ABS work program is established in response to current and emerging statistical priorities of users and in the broader context of the ABS mission and overall strategic directions. The statistical drivers and demands of the government and community are broad ranging and are increasing both in volume and complexity. As Australia's national statistical agency, the ABS has a responsibility to respond to these demands, in the context of its mission and the resources allocated to it. The ABS' statement of strategic directions therefore presents the broad objectives that the ABS has chosen to pursue, which shape its priorities and work program for the period 2008–09 to 2010–11. Some of the key priorities for the future include:

#### NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

In recent years the ABS has worked to strengthen client engagement and improve responsiveness to client needs, to raise the profile of its externally focused activities, and to increase the informed use of statistics. The ABS will continue to build and maintain relationships with users and producers of statistics, ultimately to improve the strength and coherence of the National Statistical Service (NSS) as a whole. Consistent with these aims, the forward work program for 2008–09 to 2010–11 places a strong emphasis on strategies aimed at progressing the NSS.

The NSS is at the core of ABS strategic directions over the next three years. The NSS, in which the ABS has a legislated leadership role, is the set of arrangements within Australia which provides an accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful picture of the economy, society and the environment to support the formulation and monitoring of policies. This picture is 'painted' by the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of information sourced from administrative agencies or from specially commissioned surveys.

Securing NSS aspirations will mean governments and the community value and support high integrity information. Under an NSS encompassing producers and users of statistics, Australians will be able to manage data, make it accessible, and use it well. The NSS will also contribute to public information sources being fully used to provide a statistical picture of the economy, society and the environment. Infrastructure such as statistical standards, policies and tools will be shared in the NSS to maximise the value of investment and support integrated statistics.

#### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

As I have already mentioned, the new Australian Government has a range of new policy priorities, has changed the focus of its interactions with the state and territory governments and is seeking a broad range of community input into its longer term strategies. The work of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) across federal and state/territory governments is highlighting the need for improved information for government decision making across all levels of government in Australia.



In this changing environment the ABS will remain a key contributor of statistical information, and continue to be an advisor on statistical processes. The ABS must work to shape and influence government information needs early in the planning process, contributing to a more responsive and relevant statistical service. When agencies plan and make strategic policy decisions, the ABS needs to be seen as either the natural home for the necessary statistical information that will allow the measurement and reporting on the new policies, or as the source of statistical knowledge and expertise that can advise and assist them in their own statistical work.

There are increasing demands by information providers for simplified interactions with government. This is reflected in the Australian Government agenda that emphasises reductions in red tape and greater information sharing, by providing access to more convenient technology-based facilities for data providers.

### FUTURE WORK PROGRAM

Increasingly complex issues in the Australian economy, society and the environment mean that production of existing statistics has become commensurately more challenging. The ABS is looking to the future, which will require more integrated economic, social and environment information, to better respond to cross-cutting policy issues. Significant steps forward will be required to address population wellbeing data gaps, social inclusion and Indigenous statistics. Implications for statistics will have to be determined arising from the evolution of the roles of the different levels of government.

Within this environment, the ABS needs to be providing improved leadership in addressing data requirements for all tiers of government. Delivering spatially enabled and integrated statistics and an increase in the availability of regional statistics will be crucial, as will ensuring improved access to, and analysis of, microdata, consistent with legislation and ABS values.

Unfortunately, the ABS resource base cannot continue to absorb these additional demands and new work, however minor, must be funded externally or by the ABS discontinuing other, lower priority work. Where there is an ongoing requirement for new statistics, funding will be sought via the Australian Government's processes for funding new work or some other agreed arrangement that embeds the funding in the ABS' core program appropriation.

To meet future challenges for the ABS work program, we will need to understand Australia's evolving information needs and help to satisfy those needs. The ABS must invest in the capability and capacity of its future workforce. Staff will need skills and knowledge to be effective and efficient in the complex environment in which the ABS works, and help the ABS adapt to that rapidly changing environment.

### DEMANDS FOR DATA LINKAGE AND MICRODATA ACCESS

The research community demand for microdata access and data linkage initiatives has grown significantly in recent times, as it seeks to understand relationships between social and economic circumstances and the impact of government policies. The ABS will work with the research community to establish the ABS role in this area. It will help to shape development of appropriate governance, methods, policies and protocols that as far as possible are in keeping with ABS statistical values and relevant legislative requirements.

## ABS savings initiatives

The ABS had to make some difficult decisions for the 2008–09 financial year and we are carefully considering our longer-term work program, in the context of our financial responsibilities.

In my incoming brief to the new government, I highlighted that the ABS budget situation for 2008–09 and beyond involved insufficient funds to sustain continuation of our current work program and provided us with no capacity to take on additional work on behalf of government or other stakeholders. Early in February, I confirmed with the Treasurer that the ABS would be unable to obtain any relief in the 2008–09 budget. As a consequence, I have had no option but to reduce our planned work program, as well as cut back the administrative budget.

After an initial release of options for savings initiatives and following some high level discussions, I issued the final list of changes to our survey program to staff on 8 May. These include:

- ◆ reducing the sample size for the Labour Force Survey
- ◆ cancelling the following surveys in 2008–09: Job Vacancies; Motor Vehicle Usage; and Trade Margins
- ◆ reducing the range of information collected for the Annual Integrated Collections
- ◆ decreasing administrative expenses, and
- ◆ ceasing publication of the 2009 Year Book Australia.

In total, the initiatives will result in savings of around \$22m and involve staff reductions of around 180 staff. I do not anticipate any staff redundancies will be required. We will accommodate these reductions through natural attrition, redeployments within the offices and, if necessary, by reallocation of work between offices. In addition, the ABS is looking for short term opportunities for staff to be outposted in other government agencies.

We are now preparing for a review of our long-term budget funding with the Department of Finance and Deregulation and this is on track to report in the second half of 2008. I am confident that our past performance will hold us in good stead during that investigation. The ABS has typically been exemplary in managing its budget, running small operating surpluses and only rarely obtaining additional funding to expand the work program. As a good example of our careful financial management, in the past 30 years, the ABS has not called on government to fund new investments in technology, which is a large part of the organisation's assets. We have also had an ongoing approach to finding productivity savings to fund new work.

While these cuts to the work program are regrettable, I am confident the quality and integrity of the vast majority of ABS data will remain unaffected. I would like to emphasise that while the number or frequency of some statistical products will be slightly reduced, the ABS will continue to produce a very extensive range of statistical information.



## Conclusion

I want to particularly thank the householders and businesses around Australia who provide the ABS with information for the official statistics we release each year. Without their willing cooperation, the work of the ABS would be very difficult and the official statistics we release would not be as relevant, accurate or useful.

I also want to thank our interviewers who collect the information from homes and businesses. I know they work hard to make the task of providing the ABS with information as easy as possible for householders and businesses.

In addition, I want to thank all the other ABS staff for their ongoing commitment to the ABS and the work we do. It has been a challenging year but the ABS staff have remained focused on achieving organisational goals, producing high quality official statistics, and providing exemplary public service. In particular, my executive team have been a strong support to me during this challenging year and I have certainly appreciated their assistance and commitment to the tasks at hand.

Another vote of thanks goes to the Chairperson of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, Geoff Allen, and the members of the Council. I appreciate and rely on the high quality advice provided by the Council and look forward to working closely with them during 2008–09.

Finally, I would like to thank the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs for their interest in the ABS and their ongoing support for the ABS' role as an independent producer of statistics for the government and the Australian community.

# Reconciliation Action Plan



## Message from the Australian Statistician

I am pleased to present the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Reconciliation Action Plan.

Last year was the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum where more than 90% of Australians voted to give the Australian Government the power to legislate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to include all Indigenous Australians in official estimates of the Australian population.

It is significant that the referendum included a statistical issue. The availability of high quality statistical information is essential for improving the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. The Reconciliation Action Plan builds on the ABS' commitment to a leadership and coordination role for national statistical activity involving, and relating to, Indigenous Australians.

The ABS' Reconciliation Action Plan also covers the ABS' commitment to recognising and promoting the awareness of Indigenous culture, and to improving the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians in the ABS.

In following through the actions set out here, I am confident that the ABS will make an important contribution to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Brian Pink  
Australian Statistician  
July 2008



## Our business

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency. It was established as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, with the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The agency became the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1975 with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. This Act also established the role of the Australian Statistician, and defined the functions of the ABS.

## The role of the ABS

The ABS provides statistics on a wide range of economic, social, and environmental matters, covering government, business and the community. It also has an important coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both in Australia and overseas.

## The mission of the ABS

We assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

## ABS reconciliation initiatives

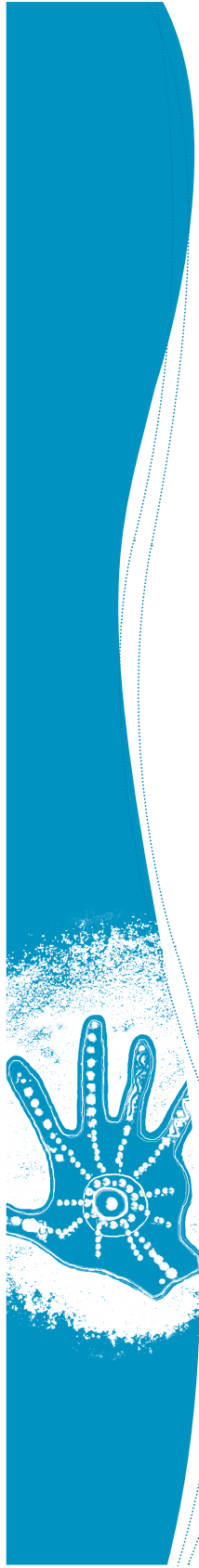
In line with the ABS mission, the ABS assists and encourages informed decision making, research and discussion among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their communities and organisations, and within governments and the wider community. It does this by leading and coordinating statistical activity involving and relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Reconciliation Action Plan sets out specific actions the ABS will take to:

- ◆ improve its recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australians in the ABS;
- ◆ promote cultural awareness within the ABS and wider community;
- ◆ build statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- ◆ increase the relevance and quality of statistical information relating to Indigenous Australians; and
- ◆ enhance its engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These actions are described in more detail in ABS corporate strategies, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan 2007–2010, Cultural Protocols for ABS staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (ICES).





## Monitoring and reporting

Achievements will be monitored and reported every year to the ABS' executive management team. An update will be prepared every May/June, to be included in the ABS' annual report, available on the ABS website. A report will also be provided to Reconciliation Australia. Indigenous input into this process will be provided through consultation with our Indigenous staff network, as well as feedback from our Indigenous Engagement Managers and representatives on advisory groups.

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan will be updated annually, and comprehensively reviewed every three years.

## How we developed our Reconciliation Action Plan

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan was developed in 2007 and 2008 by a cross divisional working group within the ABS. This group included representatives from the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, ABS Northern Territory office, ABS Policy and Legislation section, and Indigenous Engagement Managers. The group was guided by a number of other agency plans and reviewed a variety of relevant intra-governmental reports and programs, together with ABS corporate policy documents.

Comments on a draft Plan were obtained and incorporated from senior ABS executive, ABS consultative fora, state offices, the Indigenous staff network and Indigenous Engagement Managers.

The resulting ABS Reconciliation Action Plan presented in this document articulates ABS' reconciliation aspirations, many of which align with the high level objectives of existing ABS programs and policies. These are accompanied by a target or 'measure' to assist our evaluation of the Plan.

## Overview of the ABS Reconciliation Action Plan

The ABS Reconciliation Action Plan consists of two broad themes, under which there are four outcomes, as shown below. A number of actions have been identified under each of the outcomes, and progress against these will be measured at least annually.

### Structure of the ABS Reconciliation Action Plan—actions and measures

Organisational commitment	Recruitment and retention Cultural recognition and awareness
Community action	Statistical literacy, access and capacity building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Program

In developing the themes and outcomes, ABS was mindful of the three elements of a good Reconciliation Action Plan. The following table shows how the actions that ABS will undertake relate to the themes of relationships, respect and opportunities:

<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Indigenous-led solutions</li> <li>◆ Sharing information</li> <li>◆ Professional, social</li> </ul>	<p>The ABS will seek to foster positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through its Indigenous and cultural networks Community Engagement Strategy (action 6), and through including Indigenous representatives on consultative and advisory bodies (action 12).</p>
<p><b>Respect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Indigenous cultural education &amp; development</li> <li>◆ Cultural protocols</li> </ul>	<p>The ABS will act with respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through activities to promote cultural recognition and awareness amongst ABS staff (actions 3, 4, 5), including developing standard protocols for contact with discrete Indigenous communities (action 9).</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Indigenous recruitment &amp; retention</li> <li>◆ Professional &amp; career development</li> <li>◆ Partnerships for success</li> <li>◆ Meeting needs of Indigenous customers</li> </ul>	<p>The ABS will provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through facilitating recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (actions 1, 2), producing statistical material that is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (action 7), promoting statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (action 8), and working to improve the range and quality of statistics available on Indigenous Australians (actions 10, 11).</p>



## Organisational commitment

### Recruitment and retention

**Outcome:** The ABS is an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Timeline	Measure
<p>1. Provide employment pathways in the ABS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ greater participation in Australian Public Service Commission initiatives such as Indigenous Entry Level Pilot Program for trainees, the Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Program, and the National Indigenous Cadetship Project</li> <li>♦ promotion of ABS employment opportunities in Indigenous media</li> <li>♦ monitoring and reviewing the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan.</li> </ul>	2010	<p>ABS increases representation of Indigenous employees by 30% on that reported in the State of the Service Report 2005-06.*</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers included in Human Resources accountability reporting, branch reports and the annual report.</p>
<p>2. Encourage the retention of existing and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ABS, including through mechanisms such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Indigenous staff network</li> <li>♦ mentors for Indigenous staff.</li> </ul>	2010	<p>Retention of ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees that is comparable to, or higher than, the APS average.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are supported to participate in ABS and Australian Public Service Commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network meetings and events.</p>

\* The State of the Service 2005-2006 report related that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2% of the APS workforce (compared to the broader Australian workforce, in which 1.4% of the Australian labour force identified themselves as Indigenous). Of the 21 agencies recorded as having over 1,000 ongoing employees, the ABS is ranked 15th as an employer of Indigenous people (with less than 1% of staff identifying as Indigenous). Large agencies with above average Indigenous representation are DEST (9.4%), DEWR (4.5%), Centrelink (3.6%), DEH (3.0%) and Health (2.7%).

## Cultural recognition and awareness

**Outcome:** All staff work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, communities and organisations.

Action	Timeline	Measure
3. Promote and support the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events.	Ongoing (review annually)	Regular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feature in ABS News, which is published every four months.
	Ongoing, May and July each year	All ABS staff encouraged to participate in internal Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities, through internal promotion of these events
	2010	ABS participation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events increases beyond levels in 2007.
4. Enhance ABS staff understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and issues.	2010	ABS staff induction training modified to include a cultural awareness component.
	2009	ABS managers have tools available to support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their workplace.
	Review annually#	All ABS staff conducting business in Indigenous communities attend cultural awareness training.
	Review annually#	ABS cultural protocols and procedures applied by ABS staff undertaking work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
5. ABS acknowledges traditional owners.	2008	Traditional owners are acknowledged in the meeting rooms through appropriate displays.
	Review annually#	Acknowledge traditional owners and/or include welcome to country ceremonies at official ABS events.

# The annual review will take place in May/June. For more information, see the Monitoring and reporting section.





## Community action

### Statistical literacy, access and capacity building

**Outcome:** Facilitate, encourage and assist informed and increased use of statistics among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Timeline	Measure
6. Maintain and expand the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (ICES).	Review annually#	Seven Indigenous Engagement Managers are employed to implement the ICES, one in each state and the Northern Territory.
7. ABS outputs will be produced in a manner that is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Review annually#	Tailored products and output developed with the input of our network of Indigenous Engagement Managers and made accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
	Review annually#	ABS will continue production of material in formats accessible for those in low technology environments.
8. Promote statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ CensusAtSchool*</li> <li>◆ development and delivery of statistical training packages for Indigenous communities</li> <li>◆ continued roll out of the Information Skills Program.</li> </ul>	Review annually#	CensusAtSchool* materials are available to, and used by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools and communities.
	Review annually#	Indigenous Engagement Managers to provide statistical training to 30 or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations throughout Australia each year.
9. Develop and implement standard protocols for ABS contact with discrete Indigenous communities.	Protocols to be finalised in 2008	Standard procedures and protocols are available to, and used by, ABS staff in contact with Indigenous communities.  Training on the use of protocols is delivered to relevant ABS staff.

\* see <http://www.abs.gov.au—Education—CensusAtSchool> for more information

# The annual review will take place in May/June. For more information, see the Monitoring and reporting section.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Program

**Outcome:** Continuous improvements in the range, quality and availability of statistics on Indigenous Australians, which will support and inform national efforts to improve Indigenous life outcomes.

Action	Timeline	Measure
10. Extend and improve the collection and accuracy of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Work program produced 5-yearly	Strategic directions for ABS Indigenous statistics are determined in consultation with key Indigenous stakeholders, in addition to relevant government and non-government agencies.
11. Provide leadership in Indigenous data collection and analysis.	Review annually#	Annual reports on the ABS Indigenous work program provided to the Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.
	Review annually#	Implement measures to reduce respondent burden among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and report measures to the Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.
12. Indigenous representation consultative and advisory bodies.	Review annually#	All ABS consultative bodies with significant implications for Indigenous Australians ensure the opportunity for Indigenous representation.

Reference: *ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, June 2007* (cat. no. 4700.0)

# The annual review will take place in May/June. For more information, see the Monitoring and reporting section.



# chapter 2

## Overview of the ABS

### Introduction

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency. It was established as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, following enactment of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The agency became the 'Australian Bureau of Statistics' in 1975 with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. This Act also established the role of the Australian Statistician and defined the functions of the ABS.

### The role of the ABS

The ABS provides statistics on a wide range of economic, social and environmental matters, covering government, business and the community. It also has an important coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both in Australia and overseas.

### The mission of the ABS

We assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS Corporate Plan can be found on the ABS website at <http://www.abs.gov.au>. The plan outlines the strategies the ABS is using to achieve its mission, and sets out the direction for the ABS to meet future challenges.

### Authority and Legislation

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides the Australian Statistician with the authority to conduct statistical collections and, when necessary, to direct a person or an organisation to provide statistical information. The Act imposes obligations on the ABS to publish and disseminate compilations and analyses of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* sets out the functions and responsibilities of the Statistician and the ABS –

- (a) to constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the governments of the states, provide statistical services for those governments;
- (b) to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information;
- (c) to ensure coordination of the operations of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information, with particular regard to:
  - (i) the avoidance of duplication in the collection by official bodies of information for statistical purposes;
  - (ii) the attainment of compatibility between, and the integration of, statistics compiled by official bodies; and
  - (iii) the maximum possible utilisation, for statistical purposes, of information, and means of collection of information, available to official bodies;
- (d) to formulate, and ensure compliance with, standards for the carrying out by official bodies of operations for statistical purposes;
- (e) to provide advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics; and
- (f) to provide liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organisations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters.

Section 6 of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* also established the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC).

Under the *Statistics (Arrangements with States) Act 1956*, Australian and state government statistical services have been integrated since 1958 (from 1924 for Tasmania). Although not covered by legislation, similar arrangements apply in both territories.

There were no amendments made to the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* or the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* in 2007–08.

## Organisational structure

The ABS is led by the Australian Statistician—a statutory office established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975.

A new organisational structure was implemented in the ABS from 1 July 2007. The ABS now has three statistical groups, each reporting to a Deputy Australian Statistician. These groups are:

- ◆ Macroeconomics and Integration
- ◆ Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Statistics, and
- ◆ Social Statistics.

The ABS also has four divisions reporting directly to the Statistician –

- ◆ Integrated Collection and Dissemination Services
- ◆ Methodology and Data Management
- ◆ Technology Services, and
- ◆ Corporate Services.

Further information about the restructure can be found in Effectiveness of activities (see Chapter 16).

The ABS has a central office in Canberra and regional offices located in the eight state and territory capitals. All regional offices, apart from the ACT Office, have some responsibilities for national statistical activities.

Regional offices are also primarily responsible for the delivery of statistical services to their state or territory. These offices have ongoing engagement with state and territory governments on statistical services and priorities, generally through state and territory committees set up for that purpose. In Western Australia and Tasmania, the Regional Director administering the ABS Regional Office is also the State Government Statistician.

All Regional Directors have a direct reporting line to a Deputy Australian Statistician (see organisational chart in this Chapter).

## Australian Statistics Advisory Council

ASAC was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* to be the key advisory body to the Minister and the Statistician on statistical services. It provides valuable input to the directions and priorities of the ABS work program and reports annually to Parliament. ASAC meets twice yearly.

The functions of ASAC, as set out in the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, are to advise the Minister and the Statistician in relation to:

- (a) the improvement, extension and coordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;
- (b) annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and
- (c) any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.

The Chairperson of ASAC is Geoff Allen, Director, The Allen Consulting Group. ASAC members include nominees from each of the state premiers and the territory chief ministers. The other members are appointed by the Minister responsible for the ABS, and are chosen to represent a broad cross-section of perspectives, including business, government, academic and community interests.



*The Australian Statistics Advisory Council meeting in Canberra on 24 June 2008.*

The mission of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council is:

*To ensure that, in keeping with Council's statutory charter, the advice furnished to the Minister and the Statistician in relation to the collection and dissemination of statistics has due regard to relative priorities, is objective, relevant, timely, constructive and practical, and that it is sensitive to the needs of both suppliers and users of statistical data.*

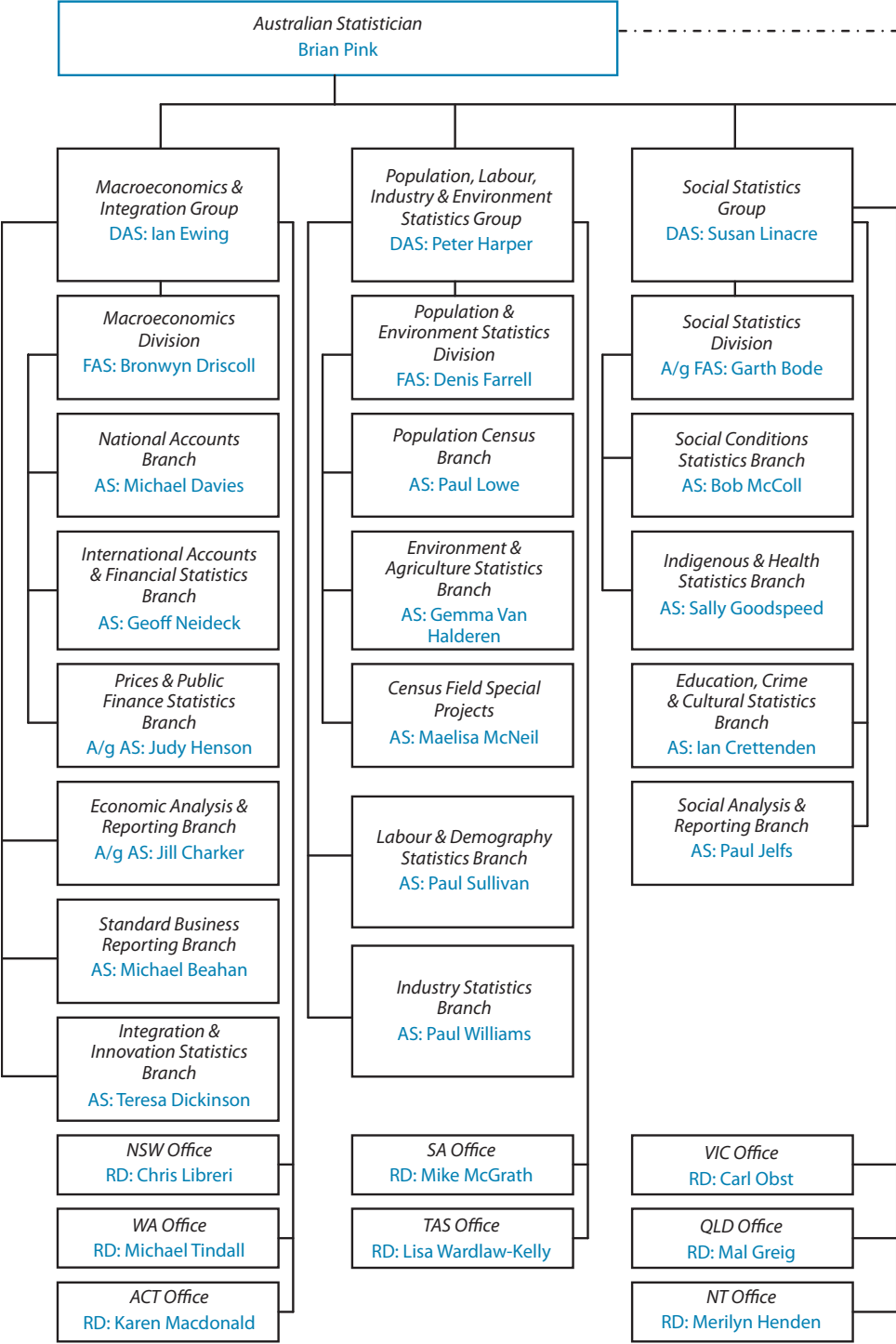
Further information on ASAC can be found on their website (<http://www.asac.gov.au>) or by contacting the ASAC Secretariat by mail to: ABS, Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616 or by phone on (02) 6252 7191. The Council's annual report can also be found on their website.

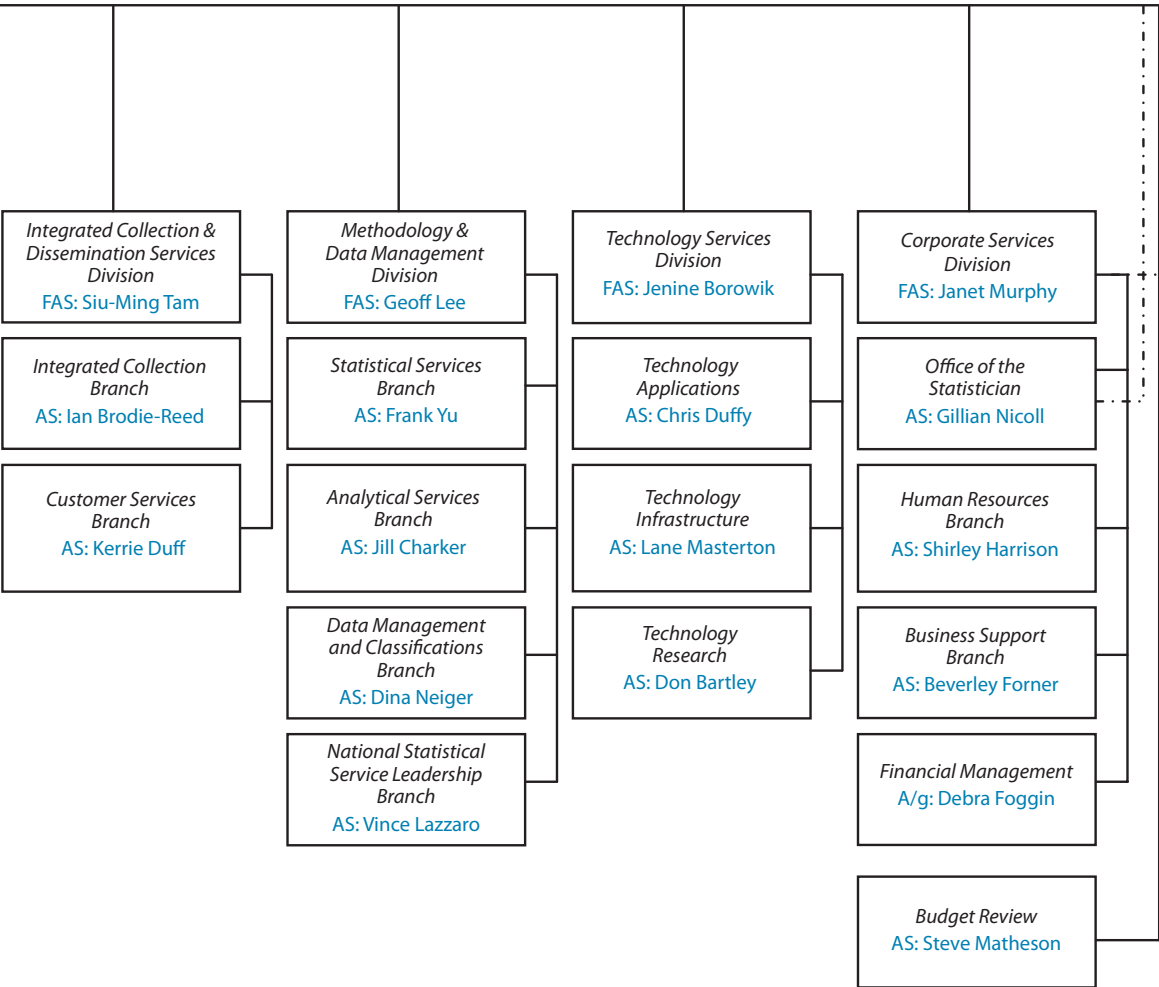
## State Statistical Forum

Every year the ABS hosts a State Statistical Forum (SSF), with the state and territory government members of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council coming together to discuss their statistical priorities.

In 2007–08, the SSF has focused on improving statistics about Indigenous Australians, demography at the local level, and children and youth statistics. Members have also sought improved information on local level economic development, water and housing affordability.

ORGANISATIONAL CHART  
(as at 30 June 2008)





KEY	DAS: Deputy Australian Statistician	FAS: First Assistant Statistician	AS: Assistant Statistician	RD: Regional Director
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*The Hon Chris Bowen MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs.*

## Responsible Minister

The ABS is an agency under the Treasury portfolio. Since November 2007, the Minister responsible for the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs.

## Outcome and outputs structure

### ABS Outcomes

In the Portfolio Budget Statement 2007–08, the ABS has one outcome:

Informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community based on the provision of a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

### ABS Outputs

Within the context of the Portfolio Budget Statements, *Output 1.1* (Australian Bureau of Statistics — national statistical service), the ABS produces and disseminates statistics in two key areas to meet the above outcome, namely:

- ◆ Output 1.1.1 — Economic Statistics
- ◆ Output 1.1.2 — Population and Social Statistics

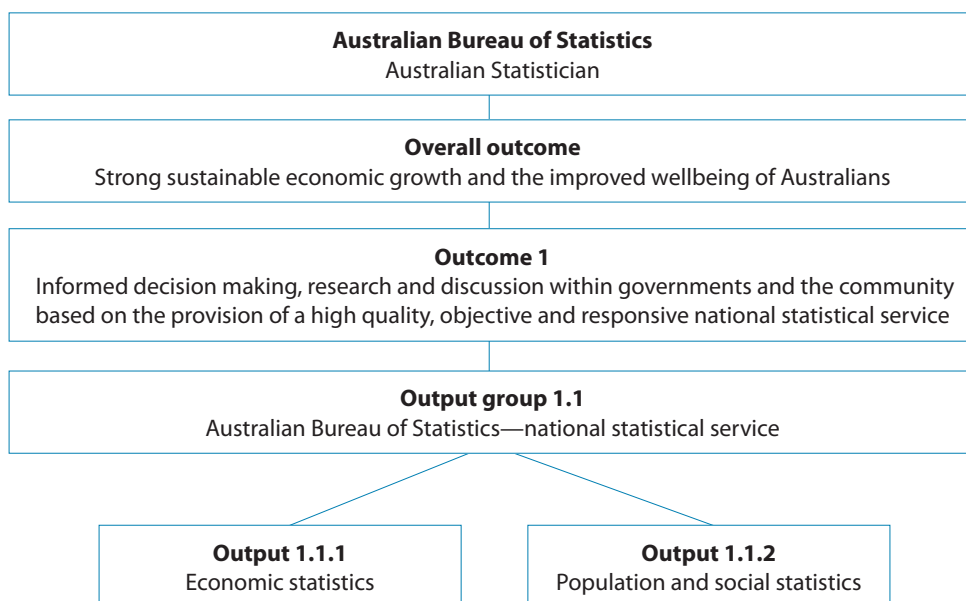
Economic statistics are produced predominantly from the ABS business survey program. They include an extensive range of statistical outputs relating to the structure and performance of the Australian economy.

Population and social statistics are produced mainly out of the ABS household survey program. They include statistical information relating to the Australian population, including census and demographic statistics, as well as information relating to the social and economic wellbeing of the population.

Both outputs provide an objective source of information that is used by governments and the community to inform their decisions. Both areas of statistics involve extensive data collection through censuses, surveys and from administrative data sources.

The ABS statistical programs are supported by service areas that deliver assistance and advice on statistical methods, data and metadata management, information technology, client management, dissemination, human resources and other corporate services.

## OUTCOMES AND OUTPUT GROUPS



## Financial position

As noted above, the ABS has two outputs; Economic Statistics and Population and Social Statistics. Table 2.1 provides, for 2007–08, a financial summary of ABS outputs and prices of outputs. The full financial statements are provided in Section VII, Financial Statements.

*Table 2.1: Summary of financial resources*

	2007–08	2006–07
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Price of Departmental Outputs</b>		
Output group 1.1.1—Economic statistics	174,835	163,967
Output group 1.1.2—Population and Social Statistics	155,184	273,628
<b>Total Output/Outcome</b>	<b>330,019</b>	<b>437,595</b>
Revenue from Government appropriations	302,260	414,431
Revenue from other sources	25,796	23,501
<b>Total for Outcome 1</b>	<b>328,056</b>	<b>437,932</b>

The ABS conducts a discretionary grant program, which is a scholarship program in conjunction with four Australian universities. A list of grant recipients can be obtained on request, by contacting the ABS' Financial Management Section on (02) 6252 6064.

**CORRECTION** — The ABS' Annual Report 2006–07 (page 29) incorrectly stated that 'the ABS does not administer any discretionary grants'. However, the scholarship program in conjunction with four Australian universities is considered a discretionary grant program for reporting purposes.

Table 2.2: Summary of financial performance

	2007–08	2006–07	Change
	\$m	\$m	\$m
Appropriation revenue	302.3	414.4	(112.1)
Other revenue	26.2	23.8	2.4
<b>Total income</b>	<b>328.5</b>	<b>438.2</b>	<b>(109.7)</b>
Employee expenses	220.5	294.7	(74.2)
Supplier expenses	73.1	107.5	(34.4)
Other expenses	36.4	35.4	1.0
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>330.0</b>	<b>437.6</b>	<b>(107.6)</b>
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus</b>	<b>(1.5)</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>(2.1)</b>

In 2007–08, the ABS reported an operating deficit of \$1.5m, which was better than the \$4.0m deficit projected in the 2008–09 Portfolio Budget Statements.

The improved result is due to a combination of factors which reduced expenditure by \$2.5m, including:

- ♦ delays in the activities associated with the Standard Business Reporting (SBR) program (\$1.5m). The delayed expenditure is expected to be incurred over the remainder of the program.
- ♦ a technical accounting adjustment to employee benefits (\$0.6m) associated with movements in long-term interest rates.

Compared to 2006–07, appropriation revenue decreased in 2007–08 due mainly to the reduction in funding for the activities related to the Census of Population and Housing. There was a corresponding decrease in the 2007–08 expenses. Other revenue was higher as a result of an increase in revenue for outposted officers and user funded surveys.

Employee expenses remained at 67% of total revenue. Within other expenses, there is an impairment/write-off of \$5.1m in relation to internally generated software assets.

The 2007–08 operating result reflects the continuing financial pressures the ABS is facing. By seeking a review of long-term budget funding, the agency is aiming to build a sustainable financial future.

Table 2.3: Summary of financial position

	2007–08	2006–07	Change
	\$m	\$m	\$m
Financial assets (a)	28.8	14.9	13.9
Non-financial assets (b)	153.3	154.5	(1.2)
Liabilities (c)	115.3	109.5	5.8
<b>Net assets (a+b-c)</b>	<b>66.8</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>6.9</b>

The ABS' net asset position improved by \$6.9 m, largely due to an increase in the financial assets (appropriation receivables). Appropriation receivables were higher than normal in 2007–08 as a direct result of the delays in the expenditure in the SBR program and delays in other capital spending.

# section iii

SPECIAL ARTICLES



# chapter 3

## Australia's National Statistical Service in the 21st Century

### Introduction

The ABS has a proud history of over 100 years of measuring the progress of the nation<sup>1</sup>. It is a scoreboard for Australia—a corner stone of our democracy. The ABS is respected for its independence, impartiality, integrity and the quality of work and outputs. Working closely with the states and territories has been a feature of the bureau since its establishment in 1905, with Integration Agreements continuing to be in place, resulting in the ABS being responsible for state and territory statistical requirements, in addition to those of the Commonwealth. The ABS is also an active and highly regarded contributor to the international statistical community, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region.

The ABS faces many challenges in what is a significantly changing world with increasing measurement complexity. Many of these were raised in a 2004 review commissioned by the ABS<sup>2</sup>. Examples include:

- ◆ There are a number of broad trends in society and the economy driving changes in the nature of the statistical environment. These involve shifts in how we live our lives, the ways our society and economy are structured and how we are governed. The trends are causing changes in both the demand for, and supply of, data.
- ◆ More than ever before, today's world is filled—and fuelled—by information. Individual citizens, businesses and their governments are using more information, and increasingly sophisticated information, as the basis for their decisions. Most significant for the ABS is the increase in the demand of government agencies for statistical data and services. Governments are seeking more and more highly developed information to support the delivery of better quality, better targeted programs and services to the public. The demands are also for more timely information to support the faster decision-making expected of governments.
- ◆ Government agencies and other users are looking to use different types of data for specific applications, such as longitudinal panel data, micro-level and local geographic data, subjective data and data that can measure intangibles. There are demands for making better use of existing information—particularly by linking databases to provide more information about people, businesses or places. Linking can produce richer, more detailed data that add depth and breadth to our understanding of complex policy problems and other issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics was known as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics (CBCS) until it became a statutory authority with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. The history of the CBCS and the ABS is recorded in *Informing a Nation — the evolution of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1905–2005* ISBN 0642479852.

<sup>2</sup> *The Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 21st Century—Strategic Positioning*—October 2004 by the Allen Consulting Group.

- ◆ The focus of private companies tends to be on producing market oriented information. However, the private sector is also moving into areas that have been the traditional preserve of the ABS. A growing number of private companies and research organisations offer economic, social and spatial data and value added services aimed at particular market sectors. As a result, the marketplace for statistical information is broad, continuing to widen and increase in complexity. The ABS remains the key player, but nevertheless only one of many players.
- ◆ Technological developments promise to make using and sharing data much easier and more affordable. New technologies also create new possibilities for the way that data are collected, presented and distributed.
- ◆ There is growing public awareness about privacy issues and concerns the linking of data could be a threat to individuals' privacy. This issue will need to be managed carefully so as not to reduce public trust in the way that governments use information.

The starting point for considering the national statistical service in the 21st century must be an assessment of how the ABS has begun to respond to changes in its environment that have emerged over recent times or are on the immediate horizon. In the 1988–89 ABS Annual Report, the article *A quart out of a pint pot* concluded that in the period since the ABS became a statutory authority with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the ABS had made significant advances in terms of the range, timeliness, and quality of its statistical products and services on a resource base that had been essentially static. In other words, it was getting 'a quart out of a pint pot'.

A subsequent article, *The pint pot revisited*, in the 1996–97 ABS Annual Report found the performance of the ABS had continued to improve significantly, enabling it to better fulfil its mission. Many of the improvements were possible because of the increased productivity, in particular through the application of information and communication technology. Others were achieved with a relatively small amount of additional budget and other external funding. The article concluded the ABS was continuing to extract a 'quart' or more of statistical output out of a 'pint pot' of resource.

This article reports on continuing productivity gains and realignment of existing resources within the ABS over the past decade, in the context of the important leadership role the ABS has to play in effective, efficient and integrated statistical arrangements for the nation.

# Australia's National Statistical Service— better information for a better Australia

## What is the National Statistical Service (NSS)?

The NSS is the community of government agencies, led by the ABS as Australia's national statistical organisation, building a rich statistical picture for a better informed Australia.

Conceptually, the NSS is:

- ◆ the sum of an agreed set of statistical frameworks, principles, policies and data resources developed by, or available to, government agencies within Australia that are used, or could be used, to produce official statistics, together with the skills and capabilities of the people involved, and
- ◆ underpinned by a set of shared values and associated behaviours that shape and sustain the integrity and objectivity of official statistics and provide governments, markets, businesses and communities with confidence to trust, both as providers and users, the official statistics produced within the NSS.

## Objectives of the NSS

The objectives of the NSS are to:

- ◆ deliver a high quality, up-to-date, comprehensive and coherent statistical picture of the economy, society and the environment to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the wider community
- ◆ provide a world class official statistical service that retains the confidence and trust of the Australian society as both providers to, and users of, the resultant official statistics
- ◆ maximise the use, for official statistical purposes, of data available within government administrative systems by government agencies
- ◆ minimise the burden of statistical reporting at all levels of the Australian community, and
- ◆ document and retain, as an enduring national resource, key statistical outputs and their underlying data sources.

## The NSS value proposition

The NSS provides trusted statistics to answer the questions that are important to Australians, their families and their communities. It enables Australians to assess the performance of their governments and to hold them accountable for outcomes. The NSS provides the foundation for evidence-based policy and, through feedback, drives innovation in service delivery to better meet the needs of all Australians, with the result of a better life through better public and private decisions.

The NSS offers producers of official statistics a more cost effective approach for producing statistics in line with best practice to meet their own information needs, and the needs of others, and provides them with access to other statistical information they need from other producers in the NSS.

The NSS will enable Australia to realise the full potential of its investment in statistical resources by overcoming institutional and jurisdictional fragmentation. Such fragmentation adds costs through duplication and misdirected effort, increases provider load on businesses and households, makes finding relevant statistics difficult, and reduces the usefulness of statistics through a lack of comparability.

## The need for an expanded and improved NSS

As it currently exists, the NSS is nowhere near meeting its full potential. The existing NSS activities could be substantially improved, and the NSS could be significantly expanded to encompass a greater range of current and future statistical activities of government. To realise this full potential, there is an imperative to further develop a community of government agencies involved in official statistical activities that progressively:

- ◆ develops, conducts and disseminates official statistics on the basis of shared values, principles and policies
- ◆ protects individual respondent data, as required by legislation, through these shared values, principles and policies
- ◆ maximises comparability of official statistical sources by shaping and adopting national (and where appropriate international) statistical standards, such as concepts, classifications, methods, metadata and data definitions
- ◆ makes strategic use of existing information held within government administrations for statistical purposes rather than treating it as a secondary resource
- ◆ builds a community of professional statistical staff working across all levels of government by providing access to appropriate mechanisms, to share their knowledge and experience; as is providing appropriate professional development opportunities
- ◆ minimises the overall investment required to support the NSS by facilitating the availability and accessibility of the information resources of the NSS by way of shared technical statistical infrastructure, and
- ◆ manages and maintains Australia's key official statistical resources, as an enduring national resource, by developing appropriate archival mechanisms for all official statistical data produced by governments.

## ABS leadership role

The ABS is well positioned to lead the NSS given that it has:

- ◆ a legislative mandate to do so
- ◆ the necessary skills, expertise and capability
- ◆ as its core activity, a strong track record of more than 100 years of providing high quality statistics
- ◆ the necessary values, especially integrity and independence
- ◆ the trust of the Australian community
- ◆ a commitment to provide access for all, and
- ◆ agreement by governments (including senior government officials) and the wider community that the ABS should play this leading role.



## Sustaining and improving the National Statistical Service

Over the last three decades, the ABS has made significant organisational, technological and methodological changes that have given rise to significant productivity savings. These savings have been used to meet successive government efficiency dividends, fund pay rises, expand the ABS work program, and invest in enabling technologies. Unfortunately, similar levels of productivity savings are not likely in the future, given the degree of functional specialisation already in place, and the effective use being made of information and communications technologies within the ABS. As the economy, society and environment are growing and becoming increasingly complex to measure, additional funding will be needed just to maintain the statistical quality standards, and to deal with the increasing collection costs, particularly for households surveys.

This complexity, together with an additional 2% efficiency dividend applied by government from the 2008–09 financial year, has resulted in \$21.8m in cuts to the ABS work program for 2008–09, so the ABS can operate within its appropriation. While these cuts represent only about 8% of the ABS 2008–09 budget appropriation, the small scale of most ABS activities has resulted in a range of statistics being affected—some were discontinued, others significantly reduced. There was a strong adverse reaction to the cuts from within government itself and from key users of statistics. The media has also expressed concerns the reduction to the ABS work program runs counter to an increased focus on ‘evidence-based’ policy and quantitative evaluation of government service delivery.

If the ABS is unable to secure additional funding for future years, cuts of a similar order to those made for 2008–09 will be necessary. Given this situation, the basis for determining ongoing funding for the ABS is being reviewed. The ABS is also seeking closer, up-front attention to be given to the data needs of new government programs, to ensure the provisions made for the statistical activities of the ABS, and the agencies concerned, are both adequate and appropriately coordinated.

## ABS funding

The ABS budget of around \$300m a year represents about one-eighth-of-one-percent of the federal budget and about \$14 per Australian each year. It peaks in the years around the five yearly national Census of Population and Housing, as well as the years immediately before and after the ‘Census night’. While there has been some additional funding provided to the ABS from government budget decisions over the past decade, in real terms the ABS funding has declined by 2% overall between 1998–99 and 2008–09 despite the substantially increased scale and complexity of economic, social and environmental concerns.

In addition, over the last decade Australia’s population has increased by about 14%, the labour force by about 19%, gross domestic product (in volume terms) by about 42% and domestic final demand (in volume terms) by about 55%.

As in the previous two decades, the last decade has seen major improvements to the range of ABS outputs and services. These have been primarily funded internally and have been achieved through the ABS making productivity improvements and doing more with less.

## ABS planning cycle

The annual ABS planning cycle involves careful consideration of relative statistical priorities and competing resource priorities, with particular attention to:

- ◆ prospective total resources available to the ABS within a four-year period
- ◆ input from user consultations
- ◆ the extent to which particular statistical activities continue to be undertaken in preference to other new work sought by users
- ◆ the contribution statistical activities make to achieving National Statistical Service objectives
- ◆ the potential availability of new funding, including user funding where appropriate, for various initiatives proposed
- ◆ the cost imposed on respondents to collections, in terms of time and effort productivity gains, which have been achieved or might be possible in the future, and
- ◆ resources spent on statistical versus non-statistical work.

Proposals are considered by ABS management, generally following consultation with major users. Aspects of the proposed forward work program and resource estimates that emerge are considered by the Australian Statistics Advisory Council and then finalised in light of their advice.

## Principal reforms and developments

The principal reforms and developments over the last decade include the following:

- ◆ *A new approach to household survey planning, development and processing (2000)*  
Household Survey Centres were formed to focus on the specialist survey statistician role of improving the quality of all aspects of survey design, development, enumeration and processing, to provide more timely, relevant and reliable outputs. National Statistical Centres were formed to provide statistical leadership internally and externally, for fields of statistics, including non-ABS data sources.
- ◆ *The Business Statistics Innovation Program (2002–05)*  
Key improvements were made to the way the ABS works with providers of business survey information. Significant organisational change and increased functional specialisation set the stage for the adoption of new methodologies and processing technologies. National Statistical Centres were also formed to provide statistical leadership in various fields.
- ◆ *Annual Integrated Collections (2006–08)*  
An integrated program was established for planning and conducting industry surveys, providing efficiencies in the way scarce industry survey resources are allocated.
- ◆ *Development of the environment statistics program*  
This program has a small amount of funding provided through a combination of realigned ABS resources, some government funding and some funding from partner organisations. Since its inception in the early 1990s, it has made significant progress in several areas, particularly in economic environmental accounting for water and minerals (see following section on New and improved outputs), but there is a significant amount of work still to be carried out.

- ◆ *Analysis of data*

Increased analytical work over the last decade has enabled the ABS to: better understand the uses and users of its statistics; and engage analytical, research and policy stakeholders in government, academia and the broader community, about statistical directions and priorities (see section on New and improved outputs).

- ◆ *Confidentialised unit record files*<sup>3</sup>

Over and above the statistical outputs generated by the ABS from survey data, significant additional analytical value has been realised by making confidentialised unit record level files available to researchers, for both basic research and for direct policy relevant research. Most ABS household surveys are now available as Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) in both a 'basic' form, as well as an 'expanded' form, through a remote access data laboratory facility (RADL) (see section on Increased access and use).

- ◆ *Electronic dissemination and free access to statistics via the ABS website*

The ABS website was established in 1995. Since then, the ABS has progressively replaced paper publications as the principal way in which users access ABS statistics. From December 2005, nearly all ABS statistical outputs have been available free-of-charge from the ABS website, resulting in a dramatic increase in the range and accessibility of statistics (see section on Increased access and use).

- ◆ *Rationalisation and realignment*

To enable increased attention for environment statistics, measures of population wellbeing, and statistics on the 'new economy', the ABS has reduced the sample sizes of some surveys, and changed the content and frequency of other surveys (see section on Increased access and use).

## Quality and relevance

To best meet Australia's statistical needs in an environment of societal change and increasing complexity, the ABS has invested significantly in improving the quality and relevance of its statistics and services. Major areas of improvement have been the following:

- ◆ *New and improved statistical methodologies, and more integration of statistical processes and datasets*

Of note are developments in: the integrated business characteristics strategy, which is providing for point-in-time and longitudinal data analysis; the consumer price index (CPI), including spatial indices and computer price indices; labour force statistics, in particular through the use of composite estimation techniques; methodological approaches such as seasonal adjustment; production of household estimates in addition to person level estimates; and time series analysis of recompiled historical surveys.

Other areas in which new and improved statistical methodologies have been developed include: retail and wholesale margins; industry and agriculture statistics; statistics for not-for-profit institutions; the house price index; pay setting methods statistics; the Population Census; overseas migration and population estimates; and surveys of income and housing.

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<sup>3</sup> A Confidentialised Unit record File (CURF) is a product that allows approved researchers with a valid statistical purpose to access individual survey responses. The data files are confidentialised and access is carefully controlled to ensure no individual or organisation can be identified.

- ◆ *Increased visibility of quality measures and quality information about ABS statistics*

Across many fields of statistics there has been significant progress in developing and implementing improved indicators of quality. These indicators promote and contribute to more informed and appropriate use of statistics. There has been a marked increase in the publication of measures such as relative standard errors and quality declarations.

## New and improved outputs

The ABS has received a small amount of funding from government and users to enable it to respond to emerging environmental, social and economic issues. The desire to bring together different sets of information and different data perspectives is also driving developments within the ABS. An increased emphasis on whole-of-government initiatives and cooperation between levels of government is another change to which the ABS is responding. However, the bulk of new statistical activity, particularly the development of related infrastructure and methodologies, has been achieved within existing ABS resources through ongoing productivity improvements and use of internal reinvestment mechanisms.

- ◆ *Environment*

Key developments have included: economic environmental accounting for water and minerals; filling information gaps on natural resource management (externally funded), salinity, water use on farms, environmental protection expenditure, agricultural commodities, energy supply survey and use, and domestic water use; regional environmental outputs and products; extensive use of administrative data to supplement or expand the range of environmental statistics without increasing the reporting burden on business or community. As previously noted, there is still considerable work to be done in the environment area to provide information necessary for decision making purposes.

- ◆ *Indigenous statistics*

There has been significant expansion to the breadth of Indigenous statistics produced by the ABS, and to related analysis. Following the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey in 1994, a regular program of surveys was established starting with a 2001 supplement to the National Health Survey. Since then, regular Indigenous surveys are included in the program every three years, alternating between a broad social survey and a survey focusing on health. Improvements have included the development of appropriate protocols and procedures for locating and interviewing Indigenous people.

Indigenous enumeration strategies have also been developed for use in the Census and these are reviewed and improved between censuses. Considerable work has also been done on understanding the quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths statistics, and to work with jurisdictions to improve recording of status. Methodologies for calculation of some aspects of Indigenous life expectancy have also been improved, and work continues to ensure the available measures are of the best possible quality. Annual experimental estimates of Indigenous labour force participation have also been developed.

- ◆ *Social and community wellbeing*

The range of social statistics has expanded greatly over the decade, including youth and children statistics, culture, leisure and sport statistics, a new general social survey, and the 2005 personal safety survey (the latter being externally funded). The ABS has also been involved in international projects such as development of a manual for conduct of crime victims surveys.

- ◆ *National Accounts*

Extensive upgrading of the national accounts infrastructure has occurred, including: introduction of updated statistical standards, with some funding from the 2005–06 budget; chain volume estimates; annual supply-use tables; upgraded capital stock and multi-factor productivity statistics. This provides a solid base for increased analytical work, particularly in the areas of productivity statistics and satellite accounts. User funding has helped make this possible, particularly work in relation to the tourism and not-for-profit sectors.

- ◆ *Labour statistics*

New outputs include: statistics on the nature and dynamics of the Australian Labour Market, including barriers and incentives to labour force participation, retirement and retirement intentions, and work related injuries; and CURFs for the labour mobility survey, and the survey of employee earnings and benefits and trade union membership. A new, partially externally funded survey of employment arrangements and superannuation was conducted in 2000 and again in 2006, with additional information collected in 2006 on work and family balance and retirement and retirement intentions. Improvements include: the introduction of new technologies and sample methodologies; development of experimental Indigenous estimates; enhancements to the presentation of youth data; enhancement of seasonally adjusted and trend estimates; improvements in the quality of regional estimates through the adoption of regional benchmarks; improved family estimation methodology; and production of annual measures of labour underemployment and underutilisation.

- ◆ *Industry and business*

This field has been expanded significantly, including the introduction of *Quarterly Business Indicators* supplementing the *Quarterly National Accounts*. There have been significant improvements to counts of businesses. Business characteristics data, including innovation, information technology (IT) use and entrepreneurship are now collected regularly. For example, the Business Longitudinal Database has been established and comprises characteristics and financial data sourced from the first Business Characteristics Survey, Australian Taxation Office administrative data (including BAS and BIT data), as well as data on exports and imports from the Australian Customs Service.

- ◆ *New economy statistics*

New work and research covers the following: globalisation, foreign affiliates trade in services and information on direct Australian investment abroad; information on use of information technology by government and households, including in the areas of broadband and electronic commerce; and development of indicators of innovation in Australian industry. While there has been some budget and external funding, much of the developmental work has been funded through savings and realignment initiatives within the ABS.

- ◆ *Improving the statistical value of administrative data*

The ABS is increasingly collaborating with other agencies at both the federal and state/territory levels to develop the statistical value of their administrative data holdings, improve data comparability, and enhance data access. This work will progress the National Statistical Service, and is also supporting the expansion of some statistical fields, such as rural and regional data. Integration across ABS and non-ABS statistical collections, and administrative systems, has been pursued as opportunities have arisen and resources have permitted. Partnerships with the Australian Taxation Office, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, the Australian Customs Service and the Department of Immigration and

Citizenship have enhanced the quality and use of an expanding range of statistics derived from administrative sources, and have contributed to better management of the reporting load on citizens and business while meeting the growing statistical needs of the nation.

- ◆ *Improvements in geographical information*

The major development in geography over the past 10 years has been the move to a mesh block based geography<sup>4</sup>, including the new mesh block based Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). The ASGS is to replace the Australian Standard Geographical Classification for the 2011 Census of Population and Housing<sup>5</sup>. Technology has also been developed and maintained to code statistics to the smaller areas (Geocoded National Address File (GNAF) based address coder). For example, attaching mesh block codes to deaths data has commenced, enabling location related factors to be analysed. As well as having significant implications for census and other statistical programs, this statistical geography infrastructure is a critical and timely investment in supporting analysis and decision making around policy areas, such as strengthening communities, water, the environment and social and physical infrastructure development.

- ◆ *Improvements in quality and range of state, regional and rural data*

Improvements include: commencement of a new measure of Gross State Product, which has led to more credible national accounts than in previous decades; introduction of regional benchmarks in the Labour Force survey to improve regional estimates; and development of National Regional Profiles, which complement Census Community Profiles.

- ◆ *Indicator frameworks*

Several state and territory governments have developed statistical indicator frameworks, with the active involvement of the ABS. These frameworks have prompted discussion about the potential for greater use to be made by the ABS of government administrative data as a source of statistics.

## New and improved analytical outputs

- ◆ *Measures of Australia's Progress* (ABS cat. no. 1370.0)

This publication integrates statistical data from across the national statistical system, to paint a picture of national progress over the last decade. It was first published in 2002, and then again in 2004 and 2006.

- ◆ *Improved analysis of income and wealth data*

The ABS recompiled its time series of household income estimates from the mid 1990s, to better reflect new international standards, including a new focus on household level measures, and to standardise estimation methodologies across time.

From 2003–04, the ABS began the collection of comprehensive household wealth data, together with household income and expenditure data, to allow for improved analysis of the level and distribution of household economic resources. Analysis of this data will provide a better understanding of the factors affecting those people with low levels of consumption.

<sup>4</sup> Mesh-blocks are a small area geographical unit. There are approximately 300,000 covering the whole of Australia. For more information on mesh blocks please refer to *Information Paper: Draft Mesh Blocks, Australia (Reissue), 2005* (ABS cat. no. 1209.0.55.001).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the ASGS please refer to *Information Paper: Outcome from the Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1216.0.55.002)

- ◆ *New experimental measures of household income*

New household level imputed rent estimates were published in 2008, to support a broader comparison of the economic wellbeing of owner-occupier households and their social and economic circumstances relative to other households.

- ◆ *Improved analytical tools*

Greater use has been made of ABS data to model and derive statistical products and measures such as the Socioeconomic Indexes for Areas.

- ◆ *Improvements to 'Australian Social Trends' (ABS cat. no. 4102.0)*

Improvements have been achieved by combining internal and external data, greater analysis, and provision of more detailed data to users.

- ◆ *A biennial production of a compendium of statistics about Indigenous Australians*

Since the first release in 1997, six editions of *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (ABS cat. no. 4704.0) have been produced in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

- ◆ *'Snapshots'*

*Snapshots* are an expanded range of short analytical publications, which bring together data from different sources on specific topics, including different health priority areas, and associated risk factors.

- ◆ *Census data enhancement*

Starting with data from the 2006 Census, work has begun to bring together a 5% sample of de-identified census data with migration, deaths and labour force data, in order to test the compatibility of data and identify key patterns in the combined data. Analysis, through specific quality studies, will help inform future strategies for improving data quality, for example, in Indigenous deaths statistics. Development of a longitudinal census data set is of particular interest for future research into factors influencing, over time, critical areas, such as education, employment and family outcomes in the community.

- ◆ *Enhanced analysis and reports on the Business Longitudinal Database*

Although very new, the Business Longitudinal Database has already been used for analytical input to the 2008 Review of the National Innovation System and will increasingly be used in industry and economic policy development.

- ◆ *Experimental Estimates of Industry Multi-factor Productivity (ABS cat. no. 5260.0.55.001)*

This publication, released in 2007, contains estimates of multi-factor productivity growth for 12 market sector industries of the Australian economy from 1985–86 to 2006–07.

- ◆ *Improvements and developments in ABS price indexes*

Improvements to ABS price indexes include the refinement of the methodology underpinning the House Price Index, and the development of capability to establish new price indexes.

## Enhanced Infrastructure

### Statistical and conceptual classifications redevelopment

A number of statistical and conceptual classifications have been reviewed and redeveloped to ensure the continuing relevance of both the classifications and statistics based on them. In particular, this has included the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification, the Standard Economic Sectoral Classification of Australia, the Australian Standard Geographical Classification, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, and the Australian Standard Offence Classification.

In addition, the System of National Accounts and Balance of Payments Manual, representing international standards for macroeconomics, have been revised, with the ABS as a key contributor.

The past decade has also seen the development of a number of new conceptual frameworks and classifications:

- ◆ *Household Income Statistics*

In 1996, the ABS organised the first meeting of the International Expert Group on Household Income Statistics (The Canberra Group). The recommendations of this group were incorporated into a substantial revision, in December 2003, of the international standards for these statistics promulgated by the International Labour Organisation.

- ◆ *'Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics'* (ABS cat. no. 4160.0)

Released by the ABS in 2001, this publication describes the conceptual organisation of social statistics, the various conceptual models used in the nine main areas of social concern, along with a range of issues for consideration in the analysis of these areas of social concern.

- ◆ *'Measuring Social Capital—An Australian Framework and Indicators'* (ABS cat. no. 1378.0)

Published by the ABS in 2004, this release provides a broad conceptual framework and a set of possible indicators for measuring aspects of social capital. *Aspects of Social Capital* (ABS cat. no. 4911.0) followed in 2006, drawing together available data for many of the possible indicators.

- ◆ *Other conceptual frameworks and classifications*

Other new frameworks include those for education and training, sexual assault, domestic and family violence, criminal justice processes, and sport and physical activity. The new classifications include the Australian Standard Classification of Education, and the Australian Culture and Leisure Classifications.

### Information and Communications Technology

As a knowledge-intensive business, the ABS is critically dependent on the appropriate use of information and communications technology (ICT). The ABS adapts and reuses ICT to produce statistical output for a very large and increasingly complex Australian economy, society and environment.

In 1980, the ABS received budget supplementation to acquire a single mainframe processing environment and to migrate all existing statistical and administrative systems to that new environment. This was the last external direct supplementation for ICT provided to the ABS.



Since then, changes in ICT to enable ABS business initiatives and adaptation have been funded predominantly by re-invested internal efficiencies, although some funds have been allocated as part of new business program funding.

The last decade has seen ongoing investment in ICT systems, networks and software, including the replacement of legacy mainframe elements with a contemporary processing architecture. The ABS has used a cost-recovery mechanism for information technology and computer programming resources, which has ensured the technology development in the ABS is driven by business considerations. The 'cost recovery' concept operates as 'break-even' business model. ABS resource centres allocate funding to a range of technology and professional services, with oversight by the ABS Information Resources Management Committee, which approves, revises and monitors investments and funding for ICT.

Key developments from the last decade, where the ABS has self-funded the ongoing development of its ICT environment, include the following:

- ◆ *An integrated system for household surveys (2005–2008)*

Process and system changes have been made to improve integration, processing, quality and timeliness of household surveys.

- ◆ *Business Register redevelopment*

There have been three major redevelopments (1984, 1997 and 2008) of the ABS Business Register database, which is the master list from which ABS draws samples of businesses to be surveyed. The 2008 redevelopment will be completed with a staff cost of 22 staff years, a significant reduction on the 1997 redevelopment, which cost 100 staff years.

- ◆ *Data capture processing*

There have been several data capture processing improvements during the last decade, including two generational shifts in image/character processing of forms for ABS surveys and the Census of Population and Housing, as well as:

- ◆ use of computer-aided and telephone-based interviewing in household surveys
- ◆ introduction of multi-modal data capture including electronic data collection, and
- ◆ conduct of a large-scale e-form based 2006 Census, with Australian Government funding<sup>6</sup>.

- ◆ *Core statistical processing*

The ABS has carried out significant re-design and development of the entire ABS application portfolio, including:

- ◆ moving from a pure mainframe environment to a standard processing environment for client-server based systems, with mainframe decommissioning in 2006
- ◆ 'end-to-end' re-engineering of the business survey processing systems, which commenced in 2002, and the household survey processing systems, ongoing from 2005, and establishing a single input data warehouse for all business data collected by the ABS.

- ◆ *Information dissemination processing and consultancy*

Developments have included: creation and on-going maintenance of the ABS website; and establishment of the ABS Output Information Warehouse and associated processing environment (with around 90% of released official statistics processed through this warehouse, it is part of the critical output supply chain of data to the ABS website).

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<sup>6</sup> The ABS won the 2007 Excellence in e-Government Award (e-Award) for the e-form based Census.

◆ *Knowledge management infrastructure*

Since the mid-1990s, there have been three generational changes to the ABS' knowledge management and personal computing environment, with the next generation of personal computing in development.

◆ *Enabling technology infrastructure*

Developments have included:

- ◆ a shift from pure mainframe-centric processing to client-server processing
- ◆ introduction of mobile computing platforms
- ◆ migration to 'Voice Over IP' for telephony services
- ◆ introduction of collaboration tools, including instant messaging and video conferencing
- ◆ enhancement of internet services
- ◆ improvement in business continuity, through consolidated offsite backup and recovery, and
- ◆ consolidation of significant servers, storage and networks.

◆ *National statistical leadership*

Leadership has included prototype development and deployment of the National Data Network, which is a distributed data network for the National Statistical Service community, used to increase visibility, accessibility and reuse of data, tools and services.

◆ *New central office building in Canberra*

The ABS Central Office in Canberra moved to a purpose-built building in 2001–02, which has markedly improved the working environment and the collaborative working arrangements.

◆ *People*

The ABS has continued to provide staff with training and work experience in conceptual, analytical, statistical, information systems and subject matter skills. Staff perception surveys have proven useful in identifying potential organisational cultural reform. Important areas of staff development have been in leadership and performance management skills.

The ABS also offers a range of training programs for the broader National Statistical Service community, on a cost-recovered basis. The training has been well subscribed and there is growing demand, with the increasing recognition of the value of statistical capability in policy development, implementation and evaluation.

The ABS pays careful attention to recruitment and staff retention strategies, especially in the increasingly competitive labour market. Over the decade, the effort required to attract and retain some key skill groups has increased. Contributing factors have been changes to the choices made by school and university students, and in university course offerings. One key skill group affected by these changes is mathematical statisticians, who are required by the ABS as methodological experts responsible for efficient and effective sample design and analysis processes. The ABS conducts a scholarship program, in conjunction with four Australian universities, to encourage gifted students to continue their studies in statistics. In addition, the ABS has established a close working relationship with the Centre for Statistical and Survey Methods at University of Wollongong.

## Increased access and use

The volume of data disseminated by the ABS has increased enormously over the past 10 years. This reflects improvements to, and much greater automation of processing systems and output systems. Most collections now disseminate far more data than was previously the case. The ABS has funded a number of strategies from within its budget, including:

- ◆ *ABS website*

Established in July 1995, the ABS website is the principal dissemination medium for ABS statistics. The majority of releases have been free on the website since December 2005. A telephone information and referral service continues to operate, now focusing on assisting customers, wherever possible, to help themselves via the ABS website. While some government funding was provided to support the move to 'free from the website' from December 2005, there was a reduction in net revenue of over \$2.5m each year that has had to be absorbed by the ABS.

The ABS continues to investigate improvements to the website, enhancing accessibility, usability, functionality and reliability. Notable recent developments include: addition of publications in digitised form including the entire Year Book Australia series and all printed publications released between 1994 and 1997; release notification systems, email and RSS feeds; download facilities for content such as data cubes, publications and spreadsheets; data visualisation mechanisms including animated population pyramids; use of Google search and map facilities; eMagazine style content including Year Book Australia as a web document; and National Regional Profiles.

The number of pages published has increase fourteen-fold to 193,515 pages in five years, webpage-views have almost trebled in five years to over 140 million, and a seven fold increase in product downloads to over seven million in 2007–08.

- ◆ *Confidentialised unit record files*

CURFs are available for use by authorised researchers for specific research purposes either on CD-ROM or via a web-based interface to the ABS remote access data facility, Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL). The number of CURFs available for analysis has grown from 16 in 1998 to over 100 now available. To date, only two business surveys have been released as CURFs, due to the inherent difficulty in confidentialising business unit record data.

The number of active individual CURF accesses has grown from 254 in 2003 to 5,020 in 2008. Currently, over 100 organisations access CURFs with especially strong growth in the government sector. Approximately half of the active accesses to CURFs are for policy development or related research. An ongoing agreement with the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee has made possible a wide range of CURF-based research projects within the university sector.

The development of RADL, and the associated computer facilities, represents an important milestone in increased accessibility of CURF data. RADL provides access to a wider and more detailed range of CURFs than are available on CD-ROM. Authorised users submit their statistical analysis requirements (written in SAS, Stata or SPSS computing languages) via a web interface. Processing of these requirements then occurs within the ABS computing environment and output checked for confidentiality, before being returned electronically to the users concerned.

- ◆ *Information Skills Program*

This program assists and encourages the informed, effective and increased use of ABS information by external clients, through high quality and responsive training and other information literacy programs. These services are provided to targeted client groups, including other government agencies, journalists, educators, information professionals and community groups. This program incorporates the Library Extension Program, which the ABS ran for many years.

- ◆ *Improving statistical literacy in the Australian community and across governments*

Over the last decade the ABS has worked with schools across Australia, to establish and sustain the 'Census@School' program, an initiative aimed at improving the statistical literacy of teachers and students, and increasing the use of ABS data in schools. During 2007–08, the ABS also ran a successful pilot of a theatre style program to educate and engage with year five and six students visiting Canberra. The program is designed to introduce children to statistics and explain how statistics can influence decision-making and planning. The ABS also attended a large number of education conferences and workshops over the last twelve months, with the aim of raising awareness of statistics as a life skill.

## Trust and cooperation of providers

The ABS has continued to work towards fully integrating the interests of data providers into strategic direction setting, alongside emerging interests of users. As a result, there has been considerable success in recent years in reducing the overall amount of time businesses spend responding to ABS business surveys, while at the same time significantly expanding the range of statistics available. For small businesses, the reduction has been 22% since 1996–97, while for businesses overall, the reduction has been 15% during the same period. For household surveys, the overall amount of time householders spend responding to ABS surveys varies considerably from year to year, with many major surveys on 3–6 yearly cycles. The ABS has to balance the pressure to expand the household survey program, to meet the need for information about the population, with the load on the providers of the information.

Most of the reductions in provider burden in recent years have been achieved through the use of administrative data and a broad range of smarter statistical methodologies, including ones aimed at improving relationships with providers. Recent achievements and initiatives, within the current resource levels, include:

- ◆ reductions in sample sizes across a range of economic, social and environmental surveys, as a result of improved methodologies and estimation techniques, and other reductions in sample sizes through integration of annual economic surveys
- ◆ substantial sample reductions across a range of surveys (including the Retail Survey) through the use of Australian Taxation Office data in survey design, and as a substitute for data that would otherwise be collected via a survey, and
- ◆ work on the Standard Business Reporting project—a whole-of-government initiative aiming to standardise business data collection requirements and methods of federal government agencies.

The formation of the Integrated Collection and Dissemination Services Division within the ABS in 2007 has contributed to further improvements in provider management, for example: placing responsibility for managing provider burden, for both businesses and households, under a single program; and creating opportunities to more effectively manage and coordinate strategies to reduce provider burden across the full range of ABS surveys.

## Client relationships

In 2008, the ABS released a Service Delivery Charter, outlining the ABS' commitment to providing a quality customer service and specifying what clients can expect when they approach the ABS. The ABS will report on service delivery performance in the ABS Annual Report.

## International engagement

The ABS is participating in a much wider range of international initiatives and collaborations than was the case 10 years ago. The ABS is recognised as a pre-eminent national statistical office and is often called upon to participate in a wide range of high level statistical development initiatives in relation to international standards, frameworks and methodologies.

Over the last decade, the ABS has directly contributed to strengthening of statistical systems of countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as continuing to play a leadership role. The ABS has:

- ◆ worked to improve data comparability across countries
- ◆ contributed to the development of international standards in the fields of social, economic and environmental statistics—the most notable contributions are to the review of the System of National Accounts, Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC 2006) and the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounts (SEEA)
- ◆ provided extensive technical assistance for the Asia-Pacific International Comparison Program (ICP)
- ◆ provided advice to many countries to assist with the undertaking of population and housing censuses, which form part of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses
- ◆ cooperated with the international statistical community to identify and implement best practice statistical processes and methods, and
- ◆ improved collaboration with Australian Government agencies on internationally comparable datasets.

## Conclusion

As this article again shows, the ABS has continued over the past 10 years its proud tradition of expanding and improving the statistical services it provides to governments, businesses, communities and the Australian people.

Although the ABS has received some additional funding over the past decade, the vast majority of the expansions and improvements outlined in this article were achieved through finding more efficient and effective ways of designing, collecting, processing and disseminating our statistics.

In many cases this has involved significant organisational changes as well as the development and implementation of more sophisticated survey design and analytical methods. It has also involved the cost effective application of computing and communication technologies to drive innovation and reduce operational costs, while at the same time expanding enormously the information available to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion, at all levels of Australian society.

It is not surprising that in a period where governments and society are placing increasing emphasis on the value of being able to access good quantitative data to better inform and evaluate both public and private decisions, the ABS continues to face demands for more and better statistical services. At the same time, the various phenomena that the ABS seeks to understand and measure in our economy, our society and our environment are changing more rapidly and becoming more complex and more challenging. This, combined with the growing sophistication of the uses and users of our data is having consequent impacts on the costs of collection, processing and dissemination across many of our statistical programs.

Against this background, it is unlikely that the ABS in the coming decade will be as well placed to continue to deliver 'a quart out of a pint pot' as has been the case over the past three decades. Further investment will be required in the ABS if it is going to continue to lead the development of a national statistical service able to meet the needs of Australian governments and society in the 21st century. This will require governments to commit the resources required for the ABS to produce the evidence so necessary to inform and evaluate decisions—that is, trustworthy, relevant official statistics.

# chapter 4

## 100 Years of International Trade Statistics

### 100 years of history mapped by trade statistics

**1907** — *Trade and Customs and Excise Revenue of the Commonwealth of Australia* released for the year 1906. Trade surplus [exports – imports / (exports + imports)] 22%.

**1917** — Monthly international merchandise trade statistics first published in August.

**1930–31** — Following the 1929 Wall Street crash and subsequent onset of the Great Depression, price of wool, metals, timber, apparel, liquor and minerals are hardest hit. Total trade (exports plus imports) reduces 42% from 1929–30.

**1942–43** — World War II led to high import and export prices. Largest Australian trade surplus (in percentage terms) 33%.

**1943–44 to 1944–45** — Dangers to shipping, as a result of the war, reduces international trade. Trade surplus 16%.

**1951–52 to 1952–53** — Record price of wool led to most volatile period for Australian trade. Trade balance shifts from a deficit of 21% in 1951–52 to a surplus of 26% in 1952–53.

**1966–67** — The UK relinquishes its position as Australia's number one leading trading partner. Imports from the USA surpass those from the UK, and Japan replaces the UK as the number one market for exports. Trade deficit 0.3%.

**1988** — Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) classification introduced enabling consistent international comparison of trade statistics.

**2004–05** — China becomes the main source of imports (followed by the USA and Japan), growing 44% since 2002–03. Trade deficit 8%.

**2006–07** — Strong growth in China's demand for Australian minerals exports, more than doubling from 2003–04, contributes to a boom in Australia's mining industry. China is the second largest export market after Japan, and followed by the Republic of Korea. Trade deficit 4%.

## Introduction

The year 2007 marked 100 years of the ABS producing statistics on international trade in goods. This centenary of international trade statistics was achieved through strong collaboration between the Australian Customs Service and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Australia's international trading performance has always been a critical component of the Australian economy. Comprehensive, accurate and timely international trade statistics are vital in understanding Australia's economic performance.

The ABS first published international trade statistics in 1907, soon after its formation (as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics) in 1906. Prior to this, trade statistics were compiled by the Government Statistician of each state. The earliest state records are available from 1826.

ARTICLE AND COUNTRY WHENCE IMPORTED	Quantity	Value	Country of Origin	Value	which D was coll
	cwt.	£		£	
Potatoes.	1,415	486	Australia	90	
United Kingdom	306	68	United Kingdom	454	
Canada	7	1	Canada	1	
Cape Colony	90	1	Cape Colony	1	
Hong Kong	15	1	Hong Kong	1	
Mauritius	10	1	Mauritius	1	
Natal	345	1	Natal	1	
New Guinea	7	1	New Guinea	1	
New Zealand	1,000	1	New Zealand	1	
Norfolk Island	3	1	Norfolk Island	1	
Straits Settlements	1	1	Straits Settlements	1	
Belgium	210	1	Belgium	1	
France	2	1	France	1	
Germany	1,000	1	Germany	1	
Italy	3	1	Italy	1	
Japan	1	1	Japan	1	
United States	1	1	United States	1	

*International trade statistics were first published by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics in 1907, for the year 1906.*

Australia's imports and exports statistics are analysed by a large number of organisations, including government agencies, industry analysts and businesses, to formulate policy, support international trade negotiations, evaluate domestic market implications and for international comparison.

## Compilation

The ABS produces international trade statistics on the value, composition, destination and source of Australia's merchandise exports and imports. The statistics are compiled using export and import transactions provided by the Australian Customs Service, which are based on information it receives from importers and exporters, or their brokers. Both agencies acknowledge the contribution the importing and exporting community have made and continue to make to the collection and dissemination of reliable merchandise trade data.



## Dissemination

The first ABS international trade publication, *Trade and Customs and Excise Revenue of the Commonwealth of Australia for the year 1906* (ABS cat. No. 5409.0), was released in June of 1907. This leather-bound publication of 445 pages presents the imports and exports of merchandise, specie (coin) and bullion between Australia and the rest of the world.



*The first ABS international trade publication was released in June 1907.*

In this very first release of international trade statistics, imported and exported items are recorded along with their value, quantity and country of origin (imports) or destination (exports). The publication extensively details traded items from acids and ale to watches and wigs. The level of detail in the 1906 publication accounts even for singular items, for example, a boat imported from Fiji costing £165.

Today, *International Trade in Goods and Services*, (ABS cat. no. 5368.0) aggregates the extensive range of traded items under broader categories. For example, previously classified acids would now be aggregated under chemicals and related products; ale would be included in beverages and tobacco; and watches and wigs under miscellaneous manufactured goods.

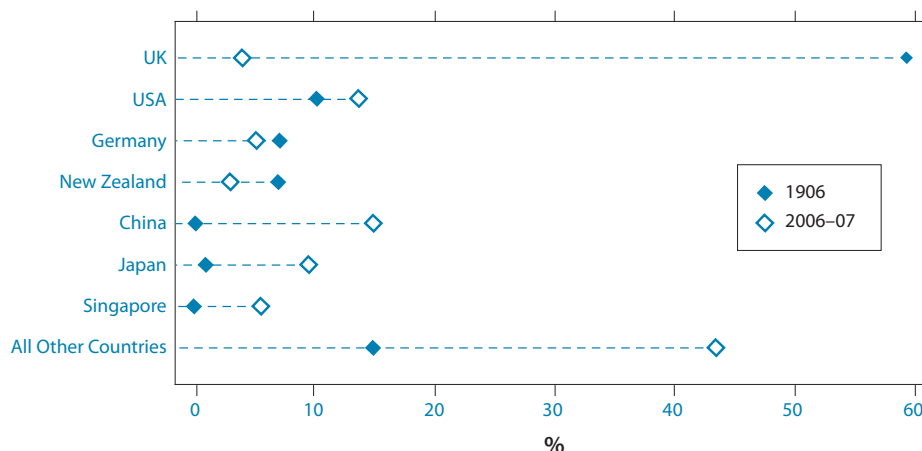
In a move from a paper based approach, international trade statistics are now disseminated via a range of electronic data formats, including electronic publications, email and disc. The move from hardcopy publications to electronic data presentation makes today's international trade publications highly accessible. Considerable information can be accessed free of charge from the ABS website, with the most detailed data available upon request.

## Composition

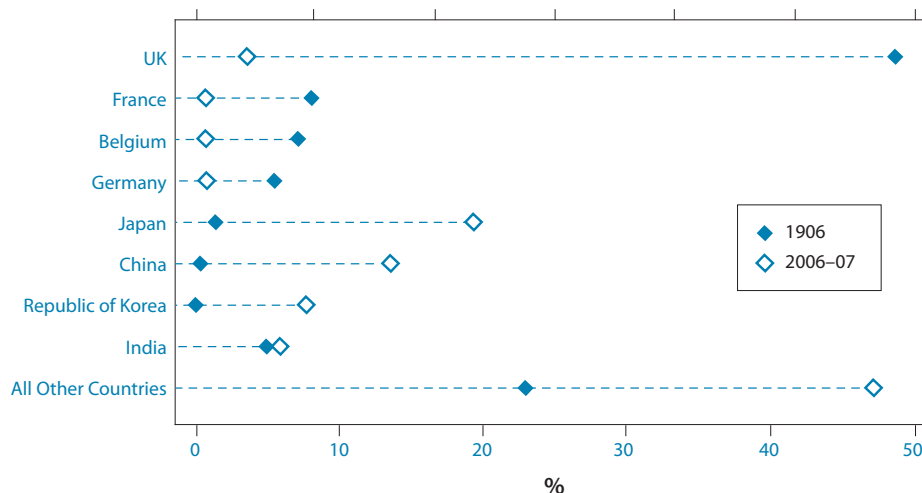
Australia's international trade statistics have changed markedly over the past century, not only in presentation but also in the composition of imports and exports:

- ◆ In 1906, Australian imports totalled £44,729,506, with the largest single commodity being apparel and textiles (£12,741,635, approximately 28%) from the UK and Germany. Imports of manufactured metals and machinery, mostly boilers and pumps, were also significant (£9,143,861 or 20%). Exports totalling £66,299,874 resulted in a £21,570,368 trade surplus. The single largest commodity exported was wool destined primarily for the UK, contributing £22,645,769 (34%) to exports. The next largest export commodity was gold specie primarily destined for Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon, totalling £9,851,558 (15%). The UK was Australia's major trading partner in 1906, accounting for 59% of imports and 49% of exports.
- ◆ In 2006-07, imports totalled \$181b and the major commodities were road vehicles, \$23b (13%), and petroleum products, \$21b (13%). From exports worth \$168b, Australia's major commodity exports were coal, \$22b (12%), and iron ore, \$15b (9%). The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries account for 72% of Australia's trade and the UK just 4% of both imports and exports. The main sources of Australia's imports were China (15%), USA (14%), and Japan (10%). Australian exports were primarily destined for the ports of Japan (19%), China (14%) and the Republic of Korea (8%).

*Comparison of Import Origin, 1906 and 2006-07*




*Comparison of Export Destinations, 1906 and 2006-07*



## Users and Uses

International trade statistics are an important input to a range of other ABS statistics, including export and import price indexes, the balance of payments and national accounts. International trade data helps provide a comprehensive view of Australia's national and international economic picture.

In 1906, the use of trade statistics was likely to have been limited. Users were primarily state and Commonwealth governments analysing state trade patterns for budgetary and policy consideration.



For example, in a Report of the Advisory Committee on Commercial Intelligence of the Board of Trade, early trade statistics were used in an analysis of Australia's trade position to support the argument in favour of increasing foreign competition. International trade statistics were also used as an indicator of Australia's prosperity and overall economic performance, in the absence of more vigorous measures.

Today, international trade statistics at aggregate and detailed levels are used by a wide-range of clients for different purposes, including:

- ◆ Australian and state/territory government agencies use the data for regulatory and general economic policy purposes, for monitoring commodity trade flows, to assist in the development of trade policy, trade negotiations, monitoring trade agreements and settling trade disputes, and as input to infrastructure planning
- ◆ economic commentators use the data to report and comment on Australia's trade with the rest of the world and the impact on the Australian economy
- ◆ private sector businesses and individuals use international trade statistics to: monitor import penetration and export performance; analyse market shares; assess import competition facing domestic production activities; conduct market research; and assess possibilities for expanding existing markets and developing new markets
- ◆ international agencies such as the United Nations Statistics Division, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Monetary Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations use the statistics for purposes specific to each organisation, and to ensure that Australia is complying with international standards
- ◆ other national statistical agencies use Australia's international trade data for analysis and comparison with their own international trade data
- ◆ financial sector economists, national and international commentators, and public sector agencies in other countries use the data to support their interpretation of international trade statistics and provide advice to their organisations and clients
- ◆ academics use the data in support of theory and in order to conduct research on international trade
- ◆ educators and students use international trade statistics to teach/learn about Australia's economy and its relationship with the rest of the world.

The way in which merchandise trade statistics can be accessed has changed significantly in 100 years. A great deal of data can be accessed free of charge from the ABS website (<http://www.abs.gov.au>) or on user-pays basis from ABS Client Services. Merchandise trade data are also available from licensed intermediaries of international trade data, including:

- ◆ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, producing trade statistical publications and providing a consultancy service
- ◆ Global Trade Information Services Inc., producing international merchandise trade data on the Internet
- ◆ MariTrade, providing Australian air and sea freight statistics
- ◆ TradeData International, specialising in foreign trade information and producing customised reports on trade and consultancy services.

## Conclusion

International trade statistics indicate a country's economic strengths and challenges. They guide significant cross-border relationships and shape foreign economic policy. The publication of international trade statistics has come a long way since 1907, as has Australia's international trade position in an increasingly globalising world. The production of quality merchandise trade statistics has enabled the analysis and monitoring of Australia's international trade, allowing Australia to develop and maintain a successful trade strategy and prosperous global economic position.

The ABS and the Australian Customs Service together celebrate 100 years of providing reliable and readily accessible international trade statistics for varied uses, most importantly as a measure of Australia's economic performance in a complex global environment.

For further information about statistics in this article refer to:

- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0 — *Year Book Australia 1901–1907*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0 — *Year Book Australia 1908*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0 — *Year Book Australia 2001. 'Trade Since 1900'* pp.1035–1039
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 1382.0 — *Informing a Nation: The evolution of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1905–2005*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 5302.0 — *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia, June 2007*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 5368.0 — *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia, June 2007*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 5409.0 — *Trade and Customs and Excise Revenue of the Commonwealth of Australia for the year 1906*
- ◆ ABS Catalogue No. 5489.0 — *International Merchandise Trade, Australia, Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2001*



## NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

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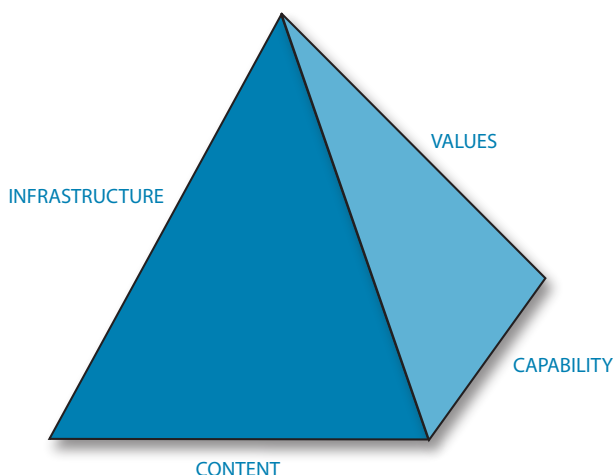
# chapter 5

## The ABS and the National Statistical Service

### Introduction

The National Statistical Service (NSS) is the community of government agencies, led by the ABS as Australia's national statistical organisation, building a rich statistical picture for a better informed Australia. The wide range of statistics being produced by agencies other than the ABS is driving a need to ensure the overall Australian statistical system is cohesive, and the ABS' role in this system is clearly defined. These changes coincide with the Australian Government agenda emphasising greater information sharing and coordinated policy and program initiatives across agencies.

*Values, infrastructure, content and capability are essential elements of a successful NSS.*



The objectives of the NSS are to:

- ◆ deliver a high quality, up-to-date, comprehensive and coherent statistical picture of the economy, society and the environment, to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion, within governments and the wider community
- ◆ provide a world class official statistical service that retains the confidence and trust of the Australian society as providers to, and users of, official statistics
- ◆ maximise the use, for official statistical purposes, of data available within government administrative systems by government agencies
- ◆ minimise the burden of statistical reporting at all levels of the Australian community, and
- ◆ document and retain, as an enduring national resource, key statistical outputs and their underlying data sources.

The NSS provides trusted statistics to answer the questions that are important to Australians, their families and their communities. It enables Australians to assess the performance of their governments and to hold them accountable for outcomes. The NSS provides the foundation for evidence-based policy and, through feedback, drives innovation in service delivery to better meet the needs of all Australians, with the result of a better life through better public and private decisions.

The NSS offers producers of official statistics a more cost-effective approach for delivering statistics in line with best practice, to meet their own information needs and the needs of others, and provides them with access to other statistical information that they need from other producers in the NSS.

The NSS enables Australia to realise the full potential of its investment in statistical resources, by overcoming institutional and jurisdictional fragmentation. Such fragmentation adds costs through duplication and misdirected effort; increases provider load on businesses and households; makes finding relevant statistics difficult; and reduces the usefulness of statistics through a lack of comparability.

## Enhancing the NSS

As it currently exists, the NSS is nowhere near meeting its full potential. The existing NSS activities could be substantially improved, and the NSS could be significantly expanded to encompass a greater range of current and future statistical activities of government. To realise this full potential, there is an imperative to further develop a community of government agencies involved in official statistical activities that progressively:

- ◆ develops, conducts and disseminates official statistics on the basis of shared values, principles and policies
- ◆ protects individual respondent data, as required by legislation, through these shared values, principles and policies
- ◆ maximises comparability of official statistical sources by shaping and adopting national (and, where appropriate, international) statistical standards, such as concepts, classifications, methods, metadata and data definitions
- ◆ makes strategic use of existing information held within government administrations for statistical purposes, rather than treating it as a secondary resource
- ◆ builds a community of professional statistical staff working across all levels of government by providing access to appropriate mechanisms, to share their knowledge and experience; and providing appropriate professional development opportunities
- ◆ minimises the overall investment required to support the NSS, by facilitating the availability and accessibility of the information resources of the NSS through shared technical statistical infrastructure, and
- ◆ manages and maintains Australia's key official statistical resources, as an enduring national resource, by developing appropriate archival mechanisms for all official data produced by governments.



## Examples of National Statistical Service Initiatives

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### NatStats08 Conference, Melbourne, 19–21 November 2008

#### ‘Working together for an Informed Australian Society’

The theme for the inaugural NatStats08 Conference focuses on fostering the growth of the statistical community, and developing a collaborative approach to national statistics.

The conference will cover three key themes:

- ◆ **Informing the Nation**

Discussion will be centred around the type of statistics required, and the role statistics can play in future policy decisions, as well as strategies and ideas to improve the statistical base for the nation.

- ◆ **Measuring the Progress of Society**

This theme will provide an international and Australian perspective on measuring progress in society. Discussion will examine key issues such as social inclusion and provide regional input into the World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, to be held in Korea in 2009.

- ◆ **Informing the Environment Debate**

Statistics are critical to informing environment debate and discussion within governments and the community. Climate change, natural resource management and water will be key discussion points within this theme.

More information about the conference is available at <http://www.nss.gov.au/natstats>

### Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is developing a comprehensive, across-government monitoring system. The system, known as the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS), aims to provide statistical data on the safety, health, development, learning and wellbeing of children and young people in Victoria. The system derives data predominantly from across-government administrative systems and new data collections being implemented by the Victorian Government. This system will provide all levels of government and researchers with access to, and query options for, data on indicators related to children's health, safety, learning, development and wellbeing.

In October 2007, the Children's Services Coordination Board, which is managing the VCAMS project, endorsed a proposal to undertake a collaborative project with the ABS, to explore the potential benefits and issues of using a National Data Network (NDN) solution, making data securely available through a web-based interface.

<b>Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (continued)</b>	<p>This project has demonstrated the success of the collaborative approach for both parties. The Victorian Government was able to access the expertise and experience of the ABS in developing statistical systems, while the ABS was able to further its understanding of a NDN capability by working in an end-to-end environment on a 'real life' business problem.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is now moving to the next stage of the project, which will see the establishment of an Interdepartmental working group to lead the project across relevant government departments. The ABS will continue to be engaged in the project at both statistical and technical levels.</p>
<b>Involvement in the Council of Australian Governments</b>	<p>The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance, and which require cooperative action by Australian governments. The ABS is becoming more active in a number of COAG groups.</p> <p>The ABS has been invited onto an Australian Government Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) for the COAG Working Group on Climate Change and Water, which is chaired by Senator, the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change. This group aims to ensure there is an effective national response to climate change and sustainable water use across Australia. The ABS is also a member of an IDC to streamline greenhouse and energy reporting.</p> <p>The ABS is attending meetings of the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform: Sub-group on Building the Evidence Base, which is working on breaking down the government's high level targets for Indigenous reform into manageable sub-targets and identifying ways to close data gaps. The ABS has also contributed to discussions about COAG's intention to develop a national framework for reporting expenditure on Indigenous services in areas such as education, justice, health, housing, community services and employment.</p> <p>The ABS has worked closely with the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and state and territory representatives on the COAG Productivity Working Group to identify potential sources of information for the framework of outcomes, progress measures and targets being developed under the productivity agenda. In addition, new statistical work particularly relevant to data needs in the early childhood education area have been investigated.</p>

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## The Australia 2020 Summit

The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, convened the Australia 2020 Summit at Parliament House on 19–20 April 2008 to help shape a long-term strategy for the nation's future. The objectives of the Summit were to explore the challenges facing Australia over the next decade and beyond, to discuss ambitions for Australia as a nation, and to identify policy mechanisms to realise those ambitions.

The ABS provided statistical support in the preparation of briefing documents for the summit. This involved sourcing data for the agenda reports (from ABS and other sources), advising on statistical methods and the most appropriate ways of presenting data. The summit highlighted a number of significant data gaps that need to be addressed in order to progress the development of policies generated as a result of discussions at the summit.

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Society

The NatStats08 Conference program has been designed with policy and decision makers in mind. The conference will be divided into three main themes: Informing the Nation; Measuring the Progress of Society, and Informing the Environment Debate. There will also be showcase sessions that will demonstrate Information Platforms and State Planning Initiatives.

Participating in NatStats08 will provide you with the opportunity to:

- ▶ **Learn** from experts and experience first hand the latest developments and the future directions of key national statistics.
- ▶ **Connect** with the statistical community on the issues and challenges in the creation of an evidence-based decision making culture.
- ▶ **Share** your experiences and raise awareness of the significant issues within your field.
- ▶ **Network** with policy makers from across government, industry, academia and the community.

For Exhibition, Sponsorship and Registration Information  
[www.nss.gov.au/natstats08](http://www.nss.gov.au/natstats08)

# NatStats08

Table 5.1: Economic statistics programs

National Accounts	The National Accounts program provides quarterly and annual data about the level of economic activity and the structure of the Australian and state economies, within a coherent system of concepts and classifications.
International Accounts	The International Accounts program provides statistics on Australia's balance of payments and international investment position.
International Trade	The International Trade program provides statistics on Australia's exports and imports of goods and services. Statistics on merchandise (goods) exports and imports are derived from records lodged by exporters and importers with the Australian Customs Service.
Financial Statistics	The Financial Statistics program compiles statistics on the financial assets, liabilities, borrowing and lending of financial institutions, and on the stocks and flows of finance for the various sectors of the economy.
Prices	The Prices program compiles the Consumer Price Index, the House Price Indexes, the Labour Price Index (which is an annual series comprising a quarterly Wage Price Index and an annual non-wage price index), and a range of Producer and International Trade Price Indexes.
Public Sector Accounts	The Public Sector Accounts program provides Government Finance Statistics in respect of the Australian government, state and territory governments, their public non-financial corporations and public financial corporations, universities and local governments. The statistics are compiled predominantly from administrative data sources.
Business Indicators	The Business Indicators program is responsible for the provision of a range of sub-annual main economic indicators. The indicators include: monthly statistics of turnover by retail and selected service industries; quarterly statistics of company profits, inventories, sales and labour costs; quarterly statistics of actual and expected new capital expenditure; and quarterly statistics of actual and expected mineral and petroleum exploration. These data are essential inputs into the compilation of quarterly and annual national accounts and Supply-Use tables.
Innovation and Technology	The Innovation and Technology Statistics program provides data to assist the understanding of the impact of research, experimental development, innovation and new technologies on economic and social outcomes. It provides measures of the penetration of selected new technologies, particularly information and communication technology, within Australia.
Business Demographics	The Business Demographics program is responsible for the provision of a range of information about the structure, characteristics and performance of the economy and conceptual developments regarding business definitions and classifications. This information is part of a consistent framework for all ABS business statistics and includes the development of an Integrated Business Characteristics Strategy. A particular, but not exclusive, focus of the program is on providing information about small businesses.

Economy Wide Statistics	The Economy Wide Statistics program is responsible for the provision of annual statistics that measure changes in the operations, structure and performance of all private and public trading enterprises (with the exception of finance and insurance). These statistics are derived from an annual economic activity survey and Business Income Tax data from the Australian Taxation Office.
Agriculture	The Agriculture program aims to satisfy the statistical needs of agricultural policy makers and other key users of agricultural statistics by providing reliable and relevant information on commodity production, as well as the economic and environmental aspects of agricultural operations. The main collections include: an annual agricultural survey; a five-yearly agricultural census; and a range of monthly, quarterly and ad hoc surveys covering specific aspects of agriculture and related activity.
Mining	The Mining program provides annual data about the structure, performance and production of the mining, electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, as well as quarterly data on private sector exploration for minerals and petroleum in Australia.
Manufacturing	The Manufacturing program provides statistics on the structure, financial operations, performance and production of the manufacturing industry.
Construction	The Construction program provides regular data on levels of activity in residential building, non-residential building and engineering construction. It also provides periodic statistics on the structure, performance and characteristics of the construction industry.
Transport	The Transport program provides statistics about transport related activities, particularly relating to the composition and use of the road fleet in Australia. It also produces periodic statistics on the structure, performance and characteristics of the transport industry.
Service Industries	The Service Industries program provides detailed information about the operations, performance and structure of Australia's service industries, including the not-for-profit sector, through a comprehensive program of periodic collections and use of non-ABS collected data. Statistics are produced for particular industries and activities in the following sectors of the economy: retail; wholesale; accommodation and food services; transport, postal and warehousing; information media and telecommunications; rental, hiring and real estate services; professional, scientific and technical services; administrative and support services; health care and social assistance; arts; recreation; and personal services.
Tourism	The Tourism program is responsible for producing regular, timely and coherent data on tourism activities. The data produced includes: the Australian Tourism Satellite Account, overseas arrivals and departures, tourism related exports and imports indicators, the Survey of Tourist Accommodation, and data collected under the Service Industries program.
Environment and Energy	The Environment and Energy program provides a focal point for the ABS to meet the growing need for environment and energy information, by integrating environmental, economic and social data.

Table 5.2: The Population and social statistics programs

Census of Population and Housing	The Census program conducts a five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. Its aims are to accurately and efficiently measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on Census night to provide a reliable basis for the estimation of the population of each state and territory. It also provides timely, high quality and relevant five-yearly benchmark data within areas of social concern (for example; population, cultural diversity, work, housing, families, education, labour force) for small geographic areas and for small population groups.
Demography	The key objective of the Demography program is to produce estimates of the recent and projected population, and analysis of the components of population growth and related demographic trends. These data are provided at the national, state/territory and regional level. There are requirements in legislation for population estimates. They are also widely used for electoral and funding purposes, as well as in research and to support policy formulation and planning.
Labour Statistics	The Labour Statistics program provides information about the structure and performance of the labour market. The program produces statistics on labour supply (such as labour force participation, unemployment, employment conditions and broader measures of labour underutilisation); labour demand (such as employment, job vacancies and labour costs); and industrial relations.
Health	The Health Statistics program provides information about aspects of the health of Australia's population, and about health related services. This includes statistics relating to health status, mortality, disability, risk factors and impacts on sub-groups within the population.
Education and Training Statistics	The Education and Training Statistics program develops and compiles statistics from national administrative collections and the conduct of a number of surveys relevant to the education and training field. Key elements of the program in this field include the conduct of the annual National Schools Statistics collection; the regular conduct of a number of surveys related to education, training and work; and the work of the National Education and Training Statistics Unit.
Crime and Justice Statistics	The Crime and Justice Statistics program leads national statistical activity aimed at developing and improving the information available in this field. The program compiles and publishes national statistics on recorded crime, courts and corrections, and works to improve the quality of these collections in cooperation with statistical practitioners in the jurisdictions.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics program has responsibility for leadership and coordination of national statistical activity about Australia's Indigenous peoples, both across the ABS and more broadly. This includes consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and working in collaboration with a broad range of external agencies to achieve relevant and appropriate information. The main sources of statistics for this program are the six-yearly National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, the six-yearly National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey; and the Census of Population and Housing.

Living Conditions Statistics	The Living Conditions Statistics program provides information about the material living conditions of the population within a framework of areas of social concern and population groups. Household income, wealth, expenditure, housing, superannuation and other aspects of material living conditions are central to monitoring material wellbeing. Related areas of measurement and analysis include economic hardship and financial stress, which help to provide a wider picture of the material circumstances and living conditions of Australians.
Family and Community Statistics	The Family and Community Statistics program provides information about family and community wellbeing, including: time use; volunteering; work and family balance; and social capital. Statistics are provided for women, men, couples, one parent families, children, youth, older people, carers and other population subgroups.
Culture and Recreation Statistics	The Culture and Recreation Statistics program has responsibility for the leadership and coordination of national statistical activity in the fields of culture, sport and leisure.
Migrant Statistics	The Migrant Statistics program provides statistics on migrant settlement within Australia in the short and long-term. The unit provides data relevant to migrant populations, and is involved in the development and compilation of a range of survey and administrative data outputs relevant to migrants.
Rural and Regional Statistics	The Rural and Regional Statistics program aims to improve the availability of regional data including data at metropolitan, non-metropolitan, urban and rural levels. Activities undertaken under the program include improving access to, and dissemination of, ABS data and data from other sources, and developing new indicators where feasible.



# chapter 6

## Economic statistics

### Introduction

Within the context of the Portfolio Budget Statements, Output 1.1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics—national statistical service), the ABS produces and disseminates statistics in two key areas to meet the above outcome, namely:

- ◆ Output 1.1.1 — Economic Statistics
- ◆ Output 1.1.2 — Population and Social Statistics

The ABS releases a broad range of economic statistics, which are used by governments, businesses and community groups to: formulate and assess economic policies (at both macro and micro levels); evaluate economic performance; understand the drivers of economic growth; and understand the structure of, and the emerging trends in, the Australian economy. State, territory and regional dimensions of these issues are important, and attention is given to servicing these statistical needs. The ABS also plays an active role in the international comparability of economic statistics.

In addition, the ABS releases a range of environment and energy statistics which directly assist in the management of the nation's environmental and natural resources and can be used to inform climate change and water security issues. Regional dimensions of the data are of particular importance and the ABS is continuing to invest in methods aimed at improving regional environmental data.

The ABS framework for economic statistics is based on the United Nations System of National Accounts 1993 (SNA). The SNA provides a comprehensive structure for compiling economic data in a coherent and consistent manner for the purposes of economic analysis, and in particular the compilation of national accounts. A range of other connected international standards is also used including the Balance of Payments Manual (BPM), the



*The National Accounts Branch marked 5 September 2007 as the day Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) hit one trillion dollars. Deputy Australian Statistician Peter Harper cuts the cake to celebrate an estimated GDP value of \$1,046,164,239,961.09.*

standards on Government Finance Statistics, manuals on Consumer and Producer Price Indexes, and Research and Development Expenditure. Information on recent updates of the international framework used for economic statistics can be found below and in Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

The main economic indicators released by the Economic Statistics Program are the quarterly national accounts (containing the latest estimates of gross domestic product [GDP] and household saving), the quarterly consumer, producer and house price indexes, the quarterly balance of payments, the quarterly wage price index, the quarterly business indicators publication and the monthly retail trade publication. These sub-annual releases provide a comprehensive picture of Australia's economic performance and form the basis of economic commentary, analysis and policy development.

A wide range of other statistics is also produced. These statistics focus on more targeted areas of the economy such as capital expenditure, building activity, government finance statistics, housing finance and tourist accommodation. Annual publications provide more detailed structural information on the Australian economy, including areas such as innovation, and research and development.

For environment statistics, the ABS is engaged in ongoing international collaboration on the implementation of a framework to support environment and energy statistics, which is known as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA). The SEEA is aligned with the SNA and provides a coherent and consistent data system that allows for integrated environmental-economic analyses. For example, it provides links of natural resource use and emissions to economic growth and distribution of income and wealth (for more information on SEEA, see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seea.asp>).

## The ABS and environment statistics

Australia faces critical challenges in water security, adapting to climate change and reducing emissions. The Australian Government has placed a high priority on managing these challenges for Australia. However, little is known about the connections between these environmental issues and socio-economic outcomes. Without this knowledge, it is not possible to measure change; or develop, implement and evaluate programs; or direct investment to where it is most needed.

An urgent need to address the poor state of Australia's environment information system was highlighted in: the 2006 State of the Environment report; the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council; the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2007 Environmental Performance Review of Australia; and most recently by the Australia 2020 Summit.

During 2007–08, the ABS has been developing a proposal to overcome identified deficiencies in environment statistics. The ABS proposal will:

- ◆ provide the overarching leadership for a national environment statistics system
- ◆ complement and expand the information coming from major initiatives, such as the National Water Initiative, Caring for our Country, the National Adaptation Agenda, and the Australian Emissions Trading Scheme, and
- ◆ supplement existing or new information, by providing additional information on the interconnections between the environment and human activity, to inform and evaluate environmental, economic and social initiatives.

Key policy agencies in the Australian Government, such as the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Climate Change, and the Australian Government Treasury, and their state and territory government equivalents, require quality and trusted statistics, as well as scientific studies, to inform policies and public debate. Statutory reports, such as the State of the Environment report and Intergenerational Report, also require this information.

Analysts and researchers will also benefit from the availability of information for analysis, modelling and research. Local government, regional bodies and communities will benefit from relevant, accurate information on the impacts of land and water management policies and decisions such as those relating to peri-urban and coastal issues. The business sector will be better informed in how they may be impacted by certain policy initiatives such as emissions trading and water.

## Statistical developments in 2007-08

### 2005-06 Agricultural Census

Regional outputs from the 2005–06 Agriculture Census were progressively released during 2007–08. A key feature of the 2005–06 Agriculture Census was the ability to provide estimates for a range of flexible, geographic regions. Agricultural commodity, water and land use estimates for 2005–06 are now available for Australia, each state and territory, Statistical Divisions, Statistical Local Areas, Natural Resource Management Regions and the Murray Darling Basin, as well as River Basins, Surface Water Management Areas, Murray-Darling Sustainable Yield Regions, Capital City Water Supply Areas, and Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) Regions.

Users of ABS agriculture statistics are now able to obtain estimates for regions directly from the ABS website. Regional outputs from both the 2000–01 and 2005–06 Agricultural Census were released in e-magazine format and these have been well-received by the user community.

The provision of estimates for a range of regions was made possible by funding from the National Water Commission's Raising National Water Standards projects and natural resource management programs administered by the Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.



*The Agricultural Census is the basic source of Australian agricultural commodity statistics.*

## **An Experimental Monetary Water Account for Australia**

In August 2007, the ABS released the first issue of *An Experimental Monetary Water Account for Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4610.0.55.005), which is a valuable information source for policy makers, researchers and the community. This release provides information on some of the physical flows of water, matched with monetary transactions for the 2004–05 year. Linking monetary and physical water accounts provides information useful for determining efficient water allocation, achieving cost recovery for water infrastructure assets and analysing trade-offs between alternative water and economic policies.

## **Data for economic modelling of an Emissions Trading Scheme**

The ABS has produced statistics to help the Australian Government Treasury model the impact of the proposed emissions trading system on the economy. The data covers each group of commodities used in the economy. The statistics trace industry use and production of products, as well as final consumption by governments and households. The data will help the Australian Government Treasury model the effect an emissions trading scheme will have on the production and use of products, such as coal, oil, electricity and transport fuels, and the effect this will have on business and consumer demand. This will help determine both the likely effectiveness of the scheme and the costs for businesses and households.

## **Implementation of Gross State Product using the production approach—GSP(P)**

The ABS developed a new measure of economic growth for Australia's states and territories, which was first published in late 2007 in the *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts* (ABS cat. no. 5220.0). This new measure sums up economic production by industry in each state and territory. Adding the new measure of state and territory economic growth to the existing

measures has enabled the ABS to undertake more confrontation of data about state and territory economic activity and as such, has resulted in a significant improvement to the overall quality of the ABS suite of state and territory economic measures.

## Review of international macroeconomic standards

In 2007–08, the ABS continued to make a significant contribution to the review of key international macroeconomic standards (System of National Accounts, Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, 2008). The focus of the review has been on maintaining relevance in a changing economic environment and on ensuring the various economic standards are appropriately aligned. The United Nations Statistical Commission agreed on a proposed set of changes at its meeting in February 2007, with work on some chapters of the System of National Accounts to be completed by the end of 2008 and release of the updated manuals expected by mid 2009.

### Implementation of the revised international macroeconomic standards

The ABS is planning to implement the revised international macroeconomic standards, in conjunction with the implementation of Australia New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC 2006), for the 2008–09 release of the annual national accounts in November 2009.

The various quarterly releases (including the national accounts, balance of payments and financial accounts) will be released in accordance with the new standards beginning with the September quarter 2009 releases, and any changes required to the monthly international trade series will appear in the July 2009 release. The ABS has undertaken consultation with key users on its implementation plans for the revised standards. Discussions have been held with relevant Australian government agencies and the ABS convened Economic Statistics User Group, which includes representatives from state and territory governments, academia and private industry. This was followed by the release of *Information Paper: Introduction of Revised International Standards in ABS Economic Statistics in 2009* (ABS cat. no. 5310.0.55.001). The ABS plans to release further information on the statistical impacts of the changes in 2009, well before their introduction in the official statistics.

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) was released by the ABS on 31 March 2008. It will be used as the basis for the ABS' research and development survey output.

More information on the review of standards can be found in Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

## Release of Confidentialised Unit Record File from 2003 Innovation Survey

An expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) from the 2003 Innovation in Australian Business survey was released in the Remote Access Data Laboratory environment in August 2007. This was only the second business CURF released by the ABS and the first to include large businesses. Users of the CURF are able to tabulate, manipulate and analyse data to their individual specifications. A series of measures were used to ensure that no individual business could be identified.

More information on CURFs can be found in Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

## Integrated Business Characteristics Strategy

The Integrated Business Characteristics Strategy (IBCS) brings together a range of collections and outputs, including the Innovation and Business Use of Information Technology surveys and the business characteristics data required for the new business longitudinal database. The first Business Characteristics survey was run for 2005–06, with outputs released progressively between November 2007 and February 2008. Although this survey focused on business information technology use, it also included a range of new business characteristics items, and key measures of innovation, which were previously only available biennially. The first outputs from the innovation-focused 2006–07 survey were released in June 2008.

## Prices statistics

Administrative changes to the way the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR) is paid were introduced by the Australian Government in 2007, effectively bringing the CCTR in-scope of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Prior to these changes, the CCTR was a tax offset for taxpayers, which was paid through the tax system for families only. It was out-of-scope of the CPI as income tax offsets are excluded from the CPI. The recent government changes are to the method of payment of the CCTR, which is no longer linked to a family tax liability and is no longer paid through the tax system. The administration of this payment has been moved from the Australian Taxation Office to the Family Assistance Office. The benefit is now available to both taxpayers and non-taxpayers alike. Therefore, from the September 2007 quarter onwards, the CCTR is now in scope of the CPI and is included as a rebate. An article titled *Treatment of Child Care Services in the Australian Consumer Price Index (CPI)* was included in the September quarter issue of the CPI (ABS cat. no. 6401.0).

During 2007–08, the ABS contributed to a number of policy areas, including providing economics related information to the following:

- ◆ Senate Committee on Community Affairs' inquiry into the cost of living pressures on older Australians
- ◆ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's grocery pricing inquiry
- ◆ Australian Fair Pay Commission's review of compensation for minimum wage/low paid employees, and
- ◆ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' review of pensioner indexation.

Reviews of Producer Price Indexes have been underway during 2007–08 to ensure these indexes continue to reflect current economic conditions. A review of the price indexes for the output of the general construction industry was successfully implemented in the December quarter 2007. The ABS has also undertaken a review of the International Trade Price Indexes, to incorporate the revisions to international trade classifications such as the Standard International Trade Classification and the Harmonized System. The updated indexes will be published in the September 2008 reference period.

Further reviews of the Producer Price Indexes are expected to result in updated indexes in respect of a revised classification of industry, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC 2006).

During 2007–08, the Labour Price Index area has ensured that data released from late 2009 will use the revised industry classification. Using ANZSIC 2006, some key indexes will be backcast to 1997.

# chapter 7

## Population and social statistics

### Introduction

Within the context of the Portfolio Budget Statements, Output 1.1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics—national statistical service), the ABS produces and disseminates statistics in two key areas to meet the above outcome, namely:

- ◆ Output 1.1.1 — Economic Statistics
- ◆ Output 1.1.2 — Population and Social Statistics

The Population and Social Statistics Program produces statistical information relating to the Australian population, including its size and composition, and information relating to social and economic wellbeing. This information provides a picture of the ways in which people's lives are changing over time. The program also undertakes work focusing on different groups in the population. Population and social statistics are produced mainly through the ABS household survey program, the Census of Population and Housing, and a range of administrative by-product data from governments. This chapter provides a range of ABS highlights in relation to population and social statistics.

### Census of Population and Housing

*The Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires that the "...census shall be taken in the year 1981 and in every fifth year thereafter...". The last Census was held on Tuesday, 8 August 2006 and the next Census is scheduled for 2011.

The Census is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the ABS and one of the most important. There are two broad objectives that underpin the Census. The first is to accurately measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on Census Night and the dwellings in which they live. The second is to provide timely, high quality and relevant data for small geographic areas and small population groups, to complement the rich but broad level data provided by ABS surveys.

From *How Australia takes a Census* (ABS cat. no. 2903.0)

The ABS framework for social statistics, as published in *Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics* (ABS cat. no. 4160.0), is built around two dimensions. The first dimension relates to a number of key areas of social concern:

- ◆ health
- ◆ family and community
- ◆ housing



- ♦ education and training
- ♦ work
- ♦ economic resources
- ♦ crime and justice
- ♦ culture-leisure, and
- ♦ population.

The second dimension focuses on population groups, which are of particular interest to the community and to governments because they may have special needs or be disadvantaged. These groups include:

- ♦ older people
- ♦ children
- ♦ youth
- ♦ families with children
- ♦ long-term unemployed
- ♦ lone parents
- ♦ people with disabilities
- ♦ carers
- ♦ recipients of various government benefits
- ♦ low income earners
- ♦ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- ♦ migrants, and
- ♦ people whose language background is not English.

**Did you know?** A boy born in 2006 could expect to live to be 79 (three years longer than a boy in 1996), while a girl could expect to reach 83 years of age (two years longer than a girl born in 1996).

Source: *Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.001)

## Statistical releases in 2007–08

Population and social statistics produced by the ABS include some regular series, as well as a range of measures that are produced less frequently, either periodic or on a one-off basis. The regular series include: monthly labour force measures; quarterly population estimates; quarterly average weekly earnings figures; annual statistics on recorded crime, courts and prisoners; and annual data on migration, births and causes of death.

In 2007–08, results released from less frequent series included:

- ◆ *2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (ABS cat. no. 4228.0), which provides internationally comparable data allowing the literacy skills of Australians to be compared with citizens of other countries
- ◆ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 4704.0, sixth edition), prepared jointly with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
- ◆ *Population Characteristics: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 4713.0), drawing on results from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing
- ◆ *2005–06 Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6523.0) and associated confidentialised unit record files
- ◆ *Information Paper: Experimental Estimates of Imputed Rent, Australia for 2003–04 and 2005–06* (ABS cat. no. 6525.0) and associated confidentialised unit record file variables
- ◆ *2005–06 Household Wealth and Wealth Distribution, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6554.0)
- ◆ *2006 Voluntary Work, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4441.0)
- ◆ *How Australians Use Their Time* (ABS cat. no. 4153.0) and associated confidentialised unit record files
- ◆ *2006–07 Family Characteristics and Transitions, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4442.0) and associated confidentialised unit record files, and
- ◆ *2005–06 Housing Occupancy and Costs, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4130.0.55.001), with a feature article on first home buyers.

## Feature Article: First Home Buyers in Australia

Home ownership is a widely held aspiration in Australia, providing security of tenure and long-term economic benefits to home owners. Housing is also very significant in the national economy in terms of investment levels, building activity and employment.

Australia has one of the highest levels of home ownership in the world. Results from the Census of Population and Housing show that home ownership was at 70% in 2006, little changed over the past 40 years.

In the 2005–06 Survey of Income and Housing, 318,000 Australian households had purchased their first home in the three years prior to interview. Of these, 86% purchased established homes and 95% owned their home with a mortgage at the time of interview, up from 82% in 1995–96.

The 5% of first home buyer households without a mortgage in 2005–06 had an average household net worth of \$882,000, compared to \$236,000 for first home buyer households with a mortgage. One in two of those first home buyer households without a mortgage were lone person households.

From *2005–06 Housing Occupancy and Costs, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4130.0.55.001)

Other significant population and social statistical releases during 2007–08 are outlined below:

## Outputs from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing

- ◆ **Second release 2006 Census data (released October 2007)**

The second release data from the 2006 Census was released free-of-charge on the ABS website in October 2007. This included new results from a range of topics including Industry, Labour Force, Need for Assistance, Occupation, Qualifications and Unpaid Work.

- ◆ **Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (released March 2008)**

*Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas 2006* (SEIFA 2006) has been developed for those interested in the assessment of the welfare of Australian communities. The ABS has developed indexes to allow ranking of regions/areas, providing a method of determining the level of social and economic wellbeing in that region. The SEIFA indexes have been created by combining information collected in the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing.

- ◆ **2006 Census Social Atlas Series (released March 2008)**

The Social Atlas series consists of one publication for each state or territory. For the 2006 Census, the series has been expanded to include key social, demographic and economic information on selected regional centres of each state or territory, as well as each capital city in Australia. Each publication consists of a series of maps of the capital city and selected regional centres, covering topics such as population, ethnicity, education, families, income, labour force and dwellings. More information on the release of the Social Atlas series can be found in Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

- ◆ **2006 Census Community Profiles Series (last release in February 2008)**

The Community Profile Series contains six separate profiles aimed at providing key Census characteristics relating to persons, families and dwellings and covering most topics on the Census form. The profiles are excellent tools for researching, planning and analysing small and large geographic areas. They enable comparisons to be made between different geographic areas. The profiles released from the 2006 Census include: Basic Community Profile, Place of Enumeration Profile, Indigenous Profile, Time Series Profile, Expanded Community Profile and the Working Population Profile.



*The Assistant Treasurer, The Hon Chris Bowen MP with Brian Pink, Australian Statistician, at the 2006 Census Social Atlas launch.*

## Indigenous population estimates

Preliminary Indigenous population estimates, rebased to the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, were released in August 2007, in *Population Distribution: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 4705.0). This publication also presented information from the 2006 Census about the geographic areas in which Indigenous Australians live.

## Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices

The ABS released *Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices* (ABS cat. no. 4602.0) in December 2007. This edition focused on water use and conservation, and covered a range of issues including water sources, water supply, rainwater tanks and water saving measures.

## Demography

The ABS released summary statistics in the publication *Population, Australian States and Territories, December 2007* (ABS cat. no. 3239.0.55.001) in June 2008. This release provided population estimates for the states and territories at 31 December 2006 and 2007, components of population growth for the calendar year 2007, and other summary statistics. The release also included final population estimates for 30 June 2006 based on the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, and a feature article entitled *Final Rebasing And Revisions Of Australia's Population Estimates, September Quarter 2001—June Quarter 2006*. Regular series released by the ABS include: monthly labour force measures; quarterly population estimates; quarterly average weekly earnings figures; annual statistics on recorded crime, courts and prisoners; and annual data on migration, births and causes of death.

To complement the release of statistics relating to population, the ABS released the *Information Paper: Population Concepts* (ABS cat. no. 3107.0.55.006) in March 2008. This information paper aims to help users understand various population concepts and measures.

## Statistical developments in 2007-08

### Census Data Enhancement Project

The ABS Census Data Enhancement project aims to enhance the value of Census of Population and Housing data by creating from it a 5% sample of the Australian population that can be linked between the 2006 Census and subsequent Censuses. Work in 2007-08 focused on assessing matching methodologies, undertaking data matching, validating results and developing options for selection of the Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset sample in future Censuses. Work on various quality studies has commenced, with an expectation that results will be finalised late in 2008. More information on this project can be found in Chapter 13, Extended analysis of statistics.

### 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

During 2007-08, development of the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) was finalised, ready for enumeration in late 2008. For the first time, the NATSISS will collect information about Indigenous children and adults. Some additional content has been included, and the survey sample will also be expanded with user funding.

## Children and Youth

### ◆ **Children and Youth Information Development Plan**

The Information Paper: *Improving Statistics on Children and Youth—An Information Development Plan, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 4907.0), which was released in December 2006, was reviewed in 2007 and the Annual Progress Report (including updated data development actions) was published on the National Statistical Service website in December 2007. More information on progress can be found in Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

### ◆ **2008 Childhood Education and Care Survey**

The Childhood Education and Care Survey, which includes child care and early years learning topics, was conducted in June 2008. The survey results, to be released in 2009, will provide information about the number of children participating in pre-school programs, in both dedicated pre-schools and as part of pre-school programs conducted in long-day care centres. The survey collected data on child care costs, usual and average care usage (in addition to the historical short reference period measure of care use characteristics) and the need for child care. It will also provide some information about children starting school who have, or have not, participated in some form of pre-school program, the reasons for not attending and why parents would like more attendance.

### ◆ **Information Paper on Concepts and Directions in Early Childhood Learning**

*Measuring Learning in Australia: Concepts and Directions in Early Childhood Learning* (ABS cat. no. 4232.0), released in December 2007, discusses recent research and policy directions in early childhood education, as well as providing information about current data sources and indicators, and highlighting a range of data gaps. The paper provides a framework for future data development activity in this area.



*The 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey will collect information about Indigenous children for the first time.*

## Surveys of health and wellbeing

The 2007 Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing was conducted from August to December 2007, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The survey used an international instrument (the Computerised International Diagnostic Instrument), which provides information about the prevalence of mental health conditions and the use of health services. Results are expected to be released from August 2008.

The 2007–08 National Health Survey was also conducted during 2007–08. The survey builds on previous surveys, with a stronger focus on chronic disease, and the collection of measures of height, weight and waist circumference. Results are expected to be released from March 2009.

## 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing

The 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing was conducted from August 2007 to June 2008. It contains new content on child care, and expanded content for housing including: housing mobility; intentions to move; dwelling characteristics such as structural problems, need for repairs, sources of water and energy, and smoke alarms; additional detail on sources of finance for first home buyers and for housing loans and refinancing; renter lease arrangements; changed rental circumstances and difficulties; public housing waiting lists; and neighbourhood characteristics. Results are expected to be released from mid 2009.

## Review of Labour Force Survey sample design

The ABS reviews the Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample design every five years, with data obtained from the Census of Population and Housing. The review ensures that the survey continues to accurately reflect the geographic distribution of the Australian population, and remains efficient and cost-effective. Following the review based on 2006 Census data, the new sample design was implemented over the period November 2007 to June 2008. More information on future changes to the LFS sample can be found in Chapter 11, Quality and timeliness.

**Did you know?** The average annual unemployment rate decreased from 8.3% in 1997 to 4.4% in 2007. The labour force underutilisation rate also fell from 13.6% to 8.9% over the same decade.

Source: *Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.001).

## Developments in client engagement and output enhancement

The ABS has continued to work closely with its population and social statistics clients to ensure that:

- ◆ products and services continue to be relevant
- ◆ emerging needs of users of statistics are understood, and
- ◆ ABS decisions about collections and releases are explained.

The ABS continues to look for ways to strengthen engagement with key stakeholders and has established new partnerships, has strategically positioned outposted officers in Australian Government agencies, and initiated regular bilateral discussions at a senior level on key policy areas requiring a statistical input. Some highlights of client engagement and product enhancement activities follow, with more information on engagement with users of statistics in Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

## ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics

The third meeting of the Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (AGATSIS) was held in May 2008. At that meeting, the ABS reported on progress against the six key strategic areas identified in *ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics* (ABS cat. no. 4700.0), which was released in mid 2007. The ABS report included information about ongoing efforts towards improving Indigenous mortality statistics, plans for release of updated Indigenous life expectancy estimates (in late 2008) and revised population projections (in late 2009), the continued focus on engagement through the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy, and the development of the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

## Population wellbeing data gaps workshop — early childhood

In 2006, a project focused on information gaps in early childhood development (including education and care) was established, based on the outcomes of an Australian Government inter-agency workshop. The Departments of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; the Australian Government Treasury; and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the ABS, are involved in the project. These agencies are collaborating to draft a report (due for release by the ABS late 2008) that identifies current data, policy questions and data access issues relating to early childhood development. The report is also expected to make recommendations for enhancing data and for using existing data more effectively.

The collaborative work aims to create advice that might be used by government agencies to enter into arrangements that extend knowledge of early childhood through data exchange, linkage, standardisation and improved analysis. As a result, policy and programs could be better targeted to improve the wellbeing of children and positively influence their futures.


## Support for agencies

The ABS has continued to support the work of other agencies in developing population and social statistical products and capability. For example, it has provided advice and expertise through membership of steering and working groups associated with:

- ◆ the Council of Australian Government's 'Review of Government Service Provision' and the regular report titled 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage'; and
- ◆ key government funded surveys for which other agencies are responsible, including the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC).

During 2007–08, the ABS continued its strong engagement with LSAC by providing survey development and data collection services for waves 2.5 and 3 of the survey. This was done in partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

More information on support for agencies can be found in Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers statistics.



**Did you know?** The proportion of people aged 25 to 64 years with a non-school qualification increased from 46% in 1997 to 59% in 2007.

Source: *Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.001).





section v

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

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# chapter 8

## Summary

### Introduction

The ABS:

- ◆ is the central statistical authority for the Australian Government
- ◆ provides statistical services for the state and territory governments
- ◆ collects, compiles, analyses and disseminates statistics and related information
- ◆ ensures the coordination of the statistical activities of, and provides advice and assistance to, other government agencies, and
- ◆ provides liaison between Australia and other countries and international organisations on statistical matters.

The ABS is required to report against the outcomes and outputs specified in the 2007–08 Portfolio Budget Statements, presented to the Parliament in May 2007. As noted in Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS, the ABS has one outcome and one output group (Australian Bureau of Statistics—national statistical service). There are two sub-groups in the output group—Economic Statistics and Population and Social Statistics.

The Portfolio Budget Statement for the ABS sets out performance indicators, used to evaluate the outcomes for the ABS. Four of these are against the overall outcome, and three are against the output group, as shown in table 8.1 below.

*Table 8.1: Performance indicators for the ABS*

Performance information for Outcome 1	Performance information for Output 1.1
1. Integrity in statistical operations	1. Improve the quality of outputs
2. Relevance of ABS output	2. Increase the quantity of outputs
3. Appropriate use of statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies	3. Achievement of cost effective outputs
4. Improving coordination of the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics produced by other official bodies	

A summary assessment against each of the performance indicators is outlined below. Some topics are explained in more depth in the subsequent Chapters. These include:

- ◆ Engagement with users and assistance to producers of statistics
- ◆ Provider/respondent relationships
- ◆ Quality and timeliness
- ◆ Communication of statistics
- ◆ Extended analysis of statistics
- ◆ Statistical standards and infrastructure
- ◆ International engagement, and
- ◆ Effectiveness of activities.

# Summary of performance information for Outcome 1

## 1. Integrity in statistical operations

### 1.1 An objective statistical service, as demonstrated by:

#### ◆ *Release of reliable/accurate statistics*

During 2007–08, the ABS reviewed its approach to quality assurance and has commenced implementing a range of measures aimed at maintaining a low incidence of statistical errors. For example, the ABS introduced Quality Declarations on its website from October 2007. Quality Declarations describe the quality of the statistical release, allowing users to determine the ‘fitness for purpose’ of the product being viewed. In addition, the ABS releases information on any errors found in the statistics it produces.

The ABS continues to refine its products to ensure they remain relevant. For example, during 2007–08, the ABS continued implementing a revised classification of industry, *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 1292.0), which will enable ABS statistics to better reflect the economy in the real world.

For further information see Chapter 11, Quality and timeliness, Chapter 12, Communication of statistics and Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

#### ◆ *Open statistical process*

In 2007–08, the ABS undertook extensive user consultation on a range of statistical developments. For example, the ABS periodically undertakes a major review of its household survey program to ensure that emerging issues are being adequately addressed and ongoing measures remain relevant to users. The latest review commenced in 2006, and the priorities identified through the consultation undertaken have been developed into a broad survey program that has generally been supported by key stakeholders.

Methodological developments were open to scrutiny, through information papers and the Methodological Advisory Committee. The Committee meets twice a year and consists of external professional statisticians, who provide peer review for the ABS.

For further information see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics, Chapter 11, Quality and timeliness and Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

#### ◆ *Trust and cooperation of providers*

The ABS recognises its obligation to respondents in statistical collections, and has produced service charters relating to both business surveys and household surveys. Continuing high response rates demonstrate a good level of cooperation by providers. The ABS works hard to secure the trust and confidence of data providers, and endeavours to reduce the burden placed on them by expanding the use of administrative data.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires the ABS to publish and disseminate compilations and analysis of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act. The ABS meets the confidentiality requirements of the Act by ensuring information provided is: securely maintained; only used for statistical purposes; and used only in unidentifiable microdata files to support research and analysis. In addition, the ABS ensures identifying information provided by a household is not revealed.

For further information see Chapter 10, Provider/respondent relationships.

## 2. Relevance of ABS output

### 2.1 Statistical output which meets the needs of key economic and social data in terms of:

#### ◆ *Support to decision-making*

In 2007–08, the ABS continued to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion by increasing accessibility to the outputs of statistical activities. For example, an extensive range of ABS statistics were used to inform the Australia 2020 Summit in April 2008 to help shape a long-term strategy for the nation's future.

For further information see Chapter 12, Communication of Statistics.

#### ◆ *Demonstrated by a high level of use*

The ABS website remains the primary point of access point for ABS information. Website users accessed ABS web pages 140 million times in 2007–08. This is an increase of 37.7% over 2006–07 and 79.4% over 2005–06.

The National Information and Referral Service (NIRS) is the main entry point to the ABS for basic information and statistical enquiries from external customers. The number of emails received by NIRS in 2007–08 was approximately 10% higher than 2006–07, while the number of calls answered has slightly decreased. In 2007–08 reflecting the greater availability of free statistics on our website.

For further information see Chapter 12, Communication of Statistics.

### 2.2 Openness of planning process

The ABS mission statement and corporate plan provide the context and high level framework for making decisions on the ABS' forward work program. While much of the ABS work program remains constant from year to year, the planning process requires the agency to examine the environment in which it is working and identify future statistical needs.

The ABS undertakes user consultation regularly to gather views about aspects of the ABS' work. For example, in 2007–08, the ABS consulted with major stakeholders of the Survey of Education and Work. The feedback from this consultation was used to improve the survey (to be conducted in 2009), to better reflect current issues in education and training.

For further information see Chapter 9 Engagement with users and producers of statistics, Chapter 17, ABS corporate governance and Appendix 2, User groups advising the ABS.

### 3. Appropriate use of statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies

#### 3.1 Lead the development of national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies, and their implementation within the broader Australian statistical system

The ABS develops national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies, which are applied, as appropriate, to all ABS statistical collections, including business and household surveys. For example, during 2007–08: the ABS released a (draft) of the second edition of the Australian Culture and Leisure Classification for public consultation; finalised the Local Government Purpose Classification; and released a discussion paper *Defining Sport and Exercise: a Conceptual Model* (ABS cat. no. 4149.0).

The ABS takes a leading role by encouraging other Australian, state and territory government agencies to adopt these standards, frameworks and methodologies in their statistical activities.

For further information see Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

#### 3.2 Contribute to the development of key international standards, frameworks and methodologies, and implement them as appropriate

The ABS supports sound methodological approaches to the development of standards, aids international comparability and helps ensure that such standards and statistical developments reflect Australian user interests. User interest in these types of studies continues to develop.

During 2007–08, the ABS continued to be involved in the review of key international macro-economic standards which began in 2003. This review focused on maintaining the relevance of economic statistics in a changing environment, as well the appropriate alignment of various economic standards. The ABS expects to implement the revised standards with the 2008–09 release of the annual national accounts. Also during 2007–08, the ABS continued to work on implementing the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANSZIC 2006).

For further information see Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

### 4. Improving the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics produced by other official bodies

#### 4.1 Statistical Clearing House activity

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) pays particular attention to eliminating duplication in business surveys, and ensures that surveys conducted follow good statistical methodologies and practices.

In 2007–08, the SCH approved 80 surveys to proceed. Of the 80 approved surveys during 2007–08, 27 were high profile reviews and 14 surveys were approved with conditions attached.

For further information see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

## **4.2 Assisting other official bodies with integration of administrative and statistical data, including outposting ABS officers, and providing training on statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies**

The ABS provides assistance through outposted officers and training courses, and by supporting projects on statistical developments. In 2007–08, ABS officers were outposted to seven Australian Government departments, and 18 state and territory government departments.

The National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI) in the ABS, along with the State and Territory Statistical Services units in each regional office, coordinated the development and presentation of a wide range of training courses on statistical issues in 2007–08. The NSTI conducted a number of training courses for users and producers of ABS statistics during 2007–08, including the ‘Turning data into information’ course, which was attended by 477 participants from other Australian government agencies.

The ABS supports projects on statistical developments. For example, in 2007–08, the ABS worked closely with the Department of Climate Change and other stakeholders to assist in the development the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System, which will be introduced from July 2008. This reporting system will be the primary data source for Australia’s future energy and emissions statistics.

For further information see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

## **4.3 Identifying, storing and disseminating statistics from other official bodies**

The ABS works closely with a range of partners to extend the use of statistics by: exploring information needs; examining potential data sources; and advising on issues around the collection of statistics.

For example, during 2007–08 the ABS worked closely with the Bureau of Meteorology to discuss the development of National Water Account and National Water Information Standards under the *Water Act 2007*. The ABS and Bureau of Meteorology met several times during 2007–08 to ensure duplication in data collection and dissemination activities are minimised, as the standards are developed.

For further information see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

# Summary of performance information for Outcome 1, output group 1.1

## 1. Improve the quality of outputs

### 1.1 Achieve or exceed timeliness, statistical reliability, response rates and accuracy objectives:

#### ♦ *Timeliness*

The timeliness of statistical information can be measured by the gap between the reference period (the period the data relate to) and the date of release of results. The ABS continues to adhere to pre-announced release dates and make improvements, where possible, to the timeliness achieved.

The high standard of timely release of statistical tables was maintained in 2007–08. In addition, elapsed time between the end of the reference period and the supply of confidentialised unit record file (CURF) data has significantly improved over recent years.

For further information see Chapter 11, Quality and timeliness.

#### ♦ *Statistical reliability*

The ABS aims to produce high quality statistics that can be used with confidence. In 2007–08, the ABS continued to take steps to maintain and improve the reliability of statistics. The ABS regularly reviews the methodologies used to produce statistics, providing the opportunity to make improvements and incorporate new approaches, where appropriate.

For example, the ABS minimises the impact of non-sampling errors by use of best practice procedures in questionnaire design, interview procedures, data validation and repair, and processing. Any significant changes to questionnaire wording or data collection methods are carefully trialled and evaluated before they are implemented.

For further information see Chapter 11, Quality and timeliness.

#### ♦ *Response rates*

The ABS has maintained high response rates for both household and business surveys. For example, the Manufacturing Survey has a target response rate of 90%. In 2007–08, the response rate for the survey was 92%. The ABS works hard to improve response rates, where needed. For example, as part of the 2007 Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, a follow-up study is being conducted to further the ABS' understanding of non-response issues, improve response management in the future, and enhance the reliability of future data.

For further information see Chapter 10, Provider/respondent relationships.



#### ♦ Accuracy

The accuracy of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure. Descriptions of accuracy, as well as extensive information on the statistical methods used in collections, are routinely provided in concepts, sources and methods publications, the explanatory notes in publications, and through the Statistical Clearing House.

In 2007–08, the ABS continued to work towards ensuring statistics released were accurate. For example, the information paper *Changes to Weights of the Price Indexes for the Output of the General Construction Industry, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 6406.0), outlines methodological changes to producer price indexes.

For further information see Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness.

## 2. Increase the quantity of outputs

### 2.1 Increase the range of statistics disseminated

The ABS releases a wide range of information from its collections through electronic and paper publications, spreadsheets and datacubes. The ABS released an extensive range of statistics in 2007–08. The number of publications released in 2007–08 was 818, an increase from 711 (or 14.2%) in 2006–07. This was due to the increase in the amount of Census publications that were released on the ABS website in the year.

During 2007–08, the ABS released 17 new CURFs, including Expanded CURFs. There are currently 91 (latest edition) CURFs available and 112 CURFs (includes Editions) available on the Remote Access Data Laboratory RADL™.

For further information see Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

### 2.2 Innovative outputs

In 2007–08, the ABS continued to make statistical outputs more accessible. For example, a number of improvements were made to the ABS website during 2007–08 including an improved free email notification service, which enables customers to receive updates on particular topics. In addition, a century of Year Book Australia, from the first in 1908 to 2008 are now available online.

During 2007–08, the ABS has continued to develop RADL™, with a focus on improved useability and functionality, using feedback from customers as an important driver for enhancements. For example, RADL™ now supports the SAS, SPSS and Stata statistical languages.

For further information see Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

### 3. Achievement of cost effective outputs

#### 3.1 Conduct efficiency reviews and audits, and implement their recommendations

The ABS endeavours to find ways to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. A number of processes, systems and controls have been implemented, for both statistical and non-statistical activities, to assist the ABS to meet these goals of greater efficiency and effectiveness. These include the strategic audit and review program, operational and statistical reviews, as well as special initiatives such as the operations research initiative.

During 2007–08, the Data Collection Methodology (DCM) section was established. The section's role is to support the design and evaluation of questionnaires, letters and data collection procedures. DCM combined two units from separate divisions, bringing together the experts on business surveys and household surveys. The synergy created by the single larger group allows for more effective and efficient survey support

For further information see Chapter 16, Effectiveness of activities.

#### 3.2 Test operating efficiencies of statistical activities by benchmarking internally and externally

Many of the reviews and audits conducted seek to ensure that the ABS achieves cost-effective outputs, either as a primary or secondary objective. A key approach in achieving this is reviewing ABS activities, which provides the opportunity for the agency to understand and learn from best practice, and to improve its performance.

Key reviews conducted in 2007–08 include one of clearance documentation and related aspects of the clearance process (i.e. the process to obtain approval for release of ABS statistics) for business surveys, and a review of the testing of the Business Continuity Plan.

For further information see Chapter 16, Effectiveness of activities and Chapter 17, Corporate governance.

#### 3.3 Market test a number of non-statistical activities to identify possible outsourcing opportunities

The ABS selects and engages consultants in a way that provides value for money. During 2007–08, the total expenditure on consultancies was \$677,999. Twenty-four new consultancies were engaged to carry out projects, or provide professional and technical advice that could not be provided by ABS staff. The total expenditure of these was \$584,843. Six consultancies had been let in previous years, and continued into 2007–08, with an expenditure of \$93,156 during 2007–08.

The ABS engages consultants for a number of reasons, including: the need for specialised skills; access to the latest technology and experience in its application; the need for independent studies; and a lack of in-house resources.

For further information see Appendix 3, Consultancy services.

### 3.4 Minimise respondent load

The ABS endeavours to minimise respondent load by promoting efficiency and effectiveness of ABS operations, and the ABS survey program. Information is not requested unless the collection is of high priority for the national statistical program. To further reduce respondent load, forms are carefully designed and thoroughly tested for ease of use.

For business surveys, there is close liaison with representative groups, in relation to both the survey program and the demands on businesses. In addition, the ABS is a partner in the Standard Business Reporting (SBR) project, which is an Australian Government initiative to reduce the business-to-government reporting burden. The project aims to reduce the cost incurred by small and medium sized businesses when providing financial data to government departments.

For household surveys, the ABS seeks to ensure that information is obtained from selected dwellings with minimum inconvenience. For example, ABS interviewers are trained to be flexible and organise interview times that are most suitable for respondents, as well as enter responses directly into a notebook computer in an efficient manner.

For further information see Chapter 10, Provider/respondent relationships.

# chapter 9

## Engagement with users and producers of statistics

### Introduction

The ABS aims to lead an effective national statistical service. This involves providing statistical services that meet the needs of users in government and the broader community and working with those who are holders or custodians of statistical data. The ABS coordinates these statistical services, as well as assisting data custodians such as state and territory governments in making the data available. ABS engagement with users and producers of statistical services is vital to meeting this objective.

Reflecting the wide range of users and producers of statistical services, the ABS uses a variety of mechanisms to engage with them, including:

- ◆ meeting with key users and producers of statistics working in partnership with both users and producers
- ◆ placing outposted officers in departments and agencies, and
- ◆ conducting training courses.

### Working with users of statistics

The ABS encourages the use of statistics for informed decision making, research and discussion. It makes statistics readily available and easy to understand by employing the website, using the media, presenting at conferences and other forums, and providing a range of consultancy services. The ABS actively looks for ways to work with users of statistics and those needing information to develop and/or evaluate policy (for more information see Chapter 12, Communication of statistics).

The ABS works closely with users of statistics to enhance user understanding of ABS products, and to ensure ABS statistics are relevant to user requirements. Engagement with users of statistics takes place in a number of different ways, including through:

- ◆ user and advisory groups
- ◆ meetings with representatives of government agencies using ABS statistics for policy development, implementation and evaluation purposes
- ◆ forums involving non-government delegates and/or government, where ways of producing useful information are considered
- ◆ consultations, and
- ◆ submissions to parliamentary and government reviews.

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**Australian Statistics  
Advisory Council**

The Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) is the highest level statistical advisory body, with its role to the Minister and the Australian Statistician set down in the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. Members of ASAC are generally users of statistics, with representation from producers of statistics as well (see Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS, or <http://www.asac.gov.au> for more information about ASAC).

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**State Statistical Forum**

The State Statistical Forum, involving the state and territory government members of ASAC, is another important advisory group for the ABS. The forum meetings are opportunities for the ABS to hear about state and territory government priorities, and to provide information to these representatives about the data produced by the ABS.

During 2007–08, the ABS regional directors and the State Statistical Forum members established a new way of the working together, holding a workshop in November 2007, at which actions for key priority areas were agreed. The state and territory priority areas are improving statistics about Indigenous Australians, demography at the local level, and children and youth statistics. State Statistical Forum members have also sought improved information on local level economic development, water and housing affordability.

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**The Australian  
Government  
Statistical Forum**

The Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF) encourages communication among senior staff of Australian Government agencies with important roles in the National Statistical Service (NSS). The forum aims to: promote NSS initiatives among agencies; identify and promote partnerships and collaborations; and encourage the use of best practice in data collection and management. The AGSF meetings held in 2007–08, discussed a range of statistical issues arising out of government initiatives. There were presentations to members on best practice in building longitudinal datasets, capturing spatial and statistical metadata across government and the impact of new technologies on statistics.

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## Examples of engagement with users of data from the Census of Population and Housing

- ◆ Following the initial release of the 2006 Census data in June 2007, the second release occurred on 25 October 2007. Data on labour force, hours worked, industry, occupation, journey to work, education and internal migration were included in the release. The release generated substantial demand on the website.
- ◆ During 2007–08, the ABS worked with the Northern Territory Government to achieve a better understanding of the 2006 Census results, particularly the reasons for Indigenous under enumeration.
- ◆ Following release of the 2006 Census data, ABS officers met with the Kimberley Development Council to discuss the results. They also had positive discussions about strategies for the 2011 Census and developing partnership arrangements with local organisations to address the enumeration issues for the Kimberley region.
- ◆ The *Information Paper: Census of Population and Housing: Content and Procedures for Census 2011* (ABS cat. no. 2007.0) was released on 26 October. The purpose of the paper was to initiate public consultation on the nature and content of the 2011 Census. Following the announcement of curtailment for census development work, this public consultation was cancelled. However, all submissions received will be reviewed and used in the lead-up to the 2016 Census.



*The Australian Statistics Advisory Council chairperson, Geoff Allen, centre, and the Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, right, at the ASAC meeting on 24 June 2008.*

Other examples of engagement with users of statistics include:

## User and advisory groups established by the ABS

(see Appendix 2 for a full list of user and advisory groups)

The **Housing Statistics User Advisory Group** has representation from state and territory governments and the Australian Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Treasury; Productivity Commission; and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Members also include community sector and industry representatives, and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. During 2007–08, the following issues were examined: the launch of a housing Information Development Plan process; housing affordability measurement issues; the broad housing information needs in the field; and updates on the many developments in the ABS forward work program related to housing statistics.

The **Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group** met in September 2008 to discuss the progress of data development activities identified in the 2006 Children and Youth Information Development Plan, as well as the details of progress that will be published. The ABS also informed members about, and sought advice on, the many developments in the ABS forward work program relating to children and youth statistics. These developments included: the Data Mapping Pilot on Early Childhood; Census Data Enhancement; and census developments relating to children and youth.

The **Labour Statistics Advisory Group** includes academics and key users of ABS labour data. The group meets annually and provides advice and feedback on labour issues and priorities from a wide range of perspectives. Issues discussed in 2007–08 included the content of the labour supplementary surveys, the development of the Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours and developments in the monthly labour force survey.

The **Demography Statistics Advisory Group** was formed to provide an annual forum for key users and experts in the field of demography statistics. The aim of the group is to provide feedback and advice to the ABS on issues relating to the Demography Statistics program. Topics discussed in 2007–08 included the content for the 2011 Census of Population and Housing and a range of research projects relevant to demography statistics being undertaken in the ABS.

The annual **Agriculture Statistics Workshop** met in March 2008, with members advised about:

- ◆ savings initiatives for the 2007–08 agriculture survey program, and
- ◆ a new Resource Managers Benchmark Survey being conducted for 2007–08, on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. There was general support for the survey, as it provides capacity to maintain key community estimates for regions, whilst also targeting key land management information.

The **Water Statistics User Group** has been established to consider issues relating to water statistics work programs. In 2007–08, the group discussed progress with the newly enacted *Water Act 2007*, with presentations from the Bureau of Meteorology, the National Water Commission and the Water Accounting Development Committee, as well as performance reporting, and the development of water accounting standards. The group also heard of the ABS' plans to release a report on water use in the Murray Darling Basin.

The **Energy Statistics User Group** met in 2007–08 to hear progress on a number of key initiatives relating to Australia's energy statistics. The Department of Climate Change outlined progress with a National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System and Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics outlined the process for compiling Australia's energy statistics and balances. The ABS provided information about the conduct of a survey of energy suppliers for the 2007–08 year, and the release of statistics presenting an alternative view of energy activity in Australia. In addition, the ABS reported on developments overseas, including discussions on the European Emissions Trading Scheme and collection of data on household energy use.

A new **Migrant Statistics Advisory Group** has been established and met for the first time in 2007–08. The group considers statistical priorities relevant to migrant outcomes, with a particular focus on improving understanding of differential outcomes for migrants entering Australia under different migration programs.

During 2007–08, the **Economic Statistics User Group** (ESUG) met to discuss recent developments in ABS economic statistics, such as:

- ◆ economic analysis and reporting program
- ◆ strategic directions in agricultural statistics
- ◆ developments in productivity statistics, and
- ◆ statistical issues associated with the recent financial market instability.

ESUG was also advised of ABS plans for reviews in the areas of merchandise trade statistics, financial statistics and the stage of production price indexes.

At meetings of the **Transport Statistics User Group** during 2007–08, the following opportunities were identified:

- ◆ improving data availability through greater accessibility and use of administrative and other data holdings, and
- ◆ combining data from different sources and accessing data generated by traffic monitoring (for example, toll information and data recorders from trucks).

There was also agreement on revisiting the Transport Information Development Plan in order to refresh the priorities across transport statistics.

The third meeting of the **Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics** was held in May 2008. At that meeting, the ABS reported on progress against the six key strategic areas identified in *ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics* (ABS cat. no. 4700.0) released in mid 2007.

## Information Development Plans

Information Development Plans (IDPs) involve a review of the needs for users in a particular area of statistics, a review of available sources of data, an assessment of the gaps and overlaps in information available, and recommendations on a future work program. These recommendations are agreed with users of statistics, as well as other data custodians.



During 2007–08, progress on a number of IDPs was made, including:

- ◆ Australian Capital Territory Information Development Plan, 2008–2011

On 5 June 2008, the Australian Capital Territory Information Development Plan, 2008–2011 (ACT IDP) was signed by the Chief Executive of the ACT Chief Minister's Department and the Australian Statistician. The ABS' ACT regional office and the ACT Government have developed the IDP to recognise and give effect to the important role that quality statistics play in informed decision making within governments, business and the community. The IDP provides a high level strategic framework for a whole of government approach to improve the management and development of statistical resources for the Territory. The objectives of the IDP are to:

- ◆ provide a framework within which the ABS and the ACT Government can collaborate in the development, collection, coordination, application and dissemination of ACT administrative by-product data and ABS data about the Territory
- ◆ provide high quality data to the community
- ◆ increase awareness and understanding of ABS data and seek to improve ABS statistics for the ACT, and
- ◆ develop and maintain capacity within the ACT Government for statistical research and analysis.

The Information Development Steering Committee (IDSC), established in February, 2007 and chaired by the Chief Minister's Department, provides the formal mechanism through which the IDP will be implemented and monitored.



*The Chief Executive of the ACT Chief Minister's Department, Andrew Cappie-Wood, right, and the Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, sign the ACT IDP in June 2008.*

#### ◆ **Children and Youth Information Development Plan**

The *Information Paper: Improving Statistics on Children and Youth — An Information Development Plan, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 4907.0), released in December 2006, identified the agreed priorities and action for information development for children and youth statistics. The information paper also indicated that, during the life of the Plan, progress on actions identified in it would be monitored, annually, at meetings of the ABS Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group. The Group would consider options for both monitoring and facilitating progress against the Plan and ensuring the continuing relevance of the agreed priority areas and associated data development needs. Following a review, the Annual Progress Report was published on the National Statistical Service website in December 2007 (see <http://www.nss.gov.au>).

#### ◆ **Arts and Heritage Information Development Plan**

In 2007–08, an Arts and Heritage IDP was released that sets out major information needs and priorities across a range of areas including the economic and social contribution of arts and heritage, as well as cultural identity and access to arts and heritage services. The plan identifies a number of research themes that could be pursued by researchers in this field and, to facilitate this, a research symposium is planned for 2008–09. This was to bring together researchers and major users of information in this area, to better coordinate research and data development.

#### ◆ **Housing Information Development Plan**

During 2007–08, the ABS commenced work on a Housing IDP. The Housing IDP is an agreement between data users and providers on actions needed to improve housing statistics to meet key policy and research needs. Development of the Housing IDP will be facilitated through a series of workshops/discussions with a range of government, academic and industry stakeholders. The Housing IDP is expected to be published in mid 2009.

## Partnerships with government in 2007–08

In July 2007, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Australian Statistician and the acting Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Education, Science and Training (now known as the **Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**). The memorandum of understanding includes an agreement to seek improvements on projects of mutual interest, as well as education and training finance statistics.

The ABS and the **New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet** signed a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2008, which aims to establish a governance system for establishing statistical priorities for the state.

In addition to these new partnerships with government, the ABS also has many ongoing partnerships in place.

## Meetings with representatives of government agencies using ABS statistics

The Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, and the Deputy Australian Statistician, Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Statistics Group, Peter Harper, attended a **joint meeting of the Natural Resource Management and Primary Industry Standing Committees**. The Australian Statistician gave a presentation on improving Australia's environment statistics, which was well

received. The meeting chair, the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, concluded the discussion with very strong words of support for the role of the ABS in environment information.

The ABS attended the inaugural meeting of the **Reference Group on Financial Statistics convened by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**. The group brings together industry and government organisations interested in financial services in the context of World Trade Organisation and bilateral Free Trade Agreement negotiations. On the statistical side, there is a strong interest in foreign affiliates statistics, as the establishment of affiliates overseas, rather than delivery of services from Australia, is the main mode of delivery of financial services to non-residents by Australian financial institutions.

An agency heads meeting was held between the ABS and the Department of the Environment and Water Resources (now known as the **Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**). The main issues discussed at the meeting related to the role of the ABS in environment statistics, particularly the ABS' role in supporting the department's attempts to improve the underlying data set and systems that support State of Environment reporting. Potential ABS involvement in assembling data for the National Pollutant Inventory, and the possibility of the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies were also discussed.

The ABS held a meeting with staff from the **Department of Transport and Regional Services** (now known as the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government). The Department showed strong support for ABS directions in regional statistics. There was also strong recognition of the importance of transport/infrastructure statistics, and there was agreement that the ABS and DOTARS would work together on an issues paper addressing information needs, with a view to taking a proposal to a wider forum such as the Council of Australian Governments or the Standing Committee on Transport.

## Forums involving non-government and/or government delegates

The ABS attended meetings of the **Homelessness Taskforce steering committee**, to advise the committee on the various measures of homelessness derived from the census, administrative data sources, and direct collections of information.

During 2007–08, the ABS attended several meetings of the **National Child Information Advisory Group**, established by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The purpose of the advisory group is to provide advice to the AIHW on current child health and wellbeing information issues. In 2007–08, the group provided advice to the AIHW on a range of issues including: a review of a reporting framework for child health and wellbeing; an update of existing indicators on issues relevant to children; the appropriateness and usefulness of existing data on national child health and wellbeing; and the structure and content of the report being compiled by the AIHW, *A Picture of Australia's Children: Their health and wellbeing 2009*.

The ABS has continued to participate in both the steering committee and the technical working group for the **Australian Population and Policy Simulation Model (APPSIM)**. The APPSIM is a new dynamic microsimulation model project conducted by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM), which will simulate the impacts (both distributional and fiscal) of Australian policy responses to projected changes, such as population ageing. Some examples of

recent work on the model include incorporating labour force details, and refining estimates of fertility. The ABS has contributed in areas such as microdata access for development of the model.

The ABS participates on the **Northern Territory Government Statistical Boundaries sub-committee**, which advises the government on geography issues. During 2007–08, the ABS worked collaboratively with the Northern Territory Government on its project to change geographical boundaries following local government reforms.

The ABS attended a **Tourism Research Committee** meeting. This committee brings together Australian and state/territory government tourism data users and producers, as well as the Tourism Cooperative Research Centre from the Griffith University. The discussion focused on: the impact on the new standards for Tourism Satellite Accounts, as proposed by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation; the impact of the introduction of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification 2006; and ways to improve communication between the ABS and the tourism industry. Most of the participants were accepting of the proposed new standards.

## Consultations

The ABS periodically undertakes a major review of its household survey program to ensure that emerging issues are being adequately addressed and ongoing measures remain relevant to users. The latest review commenced in 2006, and the priorities identified through the consultation undertaken have been developed into a broad survey program that has generally been supported by key stakeholders. The funding implications of both sustaining the existing program, and expanding it to meet identified priorities, are being explored.

During 2007–08, the content of the Survey of Education and Work and the Survey of Education and Training was also reviewed. As a result of feedback from major stakeholders, a number of changes have been made to the next Survey of Education and Training (to be conducted in 2009), to better reflect current issues in education and training.

<b>Department of Climate Change</b>	The ABS has been working with the Department of Climate Change and other stakeholders to ensure Australia's future energy and emission information needs are met. The National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System will be introduced from 1 July 2008, leading up to the Emissions Trading Scheme (to be introduced in 2010), which will be the primary data source for Australia's future energy and emission statistics.
<b>Garnaut Climate Change Review</b>	The ABS has an officer assisting the Garnaut Climate Change Review, by identifying and providing specialised economic and environmental data services.
<b>Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts</b>	<p>The Natural Resource Management and Environment Protection and Heritage Standing Committees have commissioned a Joint Working Group on Improved Environmental Reporting to develop a National Environmental Information System (NEIS). The NEIS is designed to establish a national environmental information system that will enable the enduring provision of policy relevant, consistent, accurate and timely environmental data at national to regional level.</p> <p>The ABS has been working closely with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and a range of other national and regional agencies, to progress the NEIS.</p>
<b>Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</b>	<p>During 2007–08, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry funded the ABS to conduct a 2007–08 Resource Managers Benchmark Survey, to provide baseline measures to determine investment priorities and evaluation of future Natural Resource Management (NRM) programs. Funds were also provided to undertake a feasibility study and develop a methodology to link records from the 2005–06 Agricultural Census with those from the Australian Taxation Office Business Income Tax files to derive profitability measures.</p> <p>The ABS has also contributed to a project, undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics, developing measures of adaptive capacity of Australian farmers. The project has made extensive use of ABS data from many of its collections, including the Census of Population and Housing, the Agricultural Census and the Natural Resource Management Survey.</p>

<b>Water Accounting Development Committee</b>	<p>The ABS has been working with the Water Accounting Development Committee to develop water use accounting standard and guidelines. This work will continue in conjunction with the Bureau of Meteorology.</p> <p>The development of a national water accounting model will provide an essential contribution to improved awareness and understanding of how much water there is, where it is, what it is being used for, and who is using it. This information will provide greater accountability of water managers and increase confidence in water market mechanisms.</p>
<b>ACT Government Departments of Health and Education and Training</b>	<p>The ABS assisted the ACT Government undertake a project on education and workforce pathways for health occupations. The project arose from a joint submission by the ACT Department of Health and the ACT Department of Education and Training, and is in line with recognition by COAG that a labour pool imbalance exists in the education and health sectors.</p> <p>The project seeks to provide policy-makers with a better understanding of the supply and demand pathway, from entry to an education program through into and out of the labour force.</p>
<b>Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet</b>	<p>The ABS Tasmanian Office has been assisting the Department of Premier and Cabinet with development of its Social Inclusion Strategy.</p> <p>The ABS contributed to the initial report prepared (Strength of Our Community), joined the Counting the Homeless Committee and seconded an officer to the department's Social Inclusion Unit.</p>

## Submissions to reviews

The ABS made a submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) **Inquiry into Grocery Prices**, outlining the purpose of the Consumer Price Index and methods used to compile the index.

In May 2008, the ABS made a submission to the **Inquiry into the Management of Australia's Waste Streams**. This submission highlighted the role of the ABS in waste statistics, and how the ABS could potentially contribute to the terms of reference for this inquiry.

The ABS also made a submission to the **Inquiry into the Cost of Living Pressures on Older Australians**, outlining the range of data relevant to this inquiry, including the annual series *Analytical Living Cost Indexes for Selected Australian Household Types* (ABS cat. no. 6463.0).

Other submissions by the ABS during 2007–08 include submissions to the **Independent Review of the Australian Government's Use of Information and Communication Technology** (Gershon Review) and the **Review of the National Innovation System**.

(See online Appendix 3 for information about ABS submissions to parliamentary inquiries)

## Working with producers of statistics

In addition to the ABS, Australia has many producers of statistics, including other specialist statistical organisations, such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE). Universities, research centres and other government agencies also carry out surveys for policy development and other purposes.

The ABS works closely with a range of producers of statistics, both within Australia and internationally. Cooperation takes many forms, including undertaking joint projects, joining advisory and technical working groups, carrying out evaluations, and providing information for international studies.



### Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ABS staff attended a meeting of the International Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Working Party hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) Directorate of Education. The Working Party agreed on a number of initiatives to improve the quality of data collections, reviewed progress on the revision of International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), and discussed longer-term plans for revising *Education at a Glance*.

## Examples of working with producers of statistics

During 2007–08, the ABS collaborated with other Australian producers of statistics. For example, in early 2008, the ABS and the **Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics** undertook a Strategic Review of Transport Statistics. The Strategic Review of Australian Transport Statistics highlighted gaps in statistical infrastructure and data collections. The review was done in consultation with both Australian and state/territory government agencies. The proposed ABS work program addresses key information needs to identify data gaps. The focus is on areas where ABS involvement in data collection or delivery is essential or where ABS expertise can add value to existing data. It is designed to complement transportation data already available from other agencies.

A joint project is being undertaken by the **Bureau of Rural Sciences** and the ABS, to develop a systematic method of identifying changes in Australian land use intensity over time using Cadlite, a digital map of the cadastre across all state of Australia.

During 2007–08, the **Bureau of Meteorology** was given responsibility for the development of a National Water Account and National Water Information Standards under the *Water Act 2007*. The ABS and Bureau of Meteorology met several times during 2007–08 to ensure duplication in data collection and dissemination activities are minimised, as the standards and National Water Account are developed.

The **Population Estimates Technical Workshop** is held annually to provide a forum for discussion with state and territory government representatives on developments and issues associated with the compilation of population estimates at national, state/territory and lower levels. In addition, the **Australia New Zealand Population Workshop** is also held annually and brings together demographers and population analysts from Australian, state/territory and New Zealand government agencies to discuss issues relating to the compilation and presentation of demography statistics.

In 2007–08, the ABS met with Australian Government **Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies**, to discuss progress in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Wave 3 development.

## Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

*Growing Up in Australia* is the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children initiated and funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs as part of its *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. The study aims to examine the impact of Australia's unique social and cultural environment on the next generation and will further understanding of early childhood development, inform social policy debate, and be used to identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention strategies in policy areas concerning children.

*Growing Up in Australia* explores family and social issues, and addresses a range of research questions about children's development and wellbeing. Its longitudinal structure will enable researchers to determine critical periods for the provision of services and welfare support and identify the long-term consequences of policy innovations.

(from - <http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/>)

In addition, the ABS continued to be a member of the Steering Committee for the Longitudinal Study for Indigenous Children (LSIC) convened by FaHCSIA. During 2007–08, the ABS presented a preliminary report on the pilot test of the LSIC. The report suggested some improvements in coverage, and highlighted issues with the overall interview length, response rates and retention rates.

The ABS was also represented at the **National Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data** (NAGATSIHID) meetings, held in October 2007 and April 2008. Issues discussed include a project to be led by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and



Torres Strait Islander Studies to develop statistical capacity among Indigenous people. The ABS Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan, and efforts to employ Indigenous graduates and cadets will be recognised through this project. A number of data development projects, for which NAGATSIHID are responsible, were also discussed. These include work to improve information on primary health care, family violence, prisoner health, social and emotional wellbeing, and mortality.

The ABS cooperated with the **Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research**, to improve coverage and metadata entries in the Queensland Government's central repository.

The Australian Statistician met with the Children's Services Coordination Board, the senior governance forum for the **Victorian Children and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS) project**. This project is one of the key pilot studies for the development of the National Data Network (NDN). Discussions during the meeting were very positive, and covered the strategic management of information; the impact on data providers; the hosting of VCAMS; and the implication of using open source software. The Board endorsed the recommendation to continue to work with the ABS to further explore the potential benefits of the NDN solution.

The **Data Mapping Pilot—Early Childhood Working Group** met on 29 November 2007. This working group was established following the Population Wellbeing Data Gaps workshop held in June 2006. Along with ABS representation, membership of the working group includes the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Treasury, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The meeting reviewed progress on identification of data gaps in the area of early childhood. It discussed a model for linking administrative and survey data to improve information available to address important data gaps. A hypothetical model has been developed that identifies existing datasets and how they could be brought together and augmented by specifically commissioned surveys to collect data, which is not currently available from survey or administrative sources. The model is not a proposal, but an examination of what might be possible if there were no constraints in access to existing data. The Working Group was enthusiastic about the potential benefits of such a linked data model and agreed it would go a good way toward addressing existing data gaps.

## Working with producers of administrative data

The ABS works closely with Australian and state/territory government agencies producing administrative data. For example:

### ◆ **The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the ABS**

In December 2007, the ABS and the ATO signed agreements covering arrangements for the provision of Australian Business Register, Business Activity Statement (BAS) and Business Income Tax data. These agreements are subsidiary to the ABS/ATO Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2006.

In addition, the two agencies have agreed to manage the implications of incoming government proposals in relation to BAS reporting, tax credits rebates and other matters through on-going interagency forums.

#### ◆ **The Australian Customs Service and the ABS**

In 2007, the ABS and the Australian Customs Service (ACS) celebrated 100 years of cooperation in the release of merchandise trade statistics. During 2007–08:

- ◆ the ABS participated in an Interdepartmental Committee chaired by ACS, looking at future directions for cargo crossing the customs frontier
- ◆ an Agency Heads Agreement was drafted, and
- ◆ an ABS officer was outposted to ACS for three months to investigate a number of projects of mutual interest (more information on 100 years of trade data can be found in Chapter 4).

#### ◆ **Government Health Ministers**

During 2007–08, the ABS was represented at a number of information committees reporting to Health Ministers, including the National eHealth Information Principal Committee (and its predecessor the National Health Information Management Principal Committee), the Health Statistical Information Management Committee (SIMC) and the Health Data Standards Committee.

At the SIMC, the ABS provided papers assessing the state of readiness of jurisdictions for geocoding data holdings and providing options for geographic coding data held by government agencies. Proposals for a national data linkage framework, and ongoing issues relating to data items and definitions for a number of national minimum datasets were also discussed.

#### ◆ **Government of Western Australia**

The ABS' regional office in Western Australia conducted a Data Custodians Workshop for the Western Australian Indicator Framework System (WAIFS) initiative. WAIFS will be an integrated online data repository and search facility for indicator data and metadata relating to state government indicator frameworks. The workshop brought together framework owner agencies and data custodians, to gain their support and collaboration. Initial reactions from custodian agencies were extremely positive, with strong agreement on the synergies to be achieved by this cross-government approach to data sharing.

## Statistical Clearing House

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) was established in response to a recommendation in 1996, by the Small Business Deregulation Task Force. Their report recommended that a central clearance process be established for business surveys conducted by the Australian Government. The purpose of the process was to ensure that surveys are necessary, well designed and place minimum burden on business respondents. As such, all directed businesses surveys conducted by or on behalf of any Australian Government agency (including the ABS), are subject to clearance by the SCH. In view of its statistical expertise and statutory coordination role, the ABS was empowered to administer the clearance process.

The SCH pays particular attention to eliminating duplication in business surveys, and ensures that surveys conducted follow good statistical methodologies and practices in reducing respondent burden. Table 9.1 presents the number of surveys approved over the last five financial years, for both the ABS and other government agencies. Of the 80 approved surveys during 2007–08, 27 of these were high profile reviews (for example, when a survey is expected to have high respondent burden and has planned to approach more than 5000 businesses or has a

planned sample size of more than 2000 businesses) and 14 surveys were approved with conditions attached. The majority (61%) of the 80 surveys approved during 2007–08, were either annual or once-only collections.

*Table 9.1: Statistical Clearing House—number of approved surveys by financial year and agency*

Year	ABS	Other Government Agencies	Total
2003–04	33	87	120
2004–05	33	83	116
2005–06	29	89	118
2006–07	25	82	107
2007–08 a)	33	47	80

a) During the 2007 caretaker period, government agency data collection activity reduced. The caretaker period refers to the period preceding an election for the House of Representatives, when the government must not make any major policy decisions or appointments, or enter any contracts, likely to significantly commit the incoming government.

The SCH<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Business Surveys Register (available on the Internet at <http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/About+SCH>) provides access to information on collections that have already been conducted. It also includes information on survey design standards and best practices for organisations developing surveys.

## Working with users and producers of data

### Outposted officers for key clients

By outposting statistical officers in Australian and state/territory government agencies, the ABS engages with users and producers of statistics. The primary objectives of longer term outpostings are:

- ◆ identify opportunities for the ABS to assist with identifying or providing information for policy development, implementation or evaluation purposes
- ◆ keep the ABS informed about emerging issues, so the ABS' forward work program remains relevant and useful
- ◆ develop statistical capability in government agencies, to improve understanding and use of statistics
- ◆ enhance cooperation between government departments, and
- ◆ support agencies' current and future information and analytical needs.

In addition, ABS outposted officers assist with coordinating statistical activities, including collection and dissemination of data, so that duplication is reduced and quality is improved. Coordination reduces costs and provider burden associated with information collection, as well as improving comparability of data.

A new outposting commenced in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet during 2007–08, with a focus on the Australian Government’s social inclusion priority. The department has established a unit to manage the new Government’s Social Inclusion agenda. The Social Inclusion Unit will have further bilateral discussions with stakeholders, including the ABS, to discuss the data needs for an evidence base for their work and its outcomes.

During preparation for the Australia 2020 Summit, which was held in April 2008, the ABS provided the co-chair’s team with an outposted officer, to assist with development of briefing materials on the ten long-term challenges confronting Australia. These briefing materials were used to inspire ideas and debate around the 10 topics, with the view to creating a long-term strategy for the nation’s future.



*ABS outposted officer, Sam Thomas (second from left), pictured with the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd, at the 2020 Australia Summit in April 2008.*

During 2007–08, the ABS Tasmanian Office provided the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Local Government Office, with an outposted officer. The Tasmanian Government identified a need for accurate, up-to-date regional data for informed policy-making and planning, Ministerial Briefings, grant allocations and maintaining the core business of State Government. The outposted officer developed a template with information about local government areas, including data from State/Territory and Australian Governments. The template covers a range of subject matter areas including population, health, economic and employment and education.



## McCaughey Centre: VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Community Wellbeing

The ABS has provided an outposted officer to the McCaughey Centre: VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Community Wellbeing in the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne. The officer is assisting a small team to implement the recommendations of the Victorian Community Indicators Project (VCIP) through the work of Community Indicators Victoria.

Community Indicators Victoria aims to establish a sustainable Victorian approach to the development and use of local community wellbeing indicators, with the purpose of improving citizen engagement, community planning and policy making.

The Community Indicators Victoria website will be launched on 17 July 2008 and, using an integrated set of community wellbeing indicators, presents data on the wellbeing of Victorians. These indicators refer to a broad range of measures designed to identify and communicate economic, social, environmental, democratic and cultural trends and outcomes.

Table 9.2: Agencies with long-term outposted officers, 2007–08

Level of government	Number in 2006–07	Number in 2007–08	List of ABS outposted officers in 2007–08
Australian	8	7	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Department of Health and Ageing Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (a) Productivity Commission Australian Taxation Office
State and territory	14	18	Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victorian Department of Human Services Victorian Department of Justice Victorian Department of Transport Victorian Department for Planning and Community Development (a) Australian Capital Territory Department of Justice and Community Safety Northern Territory Treasury Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training Queensland Department of Transport Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management Office of the Chief Information Office in the South Australian Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure Western Australian Department of Industry and Resources New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet

(a) More than one outposted officer for periods during 2007–08

## Training for users and producers of statistics

The ABS conducts a range of training courses to assist users understand ABS statistics. The National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI) in the ABS, along with the State and Territory Statistical Services (STSS) units in each regional office, coordinated the development and presentation of a wide range of training courses on statistical issues in 2007–08. Table 9.3 outlines the training courses conducted by NSTI in 2007–08, as well as the number of participants from other agencies for each course. During the last 12 months, demand for external statistical training for government continued to grow.

To harness the increased demand for statistical training, the ABS is currently undertaking a number of initiatives to improve the curriculum available and promote courses to external agencies. This includes working with clients to identify statistical skills required and develop or renew programs offered through the external training programs. It also includes gaining feedback from course attendees, as they take the opportunity to discuss user needs and concerns with the ABS staff during sessions.

During 2007–08, a large number of courses and seminars continued to be offered through the NSTI, STSS, National Statistical Service, and Statistical Literacy programs. These ranged from information sessions on the ABS website, offered through the Information Skills program, to skills based courses, such as Turning Data into Information and Analysing Survey Data Made Simple, aimed at improving the statistical skills of staff in other agencies. A new course on Understanding Environmental Accounts was recently added to the external training curriculum, with a course on Discovering Macro-economic Statistics scheduled for pilot in 2008–09.

### Turning Data into Information

During October 2007, the ABS' State and Territory Statistical Service in Queensland provided the training course, Turning Data into Information, with a focus on analysis of Indigenous Australian data.

Feedback from the 477 participants pointed to the need for an ongoing course aiming to improve analysis of Indigenous Australian data. A course is being developed to complement the training packages provided as part of the ABS' Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy.

### Introduction to Labour Statistics

Introduction to Labour Statistics training courses were conducted twice in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, and one course was held in Perth as part of the National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI) program. Approximately 107 external clients, largely from Australian and state/territory government departments, attended the courses.

The ABS has also developed a new training course, entitled Valuing Australia's Environment, on environmental-economic accounting. The development of the training course is key to raising capacity in environmental accounting in the ABS and more broadly.

*Table 9.3: NSTI training courses conducted in 2007–08 for users and producers of statistics*

Course	Number of Participants from other agencies
Analysing Survey Data Made Simple	68
Basic Survey Design	57
Introduction to Labour Statistics	107
Making Quality Informed Decisions	124
Principles of Questionnaire Design	53
Turning Data into Information	477
Understanding Demographic Data	22
Using ABS Datacubes in Supertable	82



# chapter 10

## Provider/respondent relationships

### Introduction

The work of the ABS would not be possible without the continuing cooperation of businesses, householders and others who provide the data that form the basis of statistics. The ABS works hard to secure the trust and confidence of data providers, without which the provision of a quality statistical service would be jeopardised. The ABS continues its endeavours to reduce the burden placed on data providers by expanding the use of administrative data.

### ABS Service Charters

The ABS recognises its obligation to respondents in statistical collections, and has produced service charters relating to both business surveys and household surveys. In addition, the ABS has a Client Services Charter for users of its products and services. For more information on the Client Services Charter, see Chapter 12, Communication of Statistics. The charters include performance standards for the relationship between the ABS and its clients, and for service delivery. Performance against these standards is subject to ongoing review, as are the charters themselves.

### Business Surveys Charter

The Business Surveys Charter sets out the relationship between the ABS and businesses, which provide information for statistical purposes. The charter explains how businesses can seek help from the ABS, and also specifies how businesses can request a review of the handling of any complaints.

The charter is regularly reviewed and is available on the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>. The charter is provided to new respondents in collections involving businesses, and is reproduced in English, Italian, Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese and Arabic.

### Household Surveys Charter

The Household Surveys Charter sets out the relationship between the ABS and members of the public, who provide information about themselves and their household for statistical purposes. The charter explains what people can expect, when dealing with the ABS and ABS interviewers. It includes information on the way household surveys are conducted, the way complaints are handled, and invites comments and other feedback.

The Household Surveys Charter is available on the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>, and is reproduced in English, Italian, Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese and Arabic.

## Confidentiality of data

The ABS depends on the goodwill and cooperation of Australians, businesses and other organisations to provide information in response to its many data collections. A critical way of maintaining cooperation and goodwill is by ensuring the information supplied remains confidential. The ABS has an enviable reputation for the preservation of the secrecy of reported information, and for the protection of its statistical data holdings from unauthorised release.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires the Australian Statistician to publish and disseminate compilations and analyses of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act. The ABS meets the confidentiality requirements of the Act by making sure that information provided is:

- ◆ securely maintained
- ◆ used only for statistical purposes, and
- ◆ when supporting research and analysis, is used only in unidentifiable microdata files.

In addition, the ABS ensures identifying information provided by a household or business is not revealed. However, there are a small number of situations where information about businesses, but not households, might be released. These exceptions are tightly prescribed by Determinations of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. Release under a Determination requires the approval of the Australian Statistician.

A statement outlining the importance of confidentiality of data provided, and how the ABS protects the confidentiality of data, is available on the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>> (Survey Participant Information—How the ABS Keeps Your Information Confidential).

## Provider load

In order to fulfil its mission of providing information to support discussion, debate and decision making, the ABS is authorised to collect information, about a range of issues, from businesses and households. The ABS is mindful the needs of users of information must be balanced against the extent of requests for information from businesses and households. The amount of time needed to complete ABS surveys, totalled for all collections and all respondents, is referred to as 'provider load'.

The ABS endeavours to minimise provider load by promoting efficiency and effectiveness of ABS operations, and the ABS survey program. Information is not requested unless the collection is of high priority for the national statistical program. There is a legislative requirement to table any proposal for a collection of information before both Houses of Parliament, before collection begins. To further reduce provider load, forms are carefully designed, and thoroughly tested, for ease of use. For business surveys, there is close liaison with representative groups, in relation to both the survey program and the demands on businesses.

Over the last decade, the ABS has had significant success in reducing provider burden, while at the same time expanding on the range of statistics available. The increased use of administrative data and the use of smarter statistical methodologies have contributed to this decline, as has an increased focus on strategies to improve provider relations and reporting mechanisms.

## Standard Business Reporting Project

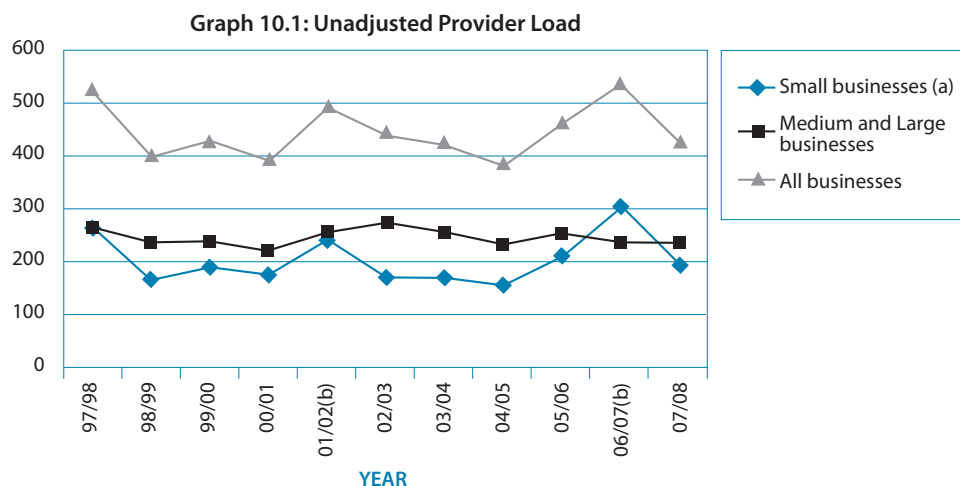
The ABS is a partner in the Standard Business Reporting (SBR) project, which is an Australian Government initiative to reduce the business-to-government reporting burden. The project aims to reduce the cost incurred by small and medium sized firms when providing financial data to government departments. The project involves an automated, electronic alternative to completing paper forms. Once fully implemented, SBR will save business \$800 million each year (more information on SBR can be found at <http://www.sbr.gov.au>).

## Provider load in business surveys

The unadjusted provider load (measured in thousands of hours taken to complete statistical forms) imposed on businesses by the ABS for 1997–98 through to 2007–08, is shown in Graph 10.1. The total ABS provider load on businesses fell to its lowest level of 383,000 hours in 2004–05. In the past year there has been a 21% reduction in overall load following a peak in 2006–07, due mainly to the conduct of the agricultural census which imposed a load of around 150,000 hours.

The average total load on all businesses during the past five years has been around 446,000 hours/year, or 15% lower than for 1997–98. For small businesses, the average total load during the past five years has been around 205,000 hours/year, or 22% lower than in 1997–98.

*Graph 10.1: Unadjusted provider load imposed on businesses by the ABS*



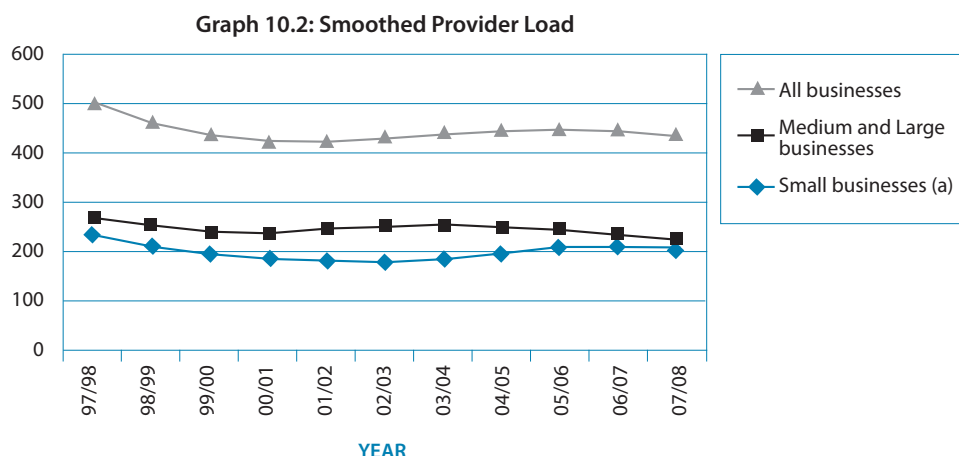
(a) Defined as businesses with less than 20 employees or a derived estimate of employees of less than 20.

(b) Higher provider load estimates for 2001–02 and 2006–07 reflect the conduct of the five-yearly Agricultural Census.

Provider load figures from 1997–98 to 2007–08 were smoothed using an 11-term Henderson moving average to reveal the underlying trend. This smooths the effect of irregular and regular contributors to provider load, such as the five-yearly agricultural census.

In 2007–08, the trend of small business provider load has started to decrease again after peaking in 2006–07. The peak in 2006–07 was due to the five-yearly agriculture census, where 90% of the total load for that collection was undertaken by small business. The trend of medium and large business provider load has continuously decreased since 2003–04 and as a result, total provider load for all businesses has also started to decline as shown in Graph 10.2.

Graph 10.2: Smoothed provider load imposed on businesses by the ABS



(a) Defined as businesses with less than 20 employees or a derived estimate of employees of less than 20.

## Provider load in household surveys

Table 10.1 shows household provider load over the last four years. The household survey program varies considerably from year to year, with many major surveys on three–six yearly cycles. The ABS recognises the need to balance the pressure to expand the household survey program to meet the need for information about the population, with the load on providers. As a result, the ABS has a range of measures in place to minimise provider load:

- ♦ all household surveys are rigorously tested, to ensure they can be completed as accurately and quickly as possible
- ♦ the minimum sample size to achieve reliable results is used, and
- ♦ the sample design is such that dwellings cannot be selected in more than one survey in a specific five-year period (for example, a dwelling selected in the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey cannot be selected in the Time Use Survey in the five-year period).

The ABS focuses on developing the professionalism of the ABS interviewers, and building their skills obtaining information from the residents of selected dwellings, with the minimum of inconvenience. ABS interviewers are trained to be flexible and organise interview times that are most suitable for respondents, as well as enter responses directly into a notebook computer in an efficient manner.

Table 10.1: Household Provider Load (approximate financial year data)

Year	Survey	Achieved Interview Time (mins)	Total Fully Responding Households	Total Provider Load (Household Hours)
2004/05	Monthly Population Survey (MPS) (a) (b)	7.0	363,018	42,352
	Multi-Purpose Household Survey (MPHS)	8.5	14,522	2,057
	National Health Survey	40.0	19,502	13,001
	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) (Non-Remote)	57.8	3,325	3,203
	<b>Total</b>		<b>400,367</b>	<b>60,614</b>
2005/06	MPS(a)	6.3	367,705	38,609
	MPHS	10.6	14,234	2,514
	General Social Survey	45.3	13,404	10,120
	Personal Safety Survey	27.9	16,430	7,640
	Survey of Education and Training	36.3	13,857	8,383
	Survey of Income and Housing	39.6	10,158	6,704
	<b>Total</b>		<b>435,788</b>	<b>73,970</b>
2006/07	MPS (a)	7.1	376,701	44,576
	MPHS	13.8	13,945	3,207
	Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation	42.7	13,705	9,753
	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey	99.1	8,703	14,374
	Time Use Survey	39.2	3,938	2,573
	Census Post Enumeration Survey	9.2	32,730	5,018
	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children	71.8	9,063	10,845
	<b>Total</b>		<b>458,785</b>	<b>90,346</b>
2007/08	MPS - July 07 to May 08 (a)	7.0	324,921	37,908
	MPHS - 9 months only to May 08	11.5	13,021	2,496
	Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing	82.5	8,452	11,621
	<b>Total</b>		<b>346,394</b>	<b>52,025</b>

(a) Includes the Labour Force Survey

(b) Full implementation of Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI) for MPS occurred in August 2004, January to July figures include Pen and Paper Interviewing (PAPI) and CAI combined average

## Response rates

The ABS has consistently had very high response rates for both household and business surveys. Table 10.2 shows that response rates for selected business collections generally exceed the target response rates set by the ABS.

In regard to business surveys, follow-up procedures tend to focus on the more significant businesses with typically high turnover or employment relative to the rest of the industry. For example, the response rate for businesses in the manufacturing survey might be 92%, but the businesses that have responded may comprise 96% of total employment in the industry. It is important to note however, the ABS considers the activities of small businesses are just as important as large businesses, as they have different characteristics from large businesses and make an important contribution to the Australian economy, especially at state and territory

levels. Usually, a sample of smaller businesses is selected to represent other like businesses and as such, their impact on the survey results is important. For some specific industries, such as mining, small businesses can be significant in their own right.

Table 10.2 also demonstrates the high levels of response gained for household surveys. Maintaining high response rates is a major focus for the household survey program, particularly given the increasing number of interviews conducted during limited evening hours (up to 8pm).

*Table 10.2: Response rates for selected surveys*

	Target response rate (%) (a)	Final Response rate 2006–07 (%)	Final Response rate 2007–08 (%)
<b>Business surveys</b>			
Retail Business Survey	95	96	97(b)
Quarterly Business Indicators Survey	85	92	91(b)
Capital Expenditure Survey	90	95	95(b)
Job Vacancy Survey	98	97	97(b)
Economic Activity Survey	86	93	90
Manufacturing Survey	90	93	92
Survey of Tourist Accommodation	90	89	88(b)
Agricultural Commodity Survey	85	(c)	87
Natural Resource management Survey	85	(c)	89
Survey of International Trade in Services	90	94	95(b)
<b>Household surveys</b>			
Labour Force Survey	97	97	97
Multi-purpose Household Survey (d)	87	82	89
Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation	85	82	(e)
Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey	85	78	(e)
Time Use Survey	73	69	(e)
Census Post Enumeration Survey	95	94	(e)
Longitudinal Study of Australian Children	85	91	(e)
National Health Survey	90	(c)	89 (f)
Survey Income and Housing	85	(c)	85 (f)

a) Target response rate can reflect differing measures (i.e. a form receival rate or a live response rate).

b) Average response rates over the year for sub-annual surveys. Response rates apply to the year in which the data are collected.

c) Surveys were not conducted in 2006–07.

d) The results for the Multipurpose Household Survey are used in several ABS publications. The survey is enumerated monthly and the response rates are a simple average.

e) Surveys were not conducted in 2007–08.

f) Preliminary results as at 30 June 2008 as survey concludes during July 2008.

## Complaints from providers

Over 200,000 businesses and around 400,000 households are selected in ABS surveys each year. Households or businesses have a number of avenues available if they have queries or complaints about being selected in a survey, or about the processes involved. Free call contact numbers are provided with all survey information (preliminary approach letters and brochures for household surveys; survey forms and brochures for business surveys). Providers can call these numbers and, for the majority of cases, their concerns are resolved by the ABS officers receiving the calls.

In addition, there are a range of other complaint mechanisms, which can be used by householders and businesses. These include writing to or emailing the ABS, writing to the ABS Complaints Review Officer, approaching a parliamentarian, or contacting the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Information about written complaints to the ABS survey areas and ministerial correspondence is shown in the Table 10.3.

*Table 10.3: Written complaints from providers in ABS surveys*

	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
<b>Complaints to the ABS survey areas</b>						
Business surveys	427	397	300	360	290	283
Household surveys	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	37
<b>Letters to politicians (ministerial correspondence)</b>						
Household surveys	8	10	15	14	15	18
Business surveys	20	6	7	9	11	5
Census(a)	-	-	-	-	85	-

(a) The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every five years.

(b) Information is not available due to separate recording processes in regional offices, making it difficult to compile accurate total figures for years prior to 2007–08.

In 2007–08, the number of ministerials received for household surveys was around the same level as the number received in 2006–07. As household surveys are conducted by interviewers, either by phone or in person, most questions and complaints are dealt with directly and informally by survey staff, and do not result in formal written complaints. It should be noted that consolidated records on complaints to the ABS in relation to household surveys were not kept prior to 2007–08 (see (b) in Table 10.3 above).

ABS business surveys are predominately mail based and the number of written complaints is higher than for household surveys. For the 12 months to 30 June 2008, the ABS received a total of 283 written complaints from businesses. A reduction in the number of written complaints from businesses since 2002–03 can be attributed to an increased number of respondent concerns being resolved by ABS officers on the phone.

Many written complaints received from businesses relate to requests for exemption from ABS business surveys. For the 12 months to 30 June 2008, 138 requests from businesses for temporary exemption from ABS surveys were granted. As outlined in the ABS Business Surveys Charter, every complaint is responded to either in writing, or by telephone contact. If the complainant is not satisfied with the ABS response, they can take the matter to the Complaints Review Officer. During 2007–08 there were six complaints made about business surveys to the ABS Complaints Review Officer, and there were three inquiries from the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

## Notices of Direction and prosecution actions

Under sections 10(4) and 11(2) of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, the Australian Statistician may, by notice in writing, direct a person to complete a form or answer a question. Under section 14 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, a person commits an offence if they fail to comply with a Notice of Direction. The penalty for this is set at one penalty unit (\$110 in 2007–08) in respect of each day after the Notice of Direction is served until the person complies with the direction. The application of this penalty is at the discretion of the Court.

These provisions are used sparingly, as the ABS prefers to seek the willing cooperation of respondents. However, it is sometimes necessary to use the legislative provisions, to ensure that high response rates are maintained and the data provided are of high quality.

The number of Notices of Direction issued and the number of prosecution actions approved in recent years are shown in Table 10.4. In 2007–08, the number of Notices of Direction issued for household and business surveys has decreased. Five of the 66 notices of direction to households have proceeded to prosecution.

The number of notices of direction and prosecution actions approved is higher every five years, when the Census of Population and Housing is conducted. The high numbers for 2006–07 are due to the 2006 Census of Population of Housing.

*Table 10.4: Notices of direction issued and prosecution actions approved*

	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
<b>Notices of direction issued</b>						
Census of Population and Housing	-	-	-	-	4,955	
Household surveys	1	-	1	8	86	66
Business censuses and surveys	23	1	-	4	19	2
Total	24	1	1	12	5,060	70
<b>Prosecution actions approved (a)</b>						
Census of Population and Housing	-	-	-	-	253	25
Household surveys	-	-	-	-	-	5
Business censuses and surveys	1	-	-	1	5	0
Total	1	-	-	1	258	30

(a) Approved by the Australian Statistician for referral to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. Any particular prosecution approval may relate to a number of Notices of Direction. Each prosecution action approval is counted in the year in which the corresponding Notice of Direction is issued. Not every prosecution action approved proceeds to court.



# chapter 11

## Quality and timeliness

### Introduction


The quality of the statistics produced by the ABS is critical to ensuring the ABS achieves its mission of assisting and encouraging informed decision-making. The ABS strives to maximise the quality of the information it produces, taking account of budgetary constraints and the load placed on survey respondents.

### Aspects of quality

To ensure the production of high quality statistics, quality monitoring is an integral part of the process. The following aspects of quality make up the ABS data quality framework:

- ◆ institutional environment
- ◆ relevance—the degree to which information meets the needs of users
- ◆ accuracy—the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena being measured
- ◆ timeliness—the delay between the reference period and the release of the information
- ◆ accessibility—the ease with which the information can be referenced
- ◆ interpretability—the availability of supplementary information necessary to interpret the statistical information, and
- ◆ coherence—the degree to which the information can be brought together with other information, and over time.

Addressing the quality of a statistical product will always involve balancing these aspects. For example, initiatives that could improve the accuracy of the statistics may reduce the timeliness. The ABS must also work within its budget, and find the right balance between achieving high quality statistical information and collecting an appropriate range of statistics. The ABS aims to produce a large and diverse range of statistics, with a quality designed to meet the key needs of policy makers, researchers and other users within the Australian community. The ABS also strives to ensure users of its information are provided with readily accessible information on quality, so they can make informed decisions on the suitability of the statistics for their intended use. This information is available electronically on the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>, through explanatory and technical notes, and more recently through Quality Declarations. Quality Declarations describe the quality of a statistical release using the dimensions of the ABS data quality framework, to assist users in determining the 'fitness for purpose' of the product being viewed. Quality declarations were introduced to the ABS website from 25 October 2007, with the 2006 Census of Population and Housing being the first released.



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## QUALITY DECLARATION FOR : 2006 Census of Population and Housing

(for the full version please see:  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/census%20data%20quality#QUALITY%20DECLARATION>)

### RELEVANCE

The Australian Census of Population and Housing is the official count of population and dwellings and collects details of age, sex, and other characteristics of the population.

Topics collected by the Census change from time to time. There must be a demonstrated national need for Census data for policy development, planning and program monitoring. A copy of the 2006 Census Household Form can be found in the [Appendix](#) to the 2006 Census Dictionary. For details on the changing content of Censuses from 1911 to 2006, see Appendix 3 of [How Australia Takes a Census](#).

A small number of new questions and classifications were used in the 2006 Census. These questions were on unpaid work, number of children ever born, type of Internet connection for the dwelling and a measure of disability called 'core activity need for assistance'. Revised classifications were used for the coding of occupation, industry, ancestry, language, and religion. For more detail see 2006 Census Dictionary entry [What's new for 2006](#).

### TIMELINESS

The Census and Statistics Act requires the Australian Statistician to conduct a Census on a regular basis; since 1961 a Census has been held every five years. The 2006 Census is the 15th national Census for Australia and was held on 8 August 2006.

For the 2006 Census, first release data was available on the ABS Website on 27 June 2007, and second release data on 25 October 2007. The release dates were in line with the proposed timeframes set out in the information paper *ABS Views on Census Output Strategy 2006* (ABS cat. no. 2009.0).

### ACCURACY

The ABS aims to produce high quality data from the Census. To achieve this, extensive effort is put into Census form design, collection procedures, and processing. There are four principle sources of error in Census data which quality management aims to reduce as much as possible. These sources of error are respondent error, processing error, partial or non-response, and undercount. For more detail see 2006 Census Dictionary entry [Managing Census Quality](#).

The Census is self-enumerated, and respondents sometimes do not return a Census form or fail to answer every applicable question. Persons are imputed into dwellings for which no form was returned. Demographic characteristics are also imputed if a respondent does not provide them on a returned form. However, not all details are imputed upon non-response. For example, the majority of output classifications include a "Not Stated" category to record the level of non-response for that data item. Data Quality Statements are produced for each census data item and include the non-response rate for each variable and a brief outline of any known data quality problems. These can be accessed through links at the top of this page; [Fact Sheets](#) are also produced comparing non-response rates over the past two censuses.

## COHERENCE

It is important for Census data to be comparable and compatible with previous censuses and also with other data produced by the ABS and wider community. The ABS uses Australian standard classifications where available and appropriate to provide data comparability across statistical collections. These include standards for occupation and geographic areas, for example. For more detail of all classifications used in the census see 2006 Census Dictionary entry [About Census Classifications](#), and the relevant entries for each classification.

For previous censuses, Census Working Papers provide comparisons of census data with other ABS data. For example, the *2001 Census Working Paper 03/09* compared the census data on 'qualifications' with the 2001 ABS Survey of Education and Work. Such information will be added to the 2006 Census Data Quality Statements over time, as evaluation work is completed.

## INTERPRETABILITY

The Census provides a wealth of data about the Australian community through a suite of standard products or as data customised for individual requirements. The 2006 Census Dictionary is a comprehensive reference guide designed to assist users to determine and specify their data requirements and to understand the concepts underlying the data. The 2006 Census Dictionary also assists users to understand details of classifications and definitions of Census terms.

A number of other resources can be accessed from the [Census Reference and Information](#) page, including Data Quality Statements, Frequently Asked Questions and Product Briefs.

## ACCESSIBILITY

An extensive range of standard products are available from the Census. For details see the [Census Products](#) page or access [Census Data](#) online.

If the Census information you require is not available as a standard product or service, then ABS Consultancy Services can help you with customised services to suit your needs. Contact **1300 135 070** from within Australia or **+61 2 9268 4909** from overseas for all your Census and other information needs. Alternatively, please email [client.services@abs.gov.au](mailto:client.services@abs.gov.au)

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In recent years, the ABS has established a more formal 'end-to-end' framework for its survey design, data collection, data processing and dissemination activities. The focus is on 'total quality management', including quality assurance, as well as quality inspection processes (for example, 'Quality Gates') being strategically positioned and designed within end-to-end workflow processes. This 'end-to-end' focus allows effort on quality assurance and inspection to be targeted in a manner that provides the greatest overall benefits to the accuracy of the final outputs. For example, the ABS focuses maximum attention on the quality of that 'input' data, which will have maximum impact on the final outputs.

Improved facilities for capturing and analysing 'management information' about how various steps in the process have contributed to the quality of the final data are an important aid in this regard, allowing the cost and benefit of each current step to be better understood, along with the likely cost and benefit of various process tuning options. Common, well managed data stores, and integrated systems working on a common basis, have reduced the risk of 'human error' during processing as well as the risk of many different stand-alone systems holding inconsistent data and/or processing it inconsistently. Finally, improved facilities within the ABS for analysing and reporting allow possible quality issues to be identified and investigated in a timely manner prior to publication, including:

- ◆ how data has changed during the current processing cycle
- ◆ how data for this cycle compares with data from a previous cycle of the same statistical activity (where applicable), and
- ◆ how data for this cycle compares with other, related, sources of data.

The changing environment, in particular the increased importance of the ABS website as the main dissemination source of its statistics, has introduced new challenges and opportunities for improvement on ways the ABS can better ensure end users have relevant and accessible quality information to guide their use of the statistics. The ABS endorses the principle that 'the quality of the data should be described clearly and understandably'.

## Institutional Environment

The ABS aims to produce high quality statistics that can be used with confidence. It also aims to exercise the highest professional standards in all aspects of its statistical operations, and recognises a quality culture is fundamental to maintaining the trust of the Australian community.

The ABS goes to considerable lengths to ensure its data, analysis, and interpretations are objective, and always publishes its statistics in ways that explain and inform, without advocating a particular position.

The ABS aims to maintain transparency in its operations and performance. Some of the ways in which this is achieved include:

- ◆ advertisement of all scheduled release dates for publications up to 12 months in advance
- ◆ use of daily press and media releases, to inform users of publications being released each day
- ◆ a strict embargo policy, which is known to the public, that ensures impartiality for the release of all publications
- ◆ publication of the ABS three-year Forward Work Program, which describes the ABS work program, including the resources to be used, outputs, clients and uses of statistical information, and the proposed developments over the next three years

- ◆ release of information about statistical standards, frameworks, concepts, sources and methods in a range of information papers and other publications, and
- ◆ inclusion of details of major revisions to published data in the explanatory notes of the relevant publication.

The ABS regularly reviews the methodologies used to produce statistics, providing the opportunity to make improvements and incorporate new approaches, where appropriate. For example, a new sample design for the Labour Force Survey was phased in from November 2007. This new design makes use of the composite estimate methodology introduced in June 2007 and population information from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, leading to a reduced respondent burden for statistics of comparable quality. *Information Paper: Labour Force Survey Sample Design, 2007* (ABS cat. no. 6290.0) was released in November 2007, describing the new sample design and the impact on quality.

## Labour Force Survey—changes to the sample size in 2008

As a 2008-09 savings initiative, the Australian Statistician announced that from July 2008, the sample size of the Labour Force Survey will be reduced by 24%, when compared with the June 2008 sample being implemented under the 2006 sample design (outlined in the information paper referred to above).

The ABS is implementing this sample reduction in such a way that the sample can be easily increased again in the future, if the ABS funding position changes.

The new sample, while smaller, will still be representative, with selections made in all parts of Australia. There will be increased volatility in the estimates, particularly the original and seasonally adjusted estimates, but this volatility will be random. Overall, the relative standard errors for estimates of employment and unemployment at the national, state and territory level are expected to be approximately 15% higher than those expected from the 2006 sample design.

The ABS statistical system is open to outside scrutiny. Its methodologies are based on sound statistical principles and practices, and are disseminated widely. The Methodological Advisory Committee meets twice a year, and consists of professional statisticians external to the ABS, who provide peer review of methodological developments in the ABS. In addition, a range of research papers are published to explain statistical developments and research. Topics covered in 2007–08 include:

- ◆ assessing the quality of linked datasets
- ◆ imputation and estimation for the census, and
- ◆ sample designs for surveys of Indigenous persons and comparing seasonal adjustment methodologies for quarterly series, when monthly data is also available.

## Relevance

The relevance of statistical information reflects the degree to which it meets the needs of the users of the information. Of concern is whether the available information addresses the issues most important to policy-makers, researchers, and to the broader Australian community. The outputs produced, the concepts and classifications used, and the scope of the collection can all affect the relevance of the data.

A detailed understanding of the users of statistical information and their requirements is an important part of the statistical process, and the ABS has a range of mechanisms in place to achieve this, including its peak advisory group, the Australian Statistics Advisory Council. A range of other advisory groups and mechanisms, which the ABS uses to communicate with the users of statistics, are described in Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

For particular surveys, key stakeholders are identified and consulted before and during the survey development. Further, each survey is regularly evaluated to assess the degree to which it meets user requirements. Information Development Plans are reviewed regularly for each area of statistics, bridging the gaps between user requirements and statistical outputs.

### Information development plans

Information development plans (IDPs) involve a review of the needs of users in a particular area of statistics, a review of the available sources of data, an assessment of the gaps and overlaps in information available, and recommendations on a future work program.

More information on IDPs can be found in Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

The ABS continues to review and refine its products, to ensure they remain relevant. For example, changes to classifications used in import and export statistics are being implemented for these statistics to remain internationally relevant and comparable. The impact of the updated United Nations Standard International Trade Classification is discussed in *Information Paper: Changes to International Trade Statistics, 2007–08* (ABS cat. no. 5368.0.55.009).

During 2007–08, the ABS has continued to roll out a revised classification of industry, *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 1292.0), to a number of ABS annual collections. The revised classification enables ABS statistics to better reflect the economy in the real world. Further information on implementation of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006 can be found in Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

## Accuracy

The accuracy of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure. Most statistics produced by the ABS are obtained from a sample of households or businesses. The estimate from the sample may not be the same as would have been obtained if information had been collected from the whole population—this is known as sampling error. There are also other sources of error that potentially cause inaccuracy, including the level of non-response, the magnitude of revisions made as additional information is received, and errors from other parts of the collection process (non-sampling error). The ABS aims to inform users about the accuracy of statistics, so they can assess whether the accuracy of the data will be sufficient to meet their needs.

### Information about accuracy

As users will want to use statistical information for different purposes, it is important to make information available to enable them to make their own assessment of the quality. Descriptions of accuracy, as well as extensive information on the statistical methods used in collections, are routinely provided in concepts, sources and methods publications, the explanatory notes in publications, quality declarations attached to publications, and at the Statistical Clearing House (see the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>> and/or the National Statistical Service site <<http://www.nss.gov.au>>).

In addition, major changes to methodology are explained in feature articles or information papers, such as *Changes to Weights of the Price Indexes for the Output of the General Construction Industry, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 6406.0), about changes to producer price indexes; and, *Experimental Estimates of Industry Multifactor Productivity, 2007* (ABS cat. no. 5260.55.001), about new methods for industry-level multifactor productivity estimation.

The ABS has made few significant errors in the statistics it has released. On the infrequent occasions when processing errors are found, it is ABS policy to publish corrected data as soon as possible. During 2007–08, there were some minor errors found in statistical releases, including:

Census of Population and Housing QuickStats

The electronic release contained an error occurring in counts for some categories of 'Language spoken at home' and 'Industry of employment' for Australian totals, and was reissued in April 2008

*Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms 2004–05* (ABS cat. no. 4620.0)

The publication was reissued in December 2007 due to errors in the calculation of some percentages, and to move some agricultural units from Victoria to New South Wales.

To ensure the continued high level of accuracy of ABS statistics, the ABS continues to implement reviews and risk mitigation strategies to ensure that processes are examined and any weaknesses identified are addressed.

## Non-sampling error

Non-sampling error is a general term that describes all sources of error other than the error introduced by the sampling process. Sampling error can be measured by using the mathematical properties of the selected sample. Non-sampling error is much harder to measure.

Some sources of non-sampling error that are most relevant to statistical surveys include: non-response error; errors in identifying and contacting the population of interest for a survey; errors introduced by the questionnaire design, such as misunderstanding or inadvertently missing questions, or phrasing questions that predispose a respondent to answer in a particular way; and data capture, processing and coding errors.

The ABS minimises the impact of non-sampling errors by use of best practice procedures in questionnaire design, interview procedures, data validation and repair, and processing. Any significant changes to questionnaire wording or data collection methods are carefully trialled and evaluated before they are implemented.

The ABS continues to work to reduce the impact of non-sampling errors. For example, it has become more difficult to make contact with respondents in household surveys for a number of reasons, including higher workforce participation and the increased number of people living in secure apartment blocks. As part of the 2007 Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, a follow-up study is being conducted to investigate patterns of non-response, to further ABS understanding of non-response issues and to assist in improving response management in the future.

## Sampling error

The relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the sampling error associated with an estimate. The magnitude of standard errors varies between collections and between data items within a collection due to factors such as the responding sample size and the nature of the data item. The RSE is a useful indicator for comparing the accuracy of estimates between surveys. Table 11.1 presents a summary view of the estimated RSEs for key statistics from a number of major ABS surveys. International comparisons of RSEs for selected indicators can be found in Table 11.2. Further detailed information is included with each ABS publication, as well as in the concepts, sources and methods publications released by the ABS.

RSEs are affected by the size of the sample used, the sample design used for the survey, and by the underlying variability of the indicator in the population.

Sample size influences the level of accuracy that can be attained. For example, the accuracy of estimates from the Labour Force Survey varies between states and territories. To have the same level of accuracy, identical sample sizes would be required for all states and territories. The sample sizes between states vary, for example, the sample size for the New South Wales estimates is greater than the sample size for Northern Territory estimates. The estimated RSEs for total employed persons in Australia is lower than any of the individual state estimates, and the estimated RSE for total employed persons in New South Wales is lower than the estimated RSE for total employed persons in the Northern Territory.

ABS sample designs for business surveys use groups of similar businesses (strata) as the basis for sample selection to improve the efficiency of estimation. Information such as employment size or annual sales can be used in this grouping. Many indicators, such as annual turnover or value of building work done, are closely related to the variables used in stratification, allowing these



indicators to be estimated with relatively high accuracy. Other variables, such as capital expenditure or job vacancies, are not as closely related, and so cannot be estimated with the same accuracy.

As well as differences between surveys, the RSE can also change with time for any given survey. These differences over time may be due to changes in the way the survey is conducted, for example, changes in the sample size or the method of producing estimates, or changes in the population being studied, such as a change in the prevalence of a particular characteristic.

The RSE for job vacancies is relatively large due to the underlying variability. That is, the number of job vacancies can vary considerably from business to business, and for any business it can vary considerably from month to month. Therefore, a very large sample would be required to measure job vacancies with high precision.

*Table 11.1: Relative standard errors (RSEs) for selected indicators (a)*

Publication	Indicator	RSE (%)
<b><i>Economic indicators</i></b>		
<i>Retail Trade, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 8501.0)	Total turnover for the retail industry, Australia	0.8%
<i>Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 5625.0)	Actual private new capital expenditure, Australia	1.6%
<i>Business Indicators, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 5676.0)	Company gross operating profit, Australia	1.6%
<i>Building Activity, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 8752.0)	Value of building work done, Australia	0.7%
<i>Average Weekly Earnings, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 6302.0)	Full-time adult ordinary time earnings, Australia	0.8%
<i>Job Vacancies, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 6354.0)	Job vacancies, Australia	4.3%
<b><i>Social indicators</i></b>		
<i>Labour Force Survey</i> (ABS cat. no. 6202.0)	Total number of persons employed (aged 15 and over), Australia	0.6%
<i>Time Use Survey</i> (ABS cat. no. 4153.0)	Total time spend on employment related activities (all persons)	1.2%
<i>Household Use of Information Technology</i> (ABS cat. no. 8146.0)	Number of households accessing the Internet at home	0.6%

(a) RSEs are presented for surveys conducted in respect of the 2006–07 reference period.

Table 11.2: Relative standard errors (RSEs) for selected indicators, with selected international comparisons

	Indicator	RSE (%)	RSE (%) for comparable indicator in selected country		
Publication		Australia	New Zealand	United States of America	Canada
<i>Retail Trade, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 8501.0)	Total turnover for the retail industry, Australia	0.8%	1.8% (a)	0.4% (c)	0.7% (e)
<i>Labour Force Survey</i> (ABS cat. no. 6202.0)	Total number of persons employed (aged 15 and over), Australia	0.6%	0.9% (b)	1.9% (d)	0.2% (f)

(a) Source: Statistics New Zealand : *Retail Trade Survey* ISSN 1178–0355 (<http://www.stats.govt.nz>)

(b) Source: Statistics New Zealand : *Labour Market Statistics: 2007* ISSN 1177–8040 (<http://www.stats.govt.nz>)

(c) Source: US Bureau of Census *Monthly Retail Trade Survey* (<http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/data/text/nrelys.txt>)

(d) Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics *Current Population Survey* (<http://www.bls.gov/bls/empstquickguide.htm>)

(e) Source: Statistics Canada *Retail Trade* cat.no. 63–005–X (<http://www.statcan.ca>)

(f) Source: Statistics Canada *Labour Force Information* cat.no. 71–001–X (<http://www.statcan.ca>)

## Revisions to data

One measurable component of statistical accuracy is revisions to data made after initial publication, resulting from additional information becoming available. Revisions are generally measured by their size and frequency over time.

Revisions are applied to statistical series to ensure there is an appropriate balance between accuracy and timeliness in the release of the statistics. Revisions could be avoided, but this would mean that either the release of statistics would be substantially delayed, or the statistics could not be improved by making use of any new or better sources of data that become available. The ABS aims to maximise the overall quality of the released statistics by publishing accurate statistics in a timely manner and subsequently improving the accuracy through revisions as new data become available. It is also ABS policy to inform users of any significant revisions and, where appropriate, to revise past time series and advise users accordingly.

One of the main causes of revisions to time series data in the past has been the application of filters to decompose the original series into its trend, seasonal and irregular components. These filters use data from both past and future time points, and so different filters must be used at the end of a series as the future time points are not available, leading to revisions as this information becomes available. Most ABS time series now use autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) modelling methods, which improve the revision properties of seasonally adjusted and trend estimates. ARIMA modelling relies on the characteristics of the series being analysed to project future period data. The projected values are temporary, intermediate values, which are only used internally to improve the estimation of the seasonal factors. The projected data do not affect the original estimates and are discarded at the end of the seasonal adjustment process.

The tables below provide, for two key series, the mean revision and the mean absolute revision for the past eight years. The mean revision shows the percentage difference between the first estimate published, and that estimate one year later, averaged over the four quarters for the year. The mean absolute revision shows the average absolute values of the mean revision.

Table 11.3 describes the revisions to quarterly gross domestic product (GDP). In particular, it shows the difference between the first estimate of GDP and that estimate one year later, in terms of the mean revision and the mean absolute revision expressed as percentage points. The figures continue to show revisions to quarterly GDP in recent years remain relatively small (mean absolute revision). Zero mean revision figures indicate that the revisions to quarterly GDP over the year have been offset. Despite the revisions to quarterly GDP being quite small, efforts to further improve the estimates are ongoing.

*Table 11.3: Revisions to quarterly gross domestic product, percentage change (a)*

Reference year	Difference between first estimate and estimate one year later	
	Mean absolute revision (% points)	Mean revision (% points)
1999–00	0.1	-
2000–01	0.2	-
2001–02	0.2	-
2002–03	0.1	-
2003–04	0.2	0.2
2004–05	0.1	-
2005–06	0.2	-
2006–07(b)	0.2	-

(a) Seasonally adjusted chain volume measure.

(b) First three quarters of 2006–07 only.

Mean absolute revisions to the quarterly current account transactions since 1999–2000 are shown in Table 11.4. The revisions to the current account deficit are expressed in percentage terms, rather than percentage points, as is the case with the revisions to GDP.

*Table 11.4: Revisions to quarterly current account transactions (a)*

Reference year	Difference between first estimate and estimate one year later	
	Mean absolute revision (%)	Mean revision (%)
1999–00	2.3	0.3
2000–01	3.4	-0.3
2001–02	2.7	-0.1
2002–03	1.8	-0.5
2003–04	1.2	0.3
2004–05	1.7	0.3
2005–06	1.1	-0.6
2006–07 (b)	1.6	0.4

(a) Seasonally adjusted data.

(b) First three quarters of 2006–07 only.

## Timeliness

The timeliness of statistical information can be measured by the gap between the reference period (the period the data relate to) and the date of release of results. The ABS continues to adhere to pre-announced release dates and make improvements, where possible, to the timeliness achieved. Tables 11.5 and 11.6 present information on the timeliness for ABS monthly and quarterly tabular data for main economic indicator statistics, and other general releases. Table 11.7 reports on the timeliness of confidentialised unit record files (CURFs).

The high standard of timely release of statistical tables was maintained in 2007–08, with similar time periods between the end of the reference period and publication release.

*Table 11.5: Time between end of reference period and release of tabular data (average number of elapsed days) (a)*

Year of Release	Main economic indicator tabular statistics		Other general tabular indicator statistics	
	Monthly	Quarterly	Monthly	Quarterly
2001–02	29	51	34	78
2002–03	28	49	33	74
2003–04	29	51	26	85
2004–05	29	51	25	75
2005–06	30	52	24	87
2006–07	31	51	22	83
2007–08	31	50	23	84

(a) Where a publication or spreadsheet has been reissued, the reissue date is used in the calculation of the average.

*Table 11.6: Time between end of reference period and release of tabular data for selected publications*

Publication	Frequency	Average number of elapsed days (a)
<i>Retail Trade, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 8501.0)	Monthly	34
<i>Building Approvals, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 8731.0)	Monthly	35
<i>Labour Force, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 6202.0)	Monthly	11
<i>Consumer Price Index, Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 6401.0)	Quarterly	24
<i>Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product</i> (ABS cat. no. 5206.0)	Quarterly	66
<i>Australian Demographic Statistics</i> (ABS cat. no. 3101.0)	Quarterly	169

(a) Average is taken over the most recent year's releases.

The timeliness of release of information depends on a number of factors, including the amount and complexity of information being collected, the source of the data (for example, whether directly collected or sourced from administrative records), and the amount of processing or validation of the information required before release. The timeliness can also vary over the year, particularly in March/April and December/January due to the concentration of public holidays at this time.

For example, labour force statistics are released very quickly after the end of the reference month. Interviews are generally conducted in week 2 and 3 of a given month. Respondents are asked to report for a set 'reference week', i.e. the previous week. This means the data collection is completed before the end of the reference month, and labour force statistics can be released in a timely manner.

In contrast, for demographic statistics on Australia's population, the quarterly changes to population statistics are based on a variety of administrative sources, such as registrations of births and deaths, passenger cards completed at Australia's borders, and modelled estimates of interstate migration (using information from Medicare card registration address changes, delayed by three months as registration often takes place after the actual move). It takes around five months before estimates can be published due to the time needed to acquire and process the administrative data, particularly with the delay of three months for the Medicare card data.

The elapsed time between the end of the reference period and the supply of the CURF data has improved significantly in recent years, as can be seen by the average number of elapsed days in Table 11.7. The number of CURF releases is related to a survey topic and may include both basic and expanded CURFs counted as a single release. More information on CURFs can be found in Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

*Table 11.7: Time between end of reference period and release of CURFs*

Reference year	Number of CURFs released	Average number of elapsed days
2002–03	5	724
2003–04	2	548
2004–05	7	375
2005–06	7	353
2006–07(a)	5	325

(a) Further microdata from the 2006–07 reference year are still to be released, which would increase the number of 2006–07 microdata released and increase the average number of elapsed days.

## Accessibility

The accessibility of statistical information refers to the ease with which it can be referenced. This includes the ease with which the existence of information can be ascertained, as well as the suitability of the form or medium through which the information can be accessed. The cost of the information may also be an aspect of accessibility for some users. More information on the accessibility of statistical information can be found in Chapter 12, Communication of statistics.

All statistics on the ABS website are now accessed free of charge. The change means all publications, spreadsheets and census data on the website are now available without cost to any member of the public through Internet access. However, people who require paper copies of publications, information on CD-ROM, or information more detailed than that published, will be charged under the ABS pricing policy.

CURFs are a product that allows approved researchers with a valid statistical purpose to access individual survey responses. The data files are confidentialised and access is carefully controlled to ensure that no individual or organisation can be identified. The ABS has worked to improve the accessibility of information available by increasing the number of CURFs released, with more than 110 CURFs released by the ABS (inclusive of both basic and expanded CURFs). The ABS has also continued work on improving the accessibility of CURFs through the ABS Remote Access Data Laboratory™ (RADL™).

The ABS has made a version of SEASABS (seasonal adjustment software) available for release, enabling users to undertake their own seasonal adjustment. In 2007–08, use of SEASABS by Australian and state/territory governments has expanded, as well as roll-out in the private sector.

## Interpretability

The interpretability of statistical information reflects the availability of the supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and utilise it appropriately. This information normally covers the availability and clarity of metadata, including concepts, classifications and measures of accuracy. Interpretability also includes appropriate presentation of the data.

ABS releases are accompanied by extensive explanatory notes to aid the interpretation of statistical information. A range of material is also available on the ABS website detailing the methods, classifications, concepts and standards used by the ABS. For the first time, in 2007–08, releases have also been accompanied by quality declarations to assist users in determining whether the information is suitable for their needs.

A number of ABS publications combine, compare and contrast statistics from different sources, to help users interpret how changes in one aspect of the economy or society can impact on other aspects. Examples include *Measures of Australia's Progress, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.001), *Australian Economic Indicators, May 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1350.0) and *Australian Social Trends, 2007* (ABS cat. no. 4102.0). For more information on these publications and other analytical work undertaken by the ABS to assist in the interpretation of statistics, see Chapter 13, Extended analysis of statistics.

## Coherence

The coherence of statistical information reflects the degree to which it can be successfully brought together with other statistical information, within a broad analytical framework and over time. Coherence encompasses the internal consistency of a collection as well as its comparability, both over time and with other data sources. The use of standard concepts, classifications and target populations promotes coherence, as does the use of common methodology across

surveys. For example, estimates of interstate trade published in *Qld Stats* (ABS cat. no. 1318.3) are moving to the same frame of businesses used by other economic surveys, leading to improved comparability with other ABS statistics.

Coherence of ABS outputs requires the use of nationally and internationally agreed concepts and classifications. Standard concepts and classifications are used extensively within the ABS, and also promoted to other producers of statistical information in Australia. Information on statistical standards, concepts, classifications and methodologies are readily accessible through the ABS website. For more information see Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) provides approval to conduct surveys that are directed to 50 or more businesses and that are conducted by, or on behalf of, any Australian Government agency, to ensure that surveys are necessary, well designed, and place minimal burden on business respondents. One of the criteria used by the SCH is the coherence of the statistical information that will be produced. In particular, surveys are assessed on their use of standard methodologies, concepts and classifications, their consistency with past or future surveys, and the extent to which outputs can be compared, or jointly used, with other sources of data. For more information about the SCH see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

In the 2006–07 reference year, with the survey conducted in late 2007, a number of changes to ABS annual economic surveys impact on coherence. The Annual Integrated Collection now comprises a number of annual surveys conducted via a common methodology, resulting in increased comparability between the component surveys. However, the sample design change, which also encompasses the updated *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification 2006* (ABS cat. no. 1292.0), causes reduced coherence over time. Change measurement strategies are in place to assess the impact of the new methodology and classification (*Information Paper: ANZSIC 2006 Implementation, 2006*, ABS cat. no. 1295.0). Multiple cycles of the collection are being run and published under both the old and new methodologies, to ensure the change is transparent and that it is treated appropriately in producing time series estimates.

# chapter 12

## Communication of statistics

### Introduction

During 2007–08, the ABS continued to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion, by increasing accessibility to the outputs of statistical activities, usually released through publications, spreadsheets and datacubes. All publications back to 1994 can be accessed free-of-charge via the ABS website, while a selection of current hard copy publications are available for purchase. A complete collection of ABS hard copy publications, including historical publications and microfiche, is held with the National Library and each state/territory library. Some public and university libraries also keep selected holdings.

In addition, confidentialised unit record files are available for some collections and can be accessed, under strict conditions, by authorised users.

Dissemination methods are underpinned by the ABS' core value of independence and impartiality. The ABS complies with this value by:

- ◆ ensuring that all potential users have equal opportunity to access ABS statistics
- ◆ assigning product release dates and times in advance, which are publicised on the website in the ABS Release Advice, and
- ◆ placing all releases, and the information they contain, under an embargo until the scheduled release time.

### Message from the Australian Statistician

In order to ensure impartiality and integrity of ABS statistics, it is standard ABS policy and practice to make all our statistical releases available on our website to all government, commercial and public users of our statistics, simultaneously from 11.30 am (Canberra time) on the day of their release. Prior to 11.30 am, all ABS statistics are treated as confidential and regarded as 'under embargo'.

I am granting access to a limited range of statistical products under embargo when there is high public interest in an issue of direct and substantial relevance to the statistics being released; a relevant government minister is highly likely to be asked to provide public comment on the statistics shortly after their official release; and/or the release is sufficiently complex that some advanced analysis of the statistics and preparation of a ministerial brief by officials is considered essential. This is to ensure initial comments made by relevant ministers regarding the headline features are well informed, thereby minimising the risk of misleading the public or, particularly, the financial markets, on an issue of national importance.



Access to statistical products under embargo will be facilitated through a secure lock-up or, in the case of the quarterly release of the *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product* (ABS cat. no. 5206.0), by means of a restrictive pre-release arrangement with the Australian Government Treasury.

Attendees at the lock-ups are required to sign security undertakings which include provision for prosecution under the *Crimes Act, 1914* for anyone breaching the conditions for attending the lock-up

From 1 February 2008, the following products were provided to authorised persons via ABS hosted lock-ups on the morning of the day of their release:

- ◆ *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 5302.0)
- ◆ *Labour Force, Australia*—monthly (ABS cat. no. 6202.0)
- ◆ *Labour Force, Australia*—spreadsheets, monthly (ABS cat. no. 6202.0.55.001)
- ◆ *Consumer Price Index, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 6401.0)
- ◆ *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 5206.0)
- ◆ *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia*—monthly (ABS cat. no. 5368.0)
- ◆ *Housing Finance, Australia*—monthly (ABS cat. no. 5609.0)
- ◆ *Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 5625.0)
- ◆ *Business Indicators, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 5676.0)
- ◆ *Labour Price Index, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 6345.0)
- ◆ *Producer Price Indexes, Australia*—quarterly (ABS cat. no. 6427.0)
- ◆ *Retail Trade, Australia*—monthly (ABS cat. no. 8501.0)
- ◆ *Building Approvals, Australia*—monthly (ABS cat. no. 8731.0).
- ◆ *State Accounts*—annual (ABS cat. no. 5220.0)
- ◆ *Crime and Safety, Australia*—irregular (ABS cat. no. 4509.0)
- ◆ *Criminal Courts, Australia*—annual (ABS cat. no. 4513.0)

In addition to the above arrangements, and having regard to the complexity of analyses required, a number of Australian Government Treasury officials have lock-up access to *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product* (ABS cat. no. 5206.0) mid afternoon on the day before its release.

In addition and in exceptional circumstances only, I may approve the conduct of additional lock-ups for other key statistical releases. Any such approval will be publicly notified in advance.

The ABS also seeks to ensure the processes used to compile statistics are open and transparent, and users of statistics have access to all the information they need to be able to interpret the statistics accurately. As such, information about the methods used in producing statistics is provided through statistical publications, such as those referred to as manuals of concepts, sources and methods, and information papers. Ongoing ABS research is often published in

professional papers (a full list of those presented in 2007–08 is included in Online appendix 2). ABS data is increasingly being presented with attendant metadata that helps customers interpret and assess the ‘fitness for use’ of the data.

The following sections cover some of the methods for accessing ABS statistics, new releases in 2007–08, and uses of ABS statistics.

## Accessing ABS statistics

### ABS website

The ABS website remains the primary access point for the majority of users of ABS information, with website users accessing ABS web pages 140 million times in 2007–08. This is an increase of 37.7% from 2006–07 and 79.4% from 2005–06.

Along with this increase in website use, there has also been a decline in demand for printed products. Consequently, from March 2008, hardcopy publications were no longer printed and available for sale unless they meet strict criteria.

During 2007–08 a number of improvements were made to the ABS website. These included:

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#### Adding Quality Declarations

Quality Declarations are short, sharp pieces of information, which quickly communicate key statistical quality messages to users, as well as providing links to more detailed information about a statistical output.

They are designed specifically for the website and users accessing ABS information electronically.

The information in a Quality Declaration aims to help users make informed decisions about the fitness for use of the statistics. They complement, but do not replace, the more comprehensive and complete statements of quality that currently exist, such as explanatory notes, and concepts, sources and methods documents.

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#### Improving email notification service

The improved email notification service enables customers to register and receive email alerts on particular topics.

This service is free, and allows customers to keep-up-to date with the latest ABS information, without having to regularly check the ABS website.

New enhancements now allow customers to subscribe to a notification for a single product or a product set. The product sets have been created to enable customers to quickly subscribe to notifications for a predefined set of products, which are based on a topic or interest group.

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#### Enhancing the website

During 2007–08, the ABS continued to enhance the look, feel and usability of the ABS website, inline with a program of continual upgrades. For example, a Print All facility was added, which enables users to print all the pages of electronic publications in one step. This functionality has been provided due to the increasing number of ABS publications produced solely on the website.

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## Over 100 Years of Data Now Online

A century of *Year Book Australia*, from the earliest edition published in 1908 to the latest 2008 edition, are now available online. This makes all issues, representing 100 years of publishing in the Bureau, available for the benefit of researchers, the community and posterity.

*Year Book Australia* provides a comprehensive and detailed statistical review of various aspects of the economy and social conditions in Australia. In addition to the broad range of statistics, with contributions from many government and private organisations outside the ABS, most issues also include a number of special articles written on topics relevant to the time.

The first volume of the *Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1901–1907* also includes statistics about Australia prior to 1900. The historical year books have been scanned from the paper version and use character recognition software, which provides a full-text searching capability once downloaded.



## Promotion of releases

The ABS seeks to encourage informed and increased use of statistics by promoting key releases such as *Measures of Australia's Progress* and *Australian Social Trends* as well as generally promoting the wider range of ABS products and services.

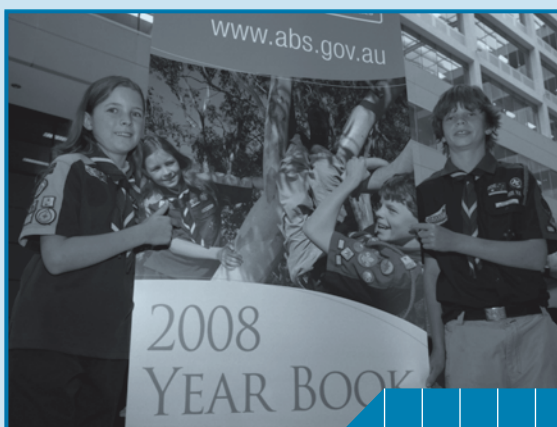
### YEAR BOOK AUSTRALIA

The *Year Book Australia 2008* (ABS cat. no. 1301.0) was launched in ABS House by the Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd).



*The Governor-General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd), launched the Year Book Australia 2008 on 7 February 2008 at ABS House. Ninety editions have been published in the past 100 years and are now available online at the ABS website.*

The *Year Book Australia 2008* commemorated both the centenary of the world-wide Scouting movement and the International Year of Planet Earth. To honour the international theme, which was proclaimed by the United Nations General assembly during 2008, the ABS also invited Geoscience Australia, the Australian Government agency with responsibility for coordinating Australia's involvement in the International Year, together with several other Australian Government departments to contribute articles that relate to the years' goals or research themes. The launch of the *Year Book Australia 2008* also provided the opportunity to announce the ABS has now digitised all 90 editions of the Year Book produced over the last 100 years and made them available on its website.



*Members of Scouts Australia assisting the Governor-General to launch the Year Book Australia 2008.*

*Year Book Australia* is the principal reference work produced by the ABS. It provides a comprehensive statistical picture of the economy and social conditions in Australia. In addition, it contains descriptive matter dealing with Australia's geography and climate, population, the environment, government, international relations, defence, education, health, income and welfare, housing, and crime and justice.

## 2006 CENSUS SOCIAL ATLAS SERIES

In March 2008, the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, and the Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, launched the 2006 Census Social Atlas series at Parliament House in Canberra.

In front of a packed audience of ABS stakeholders and key media representatives, the Assistant Treasurer spoke about the Social Atlas bringing the Census to life and presenting a bird's eye view of our cities and, importantly for the first time, our regions. He said that the Social Atlas series presented Census data in a way that makes it more accessible and understandable for users.

Following the release, there was extensive media coverage, with articles, interviews and news segments highlighting the stories from the Social Atlas series. The success of the launch, along with the associated media coverage, has assisted the ABS to generate good sales of the hard



*The stories from the Social Atlas series received extensive media coverage.*



copy publications and to see a high number of downloads from the website—registering 10,319 downloads since its release in April 2008. Comparatively, the 2001 Social Atlases registered 1,122 downloads from the time of their release (October 2002) until the end of the 2002–02 Financial Year.

### THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES, 2008

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, launched the joint ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare publication, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008* (ABS cat. no. 4704.0), in April 2008 at the 2nd Conference of the Coalition for Research to Improve Aboriginal Health in Sydney.



*The Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, launched the joint ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare publication, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008*.*

### SEMINARS AND TRAINING

The ABS also provides seminars and training courses for government and others, to promote available statistics and assist users in accessing the data. During 2007–08, sessions focused on the broad capability of the ABS, including:

- ◆ statistics freely available on the ABS website
- ◆ newly released 2006 Census of Population and Housing data
- ◆ responsible use of ABS microdata, and
- ◆ availability of customised data through information consultancies.

## Statistics for schools

The ABS has developed a number of initiatives aimed at improving the statistical literacy of teachers and students, and increasing the use of ABS data in schools. The second version of CensusAtSchool, which is an Internet based education project in which students respond to questions of interest about themselves by completing an online voluntary questionnaire, is now underway. It is now a truly international project containing a set of questions common across all countries undertaking CensusAtSchool. This will enable Australian students to compare themselves directly with students from a number of other countries. CensusAtSchool 2008 participants will also be able to compare themselves to participants in 2006, as a time series starts to develop in this popular project.

The ABS attended a large number of education conferences and workshops over the past 12 months, with the aim of raising awareness of statistics as a life skill. This, together with the re-building of a network of key senior contacts in the education sector, is aimed at trying to show the importance of statistics in a number of subject areas across state and territory curricula.

During 2007–08, the ABS also ran a successful pilot of a theatre style program to educate and engage with year five and six students visiting Canberra. The program is designed to introduce children to statistics and how statistics can influence decision-making and planning. The Student Visit Program is planned for implementation in the new financial year.

## Statistical literacy

The ABS seeks to increase statistical literacy in the government and community through a nationally coordinated program. This program uses innovative approaches to improve the statistical capabilities of targeted customer segments. For example,

- ◆ the Information Skills Program continues to deliver sessions designed to raise awareness and understanding of ABS statistics among key customer groups, including:
  - ◇ speaking at a number of high-profile national conferences, such as the Australian Library and Information Association 2008, Public Libraries Conference and Teacher Librarians Conference, and
  - ◇ coordinating training sessions across multiple states for organisations such as the Australian Taxation Office and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.
- ◆ ABS publications still available in hard-copy are provided to over 500 public libraries across Australia, to support access to statistical information for those without Internet access, and
- ◆ a brochure for small businesses has been produced, containing case studies demonstrating the application of ABS data to a number of real-world scenarios.

## Information consultancy service

The ABS provides a cost-recovered information consultancy service, which provides customised data to users whose needs are not met by data available free-of-charge on the ABS website.

Information consultancy customers come from all levels of government, large and small businesses, not for profit organisations, as well as the research sector. These customers use tailored ABS data for decision making, research, policy development, planning and marketing.

The range of data available to customers of the information consultancy service includes the Census of Population and Housing, Overseas Arrivals and Departures, the Survey of Education and Work, International Trade, Vitals, Demographic data and more.

Subscriptions to some data can be provided on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis, according to the customer's need.

## Access to confidentialised unit record files: specialist data for specialist researchers

Microdata, which is the most detailed statistical information available from the ABS, can be accessed in the form of Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs). These are a valuable source of data for specialist researchers in government agencies, universities and other organisations.

CURFs include the most detailed statistical information available from the ABS. In these files, records of individual responses to ABS surveys from persons, households or organisations have been manipulated to protect respondent confidentiality. In all cases, directly identifying information such as names, addresses and so forth have been removed from the records, and a variety of statistical techniques have been applied to further ensure confidentiality is maintained.

CURFs are produced at different levels of detail:

- ◆ Basic CURFs are offered on CD-ROM and in the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL™). These are the most rigorously confidentialised CURFs available, and
- ◆ Expanded CURFs provide more detailed data than Basic CURFs—these are able to be less rigorously confidentialised because they are available only in the more secure environments of the RADL™ and the ABS Data Laboratory (ABSDL).

The RADL™ is a system accessed through the Internet, which allows users to submit statistical queries to be run on CURFs. Users do not have access to the data directly, and there are checks and controls in the system to maintain the security of the data.

CURFs are available for 34 ABS surveys and have been a standard ABS statistical product for two years. During 2007–08, the ABS released 17 new CURFs, including Expanded CURFs. There are currently 91 (latest edition) CURFs available and a total count of 112 CURFs (includes Editions) available on RADL™.

While the use of CURFs on CD-ROM remains very popular, with around half of all CURF use in this format, researchers are also increasingly using RADL™ to access both Basic and Expanded CURFs. By the end of June 2008, there were 1,196 researchers from 88 organisations registered to use RADL™.

During 2007–08, the ABS has continued to develop the Remote Access Data Laboratory facilities (RADL™), with a focus on improved useability and functionality, using feedback from customers as an important driver for enhancements. For example, RADL™ now supports the SAS, SPSS and Stata statistical languages.

The RADL™ is a secure system accessed through the Internet, which allows registered users to submit statistical queries to be run on CURFs. Users do not have direct access to the data, and there are checks and controls in the system to maintain the security of the data. A further means of accessing microdata is the ABS Data Laboratory (ABSDL). This is a microdata processing



environment established in a secure room or area on ABS premises. ABSDL provides a more interactive processing environment than RADL™, enabling the analysis of both standard and customised microdata files. To ensure respondents cannot be identified, any output removed by ABSDL customers is vetted by ABS staff. Both the RADL™ and ABSDL services are provided on a fully cost-recovered basis.

The ABS website lists published results of research for which CURFs have been used. It includes academic papers published in journals and conference proceedings, higher degree theses, monographs and reports.

## **Informing Decisions—ABS Service Delivery Charter**

Revised and released in January 2008, the *ABS Service Delivery Charter* outlines the ABS' commitment to providing a quality customer service, and describes the products and services that users can expect when they approach the ABS for statistical or other information. The charter offers guidance to customers wishing to provide compliments, or register complaints, on any aspect of customer relationships or service. The charter also describes the service standards for which the ABS is accountable. Performance against service standards for 2007–08 can be found in Table 12.1. The Charter, together with other relevant corporate information, is available from the ABS website, using the 'About Us' link from the homepage.

The ABS has charters for respondents in Business Surveys and Household Surveys, also available via the 'About Us' link from the homepage of the ABS website. Further Information on the Charters can be found in Chapter 10, Provider/respondent relationships.

Table 12.1 Performance against service standards for 2007–08: targets and actual performance

Performance standard	Target (%)	Actual performance (%)
<b>General enquiries</b>		
Answer 85% of calls to our telephone enquiry service within 30 seconds (between the hours of 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday)	85	86
Acknowledge the receipt of 99% of email enquiries within one working day	99	100
Respond to 90% of Enquiry Form correspondence within three working days	90	n.a.(a)
<b>Consultancy services (b) (c)</b>		
Provide 90% of quotes for information consultancy services within three working days of receiving the customer's final specifications	90	91.9
Provide 90% of information consultancy services within five working days, or to a timeframe negotiated between the customer and the consultant	90	58.2
<b>Complaints (b) (c)</b>		
Acknowledgment of a service delivery complaint within one working day of receipt	100	0
Response from the Director, Client Services in the relevant ABS office, within five working days	100	75
<b>Websites</b>		
Commence publishing to website at 11:30am (Canberra Time) Monday to Friday	100	95.5
Ensure the website is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, subject to events out of our control	100	99.9
Advertise website unavailability for maintenance purposes one working day prior to the website being unavailable	100	100
Fix 99% of broken web page links within three working days of notification by a customer	99	100
Refer 99% of requests for translation of any web product which is not suitably accessible for visually impaired users to an appropriate translation service within three working days	99	100
<b>Microdata</b>		
Acknowledge the receipt of 99% of microdata enquiries within one working day	99	95
Provide a full response to 85% of microdata enquiries within five working days	85	92
Dispatch 90% of CURF microdata products within 15 working days of receipt of the completed application form	90	76
Provide 90% of new CURF users with access within five working days to a CURF already approved for use in that organisation	90	0(d)

(a) Enquiry Forms were not yet available for use during the period 2007–08.

(b) Data are for February—June 2008.

(c) Processes for recording data against these measures are under review.

(d) While 0% supplied within five days, 100% were supplied within 15 days.

## Releases in 2007–08

The ABS releases a wide range of information from its collections through publications (in electronic, and in some cases, paper formats), spreadsheets and datacubes. Most users of ABS statistics rely on releases in these forms, and the ABS is always seeking to expand and improve the range available. In particular, in 2007–08 the ABS has continued to expand the range of data available through spreadsheets and datacubes.

The number of datacubes and spreadsheets increased from 7,546 in 2007–07 to 8,773 (or 16%) in 2007–08. The increase in datacubes and spreadsheets on the ABS website since 2003–04 is shown in Table 12.2.

*Table 12.2: ABS datacubes and spreadsheets releases by year (number)*

Year	Datacubes	Time Series Spreadsheets	Total
2003–04	403	41	444
2004–05	447	258	705
2005–06	1,492	3,881	5,373
2006–07	2,280	5,266	7,546
2007–08	2,567	6,206	8,773

The number of publications released in 2007–08 was 818, which is an increase from 711 (or 14.2%) in 2006–07. This increase in releases is due to the increase in the amount of Census publications that were released on the ABS website during the year. Table 12.3 shows the number of ABS releases by year.

*Table 12.3: ABS publication releases (a) classified by subject matter, year and frequency (number)*

Subject Matter / Year	Annual	Quarterly	Monthly	Other	Total
<b>Economic and finance releases</b>					
2003–04	9	40	61	11	121
2004–05	11	33	47	5	96
2005–06	12	33	73	13	131
2006–07	14	32	60	12	118
2007–08	8	32	60	16	116
<b>Industry releases</b>					
2003–04	15	91	70	27	203
2004–05	26	78	63	28	195
2005–06	19	84	48	24	175
2006–07	18	83	56	24	181
2007–08	11	76	36	16	139

Subject Matter / Year	Annual	Quarterly	Monthly	Other	Total
<b>Population and migration releases</b>					
2003–04	35	4	18	56	113
2004–05	36	3	24	14	77
2005–06	38	4	24	8	74
2006–07	17	4	24	6	51
2007–08	58	4	24	18	104
<b>Labour releases</b>					
2003–04	6	41	52	12	111
2004–05	6	50	36	33	125
2005–06	9	57	36	40	142
2006–07	11	49	37	25	122
2007–08	13	47	36	32	128
<b>Social analysis releases</b>					
2003–04	13	4	0	64	81
2004–05	14	3	0	44	61
2005–06	16	4	0	43	63
2006–07	16	5	0	72	93
2007–08	16	7	0	68	91
<b>Other general releases</b>					
2003–04	34	19	36	9	98
2004–05	30	16	118(b)	15	179
2005–06	39	34	116	7	196
2006–07	26	33	51	36	146
2007–08	58	56	95	31	240
<b>Total</b>					
2003–04	112	199	237	179	727
2004–05	123	183	288	139	733
2005–06	133	298	215	135	781
2006–07	102	206	228	175	711
2007–08	164	222	251	181	818

(a) Includes catalogued publications and other products, but excludes reprints and corrigenda.

(b) Catalogue numbers assigned to the Reserve Bank of Australia spreadsheets.

# 2006 Census of Population and Housing—Second release

A major release during 2007–08 was the second release of data from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. The first release provided statistics relating to age, gender, country of origin and household finances, etc. The second release data built on this extensive range of data by focusing on statistics relating to Australia’s workforce, level of education, the way we travel to work and internal migration.

## Use of ABS statistics

Statistics produced by the ABS are widely used to support decision making and research. Some examples include:

- ◆ formulating and assessing government macro-economic policies
- ◆ assisting with allocation of Australian Government funds to state and territory governments
- ◆ formulating industry development policies
- ◆ supporting policy development, program delivery and evaluation of key government and non-government agencies involved in health, community and family services, and
- ◆ carrying out electoral distribution.

During 2007–08, ABS statistics were used in the following ways:

<p>The <b>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs’ (FaHCSIA) ‘Community Profiles’</b> report enables staff to interrogate multiple data sources, including the ABS’s Census, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas and Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia data, and reconcile this data with the department’s own internal grant administration data. This allows the department to better understand the impact of its funding programs on communities, as well as pinpoint disconnect between supply and demand for FaHCSIA services, through the use of social indicators.</p>	<p>The <b>Australia 2020 Summit</b>, held in April 2008, was designed to help shape a long-term strategy for the nation’s future.</p> <p>Background papers prepared by the <b>Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</b>, as an information base for each of the 10 theme areas, contained an extensive range of ABS statistics.</p>
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- ◆ informing government policies to assist and support individuals, families and businesses, during and after the January 2008 floods in Queensland
- ◆ assisting the Council of Australian Governments monitor targets for closing the gap in life expectancy for Indigenous Australians and halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five years
- ◆ using 2006 Census of Population and Housing data extensively throughout all levels of government for research, policy development and planning purposes
- ◆ providing background information for media stories on topics such as families, religion, birthplace, housing costs and labour force
- ◆ using international trade in goods and services data in negotiating new free trade agreements and monitoring existing agreements, by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and
- ◆ data from a range of sources, including international trade and the Census have been used by small businesses to undertake market research and planning.

A broad assessment of the extent of the use of ABS statistics can be seen in the accesses to these statistics through ABS dissemination services (shown in Table 12.4).

## National Information and Referral Service

The National Information and Referral Service is the main entry point to the ABS for basic information and statistical enquiries from external customers. As shown in Table 12.4, the number of emails received by NIRS is approximately 10% higher than what was received in 2006–07, while the number of calls answered has slightly decreased. As reported last year, the unusually higher number of calls in 2006–07 was partially due to increased enquiries following the 2006 Census enumeration and output activities. The number of calls for this in 2007–08 reflects the volume of activities during a period where more free statistics became available on our website. Table 12.4 below provides additional information on the ways people access ABS dissemination services.

Table 12.4: Number of accesses, by type of access, 2003–04 to 2007–08

Type of Access	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
<b>Website</b>					
Pages viewed(a)	48,383,816	60,573,254	78,054,933	101,693,436	140,058,970
Pages published	13,861	16,668	23,015	148,144	193,515
Products downloaded	948,956	962,872	1,868,280	4,501,530	7,029,854
<b>National Information and Referral Service</b>					
Emails	21,136	12,862	12,588	14,278	15,772
Calls completed	85,556	60,820	56,257	58,040	56,739
<b>Information Consultancy Service</b>					
Consultancies dispatched	5,487	4,937	3,464	3,380	4,677
<b>Library Extension Program</b>					
Libraries	519	518	518	515	517
<b>Secondary providers</b>					
Number	140	132	172	126	245(b)
<b>Remote Access Data Laboratory(c)</b>					
Organisations active on RADL™(d)	25	28	32	41	60
Individuals active on RADL™(e)	64	84	98	131	173
Statistical programs executed (f)	6,274	7,535	8,998	15,955	19,305

(a) Pages viewed accounts only for views of static web pages. Much of the content of the ABS website is generated dynamically and is difficult to report on using existing tools.

(b) Includes 32 secondary distributors who incur a licence fee for on-selling data purchased data.

(c) Re-calculation of the RADL usage figures has shown that slightly fewer organisations and individuals actively used RADL over the period 2003–04 to 2005–06 than was shown in previous issues of this Report. The number of statistical programs executed remains unchanged over the same period.

(d) Organisations active on RADL refers to organisations with users who executed statistical programs in RADL during the period shown.

(e) Individuals active on RADL refers to registered RADL users who executed statistical programs in RADL during the period shown.

(f) Statistical programs executed refers to jobs run in RADL during the period shown.

# Media reporting

The ABS received widespread media coverage throughout the year. There were approximately 6,700 mentions in major metropolitan print media during 2007–08. While broadcast mentions are not easy to measure, media monitoring records demonstrate the ABS received no less than 2,800 major metropolitan radio and televisions mentions in 2007–08.

As shown in table 12.5, in 2007–08, the ABS issued 132 media releases throughout the year, promoting ABS products, as well as flagship releases, such as *Australian Social Trends*, *Year Book Australia* and *Measures of Australia's Progress*.

Table 12.5: Number of ABS media releases issued, 2001–02 to 2007–08

Year	Media releases issued(a)
2001–02	156
2002–03	168
2003–04	193
2004–05	133
2005–06	169
2006–07	160
2007–08	132

(a) Does not include media releases promoting the Census of Population and Housing.

# chapter 13

## Extended analysis of statistics

### Introduction

There is rich information in ABS statistics, and the Bureau seeks to ensure users can benefit from this information to the greatest extent possible. The ABS releases data through standard products (for example, publications and confidentialised unit record files), and also produces customised data tables on a consultancy basis. However, as these outputs cannot meet all user needs or fully utilise the potential of the data, the ABS seeks to add value to its statistics and extend the range of statistical outputs produced. Specifically, we undertake the following activities to add value to ABS statistics:

- ◆ production of analytical and compendium publications, such as Australian Economic Indicators (AEI), Measuring Australia's Progress (MAP) and Australian Social Trends (AST)
- ◆ research and development into the production of complex statistical measures such as measures of human capital, socio-economic indexes and seasonal or calendar series adjustment
- ◆ conducting and publishing the results of policy-relevant analyses of unit record data, which, due to confidentiality constraints, are not widely available for analysis
- ◆ bringing data together to produce modelled, synthesised or enhanced statistics, and
- ◆ exploring relationships in statistics to ensure the quality of ABS outputs, and understand the movements and trends in various series.

### ABS' analytical community

Early in 2007-08, the ABS restructured and refocused its analytical resources to build a stronger capacity for analysis across social, economic and environmental issues. As part of this process, two additional analysis branches were created within the ABS, with one having the aim of undertaking applied social analysis and reporting, and the other applied economic analysis and reporting. These branches, combined with an existing methodological analysis branch, form the core of the ABS Analytical Community, which is intended to be a vehicle to produce analytical outputs and services, and to disseminate analytical skills and expertise more broadly. The analysis branches are governed by an internal steering committee, which considers the high level strategic issues facing the statistical analysis agenda within the ABS. The internal committee also receives advice from an external reference group.

Together, the three analysis branches bring a wealth of technical, methodological and analytical capability to the ABS and offer an opportunity for the ABS to produce increased value-added statistical outputs.



## ABS releases

The ABS produces a number of analytical reports that provide information on social and economic conditions and progress in Australia, to governments and the community. The reports draw together data and analysis from within the ABS, and from a range of sources. They include analysis of current circumstances, changes to circumstances over time, ways that different groups of people have been affected by change, and the various factors that may have accounted for observed trends. In addition, analyses explore the interrelationships between the economic, social and environmental aspects of life.

The following flagship publications were released during 2007–08:

### Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP): Summary Indicators

*Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP): Summary Indicators* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.001) is part of the suite of Measures of Australia's Progress products produced by the ABS. This suite includes *Measures of Australia's Progress* (ABS cat. no. 1370.0), which presents a detailed set of indicators every five years, and *Measures of Australia's Progress: At a Glance* (ABS cat. no. 1383.0.55.002), a small summary booklet released annually. The MAP products are designed to inform Australians of changes in their lives and the human and natural environment.

*MAP: Summary Indicators* provides a summary of measures relating to the 14 headline dimensions of progress. Where available, the summary presents the headline indicators at the national level, and a brief summary discussion about the measure and associated trends. Topics include:

- ◆ health
- ◆ education and training
- ◆ work
- ◆ national income
- ◆ economic hardship
- ◆ national wealth
- ◆ housing
- ◆ productivity
- ◆ the natural landscape
- ◆ the air and atmosphere
- ◆ oceans and estuaries
- ◆ family, community and social cohesion
- ◆ crime, and
- ◆ democracy, governance and citizenship.

Data are drawn from ABS and non-ABS sources. The 2008 issue was released in April, and, for the first time, included tables containing state and territory level data for each of the indicators.

### Australian Economic Indicators

*Australian Economic Indicators* (AEI) (ABS cat. no. 1350.0) is a monthly publication, drawing together ABS and other data, to provide a compendium of key national, state and international economic time series. It also contains feature articles. This monthly flagship publication was first released in 1991 and has remained consistently popular with users.

## Australian Social Trends

*Australian Social Trends* (AST) (ABS cat. no. 4102.0) is an annual publication containing articles on contemporary social issues, as well as a range of social indicators that present an overview of some key social trends in the various areas of social concern (such as health, work, and family and community). AST brings together information from a range of areas to address complex social issues. The 2007 issue, released in August 2007, included the following articles:

- ◆ recent increases in Australia's fertility
- ◆ lifetime marriage and divorce trends
- ◆ overweight and obesity
- ◆ training for a trade
- ◆ labour force participation—an international comparison
- ◆ trends in household consumption
- ◆ wealth in homes of owner-occupier households, and
- ◆ interpersonal violence.

## Experimental Estimates of Industry Multifactor Productivity

Industry level multifactor productivity estimates are now planned for release on an annual basis (see ABS cat. no. 5260.0.55.001 and 5260.0.55.002). These estimates provide additional value to the already established market sector productivity estimates released annually through the Australian National Accounts.

## Measuring Human Capital Flows

The human capital flows release (see ABS cat. no. 1351.0.55.023) adds to the ongoing development of the human capital work program within the ABS, with a longer-term view to provide additional input into analyses of productivity, the returns to education, and other aspects of economic and social returns to human capital.

## Data enhancement

The ABS Census Data Enhancement project aims to enhance the value of Census of Population and Housing data, by creating from it a 5% sample of the Australian population that can be linked between the 2006 Census and subsequent censuses. The resulting Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset (SLCD) will have potential to provide information on changing patterns of population and housing over time. Analysing these data in a confidential environment provides an opportunity for the ABS to inform government on areas of need, deliver evidence to underpin the development of policy and programs, and assist in their evaluation.

The project has proceeded in line with the statement of intention published on the ABS website in August 2005. Work in 2007–08 focused on assessing matching methodologies, undertaking data matching, validating results and developing options for selection of the SLCD sample in future Censuses.

A number of quality studies have also been undertaken in conjunction with this project, to be used by the ABS to plan future linkages across census data and with other datasets, subject to funding availability. Studies to date have focused on Indigenous mortality data, migration, census management and undercoverage in the labour force survey.

More detail on these analyses is outlined in the *Information Paper, Census Data Enhancement Project: An Update* (ABS cat. no. 2062.0).

## Other analytical work in 2007–08

The ABS regularly reviews the methodology used to produce statistics, to enhance the usefulness of data and to encourage and inform decision making amongst governments and the community. Analytical work undertaken by the ABS provides opportunities to incorporate improvements and new approaches, where appropriate. In 2007–08, the ABS undertook a range of analytical work, including:

### Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

*Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)* (ABS cat. no. 2033.0.55.001) is a suite of four summary measures that have been created from 2006 Census information. The indexes can be used to explore different aspects of socio-economic conditions by geographic areas. For each index, every geographic area in Australia is given a SEIFA score, which shows how disadvantaged that area is compared with other areas in Australia. Each index summarises a different aspect of the socio-economic conditions of people living in an area, and the indexes take into account a range of factors in determining socio-economic conditions. SEIFA was released as a suite of products, comprised of the SEIFA indexes (ABS cat. no. 2033.0.55.001), the *Information Paper: An Introduction to Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2006* (ABS cat. no. 2039.0), and a technical paper, *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)—Technical Paper, 2006* (ABS cat. no. 2039.0.55.001).

### Refining the stratification for the established House Price Index

The ABS publishes quarterly estimates of the change in the price of established houses in Australia, which are based on a method that has developed over time and always involved some form of stratification. The established House Price Index (HPI) methodology is currently based on attributes broadly defined as the structural, locational and neighbourhood characteristics of suburbs. Analysis indicated that a refined stratification method could provide enhanced measurement of the pure price evolution of the housing stock. This analysis was reviewed at the June 2008 meeting of the Methodology Advisory Committee, with the aim of dissemination later in 2008.

### Drivers of innovation in Australian businesses

Innovation is widely recognised as a major source of trend multi-factor productivity growth, economic growth, and ultimately, growth in gross domestic product per capita. A program of ABS research is currently investigating innovation in Australian businesses, including identification of the drivers of innovation, and analysis of skills shortages which hamper innovation. In 2008, findings to date of this research program were submitted to the Review of the National Innovation System, to assist with policy deliberations. It is anticipated that a number of ABS Research Papers will be released in the future as the research program continues.

# chapter 14

## Statistical standards and infrastructure

### Introduction

The ABS has a lead role in avoiding duplication in the collection of statistics, attaining comparability between collections undertaken by different agencies, and maximising the utilisation of statistics.

Australia has a world-class statistical environment, where a wide range of data from a range of sources can be compared and evaluated. The coherence of the statistical environment underpins the democratic processes. Coherent data gives all citizens and governments the capability of comparing different aspects of Australia's society, economy and environment, and assessing Australia's progress. The ABS produces a range of widely adopted statistical standards for a meaningful statistical picture of society, the economy, and to a lesser extent, the environment.

The increasing complexity of the world places pressure on statistical standards. As the real world changes, statistics may lose their relevance, leading to a reduction in the quality and usefulness of the statistical information. In maintaining standards, the ABS must balance the potential decreasing relevance of statistics, against the significant cost of introducing new standards and the desire for comparability over time.

Various aspects of statistical standards and infrastructure are needed for the effective collection and release of data, including:

- ◆ classification schemes that categorise concepts (for example—industry, occupation)
- ◆ definitions of the concepts underpinning data elements (for example—dependency, usual residence)
- ◆ definitions of statistical units (for example—business, family, income unit)
- ◆ tools to enable coding of data to standard classifications, and
- ◆ metadata repositories to store the information about data.

The ABS is at the forefront in adopting international standards, either by adopting the published standards or by developing Australian derivatives which facilitate international comparability. All national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies align with international equivalents. The ABS contributes significantly to the development of many key international statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies.

The ABS also develops national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies, which are applied, as appropriate, to all ABS statistical collections, including business and household surveys. The ABS takes a leading role by encouraging other Australian, state and territory government agencies to adopt these standards, frameworks and methodologies in their statistical activities. Extensive information about ABS standards is available on the ABS website (<http://www.abs.gov.au—Methods, Classifications, Concepts and Standards>).

The ABS also works closely with other agencies involved in the development of standards and frameworks. For more information see Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

The following sections summarise the ABS activities in developing and implementing statistical standards during 2007–2008.

## Progress on Developing and Implementing International Standards and Classifications

### Development and implementation of enhanced international statistical standards

ABS staff have continued to be active participants in the review of key international macro-economic standards, which began in 2003. The review focused on maintaining the relevance of economic statistics in a changing environment and on ensuring the various economic standards are appropriately aligned. At its meeting in February 2007, the United Nations Statistical Commission agreed on a proposed set of changes. Drafts of the core chapters of the resultant, revised System of National Accounts and the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, 2008 have been completed, incorporating significant ABS input. Work on the remaining chapters of the System of National Accounts is to be completed by the end of 2008 and release of the updated manuals is expected by mid 2009.

The ABS intends to implement the revised macro-economic standards, in conjunction with the implementation of Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006, for the 2008-09 release of the annual national accounts in November 2009. The various quarterly releases (including the national accounts, balance of payments and financial accounts) will be released on the basis of the new standards, beginning with the September quarter 2009 releases. Any changes required to the monthly balance of payments and international trade series will occur with the July 2009 release.

The ABS consulted key users on implementation plans for the revised standards. This was followed by the release of an *Information Paper: Introduction of Revised International Standards in ABS Economic Statistics in 2009* (ABS cat. no. 5310.0.55.001). The ABS plans to release further information on the statistical impacts of the changes during 2009, well before their introduction in the official statistics.

### Balance of Payments Manual

The Balance of Payments Manual is published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and is the international statistical standard for balance of payments and international investment position statistics. The current edition (the fifth) was released in 1993 and adopted by the ABS in its publications in 1998.

The IMF commenced the process of revising the Balance of Payments Manual in 2003. The ABS has been involved in all stages of the revision process through involvement in technical expert groups, contributing technical papers, commenting on drafts and membership of the IMF's Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics. The revised standard is consistent with other international macro-economic statistical standards and is to be published by the IMF in late 2008.

The ABS will adopt the sixth edition of the Balance of Payments Manual in the August 2009 issue of *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5368.0) and the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5302.0).

## Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment

The Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment is published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is the international standard for foreign direct investment statistics. The current edition (the third) was released in 1996 and adopted by the ABS, along with the Balance of Payments Manual in 1998.

Revision of the Benchmark Definition was undertaken by the OECD as a joint process with the IMF's revision of the Balance of Payments Manual, to ensure consistency of the two standards on direct investment. The technical expert groups formed for the revision of the Balance of Payments Manual also provided direction to the revision of the Benchmark Definition. The ABS has also been involved in the revision process, by contributing technical papers, assisting in the drafting of the manual and chairing the Working Group on International Investment Statistics. The revised standard is consistent with the Balance of Payments Manual, as well as providing guidance on other analytical presentations of direct investment statistics.

The fourth edition of the Benchmark Definition was published by the OECD in April 2008. The ABS will adopt the revised standard in the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5302.0) and in the 2009 calendar year reporting to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, subsequently published in the 2009 issue of *International Investment Position, Supplementary Statistics, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5352.0).

## Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services

The Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services is published by a consortium of international agencies consisting of the United Nations, the European Commission, the IMF, the OECD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It provides guidance on the collection and compilation of statistics on international trade in services beyond that provided by the IMF's Balance of Payments Manual. In particular, focus is given to providing definitions of more detailed service categories and to the relationship between trade in services as defined by the Balance of Payments Manual, and trade in services as defined by the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services.

A taskforce supported by the OECD has been working on revising the Manual to ensure continued consistency with the Balance of Payments Manual. The ABS has contributed to the revision process by providing comments on drafts of the revised Manual and will be attending the Working Group on Trade in Goods and Services in late 2008, when the final version of the manual will be approved.

The ABS currently publishes information according to the more detailed service categories defined in the Manual, and will adopt the revised classification in the August 2009 issue of *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5368.0) and the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5302.0).

## Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006

The ABS continues to work on implementing the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006 (ANZSIC 2006). The classification is used as a basis for the collection and dissemination of both economic and social statistics. During 2007-2008, the following publications were released on the new classification:

- ◆ *Engineering Construction Activity, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 8762.0) in January 2008
- ◆ *Agricultural Commodities, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 7121.0) in March 2008
- ◆ *Retail and Wholesale Industries, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 8622.0 and 8624.0) in August 2007
- ◆ *Construction Work Done, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 8755.0) in November 2007, and
- ◆ Population and Housing Census Statistics (Second Release) in October 2007.

Further information on the impact of ANZSIC 2006 on ABS statistics can be found in the *Information Paper: Update on ANZSIC 2006 Implementation, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 1295.0.55.001).

## Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) was released by the ABS on 31 March 2008. It was largely funded by the Australian Research Council, responsible for developing and implementing the 'Excellence in Research in Australia' program. The new classification is more closely aligned to research currently being undertaken in Australia and New Zealand, and will enable accuracy in data collection and analysis, especially in emerging fields of research such as nanotechnology and climate change. The updated research classification system will be used across government, the higher education sector and the private sector to:

- ◆ ensure a uniform understanding of discipline areas
- ◆ improve data reporting and resource allocation
- ◆ enhance effective communication, and
- ◆ allow for benchmarking of data.

ANZSRC contains about 40% more research codes than the 1998 Australian Standard Research Classification, which it replaces. The former Research Fields Courses and Disciplines codes have been updated with Field of Research codes, and the socioeconomic objective codes have been refreshed. The new classification includes concordance tables with the earlier classification and it maps the OECD's Fields of Science and Technology classification, to enable international benchmarking.

The ANZSRC was developed, in collaboration with Statistics New Zealand, following extensive consultation with users of the previous classification. Development was guided by a technical reference group comprising representatives from key user groups. About 70 experts, from a range of areas, also provided advice and approximately 300 public submissions were received during the consultation phase.

## Products classifications

In 2007, the ABS reviewed the 2001 Australian and New Zealand Standard Product Classification, which was the standard for the presentation of product based statistics. The review revealed the classification had been poorly adopted and was no longer internationally comparable given the release of Central Products Classification version 2. As a result of this review, the ABS decommissioned the Australian and New Zealand Standard Product Classification as the Australian statistical standard for products.

The ABS has initiated a program to adopt the United Nation's Central Products Classification version 2, to link all products classifications used within the ABS. The Central Products Classification is a multipurpose classification covering all goods and services, and recent developments to increase the level of detail and comparability with other international standards have positioned it well to replace Australian and New Zealand Standard Product Classification.

## Progress on developing Australian standards and classifications

### Australian Culture and Leisure Classification

The (draft) second edition of the Australian Culture and Leisure Classification (ACLC) was released for public consultation in February 2008. The revision has allowed for an update of the concordances with other standard ABS classifications, which have been recently revised, such as ANZSIC 2006 and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) 2006.

The classification focuses on the economic side of culture and leisure activities: the way culture and leisure activities are linked to the economy through direct expenditure and employment. It does this through three classifications: the Industrial Classification, the Product Classification, and the Occupation Classification. The Industrial Classification defines the business units that either directly produce or provide culture and leisure goods and services for the use of the end consumer, or otherwise enable people to make use of these goods and services. The Product Classification defines culture and leisure goods and services. The Occupation Classification lists occupations that can be considered to be part of the culture and leisure sector. These occupations may be undertaken on a paid or unpaid basis.

It is expected that the final version of the second edition of the Australian Culture and Leisure Classification will be released in July 2008.

### Local Government Purpose Classification

The ABS developed the Local Government Purpose Classification (LGPC) for use in the collection, analysis and dissemination of Australian statistical and administrative data relating to local government finance transactions by purpose. The classification was finalised this financial year and will be released in August 2008. There has been extensive consultation with external users during the development, to ensure that the classification reflects the functions of local government in Australia and meets the data requirements of clients.



In developing the LGPC, a principle aim has been the alignment with international standards developed by the United Nations, namely the Classification of Functions of Government and the Classification of Environmental Protection Expenditure and Activities. The approach improves the international comparability of local government finance statistics.

Emphasis has also been placed on aligning the classification with the existing national standard for all levels of government, the Government Purpose Classification, which lacks detail on some key local government functions. This ensures comparability between levels of government and will be reinforced by pursuit of further harmonisation in the future.

## Defining Sport and Exercise, a Conceptual Model

The ABS discussion paper, *Defining Sport and Exercise, a Conceptual Model* (ABS cat. no. 4149.0), was released in February 2008 for public consultation. A conceptual model has been constructed from an analysis of varying concepts of 'physical activity' and 'sport', which are overlaid across four 'time domains', so that the context of the activity can be understood. The model outlines what activities may be considered in scope for research of varying concepts, such as exercise, physical recreation and sport, as well as illustrating the similarities, differences and overlap of parameters that define sport and exercise.



*The ABS discussion paper, *Defining Sport and Exercise, a Conceptual Model*, presents a draft conceptual model defining key concepts commonly used in survey research on sport and exercise.*

The paper also discusses how different sport and physical activity surveys conducted by the ABS correspond to the proposed conceptual model, thus providing insights into how the differences in definitions and methodologies may impact on what is being measured, as well as the results being achieved.





## Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification

The ABS recently carried out a review of the ASGC, to incorporate mesh blocks into the classification and ensure its continuing relevance to contemporary requirements. The review began in late 2006 and continued through 2007. An information paper proposing a new statistical geography, *Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification 2007* (ABS cat. no. 1216.0.55.001) was released in August 2007. This paper called for submissions, of which 29 were received, raising a number of issues and concerns. The ABS will respond to these submissions in a second paper which is scheduled for release in mid-2008 and will outline the future directions for the classification.

## Emerging pressure on infrastructure needed to manage the ABS' standards and classifications

Metadata is fundamental to the ability of any organisation to manage its valuable information assets, in a responsible manner. Metadata is information used to find data, or to assist a user to understand that data (definitions and descriptions) or to guide a user in the appropriate use of that data (quality). For example, metadata is used to help locate specific web pages from the vast amount of information available on the web. The ABS is a large producer of information, and metadata is essential in fulfilling our stewardship role in managing this resource on behalf of all Australians.

The ABS has a metadata management infrastructure, which is aging and poorly integrated. Much of the metadata about ABS' data is stored in local facilities, which are associated with a collection, and is difficult to reuse between processes, or to access as a corporate resource across collections.

In recent years, the ABS has been working on developing an end-to-end Metadata Management Strategy, to establish a metadata environment that:

- ◆ supports ABS statistical business objectives
- ◆ enables better dissemination outcomes
- ◆ is efficient, effective and user-friendly
- ◆ promotes accountability over the life-cycle of metadata, and
- ◆ provides a metadata resource as an information system in its own right.

Once finalised and implemented, this strategy will have considerable benefits for users of ABS statistics, making it easier for them to find, understand and use ABS statistics effectively. It will also align the ABS metadata environment, with the associated international standards for metadata, such as the standard for data element definitions (ISO/IEC-11179). During 2007–08, the ABS released a new data element repository, which will enable it to manage data elements in line with international standards. This repository is currently being integrated with systems supporting the ABS' population surveys program.

# chapter 15

## International engagement

### Introduction

As established in the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, one of the ABS' functions is '(providing) liaison between Australia and other countries and international organisations in relation to statistical matters' (section 6(f)). During 2007–08, the ABS continued to meet its international responsibilities by:

- ♦ active and high level involvement in the international statistical community, and
- ♦ targeted and tailored technical assistance to national statistical agencies in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Involvement in the international statistical community

The ABS' involvement in the international statistical community takes a number of forms, including:

- ♦ participating in international meetings, including those that develop international statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies
- ♦ visiting the statistical offices of other national statistical organisations and international intergovernmental organisations, and
- ♦ hosting visits from staff of these organisations at the ABS.

### International meetings and conferences

The ABS participated in a number of important international meetings and conferences in 2007–08, including:

- ♦ 56th Session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI), held in Lisbon, Portugal
- ♦ 39th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, held in New York, USA
- ♦ 'New Directions in Social Statistics' seminar held at the United Nations, New York, USA
- ♦ United Nations Statistics Division Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics held in Oslo, Norway
- ♦ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Committee on Poverty Reduction, 4th Session, Bangkok, Thailand
- ♦ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Expert Group Meeting on Effective Use of Information Technology in Population Censuses, held in Bangkok, Thailand
- ♦ 8th Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- ♦ International Comparison Program (ICP) Executive Board Meeting, held in Washington DC, USA
- ♦ Conference of European Statisticians, held in Helsinki, Finland.

During 2007–08, ABS senior executives held the following positions on international bodies:

Brian Pink, the Australian Statistician, is –

- ♦ Australia's Head of Delegation to the United Nations Statistical Commission
- ♦ Chairman of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Committee on Statistics
- ♦ Member of the Executive Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, and
- ♦ Technical Adviser to the OECD Global Project Advisory Board on 'Measuring the Progress of Societies'.

## 'Measuring the Progress of Societies' project

The 'Measuring the Progress of Societies' project is an initiative hosted by the OECD. The OECD collaborates with a range of international and regional partners, including the ABS, in the development of sub-national, national and international indicators of societal progress. The project emerged due to an increasing need to more effectively measure and assess societal progress, in relation to social, environmental and economic issues.

Ms Susan Linacre, Deputy Australian Statistician, Social Statistics Group, is –

- ♦ Council member of the International Statistical Institute, and
- ♦ President Elect of the International Association of Survey Statisticians (2007–2009).

Peter Harper, Deputy Australian Statistician, Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Statistics Group, is –

- ♦ Member of the Advisory Expert Group for the 1993 System of National Accounts Update
- ♦ Chair of United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, and
- ♦ Member of the International Comparison Program Executive Board.

The ABS continues to be involved in the development of international standards, including key international macro-economic standards, such as the revised System of National Accounts, the Balance of Payments Manual and International Investment Position Manual, 2008. More information on the ABS' international work in these areas can be found in Chapter 14, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

## Visits to the ABS

The ABS received a number of visits from other national statistics offices, statistical agencies and international statistical organisations during the year, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Canada, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Thailand, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

The duration and purpose of these visits vary, but all act to build stronger relationships with like organisations, to share knowledge. For example, the discussions held with the Philippines' National Statistical Coordination Board during the year on poverty statistics, to improve their technical abilities, will ensure that the benefits extend beyond the participants to the National Statistical Office as a whole.



*During 2007–08, the ABS Tasmania Office hosted a visit by Angsumal Sunalai, Deputy Secretary General of the National Statistics Office (NSO) Thailand, and 14 of his colleagues.*

## International Comparison Program

The International Comparison Program (ICP) is a statistical initiative to produce internationally comparable expenditure values, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) estimates and comparative price levels. All major international development agencies, including the World Bank, the IMF, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Development Fund use ICP results to analyse economic and social conditions within their areas of concern. The ICP offers a powerful tool for comparative research on economic and social development.

The Asian Development Bank was responsible for coordinating the Asia-Pacific region's participation in the ICP and the Deputy Australian Statistician, Peter Harper, is a member of the Regional Advisory Board.

The final results for the Asia-Pacific component of the 2005 ICP were published in December 2007 by the Asian Development Bank. The results covered GDP and its main expenditure components. Of particular interest was the inclusion of China, which participated in the ICP for the first time.

Australia is not part of the Asia-Pacific ICP but participates via the OECD's PPP program. However, the ABS provided extensive technical assistance for the Asia-Pacific ICP and was acknowledged in the release of the results.

## Statistical training and technical assistance

The ABS continues to contribute to international statistical training, through organisations such as the United Nations, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), the Secretariat of the Pacific Communities (SPC) and the IMF.

The ABS provides international statistical assistance to countries in the Asia-Pacific region seeking ABS advice and support and are high priority for the Australian Government. The ABS currently has three major long-term programs of technical assistance in place:

- ◆ Indonesia: Government Partnership Fund
- ◆ Pacific Region: Pacific Governance Support Program
- ◆ Vanuatu: Vanuatu Statistical Institutional Strengthening Program

### Indonesia

The ABS has had a long association with Badan Pusat Statistik—Statistics Indonesia (BPS—Statistics Indonesia) and the two agencies have signed a number of memoranda of understanding on cooperation in statistics.

AusAID is managing a Government Partnership Fund (GPF) to assist Indonesia as part of the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development. The Government Partnership Fund is a flagship of Australia's enhanced partnership with Indonesia and provides a vehicle for supporting the further development of Indonesia's economic governance and public sector management capabilities.

Specifically, the goal of ABS involvement in the GPF is to improve the Indonesian statistical system and to establish greater coordination and a stronger relationship between Australia, BPS and Bank Indonesia, with a mutually agreed identification of skill and capability gaps.

In 2007–2008, three missions were undertaken under the program. In the first, four staff of BPS—Statistics Indonesia visited the ABS to review the ABS' Labour Force Survey, including its sampling methodology, field operations and survey outputs. The second mission, held in Indonesia, focused on the collection phase of the labour force survey. The third and final mission, also held in Indonesia, focused on improving the statistical methodology of the BPS—Statistics Indonesia Labour Force Survey, including sampling and estimation. A highlight of this mission was the opportunity to present a lecture to students at the School of Statistics of BPS—Statistics Indonesia, as well as senior BPS—Statistics Indonesia staff, on sampling of rare populations.

Further missions under the program are planned for 2008–2009.

### Pacific Region

The ABS has been involved in two main programs of assistance in the AusAID funded Pacific Governance Support Program. The first program covered the years 2005–2007, with the second taking place during 2007–2008. The aim of the both programs was to strengthen the national statistical systems of Pacific Island countries.

During the first program, the ABS in collaboration with the SPC, provided project management training in the Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu. In the second program, training was provided to Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

## Vanuatu

During 2007–2008, the ABS continued its assistance to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO), under the AusAID-funded Vanuatu Statistical Institutional Strengthening Program. The program continues to develop capacity and capability of the VNSO through improved corporate governance.

The mentoring program for the Acting Government Statistician in leadership, management, budgeting and planning, which started early in 2007, continued during the year. Other activities planned are the delivery of technical assistance for rebasing both the Consumer Price Index and National Accounts.

## Other statistical training and technical assistance

In addition to planned programs of assistance, the ABS provided statistical advice and capacity building to many countries in the region, including:

- ◆ Philippines on poverty statistics
- ◆ Vietnam on a business register
- ◆ Laos on statistics management, and
- ◆ Iran on the population census.

## International comparative survey

Results from the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS) were released in November 2007. The ALLS was conducted as part of an international comparative survey of adult skills coordinated by Statistics Canada in collaboration with, among others, the OECD and UNESCO. The ALLS study builds on the International Adult Literacy Survey, the world's first comparative survey of adult skills conducted between 1994 and 1998. Other countries involved include Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America.



# chapter 16

## Effectiveness of activities

### Introduction

During 2007–08, the ABS has continued to look for ways to operate more efficiently and effectively, in both statistical and non-statistical areas of the business. A number of processes, systems and controls have been implemented to assist the ABS meet its goals of greater efficiency and effectiveness. These include the strategic audit and review program, operational and statistical reviews, as well as special initiatives such as the operations research initiative (see below for more information).

Many of the reviews and audits conducted seek to ensure the ABS achieves cost-effective outputs, either as a primary or secondary objective. The ABS also uses external providers for a range of functions, including information technology training, leadership and management training, staff counselling services, legal advice, building maintenance, the supply of stationery, and internal audit. This enables the ABS to minimise its costs, whilst maximising its service.

### ABS restructure

On 2 July 2007, a new organisational structure for the ABS came into effect. This new structure realigned the organisational and infrastructure support groups at a high level to enable the ABS to more effectively meet future challenges and priorities. A new statistical group was created, which includes environment, labour, demography and census functions, as well as an additional subject matter division with a strong emphasis on regionally related statistics, and spatial data initiatives. The key objectives of the new organisational structure included:

- ◆ developing a strong focus on National Statistical Service (NSS) work at the most senior levels over the next few years
- ◆ ensuring that Deputy Australian Statisticians are more involved in strategic priorities and encouraging a strong emphasis on analysis and reporting
- ◆ looking for opportunities to more effectively manage administrative data around the Labour statistics program
- ◆ bringing most public facing functions under one management structure and looking for synergies in workforce use, business processes and supporting systems
- ◆ developing a more integrated approach to strategic, financial and human resource planning and reporting functions, within the Corporate Services Division, and
- ◆ ensuring a stronger succession planning structure for Assistant Statistician, First Assistant Statistician, and Deputy Australian Statistician levels.

For more information on the ABS' new organisational structure, see Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS.

Following the restructure, the opportunity was taken to review the accommodation arrangements within ABS House in Canberra, so that work program areas are positioned together and the analytical branches from within economic, social and labour statistical groups are co-located.



*Accommodation arrangements within ABS House were reviewed during 2007–08, to ensure the layout would meet current and ongoing needs of staff and the ABS.*

## Creation of the Data Collection Methodology section

As part of the organisational restructure of the ABS in July 2007, the Data Collection Methodology (DCM) section was formed. The section's role is to support the design and evaluation of questionnaires, letters and data collection procedures. DCM combined two units from separate divisions, bringing together the experts on business surveys and household surveys.

In addition to supporting statistical collections, DCM provides a single centre of expertise for assisting with the ABS' staff surveys and user feedback forms, leading to better informed decision making in human resource and dissemination planning. The synergy created by the single larger group allows for more effective and efficient survey support, balanced with research and training, as well as streamlined recruitment and enhanced skill development and career paths for the section's staff.

Recently, DCM has provided methodological leadership to the Multi-Modal Data Collection and Standard Business Reporting projects, with the aim of improving response rates and data quality, and ultimately making data collection more cost effective. DCM has released new chapters in the ABS' Forms Design Standards Manual, including chapters on using emails for surveys and Interactive Voice Response (a computerised telephony system with the ability to interact on a basic level with telephone users). Other projects underway include work on web-based forms and faxes, a Mode Suitability Framework and strategies for measuring modal bias.

By providing guidelines and support for a range of evaluation methods, DCM has also advocated more targeted, cost-effective survey testing. Finally, DCM has assisted with the implementation of cost savings for particular ABS surveys, including support of the new Agricultural Resource Management Survey, and respondent communication strategies for surveys, which have reduced the frequency of contact with respondents.

## Intensive follow-up of providers

The ABS' Operations Research Unit examined the efficacy of the intensive follow-up of providers who have not returned their completed survey forms to the ABS, and identified a number of areas where efficiency gains can be made and provider load reduced, while maintaining data quality. This work has led to the establishment of the 'gold star' provider strategy, whereby businesses having a good track record of providing information to the ABS are not followed up through the ABS' Provider Contact Unit (PCU) until later in the follow-up process. The research indicated that most of these providers return their forms without the need for a reminder call. The strategy has been implemented in a number of quarterly survey trials, and will be rolled out to other sub-annual collections, where appropriate.

Research relating to the maximum number of productive calls that can be made to a provider was conducted over 2007–08 and will most likely result in changes to procedures in the PCU. Changes to 'optimal timing of calls' have also been trialled within the constraints of current resource allocation and intensive follow-up strategy. The trials have resulted in an improved receival rate and analysis is continuing to determine whether efficiency gains can also be achieved.



### Integrated System for Household Surveys project

The Integrated System for Household Surveys project was conducted over three years, concluding at the end of June 2008. This project involved a major investment in infrastructure, and was designed to improve the effectiveness of processes and activities associated with Household Surveys at the ABS.

The project's key achievements focused around:

- ◆ developing a tool to assist in the specification and coding of the complex survey questionnaires used in ABS household surveys (for example, questionnaires are defined in metadata)
- ◆ improving the presentation of management information from survey operations and increasing the ability to respond to issues arising during the collection phase of surveys
- ◆ enhancing knowledge resources by better supporting current Household Survey staff in their work, and better enabling the ABS to maintain skills and knowledge, and
- ◆ updating the set of facilities for processing response data and reducing processing times.

The work of this project supports the ABS initiatives to improve turnaround times for survey outputs, and to provide an expanded set of metadata describing the values within survey outputs, and how they were created. This enhanced range of available metadata supports increased understanding, use, and sharing of data, in line with National Statistical Service goals.

## Workforce planning

The ABS has endorsed a workforce plan to guide organisational outcomes over the next four years. The plan covers a range of demand and supply investigations and activities, including analysis of the composition of the present workforce, job design, consideration of skills needed to deliver future services, talent recognition and management. The plan also recognises that the ABS will need to adapt to new ways of working, including making maximum use of the geographic locations of its offices and staff. The plan forms part of the ABS' effort to better align its business, financial and human capital management and planning.

## Human resource indicators

To assist in human resource planning and management, at both the corporate and operational levels, human resource indicators are being renewed. Initially, these will reflect Australian Public Service-wide indicators, to enable comparison with other government agencies. The indicators are expected to be further developed, so they can be integrated into the ABS' wider governance and performance monitoring processes.

## Business continuity management

The considerable investment in developing business continuity capability in the ABS over the past two years was tested during 2007–08 with three major incidents. These incidents caused activation of the crisis management team and the business continuity plan. The plan and procedures were thoroughly reviewed and further improved after each incident. The objective is always to resume normal business as soon as possible after ensuring safety of the staff and assets of ABS.

## Other efficiency and effectiveness strategies

### Improved cost efficiencies for surveys

A combined survey design was developed for the 2007–08 National Health Survey and the Survey of Income and Housing. This approach allowed for geographically based field workloads with an optimal combination of questions from the two surveys, rather than enumerating the surveys independently. This resulted in improved quality and significant cost savings on travel, as less trips were required to collect information from those providers selected in the sample.

The 2006–07 Annual Integrated Collection, which was enumerated in 2007–08, combines the Economic Activity Survey, Annual Manufacturing Survey, Mining and Utilities Survey and the Service Industry Survey, into a single integrated framework. The combined collection allows for improved operational efficiencies and improved data quality and coherence, through the use of common methodologies, systems and procedures. The Annual Integrated Collection also makes extensive use of taxation data to reduce the burden on small businesses.

## **Composite estimation for the Labour Force Survey**

In June 2007, the ABS introduced a new methodology, known as composite estimation, in the Labour Force Survey. During 2007–08, composite estimation enabled 11% reduction in the Labour Force Survey sample size, while effectively maintaining the same level of data quality. This resulted in cost savings for the ABS and a reduction in the reporting load placed on the community.

## **Best Practice Guidelines for seasonal adjustment**

Every year, the ABS produces hundreds of seasonally adjusted and trend series. Seasonal adjustment utilises a range of methods to derive the seasonally adjusted data from the original, and there is much flexibility in the application of these methods. This raises the need to establish best practice methodologies and to ensure that these methodologies are being implemented as standard practice for all ABS series. The Best Practice Guidelines is a document compiled and promulgated by the ABS to meet this need.

During 2007–08, significant progress has been made on the Best Practice Guidelines, with the development and finalisation of best practice procedures for several key issues relating to ABS series. The existence and use of the guidelines will enable greater consistency and quality in the production of ABS seasonally adjusted time series.

# section vi

HOW THE ABS OPERATES



# chapter 17

## ABS corporate governance

### Introduction

The ABS' corporate governance framework ensures transparency in decision making, operation and accountability, by promoting strong leadership, sound management and effective planning and review processes.

The key features of the ABS' corporate governance framework are:

- ◆ a planning cycle to ensure that the ABS work program reflects current and emerging statistical priorities of users, and is consistent with the ABS mission and overall strategic directions
- ◆ senior management committees involved in developing policies and strategies, identifying priorities and monitoring the ABS' performance
- ◆ advisory bodies and user groups, which enable the ABS to consult widely with the user community about the ABS work program
- ◆ an audit and review program covering the different facets of ABS operations, overseen by the Audit Committee
- ◆ a risk management framework to assist in identifying and managing risks at organisational, operational and project level, and
- ◆ instructions and manuals to ensure staff have access to ABS policies and practices.

### ABS values

Underlying the corporate governance framework are the Australian Public Service (APS) and ABS values, which are the basis for the ethical standards for ABS employees.

As an APS agency, ABS employees are required to abide by the APS Values and the Code of Conduct. In addition, the ABS Corporate Plan sets out values specific to the ABS, which are essential to the ABS' role as an independent provider of information for Australia.

These values are promoted through training courses and awareness raising. They are used as a reference for the actions and decisions of ABS staff, from senior management down.

The ABS values are:

- ◆ integrity
- ◆ service
- ◆ professionalism
- ◆ relevance
- ◆ trust of providers, and
- ◆ access for all.

For more information on ABS values, see Chapter 18, Management of human resources.

## Senior management committees

An important feature of ABS corporate governance is the role played by senior management committees, which are active in developing policies and strategies, identifying ABS priorities, assessing and responding to risks and opportunities, and monitoring ABS performance.

Following the organisational re-structure (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 16) and in line with best practice guidelines to regularly review corporate governance framework, the ABS commenced a review of high level committees and forums, with completion scheduled for July 2008. The aims of the project are to:

- i. review the ABS' framework for corporate governance, and
- ii. develop options for a refreshed corporate governance framework.

The ABS is also conducting a strategic alignment project. This project is examining executive roles and accountabilities, to ensure the agency is well placed to meet objectives.

The major senior management committees in place during 2007–08 are outlined below:

Division Heads Meetings	<p>Division Heads Meetings (DHMs) are the ABS executive meetings held weekly to address emerging issues, corporate strategies and policies, and ABS performance.</p> <p>DHM is attended by the Statistician, the Deputy Statisticians, and the First Assistant Statisticians, with other attendees as required for particular items.</p> <p>Branch heads and regional directors provide regular reports on their functional area of responsibility to DHM.</p>
ABS Management Meetings	<p>The Management Meetings play a major role in determining ABS strategic directions, priorities and resource allocations.</p> <p>These meetings involve DHM members, as well as the regional directors. The Management Meeting is held twice a year, and discusses the ABS forward work program, as well as a range of other strategic issues.</p>
Accountability Division Heads Meeting	<p>Accountability Division Heads Meetings (Accountability DHMs) provide a forum for reviewing the ABS financial position and the risk management strategy. They also play a role in the planning cycle, providing the opportunity for senior managers to discuss work program priorities within the broader budgetary context, and the allocation of funds.</p> <p>Accountability DHMs are scheduled four times a year and are chaired by the Australian Statistician. Other members are DHM members, together with the ABS Chief Financial Officer.</p>



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## Audit Committee

The ABS Audit Committee provides assurance to the Australian Statistician that: a comprehensive control framework is in place and is working effectively for all business systems; the operation and management of ABS systems are sufficiently adequate to ensure the ABS complies with all its legislative and other obligations; and externally published information generated by these systems is of appropriate quality and conforms with legislative and other obligations. The committee identifies significant issues of concern or non-compliance.

The ABS Audit Committee is chaired by a Deputy Australian Statistician, and comprises four other ABS officers chosen for their personal qualities, experience and skills including their ability to demonstrate independence on matters before the Committee. Throughout 2007–08, the Committee included two experienced external members.

The Audit Committee meets four times a year and reports to DHM as appropriate.

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## Human Resources Division Heads Meeting

Human Resources Division Heads Meetings (HR DHM) provide a forum for members to actively contribute to strategic directions for human resources and engage in discussion about proposed human resource management practices to ensure that they contribute to, and align with, ABS goals.

Members of the HR DHM undertake a governance role in respect to people strategies by:

- ◆ providing assistance in determining human resource priorities
- ◆ monitoring progress on significant strategic human resource projects, and
- ◆ identifying human resource opportunities, issues and risks.

During 2007–08, a wide range of matters were considered at HR DHMs, including workforce planning, capability building, occupational health and safety, remuneration and recruitment.

HR DHMs are scheduled twice a year and are chaired by the Australian Statistician. Other members include DHM members, a nominated Regional Director, the Assistant Statistician, Human Resources Branch, the Assistant Statistician, Business Support Branch, and an external member. The external member has extensive public service management experience.

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### Protective Security Management Committee

The ABS maintains a comprehensive security framework, overseen by a Protective Security Management Committee chaired by a Deputy Australian Statistician. This security framework ensures that both physical and computer security are maintained. The committee is a key means of ensuring the ABS meets its legal requirement not to divulge identifiable information and to make sure there is policy to meet the security and privacy related requirements of legislation including the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, *Privacy Act 1988* and *Crimes Act 1914*.

### Information Resources Management Committee

The Information Resources Management Committee considers matters of strategic significance concerning data and information management, and related policy, and major issues relating to the application of information and communication technology in the ABS. It also has responsibility for the strategic management of cost recovery activities of the information technology and technology services areas of the ABS. The Committee meets four times each year, and reports to each Management Meeting and the DHM as appropriate.

In 2007–08, the committee was chaired by a Deputy Australian Statistician, and consisted of another Deputy Australian Statistician, all First Assistant Statisticians, a nominated Regional Director, and selected Assistant Statisticians.

## Planning

The ABS mission statement and the corporate plan provide the context for decision making on the forward work program.

### Review of planning and budgeting cycle

During 2007–08, the ABS reviewed its planning and budgeting activities, to ensure it is well placed to carry out its legislated role and can anticipate and respond effectively to future opportunities and risks.

Some modifications were made to the activities, so that decision making about the forward work program is more closely aligned to the ABS budget. The cycle has been extended from three years to four, so the agency has a better information base for the fourth year government appropriation. Corporate and resource centre business plans will be developed, with both a strategic and operational focus. The new process also embeds the risk management strategy into the planning and budgeting processes.

The next phase of activity will be redevelopment of the ABS' performance monitoring and reporting system, scheduled for later in 2008.

While much of the ABS work program continues from year to year, the planning process requires the ABS to examine the environment in which it is working and identify statistical needs for the next four years. Through the planning process, the ABS considers how it can best meet emerging needs within its finite human and financial resources.

Within this framework, the annual ABS planning cycle comprises a series of high level meetings and forums, where senior managers consider the relative priorities and competing resource requirements of program components. In doing this, particular attention is given to:

- ◆ input from user consultations
- ◆ strategic directions the ABS has set for the next four years
- ◆ the cost imposed on respondents to collections, in terms of time and effort
- ◆ consideration of enterprise opportunities and risks
- ◆ prospective total resources available to the ABS within the next four years
- ◆ productivity gains that have been achieved or may be possible to achieve in the future
- ◆ the contribution statistical activities make to meeting National Statistical Service objectives, and
- ◆ the extent to which particular statistical activities, with user demand, continue to be justified in relation to other work.

Aspects of the proposed forward work program and resource estimates that emerge are considered by the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC). The statistical work program is then finalised, taking into consideration the advice provided by ASAC.



*Participants at the ASAC meeting on 24 June 2008.*

The Forward Work Program is published every year in hard copy, and is also available on the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>.

## Audit and risk management

The ABS has a Risk Management Framework, which provides a basis for identifying and mitigating risks the ABS may be exposed to. In 2007, the ABS developed a new Risk Management Strategy, drawing on feedback from an external review of ABS' risk management activities undertaken in 2006–07, as well as the outcomes of the annual Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking exercise.

Implementation of the new strategy has commenced, initially focusing on a comprehensive review of the ABS' enterprise risks. These are risks that are strategic in nature and have the potential to significantly impact on the organisation. ABS senior management will be closely involved in monitoring and managing these risks.

At the operational level, the program of facilitated risk management workshops for key areas continued, to ensure that risk assessments for these areas were applied consistently and given priority. These workshops assist program directors to ensure risks that have the potential to impact on a program's objectives are appropriately identified and managed. During 2007–08, workshops were carried out in areas such as the National Accounts Branch, the Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, web publishing, the Labour Price Index and the National Information and Referral Service.

The management of project risks is largely facilitated through the inclusion of risk management templates in the ABS Project Management Framework. Project managers have the responsibility for identifying and managing risks at the project level.

During 2007–08, the ABS participated in the Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking exercise. The marginal increase in the score received reflects that the ABS is in the early stages of implementing the new ABS risk management strategy. The feedback from the benchmarking exercise is being integrated into the next stages of the new strategy.

A work program of internal audits, endorsed by the Audit Committee and DHM, is developed annually to address performance, compliance and risk management issues. The internal audits are undertaken by an external audit provider. A complementary program of internal reviews is also carried out annually. The internal reviews are conducted by ABS staff and so can cover aspects where the external audit provider would not have the necessary expertise, particularly in relation to the statistical work program. Internal reviews usually address issues around effectiveness, efficiency and quality.

Internal audits in 2007–08 examined issues relating to confidentiality of information, security of data, compliance with statutory requirements, efficient and effective use of resources, and risk mitigation. Two examples of the use of audits are as follows:

- ◆ An audit was commissioned to examine the processes for forecasting and reporting revenue, and this recommended the development of a simplified and more integrated approach, with a single area coordinating the revenue reporting and forecasting processes. Work is underway to implement these recommendations.
- ◆ The ABS commissioned an audit to assess the control framework for management of access rights to IT systems and data. Recommendations were to centralise responsibility for identity and access management, develop better management information on security access issues, and improve the guidelines for managers in relation to developing good security practices. A number of the recommendations have already been completed.

## Business continuity in the ABS

The Business Continuity Plan identifies the ABS' key business activities, and strategies to resume business, as quickly as possible, should those business activities be affected.

The ABS Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is a live document, continuing to be developed and refined, as incidences occur or issues are identified. During 2007–08, the BCP was expanded and now incorporates emergency management, as well as crisis management and business resumption.

BCP has been activated on several occasions in 2007–08, with the most significant event being a major power outage in the ABS South Australian Office (SA Office).

### ABS (SA Office) major power outage—a case study

On 17 August 2007, the ABS was advised that power would be cut to the SA Office, as a result of an overflow of water into the tenant electrical riser. At the time, it was expected the problem would be rectified the following day (Saturday). As it turned out, power was fully restored six days later.

On the Sunday evening, a teleconference of the combined SA Office and Central Office (CO) Crisis Management Team decided to activate the ABS Business Continuity Plan, and assigned the Director of Corporate Services SA to be the Regional Office Resumption Coordinator, to manage the situation locally. The severity of the crisis was discussed and various aspects, including staff safety, security, critical business and available infrastructure (information technology and facilities) and communication strategy with staff, were considered.

The SA Crisis Management Team monitored and managed the situation, with regular reports provided to the CO Crisis Management Team.

The ABS Business Continuity Plan communication strategy was activated to convey information to staff. Communication channels utilised include:

- ◆ a 1800 toll free message bank, and
- ◆ publication of messages on a specified page located on the ABS website (for ABS staff only).

The combined use of these communication channels worked well. The ABS bulk SMS messaging facility, available as part of the communication strategy, was not deemed necessary.

The SA office has responsibility for one of the ABS' critical business activities, and the SA Office Crisis Management Team determined the immediate work priorities and appropriate contingencies for implementation, in the event that the situation was not quickly resolved. To keep essential business running, staff with laptops were set up to work off-site.

On restoration of power, debriefing sessions were held and action was taken on lessons learnt. This information contributed to the review and improvement of the ABS Business Continuity Plan in readiness for the next crisis.

Key reviews conducted during 2007–08 include a review of clearance documentation and related aspects of the clearance process (i.e. the process to obtain approval for release of ABS statistics) for business surveys, and a review of the testing of the Business Continuity Plan.

The ABS has introduced a new strategy for internal reviews, which will increase the management focus on reviews classed as strategic or major.

## ABS trial of quality reviews

Quality reviews involve forming small cross-functional teams (with methodological, systems and operational expertise) to conduct an intensive review of a specific issue over a short period of time. Quality reviews will provide an additional tool for ABS managers to examine an aspect of their work in a specialist area.

## Fraud control

As required by the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines, the Australian Statistician has certified that the ABS has prepared appropriate fraud risk assessments and fraud control plans, and has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection procedures and processes that meet the specific needs of the ABS and comply with the guidelines.

The ABS Fraud Control Plan was reviewed in the first half of 2008. This showed the ABS has a relatively low exposure to fraud, but that there were some aspects where mitigation actions could be taken to provide increased protections. Progress will be monitored and reported to the Audit Committee over the coming year.

## Security of premises

The ABS relies on the trust and confidence of data providers to operate effectively and to fulfil the ABS mission statement.

The security of ABS premises and information technology environment is one aspect of maintaining that trust and confidence and is key to minimising risks in a number of areas, including fraud.

All ABS premises are physically secured against unauthorised access. Entry is through electronically controlled access systems activated by individually coded access cards, and monitored by closed circuit television. Areas of the ABS producing particularly sensitive data, such as main economic indicators, are subject to further physical security measures.

The ABS computer network has a secure gateway, which allows connection to some Internet services only. The secure gateway has been established in accordance with Australian Government guidelines and is subject to annual accreditation by the National Communications and Computer Security Advisory Authority, Defence Signals Directorate.

Internal access to ABS computing systems is based on personal identifiers that are password protected. Databases are only accessible by approved users. The computer systems are regularly monitored and usage audited. There were no unauthorised access incidents into the ABS computing systems during 2007–08.

Additional access control systems are used to protect any data designated 'sensitive'. Access to sensitive data is only granted under the authority of area line management (the 'owners' of the data), on the basis that access is required by the staff member to carry out their duties.

Included in the ABS strategic audit plan is an ongoing program of security audits and reviews of computer systems and the physical environment.

## External scrutiny

The ABS is subject to external scrutiny from a range of bodies. These include the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC), and other advisory groups, which comment on the ABS work program. For more information on ASAC, please refer to Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS.

There are a range of bodies established by the Australian Government that can examine the operations of the ABS. The ABS assisted in providing information to the Commonwealth Auditor General and the Commonwealth Ombudsman during 2007–08.

ABS assistance with the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) studies is detailed below, and ABS obligations under Freedom of Information are examined in Appendix 5. Information on submissions made to Parliamentary Committees, and documents tabled in Parliament by the ABS are available in the Online Appendix (for more information see Online Appendix 3).

There were no adverse comments relating to the ABS from the Commonwealth Auditor General, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees, or courts or tribunals during 2007–08.

## Australian National Audit Office

The ABS has input into ANAO studies in a number of ways:

- ◆ the ABS provided assistance with the ANAO's performance audit on Proof of Identity for Accessing Centrelink Payments, in relation to methodological issues associated with sample selection for the audit and estimation work undertaken on the sample results
- ◆ the ABS also provided conceptual advice to the ANAO on the ABS' Government Finance Statistics manual, which was requested in relation to an ANAO performance audit on the preparation of the Tax Expenditure Statement
- ◆ the ABS participated in Australian Government Agencies Management of their Website, and
- ◆ the ABS was surveyed as part of Cross Portfolio Performance Audit on Green Office Procurement and Sustainable Office Management.

## Privacy

As an Australian Government department, the ABS must comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the associated Information Privacy Principles, which govern the way personal information should be collected, stored, used and disclosed. These obligations cover information on staff, clients and respondents. They are in addition to the protection of confidentiality of data provided by respondents from the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. For more information see Chapter 10, Provider/respondent relationships.

The ABS has a privacy officer who, providing the perspective of a privacy advocate, advises on privacy issues internally, and monitors the external environment to keep up-to-date on privacy issues that could impact upon ABS operations.

The ABS maintains a close relationship with the Australian Government's Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC), advising the Commissioner regularly of the ABS forward work program, attending OPC quarterly privacy officer network meetings, and seeking advice on any new ABS initiatives about which privacy advocates may have concerns. Every year the ABS contributes to the Commissioner's Personal Information Digest, which is published to inform the general public of the types of personal information that Government departments hold.

The ABS contributed to the Australian Law Reform Commission's Review of the *Privacy Act 1988*, making a submission on aspects of the review potentially impacting on the ABS' statistical work, and following this with further discussions with the review team.



# chapter 18

## Management of human resources

### Introduction

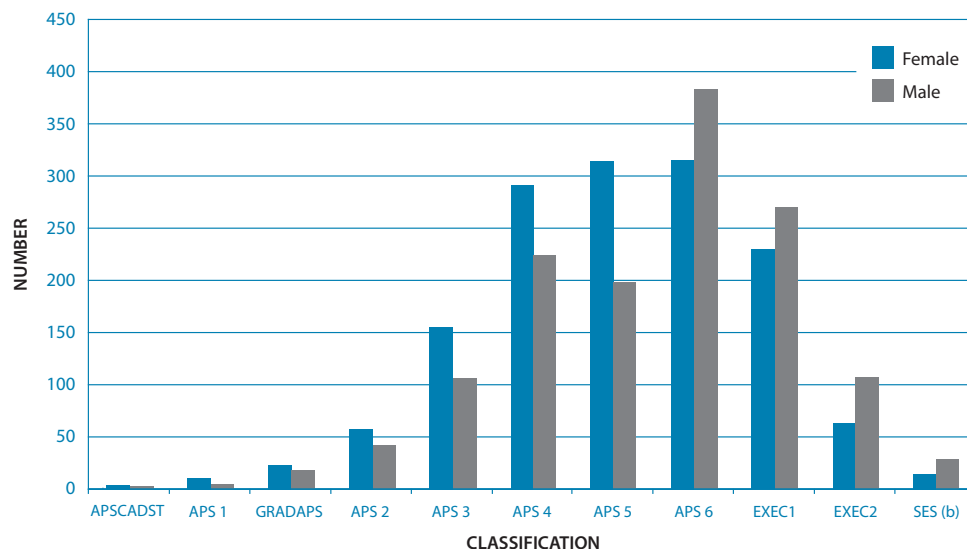
The ABS depends on the combined efforts of capable and motivated employees to achieve its objectives. The ABS needs: employees who understand Australia's evolving information needs, and can assist the ABS to satisfy those needs; employees who understand the changes to the environment in which the ABS operates, and can help the ABS to adapt to those changes; and employees with both professional competence and a commitment to both Australian Public Service (APS) and ABS values.

Human resource management is a critical function within the ABS, as it is key to ensuring the attraction and retention of a workforce that is skilled to deliver the work program.

As at 30 June 2008, there were 3,024 staff employed at the ABS under the *Public Service Act 1999* 1,999–1,449 males and 1,575 females. This includes operative, paid inoperative and unpaid inoperative staff. The ABS had 2,873 operative and paid inoperative staff, as at 30 June 2008. There were also 623 staff employed under the Regulation 3 of the Statistics Regulations, and appointed as authorised officers for the purpose of the *Census and Statistics Act* under Section 16 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, to assist with data collection—mostly household survey interviewers.

Graph 18.1 presents the profile of ABS staff by employment classification and sex. Table 18.1 presents the location and type of employment for operative and paid inoperative ABS staff. Staff employed under the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (interviewers), and 151 unpaid inoperative staff are excluded from the data below.

Graph 18.1: *Employment Classification by sex, 30 June 2008(a)*



(a) Operative and paid inoperative staff.

(b) Includes Statistician (statutory appointment).

Table 18.1: Number of ABS staff by location and status, at 30 June 2008(a)

	Ongoing		Non-ongoing		Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
Central office (ACT)	1358	221	13	76	1668
NSW	229	48	2	31	310
Vic	196	40	1	4	241
Qld	111	27	-	-	138
WA	149	18	21	4	192
SA	127	45	2	4	178
Tas	83	18	-	-	101
NT	29	5	-	-	34
ACT	10	1	-	-	11
Total	2292	423	39	119	2873

(a) Includes operative and paid inoperative staff.

There are now 15 women in the Senior Executive Service (SES), with women continuing to constitute over one-third of the SES.

Table 18.2: Number of ABS Senior Executive Staff (SES) by level, sex and year (a)

SES Level				Sex		Total
Year (at 30 June)	1	2	3	Male	Female	
2005	26	6	2	26	8	34
2006	25	6	2	22	11	33
2007	28	5	2	22	13	35
2008	33	6	3	27	15	42

(a) Includes only operative, substantive SES officers as at 30 June, but excludes the Australian Statistician, who is a statutory office holder appointed under the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

## Australian Public Service Values in the ABS

The Australian Public Service (APS) Values are actively promoted and strongly adhered to throughout the ABS. At the highest level, the ABS Mission Statement reflects the apolitical nature of the APS, as well as its commitment to the provision of comprehensive, accurate and timely advice.

The ABS also has long established agency values that are fundamental to the ABS performing its role as an independent provider of statistical information. The ABS Values directly relate to, and are congruent with, APS Values. These values are strongly upheld by employees and include:

- ♦ integrity—data, analysis and interpretation are always apolitical with the highest standards of integrity applied

- ◆ service—the ABS understands its service role and seeks to understand and assist its clients' statistical needs
- ◆ professionalism—the professionalism of employees is actively developed to ensure the ABS has the technical and leadership skills required for the future
- ◆ relevance—all information provided by the ABS is relevant in terms of timeliness and content
- ◆ trust of providers—the ABS maintains provider trust by adhering to the highest level of data protection and privacy standards, and
- ◆ access for all—the ABS ensures its statistics can be easily accessed and used by the community, business and governments.

The importance of the APS Values is reflected and integrated into the day-to-day management and operations of the ABS. For example, the obligations of employees to uphold the APS and ABS Values and abide by the APS Code of Conduct are:

- ◆ promoted in training courses from induction through to senior management development programs
- ◆ actively applied through human resource processes
- ◆ supported by guidelines, policies and procedures, which themselves take account of the APS Values
- ◆ reflected throughout ABS corporate material, which is readily accessible to employees through the ABS Intranet, and
- ◆ promoted via posters and the distribution of bookmarks to all employees and new recruits.

All employees are expected to include key deliverables in their performance agreements, which articulate the expectation that they will adhere to and promote the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and consistently behave in an ethical and professional way.

## Recruitment

Effective and targeted recruitment continues to be a priority area for the ABS. In 2007–08, the ABS responded to challenges from a tightening labour market and through improved branding and marketing activities, increased the agency's visibility as an 'employer of choice' within the Australian Public Service.

Recruitment projects in 2007–08 included:

- ◆ implementing recommendations from recruitment reviews and audits that were undertaken to ensure well-defined and streamlined recruitment practices, processes and systems
- ◆ acquiring and planning the implementation of an e-recruitment system to further improve the efficiency of ABS recruitment processes
- ◆ reviewing and updating the ABS' intranet recruitment information to enable easier access and understanding for staff, and
- ◆ strengthening partnerships with business areas across the ABS to enable improvements in recruitment services.

For the future, new processes and systems can be expected to provide an environment that supports more informed decision making, through improved reporting capability and enhanced recruitment operations.

## Graduate recruitment

Graduate recruitment forms a significant part of the ABS' succession planning and entry level recruitment strategy. Recruitment to the ABS Graduate Program has become progressively more challenging, as competition increases.

The ABS welcomed 84 graduates into the 2008 ABS Graduate Program.

The 2009 graduate campaign is well underway, with successful applicants expected to commence with the ABS in January 2009. The ABS has implemented the following initiatives to improve the 2009 graduate recruitment campaign:

- ◆ continued use of the ABS graduate employment brand
 

The graduate employment brand depicts a vibrant, youthful and contemporary workplace, and communicates the message that the ABS offers a diversity of work and opportunity for people with a range of qualifications. This branding was used in national press and online advertising, and resulted in 1,135 completed applications for the 2009 ABS Graduate Program.
- ◆ increased presence at university career fairs, which also contributed to the volume of applications for 2009
- ◆ continued use of and improvements to the usability of the e-recruitment system, and
- ◆ an increased focus on improvements to the selection process.

This included a successful pilot 'Meet and Greet' session at Central and South Australia Offices in May 2008, aimed at engaging applicants with the ABS early in the recruitment process. During these sessions, applicants were addressed by former ABS graduates and participated in a group testing session. Interviews were scheduled shortly after this session.



*2008 ABS graduates at the welcome event in January 2008.*

## 2008 ABS graduates

Here is what the 2008 ABS graduates have to say:

- ♦ *The ABS Graduate Program provides a good transition from university to the workplace. I find my work here in the ABS interesting as well as challenging, which is exactly what I was looking for in the career that I envisioned for myself.* — Joe, Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Graduate.
- ♦ *Starting a new job can be a nerve wracking experience, but my anxiety quickly evaporated when I began the ABS graduate program. The training is comprehensive and I am able to apply what I learned at university to my day-to-day work. I have responsibility and independence, but also a great deal of support, which is ideal for a graduate position.* — Jenny, Methodology and Data Management Division Graduate.
- ♦ *As a graduate fresh out of university, I have found myself surrounded by interesting work and people at the ABS. My confidence has grown and my professional skills have improved as I am continually challenged to learn more about the vast areas my team deals with. My role involves a high level of responsibility and independence, and my colleagues are more than happy to provide support.* — Wolfgang, Macroeconomics and Integration Group Graduate.
- ♦ *My role combines the intellectual stimulation I loved about university with the responsibility and respect that comes when working with peers who are passionate about their contribution to quality social statistics. It is a good feeling to know that what you are working towards will affect policy and research and it is always fun to be one of the first that finds out how Australia is going.* — Nikki, Social Statistics Group Graduate.
- ♦ *Since joining the ABS as a graduate, I have been able to take responsibility for a range of interesting and meaningful projects within Corporate Services. I have felt that my contributions have been well recognised by my colleagues and I have been made to feel valued during my rotations. It is satisfying to know that my work has positive impact on the rest of the organisation.* — Anna, Corporate Services Division Graduate.

## Workforce planning

Continued emphasis was given to the strategic development of the ABS' workforce. The ABS Workforce Planning Framework and Plan were developed during 2007–08. The ABS focus is to maintain and develop a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce, using development, renewal, deployment and retention strategies. The priorities identified in the workforce plan resulted from extensive consultation with employees. The framework considers the current and future workforce requirements, and takes into account known internal and external factors. This leads to a direction setting vision for people management within the ABS, culminating in three key workforce goals.

<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Ensure the ABS workforce remains skilled and competent</b>
	Deploying a highly skilled workforce plays an essential role in ensuring the ABS has the capability to meet current and future demands. In order to employ the right number of people in the right places at the right time, the ABS must firstly understand, and secondly become responsive to, changes in its staffing profile.
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Align workforce planning with other ABS planning activities</b>
	Linking workforce planning with the agency's financial and business planning activities (at different levels within the ABS) to ensure it has the capacity to more effectively understand and project its business requirements.
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Realign ABS systems and processes</b>
	Support for the repositioning of some operational human resource functions will require considerable investment by the ABS. Going forward, the ABS will focus on bringing its current systems into closer alignment with its business priorities, and continue to look for efficiencies in its operations.

## Consultation in the ABS

The ABS is committed to communication, cooperation and effective consultation with employees and, where they choose, their representatives, about matters that affect their workplace.

The ABS consultative framework includes:

- ◆ line managers, who are important conduits for communication and consultation in the workplace
- ◆ 14 consultative forums, which provide employees with a mechanism to participate in deliberations and decision making processes on issues affecting their jobs and workplace
- ◆ employee representatives meeting with management as necessary, and
- ◆ an annual ABS National Forum, which includes participants from each consultative forum, management and employee organisations.

The 2008 National Forum was held in March. The key topics of discussion were:

- ◆ future directions for the ABS and the ABS budget situation
- ◆ occupational health and safety
- ◆ progress with ABS collective agreements
- ◆ consultation in the ABS
- ◆ ABS work patterns
- ◆ national staff surveys
- ◆ actions to address bullying and harassment, and
- ◆ reducing ABS environmental impact.

## Agreement making

The ABS has two collective agreements in place, which cover the majority of employees—the ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009 and the ABS Interviewers Certified Agreement 2005–2008. Both agreements were certified prior to the amendment of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* by the *Workplace Relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Act 2005*.

In early 2008, consultation sessions were conducted to seek feedback on the issues to be considered for the next ABS Interviewers collective agreement. At the time of writing this report, the content of the agreement was being considered. In addition, preparatory work is underway to develop a new collective agreement for ABS office-based employees by early 2009.

As required by Australian Government policy, Australian Workplace Agreements are no longer offered to employees. All current agreements will be progressively replaced over the next financial year.

Details of the number of employees covered by a Certified Agreement, an AWA, or a determination as at 30 June 2008 are as follows:

ABS employees covered by an Australian Workplace Agreement:

- ◆ Senior Executive Service (SES)—45 (includes all SES, not just substantive, operative SES staff referred to in table 18.2)
- ◆ Non-SES employees—32
- ◆ ABS employees covered by the ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009 : 2947
- ◆ ABS employees covered by the ABS Interviewers Certified Agreement 2005–2008: 620

*Table 18.3: Salary ranges by classification as at 30 June 2008(a)*

Classification	Minimum (\$)	Maximum (\$)
Australian Public Service (APS) level		
APS1 (Adult)	35,186	38,706
APS2	39,823	43,804
APS3	45,355	49,889
APS4	51,058	56,162
APS5	56,949	62,643
APS6	64,777	71,254
Executive Officer Level (EL)		
EL1	79,277	87,204
EL2	100,228	110,250
Senior Executive Service (SES) Level		
SES Band 1	121,634	149,062
SES Band 2	149,062	180,180
SES Band 3	180,180	na (b)

(a) The APS1 to EL2 salary ranges took effect from 26 June 2008. SES Band 1 to SES Band 3 salary ranges took effect from 1 January 2008.

(b) na – not applicable (as there is not a maximum level for this classification).

## Performance management in the ABS

The ABS understands that without access to the ideas and knowledge of its employees, capacity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, or to pursue innovative ideas, is limited.

Therefore, to allow the ABS to meet the challenges of the future, a more proactive approach to performance management was introduced. To assist employees with the transition, a new style of performance agreement for use across all levels was implemented in May 2008. The new performance agreement was designed to:

- ◆ clearly identify and measure the value-added personal contribution that employees bring to their roles over and above their responsibilities for delivering their section's forward work program
- ◆ facilitate performance discussions that focus on 'how' we achieve, not just 'what' we achieve, and
- ◆ assist employees to identify personal and professional development opportunities.

The new performance agreement provides an opportunity for all employees to think about the way they do things, as well as challenging them to demonstrate insight and thinking beyond current practice. This has never been more important, as the ABS looks for ways to reduce expenditure, increase business performance and identify productivity savings.

## The ABS salary system

The ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009 outlines the salary arrangements for ABS employees.

In 2007–08, salary increases for APS1 to EL2 employees were paid from 28 June 2007, with two components to the salary increases:

- i. A general salary increase of 3.5% for all employees rated as *Effective* or better, where the minimum and maximum amounts of the salary ranges were increased by 3.5%, and
- ii. A performance based increase:
  - ◆ equivalent to a one pay point movement (2% of the minimum of the relevant salary range) for all employees rated as *Effective* or better, subject to the maximum of the salary range not being exceeded, and
  - ◆ for employees rated as *Outstanding*, a one-off lump sum payment of 2% of the minimum of the relevant salary range after the general salary increase was applied.

During 2007–08, the total amount paid as one-off lump sum bonus payments was \$437,541. It was paid to 329 employees.

Table 18.4 shows the performance pay component of the salary increases paid in 2007–08, including pay point movements and bonus payments.



Table 18.4: Performance pay by level

Classification	Number (a)	Aggregate (\$)	Average (\$)
<b>Australian Public Service (APS) level</b>			
APS1	7	2,040	291
APS2	27	5,390	200
APS3	310	204,108	658
APS4	544	404,670	744
APS5	534	433,400	812
APS6	763	628,504	824
<b>Executive Officer Level (EL)</b>			
EL1	504	407,512	809
EL2	170	185,952	1,094
<b>Senior Executive Service (SES) level</b>			
SES1, SES2, SES3	44	111,023	2,523
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,903</b>	<b>2,382,599</b>	

(a) The number of staff represents all staff who received performance pay during 2007–08. As a result, the total number of staff in this table is different to the total number of staff as at 30 June 2008, shown in Table 18.1.

## Reward and recognition

The ABS operates a Recognition and Reward Scheme, which recognises exceptional one-off achievements by individuals and work groups. Rewards may be made in the form of certificates, hospitality (such as work group lunches), prepaid vouchers and cash bonuses. Total ABS expenditure for the scheme in 2007–08 was \$78,498.45.

## Learning and development

Statistical, personal leadership and management and information technology training activities across the ABS are designed to enhance organisational capabilities, ensuring the ABS can respond to business challenges. Staff training attendance over the past 12 months has decreased from an average of 4.4 training days in 2006–07 to 3.6 days in 2007–08 (see table 18.5). The increase in average training days in 2005–06 primarily reflects the additional training associated with the 2006 Census.

The ABS has continued to invest in its development of managers and leaders for the future, with the delivery of the ABS Leadership Program during February–June 2008. This program was targeted to EL2 – SESB1, and included two participants from Statistics New Zealand.

To supplement the suite of manager/leadership development programs offered on the 2007–08 national training calendar, specific modules were developed and delivered for managers wishing to update and refresh their skills. These included modules such as Introduction to Policy

Departments, Leading Teams and Emotional Intelligence for Managers. This approach will be continued into next year, with a series of sessions for line managers envisaged to raise awareness of the breadth of their responsibilities and resources available to them.

*Table 18.5: ABS staff training (a)*

	Total ABS Operative Staff (b)	Attendance Days	Average Training Days
2003–04	2,800	10,431	3.7
2004–05	2,630	12,562	4.8
2005–06	2,865	16,163 (c)	5.6
2006–07	3,065	13,491 (c)(d)	4.4
2007–08	2,733	9,907	3.6

(a) Excludes on-the-job training.

(b) Comprises full time and part time staff at their full time equivalent.

(c) Figures revised down since first published, as more accurate information has since become available.

(d) Excludes Census Data Processing Centre Training.

The Organisational, People and Learning System (OPALS) is now well established, with about 60% of ABS employees having completed their capability profile. The information collated in this system is now being used by divisions and regions to determine training needs and develop staff utilisation strategies. A review of OPALS was conducted in 2007–08 to assess the impact of limitations in reporting capability within the system. This review involved discussions with focus groups in central and regional offices, as well as a questionnaire available to all employees. The review is expected to be finalised early in 2008–09.

The ABS is committed to providing opportunities for all employees to develop and enhance their skills and qualifications, to meet current and future skill requirements in line with corporate goals and individual career development. As part of this commitment, the Study Support Program offers paid study leave and financial assistance to approved students. Since reintroduction in January 2006, the Study Support Program has received in excess of 480 applications. A review of the Study Support guidelines was completed in December 2007, with changes made to the layout, making information easier to access and understand. An internal review of the program is in progress, with results due to be released to employees in late 2008.

Statistical skills continue to be further developed through the National Statistical Training Institute, established to provide a cohesive, statistical skills development program for ABS employees, as well as programs conducted in partnership with a number of universities, including the Australian National University, the University of Wollongong, the University of Queensland and Adelaide University. In addition, negotiations are underway to further strengthen ties with the universities, to provide greater access to statistical and mathematical courses for ABS officers. A strategy for increasing the coordination of, and capacity for, delivering statistical training to external clients and partners is being developed to support statistical leadership goals (more information on the National Statistical Training Institute can be found in, Chapter 9, Engagement with users and producers of statistics).

# Occupational health and safety

The ABS is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and meeting its responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (OH&S Act) and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act). The ABS continues to honour its commitments under the ABS Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Policy and Agreement. This provides a framework for OH&S in the ABS and, under a statement of commitment with Comcare, aims to significantly improve OH&S outcomes by 2012.

A dedicated section in the ABS central office, complemented by representatives in all regional offices, ensures the requirements of the OH&S Act and the SRC Act are met. A network of OH&S committees is the vehicle for consultation on OH&S issues affecting employees. Following recent changes to the OH&S Act, the ABS has developed, and is about to consult with employees on, revised Health and Safety Management Arrangements, which are scheduled for implementation in late 2008.

During 2007–08, 62 employees were selected or elected as Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) under the OH&S Act, with 24 receiving training during the year. There were 10 notifiable accidents/dangerous occurrences reported by the ABS, to Comcare in 2007–08. Notifiable accidents/dangerous occurrences may or may not be investigated by Comcare (see below).

## Investigations

During 2007–08, no Comcare OH&S investigations were undertaken in the ABS and no Provisional Improvement Notices, Improvement Notices or Prohibition Notices were issued.

## Workplace injuries and illness

The ABS continued to invest in a risk management approach to the prevention of work-related illness and injuries. Key features of this approach included:

- ◆ the annual national hazards inspection program, which involves OH&S inspections of all ABS workplaces
- ◆ increased employee awareness and compliance reporting of hazards in the workplace
- ◆ investigations of accident, incidents and near misses in the workplace, and
- ◆ immediate preventative interventions to address pain, discomfort or other signs of potential injury reported by employees.

A comparison of workers' compensation claims for the periods 2003–04 to 2007–08 is detailed in table 18.6.

Table 18.6: ABS Premium Group Claims Incidence (number)

Financial Year	Number of Claims
2003–04	114
2004–05	100
2005–06	94
2006–07(a)	220
2007–08	29

Data Source: Comcare Customer Information Service

(a) The increased incidence of claims in 2006–07 is largely due to 113 claims resulting from the 2006 Census enumeration.



*The Australian Statistician, Brian Pink, and members of the ABS Executive help to raise \$4,205.25 for Breast Cancer Awareness in October 2007.*

## Rehabilitation

The ABS implements early intervention and rehabilitation in both compensable and non-compensable cases. Training for five ABS rehabilitation case managers and OH&S Coordinators was provided during the year, to enhance ABS rehabilitation performance. Training for managers has been improved through the upgrading of OH&S modules of ABS management courses.

## Comcare premium

Comcare provided notification that the ABS' premium rate for 2008–09 has been set at 1.42% of total salary (including GST). The details of the ABS and the agency pool average premium rates are contained in Table 18.7.

*Table 18.7: Comcare workers' compensation premium rate (% of wage and salary expenditure)*

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
<b>ABS</b>	1.33	1.78	1.43	1.30	1.69	1.42
<b>All agencies combined average</b>	1.43	1.67	1.77	1.77	1.55	1.36

## Achievements

Measures taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees during 2007–08 included:

- ◆ ongoing review and development of the ABS' OH&S policy framework based on risk management principles
- ◆ education and awareness of employees and managers on their OH&S responsibilities, preventing injuries and OH&S risk management
- ◆ the conduct of the third annual National Hazard Inspection Program resulted in greater awareness by employees and managers of their OH&S roles and responsibilities, identified major hazards and enabled risk mitigation strategies to be effectively implemented
- ◆ the use and continual improvement of systems to promote early intervention and improve the management of rehabilitation in the ABS
- ◆ implementation of recent legislative changes in the OH&S Act and SRC Act into ABS business practices and processes, and
- ◆ the on-going implementation of the ABS National Health Promotion Program, which is aimed at reinforcing broader community health messages targeted at the National Health Priority area risk factors of:
  - ◆ asthma
  - ◆ cardiovascular health
  - ◆ mental health
  - ◆ arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions
  - ◆ obesity, and
  - ◆ diabetes.



### ABS National Health Promotion Program

During 2007-08, the ABS developed and implemented a National Health Promotion Calendar and facilitated National Health and Safety Month during October 2007, with 1,423 (40%) employees participating nationally in many health seminars, activities and events.

Other events during the year included seminars on mental health, healthy sleep and men's health, as well as the provision of cardiovascular disease information.

A national flu vaccination program was conducted in April 2008, with 636 (17%) employees participating.

# chapter 19

## Management of information technology

### Introduction

Information technology is fundamental to the ABS fulfilling its mission of leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service. The effective management of information technology allows the ABS to increase access to statistics, ensure the security of sensitive data and statistics, and provide an effective statistical service.


The ABS' Technology Services Division works closely with all areas of the ABS, and uses advances in information technology and business improvement techniques to enhance the capability, efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. The division also provides a nationwide computing and communications infrastructure, to support the ABS in all its locations including central office, regional offices and for the interviewer workforce working from home.

Under the guidance of the Information Resource Management Committee (see Chapter 17, Corporate Governance), the ABS has continued to manage information technology facilities effectively and efficiently. The Technology Services Division contributes in these key areas:

- ◆ building information technology in a strategic manner, to support the ABS mission
- ◆ supporting an effective statistical work program with the appropriate technology
- ◆ evolving the ABS technology environment and related services to enhance productivity, innovation, collaboration with others, and job satisfaction
- ◆ enhancing our professional practices to assist the ABS to align with broader government practice, project management, enterprise architecture, business process improvement and capital planning
- ◆ working with business areas to ensure that the ABS and the National Statistical Service (NSS) have the technology required for the future, and
- ◆ collaborating with other organisations to support the NSS.

During 2007–08, the Technology Services Division has assisted in the advancement of the ABS statistical work in the following areas:

- ◆ publication and management of the 2006 Census output facilities on the ABS website
- ◆ improvements in the re-use of common infrastructure solutions to meet the processing requirements of household surveys
- ◆ developments to assist in survey management and design
- ◆ increased automation of statistical techniques such as editing, estimation and imputation, and
- ◆ enhanced capture of quality metrics to aid the analysis of statistics.



Specific projects worked on by the Technology Services Division during 2007–08 include:

- ◆ redevelopment of the ABS Business Register
- ◆ release of the Quality Infrastructure System
- ◆ the Publication Production Workbench e-Magazine
- ◆ the Questionnaire Development Tool
- ◆ statistical systems improvements for backcasting, imputation and editing
- ◆ business continuity for Human Resources and Financial Systems, and
- ◆ business process analysis and re-engineering projects.

## Key developments and achievements

Achievements during the year included: enhanced video conferencing, telephony and internet services; a strategy for the use of productivity tools in the ABS; the release of Open Office to all ABS employees and the establishment of the Working@ABS initiative.

In relation to professional practices, a significant effort in 2007–08 was the development of the ABS strategic capital plan. Effort was also focused around the software development process, business process improvement, project management and communities of practice, to enhance the capabilities of staff.

The ABS Technology Research Portfolio ensures the organisation is well placed to understand technology opportunities and challenges, and is able to recognise the potential impacts and issues arising from rapid adoption of technology by businesses and the community.

The ABS continues to lead collaborative efforts on the National Data Network (NDN) in partnership with a number of other agencies. The NDN platform enables sharing and integration of statistical data relevant to policy and research. During 2007–08, a strategic, architectural and operational review was commenced, to identify the development work that will need to be undertaken to meet future cross-jurisdictional collaborative developments.

Significant NDN collaboration included pilot projects undertaken with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in relation to the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS). This collaboration demonstrated the ABS' capabilities in data and metadata management.

The ABS also hosted visits from a number of statistical organisations in other countries to share approaches in managing information technology, including: Statistics New Zealand; Lao National Statistics Center and the US National Cancer Institute.

## Working@ABS



During 2007–08, the Working@ABS initiative was established by the Technology Services Division. The initiative aims to improve the knowledge management and personal productivity of ABS employees. For example, during 2007–08, the Working@ABS initiative included the introduction of email self-release, an improved instant messaging system and the rollout of new phones.

The outcomes sought for all ABS staff are:

- ◆ an improved user experience aimed at enabling a more productive and efficient workplace
- ◆ an improved and enhanced ABS desktop platform and supporting policies and guidelines
- ◆ improved agility and responsiveness in the delivery of new initiatives, and
- ◆ enhanced collaboration within the ABS and externally.



# chapter 20

## Management of assets

The ABS' assets are integral to the cost-effective conduct of its business, and are part of the combination of resources required to enable delivery of services. This Chapter outlines the asset management principles, including the approach to purchasing, used by the ABS during 2007–08.

The ABS directly manages its non-financial assets in accordance with Chief Executive Instructions and Australian Accounting Standards. Most of the assets are intangible (internally generated software), valued at \$95.6 million in 2007–08, with tangible assets (property plant and equipment) forming the remainder, valued at \$50.4 million. Tangible asset values are maintained with the assistance of an independent valuer.

### Asset management in the ABS

#### Principles

Overall, the ABS asset management principles are designed to ensure that asset management practices and decisions support the service delivery requirements and business demands of the organisation, and that capital expenditure decisions address the full life cycle costs, benefits and risks of the assets.

The ABS' approach to asset management encompasses the following principles:

- ◆ asset management activities are undertaken within an integrated government asset management framework
- ◆ service delivery needs to guide asset management practices and decisions
- ◆ asset planning and management are integrated with corporate and business plans, as well as budgetary and reporting processes
- ◆ capital expenditure decisions are based on evaluations of alternatives that take into account full life cycle costs, benefits and risks of assets, and
- ◆ ownership, control, accountability and reporting requirements for assets are established, clearly communicated and implemented.

#### Strategic issues

The major strategic issue currently being addressed with respect to ABS assets is the effective management of its information and technology assets. The current strategies to manage these investments are:

- ◆ using strategic direction and oversight by a senior executive committee
- ◆ enhancing and/or replacing existing assets, on a rolling program, where justified by business demands
- ◆ using the ABS project management framework and governance arrangements for projects involving information technology, and
- ◆ implementing an active internal auditing program.

## Asset measurement

The ABS maintains an asset register to address management, statutory reporting and user requirements.

The ABS' assets are integral to the conduct of its business, and are part of the combination of resources required to enable cost effective service delivery.

The asset register underpins planning policies, analysis of financial programs, capitalisation, and reviews of performance against defined objectives.

For recognition as an asset, the ABS has an expenditure capitalisation threshold of \$2,000 for general assets and \$1,000 for information and technology assets, including software. Asset expenditure greater than, or equal to, these amounts are capitalised and recorded on the assets register.

## Purchasing

### Purchasing and competitive tendering and contracting

The ABS undertakes a wide variety of procurement and contracting activities, with the majority of purchases being classed as low value and low complexity.

The ABS conducts its procurement and contracting activities in accordance with Chief Executive Instructions and the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines. The ABS advertises an annual procurement plan on AusTender, and the plan is reviewed and updated as required throughout the year. The ABS has a centralised area of expertise, which provides procurement and contracting support to operational areas, and provides direct support for more complex procurement projects. Information on procurement policy and practices is disseminated to staff through an internal procurement portal.

Through the use of efficient processes and effective application of the ABS and Australian Government policies and principles, the ABS is satisfied its approach to market testing and contracting is highly effective, resulting in value for money outcomes for the ABS. The ABS continues to invest in developing procurement skills and reviewing processes, to ensure efficiency and value for money outcomes are continued. During 2007–08, the ABS released revised Chief Executive Instructions for procurement. These were reviewed following the release of the Management Advisory Committee report, 'Reducing Red Tape in the Australian Public Service'.

The ABS has not undertaken any competitive tendering and contracting activities during the year that have resulted in the contracting out of government activities previously performed by the ABS.

Information relating to expenditure on contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website <<http://www.tenders.gov.au>>.

### Exempt contracts

During the 2007–08 financial year, the ABS did not exempt any contracts from publication by AusTender, under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

# chapter 21

## Access for people with disabilities

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) is currently being reviewed. The reporting requirements for 2007–08 will remain unchanged, except for the Employer Role. Reporting requirements under the Employer Role have been transferred from the CDS to the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). From 1 July 2007, agencies only report on the Employer Role activities through the APSC's State of the Service agency survey and not agencies' annual reports.

[from <http://www.facsia.gov.au/disability/cds/default.htm>]

### Commonwealth Disability Strategy

Under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy framework, the ABS has developed the ABS Disability Action Plan as a public statement of commitment to provide:

1. Access to ABS products and services for clients with disabilities, and
2. Equal employment opportunity for employees with disabilities.

The Disability Action Plan consolidates policies and programs and is a mechanism to assist in the prevention of discrimination on the basis of disability. The plan includes a checklist to assist all ABS employees in the prevention of disability discrimination.

This section assesses the ABS' performance against the indicators set out in the Commonwealth Disability Strategy.

### Measuring disability

The ABS has three measures of disability including the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), the ABS Short Disability Module and the Census of Population and Housing. The surveys differ in methodology, but are conceptually related to each other.

Of the three measures, the SDAC, with a 75-question set, provides the largest and most comprehensive collection of disability data on the Australian population. Information is collected on three population groups—people with a disability, older people (aged 60 years and over) and people who provide assistance to others because of a disability or the effects of old age. The SDAC was last conducted in 2003 and plans for the 2009 collection continued during 2007–08.

The Short Disability Module comprises a 12-question set based on the SDAC. The module was developed to be incorporated into social surveys, so that disability can be investigated alongside other socioeconomic factors.

For the first time, the 2006 Census of Population and Housing included four questions on disability. The variable 'core activity need for assistance' was designed to collect information on people who needed assistance with the core activities of self care, mobility and communication because of a disability, long-term health problem (lasting six months or more) or the effects of old age. The population of interest relates most to those defined as being severely or profoundly disabled in the SDAC. The findings of the 2006 Census of Population and Housing were released during the 2007–08 financial year (for more information see <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/census>)

Table 21.1: Commonwealth Disability Strategy—Provider Role

Performance Indicator	Assessment
1. Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance.	<p>The ABS operates in accordance with the Australian Government Information Management Office guidelines relating to accessibility for visually impaired users and is working to ensure that the ABS website meets the requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</p> <p>The ABS is committed to the development of a website that is accessible to people with vision impairment. However, due to technological limitations, it is not possible to make the website entirely accessible in a cost effective manner. This limitation means that some tables, products, or parts of the website, may be less accessible to some visually impaired users.</p> <p>If any of the web products are not suitably accessible, the ABS will make arrangements for translation of the product into a more appropriate format. This service is provided on request and at no additional cost to the user.</p>
2. Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer and service standards, which address accessibility for people with disabilities.	The <i>ABS Service Delivery Charter</i> describes the relationship between the ABS and users of its products and services.
3. Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, are in place to address concerns raised about performance.	The <i>ABS Service Delivery Charter</i> outlines the complaints and grievance mechanisms in place to address concerns about the ABS' performance in providing services.

# chapter 22

## Ecological and environmental sustainability

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* requires agencies to report on aspects of their performance relating to ecologically sustainable development. The ABS has two key roles in respect to this issue. The first of these is in relation to the ABS' responsibility for providing statistics on the environment and environmental issues, to enable informed decision making. The second role relates to the impact of the ABS' operations on the environment, in addition to the steps being taken by the ABS to minimise that impact.

The ABS' response to the five components of subsection 516A(6), as required by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, is described below.



*The ABS is committed to providing quality environment statistics, as well as minimising the impact of its activities on the environment.*

Component Assessment	Comment
(a) How do the activities of the organisation, and the administration of legislation by the organisation, accord with the principles of ecologically sustainable development?	<p>The ABS operates primarily in an office based environment and is increasingly moving from paper to electronic products. This is being achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the availability of free publications on the ABS website and increasing the number of publications available electronically, which continues to reduce demand for hard copies of publications</li> <li>the introduction of duplex printing and copying</li> <li>a knowledge framework, incorporating digital recordkeeping rather than paper records and automatic recordkeeping facilities for ABS workgroup databases, and</li> <li>computer assisted interviewing to replace paper forms.</li> </ul> <p>Other matters relating to ecologically sustainable development at the ABS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporation of environmental clauses as part of the tender and evaluation process in most procurement activities</li> <li>consideration of environmental issues in the market testing process for new office accommodation</li> <li>inclusion of the Green Lease Schedules in new tenancy leases, and</li> <li>the trial and introduction of a range of 'green IT' initiatives, including virtualisation of servers (where one server appears as many), to allow for more efficient use of resources and electricity savings.</li> </ul>

Component Assessment	Comment
(b) How do the outcomes specified in a relevant Appropriations Act contribute to ecologically sustainable development?	<p>The ABS receives appropriation for the purpose of producing social and economic statistics.</p> <p>The ABS' environment statistics are produced as part of both the social and economic statistics programs.</p> <p>The environment component of the economic statistics program collects and publishes environment and energy statistics, including environment accounts. The environment component is involved in the coordination of data collection, research and analysis, in addition to the implementation of international environmental accounting frameworks.</p> <p>During 2007–08, the ABS continued to release a range of publications relevant to environmental issues. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices</i> (ABS cat. no. 4602.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Water Use on Australian Farms 2004–05</i> (ABS cat. no. 4618.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Australia's Environment: Issues and Trends</i> (ABS cat. no. 4613.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Australian Social Trends</i> (ABS cat. no. 4102.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Year Book Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 1301.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms, 2004–05</i> (ABS cat. no. 4620.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Characteristics of Australia's Irrigated Farms, 2000–01 to 2003–04</i> (ABS cat. no. 4623.0)</li> <li>◆ <i>Environment and Energy News</i> (ABS cat. no. 4653.0).</li> <li>◆ <i>Research Paper: Developing An Alternative View of Electricity and Gas Supply Activity in Australia, 2003–04</i> (ABS cat. no. 4647.0.55.00)</li> <li>◆ <i>Experimental Monetary Water Account for Australia</i> (ABS cat. no. 4610.0.55.005)</li> </ul> <p>During 2007–08, the ABS developed and despatched a survey of natural resource management activities of farmers. The results of this surveys are scheduled for publication from mid 2008.</p> <p>The Agricultural Resource Management Survey was also conducted in June 2008. This survey collected both agricultural commodity and resource management practice information, in respect of the 2007–08 financial year. The results of this survey are expected to be released during 2008–09.</p>
(c) What is the effect of the organisation's activities on the environment?	<p>The operation of the ABS contributes to a range of impacts on the environment through its use of electricity, petrol, water, paper and other materials consumed and by generation of waste.</p>

Component Assessment	Comment
(d) What measures are taken by the organisation to minimise the impact of its activities on the environment?	<p>To minimise the effect of its operations on the environment, the ABS is continually improving practices by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ committing resources to develop an Environmental Management System to operate from 2008–09 onwards</li> <li>♦ reviewing energy usage and management to ensure the ABS will meet the new Australian Government targets</li> <li>♦ consuming 'green energy' wherever possible (for example, 10% of energy consumed in ABS Central Office is 'green energy')</li> <li>♦ considering property location and proximity to transport hubs during property market testing</li> <li>♦ incorporating amenities during fitout that encourage staff to save water, cycle to work, and to recycle</li> <li>♦ using re-manufactured and recycled cartridges for photocopiers, faxes and printers, and recycling used printer cartridges wherever possible</li> <li>♦ recycling paper, bottles, cans, paper and cardboard products in all offices</li> <li>♦ introducing duplex printing and copying</li> <li>♦ using paper with a 10% recycled content and exploring opportunities to increase this recycled content</li> <li>♦ increasing the number of publications available electronically</li> <li>♦ introducing digital recordkeeping, and computer assisted interviewing to replace paper forms</li> <li>♦ heavily weighting energy ratings, when making purchasing decisions for whitegoods</li> <li>♦ considering the Greenhouse Vehicle Guide (GVG) when leasing government vehicles. The 57 ABS vehicles achieved a 63% rating by the end of 2007–08.</li> <li>♦ promoting good practices amongst staff and supporting the development of Green Teams throughout the ABS</li> <li>♦ working collaboratively with building owners and managers to review and improve Australian Building Greenhouse Ratings (ABGR), and</li> <li>♦ trialling and introducing a range of 'green IT' initiatives (for example, virtualisation of servers, 'Thin Client' technology).</li> </ul>
(e) What are the mechanisms for reviewing and increasing the effectiveness of these measures?	<p>The ABS Environmental Management System is being progressively introduced. It is anticipated that ISO14001 compliance will be achieved by late 2008. Benchmarking in a number of areas of environmental concern has already been undertaken. Once fully operational, the Environmental Management System will allow the ABS to monitor and review the effectiveness of its environmental program on an ongoing basis.</p>

## ABS Green Teams

During 2007–08, the ABS Green Teams have continued to suggest and implement initiatives designed to reduce the ABS' impact on the environment, as well as help employees understand and reduce their personal impact on the environment. Green Teams have been created in Central Office and all of the regional offices. In addition, a Technical Services Division Green Team has been created, which is known as 'Green IT'.

Some of the initiatives undertaken by the Green Teams include:

- ◆ introducing and encouraging mobile phone recycling
- ◆ running the 'Push your Energy Bills Down' seminar, which was conducted by an energy expert from the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) on World Environment Day in June 2008
- ◆ developing posters with '5 easy ways to make kitchens green' and '5 easy ways to make our office green', which are updated regularly
- ◆ conducting a BYO coffee cup drive
- ◆ participating in native tree planting days
- ◆ preparing terms of reference for the conduct of Green Teams
- ◆ encouraging the reduction in paper usage and recycling
- ◆ undertaking virtual walks around states and territories and reducing the carbon footprint
- ◆ attending monthly meetings and sharing ideas and initiatives
- ◆ encouraging staff to turn off their computers after they finish work, and
- ◆ introducing the Green Team mascot, Mr Frog, designed to increase employee environmental awareness.



*The ABS' Green Team mascot, Mr Frog, has been attending 'green' functions during 2007–08.*





## section vii

### FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Treasurer

### Scope

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year ended 30 June 2008, which comprise: a Statement by the Australian Statistician and Acting Chief Financial Officer; income statement; balance sheet; statement of changes in equity; cash flow statement; schedule of commitments, schedule of contingencies and a summary of significant accounting policies; and other explanatory notes.

### *The Responsibility of the Chief Executive for the Financial Statements*

The Australian Statistician is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the Finance Minister's Orders made under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and the Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations). This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

### *Auditor's Responsibility*

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on my audit. My audit has been conducted in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are

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appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Australian Statistician, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

#### *Independence*

In conducting the audit, I have followed the independence requirements of the Australian National Audit Office, which incorporate the requirements of the Australian accounting profession.

#### Auditor's Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements of the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

- (a) have been prepared in accordance with the Finance Minister's Orders made under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, and the Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations); and
- (b) give a true and fair view of the matters required by the Finance Minister's Orders including the Australian Bureau of Statistics' financial position as at 30 June 2008 and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended.

Australian National Audit Office



John Jones  
Executive Director

Delegate of the Auditor-General  
Canberra

1 August 2008

**AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS  
STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN STATISTICIAN AND  
ACTING CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

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In our opinion, the attached financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2008 are based on properly maintained financial records and give a true and fair view of the matters required by the Finance Minister's Orders made under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, as amended.

Signed 

Brian Pink  
Australian Statistician

1 August 2008

Signed 

Debra Foggin  
Acting Chief Financial Officer

1 August 2008

# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

## INCOME STATEMENT

for the year ended 30 June 2008

		2008	2007
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000
<b>INCOME</b>			
<b>Revenue</b>			
Revenue from Government	3A	302,260	414,431
Sale of Goods and rendering of services	3B	25,599	22,968
Other revenue		197	533
<b>Total revenue</b>		<b>328,056</b>	<b>437,932</b>
<b>Gains</b>			
Net gain from sale of assets	3C	43	130
Other gains	3D	433	134
<b>Total gains</b>		<b>476</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>328,532</b>	<b>438,196</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Employee benefits	4A	220,471	294,681
Suppliers	4B	73,081	107,513
Depreciation and amortisation	4C	30,763	33,443
Finance costs	4D	351	435
Write-down and impairment of assets	4E	5,167	1,304
Other expenses		186	219
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>330,019</b>	<b>437,595</b>
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus</b>		<b>(1,487)</b>	<b>601</b>
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus attributable to the Australian Government</b>		<b>(1,487)</b>	<b>601</b>

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

# **AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS**

## **BALANCE SHEET**

*as at 30 June 2008*

		2008	2007
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Financial Assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	5A	6,806	6,435
Trade and other receivables	5B	21,951	8,509
<b>Total Financial Assets</b>		<b>28,757</b>	<b>14,944</b>
<b>Non-Financial Assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	6A,6B	50,415	51,312
Intangibles	6C	95,576	95,380
Inventories	6D	38	26
Other non-financial assets	6E	7,273	7,728
<b>Total Non-Financial Assets</b>		<b>153,302</b>	<b>154,446</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>182,059</b>	<b>169,390</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Payables</b>			
Suppliers	7A	6,739	5,876
Unearned revenue	7B	5,243	1,954
<b>Total Payables</b>		<b>11,982</b>	<b>7,830</b>
<b>Interest Bearing Liabilities</b>			
Loans	8	4,821	6,245
<b>Total Interest Bearing Liabilities</b>		<b>4,821</b>	<b>6,245</b>
<b>Lease Incentives</b>			
Lease incentives	9	26,257	26,729
<b>Total Lease Incentives</b>		<b>26,257</b>	<b>26,729</b>
<b>Provisions</b>			
Employee provisions	10A	72,246	67,720
Other provisions	10B	-	1,000
<b>Total Provisions</b>		<b>72,246</b>	<b>68,720</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>115,306</b>	<b>109,524</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>66,753</b>	<b>59,866</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Contributed equity		20,534	14,033
Reserves		18,243	16,370
Retained surpluses		27,976	29,463
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>66,753</b>	<b>59,866</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		<b>33,630</b>	<b>19,909</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		<b>148,429</b>	<b>149,481</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		<b>78,611</b>	<b>71,193</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		<b>36,695</b>	<b>38,331</b>

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY as at 30 June 2008

	Retained Earnings		Asset Revaluation Reserves		Contributed Equity/Capital		Total Equity	
	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>29,463</b>	28,862	<b>16,370</b>	16,370	<b>14,033</b>	12,491	<b>59,866</b>	57,723
<b>Income and Expenses</b>								
Revaluation increment	-	-	1,873	-	-	-	1,873	-
<b>Subtotal income and expenses recognised Directly in Equity</b>	<b>-</b>	-	<b>1,873</b>	-	<b>-</b>	-	<b>1,873</b>	-
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	(1,487)	601	-	-	-	-	(1,487)	601
<b>Total income and expenses</b>	<b>(1,487)</b>	601	<b>-</b>	-	<b>-</b>	-	<b>(1,487)</b>	601
<b>Transactions with owners</b>								
<i>Contributions by Owners</i>								
Appropriation (equity injection)	-	-	-	-	6,501	1,542	6,501	1,542
<b>Sub-total transactions with owners</b>	<b>-</b>	-	<b>-</b>	-	<b>6,501</b>	1,542	<b>6,501</b>	1,542
Transfers between equity components	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Closing balance as at 30 June</b>	<b>27,976</b>	29,463	<b>18,243</b>	16,370	<b>20,534</b>	14,033	<b>66,753</b>	59,866

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.



# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

## CASH FLOW STATEMENT

*for the year ended 30 June 2008*

	2008	2007
	Notes	\$'000
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>Cash received</b>		
Goods and services	30,995	20,378
Appropriations	289,918	416,100
Net GST received	5,359	8,622
<b>Total cash received</b>	<u>326,272</u>	<u>445,100</u>
<b>Cash used</b>		
Employees	(215,918)	(293,359)
Suppliers	(81,425)	(116,670)
Borrowing costs	(351)	(435)
<b>Total cash used</b>	<u>(297,694)</u>	<u>(410,464)</u>
<b>Net cash flows from operating activities</b>	11 <u>28,578</u>	<u>34,636</u>
<b>INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>Cash received</b>		
Proceeds from sales of property, plant and equipment	239	665
<b>Total cash received</b>	<u>239</u>	<u>665</u>
<b>Cash used</b>		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(11,043)	(14,762)
Purchase of intangibles	(22,480)	(21,130)
<b>Total cash used</b>	<u>(33,523)</u>	<u>(35,892)</u>
<b>Net cash flows used by investing activities</b>	<u>(33,284)</u>	<u>(35,227)</u>
<b>FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>Cash received</b>		
Appropriations – contributed equity	6,501	-
<b>Total cash received</b>	<u>6,501</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Cash used</b>		
Repayment of borrowings	(1,424)	(1,790)
<b>Total cash used</b>	<u>(1,424)</u>	<u>(1,790)</u>
<b>Net cash flows used by financing activities</b>	<u>5,077</u>	<u>(1,790)</u>
<b>Net decrease in cash held</b>	371	(2,381)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	6,435	8,816
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period</b>	5A <u>6,806</u>	<u>6,435</u>

The above statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

## SCHEDULE OF COMMITMENTS

as at 30 June 2008

BY TYPE	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b>Capital commitments</b>		
Property, plant and equipment <sup>1</sup>	733	2,400
<b>Total capital commitments</b>	733	2,400
<b>Other commitments</b>		
Operating leases <sup>2</sup>	228,997	220,629
Other commitments	1,797	2,924
<b>Total Other commitments</b>	230,794	223,553
Commitments receivable	(21,048)	(20,541)
<b>Net commitments by type</b>	210,479	205,412
<b>BY MATURITY</b>		
<b>Capital commitments</b>		
One year or less	733	2,400
<b>Total capital commitments</b>	733	2,400
<b>Operating lease commitments</b>		
One year or less	27,431	25,484
From one to five years	135,224	93,926
Over five years	66,342	101,219
<b>Total operating lease commitments</b>	228,997	220,629
<b>Other commitments</b>		
One year or less	1,797	2,924
<b>Total other commitments</b>	1,797	2,924
<b>Commitments receivable</b>		
One year or less	(2,724)	(2,801)
From one to five years	(12,293)	(8,539)
Over five years	(6,031)	(9,201)
<b>Total Commitments receivable</b>	(21,048)	(20,541)
<b>Net Commitments by Maturity</b>	210,479	205,412

NB: Commitments are GST inclusive where relevant.

<sup>1</sup> Plant and equipment commitments are primarily contracts for purchases of furniture and fittings for a new building.

<sup>2</sup> Operating leases included are effectively non-cancellable and comprise:

Nature of lease	General description of leasing arrangement
Leases for office accommodation	Lease payments are subject to annual increases which are either fixed as outlined in the rental agreement or in accordance with upwards movements in the Consumer Price Index. The initial periods of office accommodation leases are still current and each may be renewed for up to five years at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) option, following a one-off adjustment of rentals to current market levels.
Agreements for the provision of motor vehicles to senior executive officers	No contingent rentals exist. There are no renewal or purchase options available to the ABS.

The above schedule should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

## SCHEDULE OF CONTINGENCIES

as at 30 June 2008

Contingent assets	Claims for damages/costs		Total	
	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
Balance from previous period	-	-	-	-
New	669	-	669	-
<b>Total Contingent Assets</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>-</b>
Contingent liabilities	Claims for damages/costs		Total	
	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
Balance from previous period	4,714	3,987	4,714	3,987
New	114	-	114	-
Re-measurement	116	727	116	727
<b>Total Contingent Liabilities</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>4,714</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>4,714</b>
<b>Net Contingent Liabilities</b>	<b>4,275</b>	<b>4,714</b>	<b>4,275</b>	<b>4,714</b>

The above schedule should be read in conjunction with Note 12.

## AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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## **Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

### **1.1 Objectives of the Australian Bureau of Statistics**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is an Australian Public Service Organisation. The mission and outcome of the ABS is to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS is structured to produce the aforementioned outcome through its economic statistics, and population and social statistics groups. Indirect costs for support services have been allocated to the economic, and population and social statistical areas in these financial statements.

ABS activities are classified as Departmental. Departmental activities involve the use of assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses controlled or incurred by the Agency in its own right.

Departmental activities are identified under two outputs. Output 1.1.1 Economic Statistics and output 1.1.2 Population and Social Statistics.

Further information on ABS outcomes and outputs can be found in this Annual Report.

The continued existence of the ABS in its present form and with its present programs is dependent on Government policy and on continuing appropriations by Parliament for the ABS' administration and programs.

### **1.2 Basis of Preparation of Financial Statements**

The Financial Statements and notes are required by section 49 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and are a General Purpose Financial Report.

The Financial Statements and notes have been prepared in accordance with:

- Finance Minister's Orders (*FMOs*) for reporting periods ending on or after 1 July 2007; and
- Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that apply for the reporting period.

**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements**

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The financial report has been prepared on an accrual basis and is in accordance with historical cost convention, except for certain assets and liabilities at fair value. Except where stated, no allowance is made for the effect of changing prices on the results or the financial position.

The Financial Report is presented in Australian dollars and values are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified.

Unless an alternative treatment is specifically required by an Accounting Standard or the FMOs, assets and liabilities are recognised in the balance sheet when and only when it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the Entity or a future sacrifice of economic benefits will be required and the amounts of the assets or liabilities can be reliably measured. However, assets and liabilities arising under agreements equally proportionately unperformed are not recognised unless required by an Accounting Standard. Liabilities and assets that are unrealised are reported in the Schedule of Commitments and the Schedule of Contingencies.

Unless alternative treatment is specifically required by an accounting standard, revenues and expenses are recognised in the income statement when and only when the flow, consumption or loss of economic benefits has occurred and can be reliably measured.

**1.3 Significant Accounting Judgements and Estimates**

In the process of applying the accounting policies listed in this note, the ABS has made the following judgements that have the most significant impact on the amounts recorded in the financial statements:

In calculating the cost of Internally Generated Software (IGSW), actual costs are measured for programmers and a rate of 49.58% is added to reflect non-programming staff costs directly attributable to IGSW. The 49.58% is based upon a sample of IGSW activity undertaken in 2000 and 2003. (Refer Note 1.18)

No other accounting assumptions or estimates have been identified that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next accounting period.

**1.4 Statement of Compliance****Adoption of new Australian Accounting Standard requirements**

No accounting standard has been adopted earlier than the application date as stated in the standard. The following new standards are applicable to the current reporting period:

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

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**Financial instrument disclosure**

AASB 7 *Financial Instruments: Disclosures* is effective for reporting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2007 (the 2007-08 financial year) and amends the disclosure requirements for financial instruments. In general AASB 7 requires greater disclosure than that previously required. Associated with the introduction of AASB 7 a number of accounting standards were amended to reference the new standard or remove the present disclosure requirements through 2005-10 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards [AASB 132, AASB 101, AASB 114, AASB 117, AASB 133, AASB 139, AASB 1, AASB 4, AASB 1023 & AASB 1038]. These changes have no financial impact but will affect the disclosure presented in future financial reports.

The following new standards, amendments to standards or interpretations for the current financial year have no material financial impact on the ABS.

*2007-7 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards*

**Future Australian Accounting Standard requirements**

The following new standards, amendments to standards, or interpretations have been issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board, but are effective for future reporting periods. It is estimated that the impact of adopting these pronouncements when effective will have no material financial impact on future reporting periods.

*2007-6 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 123*

AASB Interpretation 14 *AASB 119 – The Limit on a Defined Benefit Asset, Minimum Funding Requirements and their Interaction*

**Other**

The following standards and interpretations have been issued but are not applicable to the operations of the ABS.

***AASB 1049 Whole of Government and General Government Sector Financial Reporting***

AASB 1049 specifies the reporting requirements for the General Government Sector, and therefore, has no effect on the ABS' financial statements.

## 1.5 Revenue

### Revenue from Government

Amounts appropriated for departmental output appropriations for the year (adjusted for any formal additions and reductions) are recognised as revenue when the agency gains control of the appropriation, except for certain amounts that relate to activities that are reciprocal in nature, in which case revenue is recognised only when it has been earned.

Appropriations receivable are recognised at their nominal amounts.

### Other Types of Revenue

Sales of goods and services includes revenue from the sale of publications, other products, and the provision of statistical services. Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when:

- The risks and rewards of ownership have been transferred to the buyer;
- The seller retains no managerial involvement nor effective control over the goods;
- The revenue and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- It is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Entity.

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised by reference to the stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date. The revenue is recognised when:

- The amount of revenue, stage of completion and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- The probable economic benefits with the transaction will flow to the entity.

The stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date is determined by reference to the proportion that costs incurred to date bear to the estimated total costs of the transaction.

Receivables for goods and services, which have 30 day terms, are recognised at the nominal amounts due less any provision for bad and doubtful debts. Bad debts are written off during the year in which they are identified. Collectability of debts is reviewed at balance date. Provisions would be made when collectability of the debt is no longer probable.



## **1.6 Gains**

### **Resources Received Free of Charge**

Resources received free of charge are recognised as revenue when, and only when, a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would have been purchased if they had not been donated. Use of those resources is recognised as an expense.

Contributions of assets at no cost of acquisition or for nominal consideration are recognised as gains at their fair value when the asset qualifies for recognition, unless received from another Government Agency or Authority as a consequence of a restructuring of administrative arrangements. Resources received free of charge are recorded as either revenue or gains depending on their nature.

### **Sale of Assets**

Gains from disposal of non-current assets are recognised when control of the asset has passed to the buyer.

## **1.7 Unearned Revenue**

Unearned revenue includes revenue from subscriptions to statistical publications, provision of statistical consultancies, and revenue from other agencies for statistical surveys. It is recognised on a proportional basis as the service is provided (Note 7B).

## **1.8 Transactions with the Government as Owner**

### **Equity injections**

Amounts appropriated which are designated as 'equity injections' for a year (less any formal reductions) are recognised directly in Contributed Equity in that year.

## **1.9 Employee Benefits**

Liabilities for services rendered by employees are recognised at the reporting date to the extent that they have not been settled.

Liabilities for 'short term employee benefits' (as defined in AASB 119) and termination benefits due within twelve months of balance date are measured at their nominal amounts.

The nominal amount is calculated with regard to the rates expected to be paid on settlement of the liability.

All other employee benefit liabilities are measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date.

### **Leave**

The liability for employee benefits includes provision for annual leave and long service leave. No provision has been made for sick leave as all sick leave is non-vesting and the average sick leave taken in future years by employees of the ABS is estimated to be less than the annual entitlement for sick leave.

The leave liabilities are calculated on the basis of employees' remuneration, including the ABS's employer superannuation contribution rates, to the extent that the leave is likely to be taken during service rather than paid out on termination.

The liability for long service leave has been determined by reference to the work of an actuary as at 30 June 2006. The ABS obtains an actuarial assessment every three years. The estimate of the present value of the liability takes into account attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation.

The employee entitlement provision includes superannuation on-costs payable to those employees who take their annual and long service leave prior to resignation or retirement. No superannuation is payable by the ABS when leave is cashed out on resignation or retirement.

### **Separation and Redundancy**

Provision is made for separation and redundancy benefit payments. The ABS recognises a provision for termination when it has developed a detailed formal plan for the terminations and has informed those employees affected that it will carry out the terminations.

### **Superannuation**

The majority of staff of the ABS are members of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS), the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSS) or the PSS accumulation plan (PSSap).

In 2007-08 the ABS also made employer contributions to commercial accumulation superannuation funds as directed by its employees.

The CSS and PSS are defined benefit schemes for the Australian Government. The PSSap is a defined contribution scheme.

The liability for defined benefits is recognised in the financial statements of the Australian Government, and is settled by the Australian Government in due course. This liability is reported by the Department of Finance and Deregulation as an administered item.

The ABS makes employer contributions to the employee superannuation scheme at rates determined by an actuary to be sufficient to meet the current cost to the Government of the superannuation entitlements of the ABS' employees.

**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements**

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The ABS accounts for the contributions as if they were contributions to defined contribution plans.

The liability for superannuation recognised as at 30 June represents outstanding contributions for the final fortnight of the year.

**1.10 Provision for 'Make good'**

Provisions for make good obligations are recognised when the ABS has a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of past event, it is probable that an outflow of resources will be required to settle the obligation and the amount has been reliably estimated. The ABS makes an assessment as to whether a make good provision is required at the commencement of each new lease and at reporting date, in accordance with the aforementioned recognition criteria contained within AASB 137 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the present obligation at the reporting date. Provisions are reviewed at each reporting date and adjusted to reflect the current best estimate. In 2007-08 the balance of the make good provision is nil.

**1.11 Leases**

A distinction is made between finance leases and operating leases. Finance leases effectively transfer from the lessor to the lessee substantially all of the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of leased non-current assets. An operating lease is a lease that is not a finance lease. In operating leases, the lessor effectively retains substantially all such risks and benefits.

The ABS has entered into a number of accommodation leases, which include lease incentives taking the form of 'free' leasehold improvements. Under UIG 115, all incentives in relation to operating leases are required to be classified as an integral part of the net consideration of the lease for the leased asset, irrespective of the incentive's nature, form or timing of payments.

Where a non-current asset is acquired by means of an incentive under an operating lease, the asset is capitalised at the fair value of the lease incentive at the inception of the contract, and a liability is recognised at the same time, for the same amount.

Where a non-current asset is acquired by means of a finance lease, the asset is capitalised at either the fair value of the lease property or, if lower, the present value of minimum lease payments at the inception of the contract, and a liability is recognised at the same time, for the same amount.

The discount rate used is the interest rate implicit in the lease. Leased assets are amortised over the period of the lease. Lease payments are allocated between the principal component and the interest expense.

Operating lease payments are expensed on a straight line basis, which is representative of the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets. The straight line basis takes into account fixed escalation clauses (with the exception of escalation in accordance with the CPI).

### 1.12 Borrowing Costs

All borrowing costs are expensed as incurred.

### 1.13 Financial assets

The ABS classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- Cash and cash equivalents,
- Trade and other receivables, and

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. Financial assets are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

#### Cash

Cash and cash equivalents includes notes and coins held and any deposits in bank accounts with an original maturity of 3 months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and subject to insignificant risk of changes in value. Cash is recognised at its nominal amount.

#### Trade and other receivables

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that have fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market are classified as 'trade and other receivables'. They are included in current assets, except for maturities greater than 12 months after the balance sheet date. These are classified as non current assets. Trade and other receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate.

#### Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at each balance date.

Financial assets held at amortised cost - If there is objective evidence that an impairment loss has been incurred for loans and receivables or held to maturity investments held at amortised cost, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate. The carrying amount is reduced by way of an allowance account. The loss is recognised in the Income Statement. No impairment loss on financial assets was recognised in 2007-08.

### **1.14 Financial Liabilities**

Financial liabilities are classified as either financial liabilities 'at fair value through profit or loss' or other financial liabilities. Financial liabilities are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

The ABS classifies its financial liabilities in the following categories:

- Supplier and other payables
- Other financial liabilities

#### **Supplier and other payables**

Supplier and other payables are recognised at their nominal amounts, being the amounts at which the liabilities will be settled. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

#### **Other financial liabilities**

Other financial liabilities, including borrowings, are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs.

Other financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, with interest expense recognised on an effective yield basis. The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial liability and of allocating interest expense over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments through the expected life of the financial liability, or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

### **1.15 Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets**

Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets are not recognised in the balance sheet but are reported in the relevant schedules and notes. They may arise from uncertainty as to the existence of a liability or asset, or represent an asset or liability in respect of which the amount cannot be reliably measured. Contingent assets are disclosed when settlement is probable but not virtually certain and contingent liabilities are recognised when settlement is greater than remote.

### **1.16 Acquisition of Assets**

Assets are recorded at cost on acquisition, except as stated below. The cost of acquisition includes the fair value of assets transferred in exchange and liabilities undertaken. Financial assets are initially measured at their fair value plus transaction costs where appropriate.

Assets acquired at no cost, or for nominal consideration, are initially recognised as assets and revenues at their fair value at the date of acquisition, unless acquired as a consequence of restructuring of administrative arrangements. In the latter case, assets are initially recognised as contributions by owners at the amounts at which they were recognised in the transferor agency's accounts immediately prior to the restructuring.

### 1.17 Property, Plant and Equipment

#### Asset Recognition Threshold

Purchases of property, plant and equipment are recognised initially at cost in the balance sheet, except for purchases costing less than \$2,000 (\$1,000 for IT assets and purchased software, and all Internally Generated Software assets), which are expensed in the year of acquisition (other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are significant in total).

The initial cost of an asset includes an estimate of the cost of dismantling and removing the item, and restoring the site on which it is located. This is particularly relevant to 'make good' provisions in property leases taken up by ABS where there exists an obligation to restore the property to its original condition. These costs are included in the value of ABS' leasehold improvements with a corresponding provision for the 'make good' recognised.

#### Revaluations

Fair values for each class of asset are determined as shown below:

<i>Asset Class</i>	<i>Fair Value Measured at:</i>
Property, plant and equipment	Market selling price

Following initial recognition at cost, property, plant and equipment are carried at fair value less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. Valuations are conducted with sufficient frequency to ensure that the carrying amounts of assets do not differ materially from the assets' fair values as at the reporting date. The regularity of independent valuations depends upon the volatility of movements in market values for the relevant assets.

Revaluation adjustments are made on a class basis. Any revaluation increment is credited to equity under the heading of asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that it reverses a previous revaluation decrement of the same asset class that was previously recognised through operating result. Revaluation decrements for a class of assets are recognised directly through operating result, except to the extent that they reverse a previous revaluation increment for that class.

Any accumulated depreciation as at the revaluation date is eliminated against the gross carrying amount of the asset and the asset restated to the revalued amount.

### **Depreciation**

Depreciable property, plant and equipment assets are written-off to their estimated residual values over their estimated useful lives to the ABS using, in all cases, the straight-line method of depreciation. Leasehold improvements are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the lesser of the estimated useful life of the improvements, or the unexpired period of the lease.

Depreciation rates (useful lives), residual values and methods are reviewed at each reporting date and necessary adjustments are recognised in the current, or current and future reporting periods, as appropriate.

Depreciation rates applying to each class of depreciable assets are based on the following useful lives:

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>
Property, plant and equipment	<u>5-10<sup>*</sup></u>	<u>5-10<sup>*</sup></u>

\* Within this class, Artwork and Curios has a useful life between 10-100 years.

The aggregate amount of depreciation allocated for each class of asset during the reporting period is disclosed in Note 4C.

### **Impairment**

All assets were assessed for impairment at 30 June 2008. Where indications of impairment exist, the asset's recoverable amount is estimated and an impairment adjustment made if the asset's recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount.

The recoverable amount of an asset is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. Value in use for ABS assets is taken to be its depreciated replacement cost (where the ABS would replace the asset if it was deprived of it) as future economic benefit is not primarily dependent on the asset's ability to generate future cash flows.

All property, plant and equipment were assessed for indications of impairment as at 30 June 2008. No indications of impairment were found.

#### **1.18 Intangibles**

The ABS' intangibles comprise internally developed software and purchased software. These assets are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses.

Software is amortised on a straight-line basis over its anticipated useful life.

## Australian Bureau of Statistics

### Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

#### **Internally Generated Software**

In its role as Australia's national statistical agency, the ABS builds and maintains a significant set of internally generated software (IGSW) assets. These assets are added to over time, in line with the increasing range of statistical information sought by government, business and the general community, and the increasing use of technology, particularly in relation to collection, analysis and dissemination activities.

All software developed in-house since 1 July 1994 has been capitalised (Note 6C). The costing methodology capitalises direct salary and on costs for programmers and non-programmers, applicable information technology costs and some direct external costs. General administration, and overhead costs relating to software development have not been capitalised. The data capture systems in place to collect data for programmers are in line with the requirements of the FMO's. Non-programmer staff costs relating to IGSW are capitalised at 49.58% of captured programmer cost. This estimate is based upon a sample of IGSW projects that was last undertaken in 2003. (Refer Note 1.3)

In accordance with the requirements of AASB 138 Intangible Assets, IGSW is stated at cost. All IGSW assets were assessed for indications of impairment as at 30 June 2008 (refer Note 4E).

#### **Purchased Software**

Purchased software assets are stated at cost where the asset costs more than \$1,000. Assets below this threshold are expensed at the time of purchase. The cost of purchased software includes the purchase price and any directly attributable costs.

#### **Amortisation**

The ABS has long term commitments to survey and data collection programs. These are supported by software packages that are required to be maintained for the same time period as the data collection and analysis programs, to ensure consistency in approach and of data treatment.

The estimated useful lives of the major asset classes are as follows:

	<b><u>2008</u></b>	<b><u>2007</u></b>
	<b><u>Life in Years</u></b>	<b><u>Life in Years</u></b>
Computer software – proprietary	<b>5</b>	5
Computer software – internally generated	<b>2 to 28</b>	2 to 28

The above table outlines the range of life in years for Computer software, however, the average life in years is currently 11.

The aggregate amount of amortisation allocated for each class of asset during the reporting period is disclosed in Note 4C.



### **1.19 Capital Work in Progress**

Capital work in progress represents two main asset types: software assets under development, and office refurbishments. Work in progress is disclosed in the property, plant and equipment, and intangibles balances.

Software assets are not depreciated until the year in which the development phase is completed and the asset is operational. Where use of the asset commences after substantial completion of the development phase, but some improvements or enhancements to the system continue to be made, the date of substantial completion is treated as the date of completion and depreciation commences from that date.

### **1.20 Inventories**

Inventories comprise items held for sale that are considered significant and are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value (Note 6D). As part of the rationalisation of product delivery services, physical inventory items held were reduced significantly in previous financial years. Most products are now available electronically or printed on request.

Consumable stores and supplies are considered to be immaterial and have been expensed at the time of purchase.

### **1.21 Historical Statistical Data**

Statistical data accumulated over many years is stored for reference purposes. While having no value for accounting purposes, historical time series data plays an important part in the operations of the ABS as Australia's official statistical provider. The cost of storing and maintaining this data is treated as an operating expense.

### **1.22 Other Non-Financial Assets**

The ABS classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- Prepayments and
- Accrued revenue.

#### Prepayments

Prepayments primarily relate to maintenance contracts, office rent and subscriptions.

#### Accrued Revenue

The ABS accrues revenue at the time when goods are provided and/or the services are performed.

### 1.23 Taxation

The ABS is exempt from all forms of taxation except fringe benefits tax (FBT) and the goods and services tax (GST).

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of GST except for:

- where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office; and
- receivables and payables.

### Note 2: Events after the Balance Sheet date

There have been no events occurring subsequent to balance date that would affect the Australian Bureau of Statistics Financial Statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2008.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
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**Note 3: Income**

**Revenues**

**Note 3A: Revenues from Government**

Appropriations: Departmental outputs	302,260	414,431
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<b>Total revenue from Government</b>	<b>302,260</b>	<b>414,431</b>
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**Note 3B: Sale of goods and rendering of services**

Provision of goods to:

Provision of goods - related entities	1,211	1,071
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Provision of goods - external entities	356	713
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Rendering of services - related entities	18,580	12,721
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Rendering of services - external entities	5,452	8,463
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<b>Total sale of goods and rendering of services</b>	<b>25,599</b>	<b>22,968</b>
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**Gains**

**Note 3C: Net Gain from Sale of Assets**

**Property, plant and equipment:**

Proceeds from sale	153	665
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Carrying value of assets sold	(125)	(524)
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Selling expense	(16)	(11)
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**Intangible Assets**

Proceeds from sale	86	-
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Carrying value of assets sold	(55)	-
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<b>Total net gain from sale of assets</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>130</b>
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**Note 3D: Other gains**

Resources received free of charge	117	110
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Other gains	316	24
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	<b>433</b>	<b>134</b>
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**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements**

	<b>2008</b>	2007
	<b>\$'000</b>	\$'000
<b>Note 4: Expenses</b>		
<b><u>Note 4A: Employee benefits</u></b>		
Wages and salaries	<b>186,648</b>	209,213
Superannuation:		
Defined contribution plans	<b>4,849</b>	4,479
Defined benefit plans	<b>27,479</b>	29,977
Leave and other entitlements	<b>7,731</b>	5,678
Interviewers wages	<b>10,932</b>	10,127
Interviewers superannuation:		
Defined contribution plans	<b>975</b>	775
Defined benefit plans	<b>503</b>	561
Census field staff wages and superannuation	<b>(14)</b>	45,280
Census field staff superannuation:		
Defined contribution plans	-	5,019
Separation and redundancies	-	274
Other employee expenses	<b>1,889</b>	3,001
<b>Total employee benefits</b>	<b>240,992</b>	314,384
Less amounts capitalised for IGSW (refer Note 6C)	<b>(20,521)</b>	(19,703)
<b>Total employee expenses</b>	<b>220,471</b>	294,681
<b><u>Note 4B: Suppliers</u></b>		
Provision of goods - related entities	<b>653</b>	3,301
Provision of goods - external entities	<b>12,294</b>	14,066
Rendering of services - related entities	<b>7,701</b>	2,855
Rendering of services - external entities	<b>21,598</b>	54,968
Operating lease rentals:		
Minimum lease payments	<b>27,927</b>	28,408
Workers compensation premiums	<b>2,908</b>	3,915
<b>Total supplier expenses</b>	<b>73,081</b>	107,513

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Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b><u>Note 4C: Depreciation and Amortisation</u></b>		
<b>Depreciation</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	<u>13,604</u>	<u>16,986</u>
<b><i>Total depreciation</i></b>	<b><u>13,604</u></b>	<b><u>16,986</u></b>
<b>Amortisation</b>		
Computer Software	<u>17,159</u>	<u>16,457</u>
<b><i>Total amortisation</i></b>	<b><u>17,159</u></b>	<b><u>16,457</u></b>
<b><i>Total depreciation and amortisation</i></b>	<b><u>30,763</u></b>	<b><u>33,443</u></b>
<b><u>Note 4D: Finance Costs</u></b>		
Loan from Government	<u>351</u>	<u>435</u>
<b><i>Total finance costs expense</i></b>	<b><u>351</u></b>	<b><u>435</u></b>
<b><u>Note 4E: Write-off and impairment of assets</u></b>		
Impairment loss	5,069	1,164
Asset Write offs	96	124
Bad debts written off	<u>2</u>	<u>16</u>
<b>Total write down and impairment of assets</b>	<b><u>5,167</u></b>	<b><u>1,304</u></b>

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b>Note 5: Financial Assets</b>		
<b><u>Note 5A: Cash and cash equivalents</u></b>		
Special Account <sup>1</sup>	109	107
Departmental (other than special accounts)	6,697	6,328
<b><i>Total cash and cash equivalents</i></b>	<b>6,806</b>	<b>6,435</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refer also Note 17

<b><u>Note 5B: Trade and other receivables</u></b>		
Goods and services	3,225	2,433
GST receivable from the Australian Taxation Office	465	538
Sundry receivables	769	388
Appropriations receivable:		
for existing outputs	17,492	3,666
for additional outputs	-	1,484
<b><i>Total receivables (net)</i></b>	<b>21,951</b>	<b>8,509</b>

All trade receivables are current assets. Credit terms are net 30 days (2006-07: 30 days). The ABS has no provision for doubtful debts and all receivables are expected to be recovered.

Receivables (gross) are aged as follows:

Not overdue	20,506	7,316
Overdue by:		
Less than 30 days	1,200	910
30 to 60 days	116	135
61 to 90 days	105	50
More than 90 days	24	98
<b><i>Total receivables (gross)</i></b>	<b>21,951</b>	<b>8,509</b>

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b>Note 6: Non-Financial Assets</b>		
<b><u>Note 6A: Property, Plant and Equipment</u></b>		
<b>Property, plant and equipment</b>		
- Work in progress	1,212	990
- carrying value (at fair value)	61,568	76,259
- Accumulated depreciation	<u>(12,365)</u>	<u>(25,937)</u>
<b><i>Total Property, Plant and Equipment (non-current)</i></b>	<b><u>50,415</u></b>	<b><u>51,312</u></b>

All revaluations are independent and are conducted in accordance with the revaluation policy stated at Note 1.17. On 30 June 2008, an independent valuer, the Australian Valuation Office conducted the revaluation on the hardware class of assets, being the last remaining class to be recorded at fair value.

A revaluation increment of \$1,873,000 (2007: nil) was credited to the asset revaluation reserve by asset class and was included in the equity section of the balance sheet.

No indicators of impairment were found for property, plant and equipment.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 6B: Analysis of property, plant and equipment

TABLE A – Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment (2007 – 2008)

Item	Property, Plant and Equipment	Total
	\$'000	\$'000
As at 1 July 2007		
Gross book value	77,249	77,249
Accumulated depreciation	(25,937)	(25,937)
Net book value 1 July 2007	51,312	51,312
Additions:		
by purchase	11,043	11,043
Net revaluation increment	1,873	1,873
Depreciation expense	(13,604)	(13,604)
Disposals:		
Write-offs	(96)	(96)
Other disposals	(113)	(113)
<b>Net book value 30 June 2008</b>	<b>50,415</b>	<b>50,415</b>
<b>Net book value as of 30 June 2008 represented by:</b>		
Gross book value	62,780	62,780
Accumulated depreciation and impairment*	(12,365)	(12,365)
	<b>50,415</b>	<b>50,415</b>

\*In 2007-2008 the ABS wrote off a material gross value in hardware assets with a nil net book value. This therefore reduced both the gross book value and accumulated depreciation when compared to 2006-2007.



Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 6B: Analysis of property, plant and equipment

TABLE A – Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment (2006 – 2007)

Item	Property, Plant and Equipment	Total
	\$'000	\$'000
As at 1 July 2006		
Gross book value	64,602	64,602
Accumulated depreciation	(10,534)	(10,534)
<b>Net book value 1 July 2006</b>	<b>54,068</b>	<b>54,068</b>
Additions:		
by purchase	14,762	14,762
Depreciation expense	(16,986)	(16,986)
Reclassifications	(8)	(8)
Disposals:		
Other disposals	(524)	(524)
<b>Net book value 30 June 2007</b>	<b>51,312</b>	<b>51,312</b>
<b>Net book value as of 30 June 2007 represented by:</b>		
Gross book value	77,249	77,249
Accumulated depreciation and impairment	(25,937)	(25,937)
	<b>51,312</b>	<b>51,312</b>

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	<b>2008</b>	2007
	<b>\$'000</b>	\$'000
<b><u>Note 6C: Intangibles</u></b>		
Computer software at cost:		
Internally developed – in progress	<b>10,850</b>	8,759
Impairment write-down	<u>-</u>	<u>(124)</u>
	<b>10,850</b>	8,635
Internally developed – in use	<b>163,662</b>	161,822
Purchased software	<u>9,442</u>	<u>17,136</u>
<b><i>Total computer software</i></b>	<b><u>183,954</u></b>	<b><u>187,593</u></b>
Accumulated amortisation	<b>(83,309)</b>	(91,049)
Accumulated impairment write-down	<u><b>(5,069)</b></u>	<u>(1,164)</u>
<b><i>Total intangibles (non-current)</i></b>	<b><u>95,576</u></b>	<b><u>95,380</u></b>

<b>TABLE B – reconciliation of opening and closing balances of intangibles (2007-08)</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Computer software internally developed</b>	<b>Computer software purchased</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
<b>As at 1 July 2007</b>			
Gross book value	169,293	17,136	186,429
Accumulated amortisation	(78,562)	(12,487)	(91,049)
<b>Net book value 1 July 2007</b>	<b>90,731</b>	<b>4,649</b>	<b>95,380</b>
Additions			
Internally developed /Purchase	20,521	1,959	22,480
Amortisation	(15,401)	(1,759)	(17,160)
Impairments recognised in the operating result	(5,033)	(36)	(5,069)
Disposals:			
other disposals	-	(55)	(55)
<b>Net book value as at 30 June 2008</b>	<b>90,818</b>	<b>4,758</b>	<b>95,576</b>
<b>Net book value as of 30 June 2008 represented by:</b>			
Gross Book Value	169,479	9,406	178,885
Accumulated amortisation and impairment	(78,661)	(4,648)	(83,309)
	<b>90,818</b>	<b>4,758</b>	<b>95,576</b>

<b>TABLE B – reconciliation of opening and closing balances of intangibles (2006-07)</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Computer software internally developed</b>	<b>Computer software purchased</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
<b>As at 1 July 2006</b>			
Gross book value	174,841	18,675	193,516
Accumulated amortisation	(87,630)	(13,901)	(101,531)
<b>Net book value 1 July 2006</b>	<b>87,211</b>	<b>4,774</b>	<b>91,985</b>
Additions			
Internally developed /Purchase	19,507	1,625	21,132
Reclassifications	-	8	8
Amortisation	(14,699)	(1,758)	(16,457)
Impairments recognised in the operating result	(1,288)	-	(1,288)
Disposals:			
other disposals	-	-	-
<b>Net book value as at 30 June 2007</b>	<b>90,731</b>	<b>4,649</b>	<b>95,380</b>
<b>Net book value as of 30 June 2007 represented by:</b>			
Gross Book Value	169,293	17,136	186,429
Accumulated amortisation and impairment	(78,562)	(12,487)	(91,049)
	<b>90,731</b>	<b>4,649</b>	<b>95,380</b>

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b><u>Note 6D: Inventories</u></b>		
Inventories held for sale		
Finished goods	<u>38</u>	<u>26</u>
<b><i>Total inventories (current)</i></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>	<b><u>26</u></b>

All departmental inventories are current assets.

**Note 6E: Other Non-Financial Assets**

Accrued revenue	368	497
Prepayments	<u>6,905</u>	<u>7,231</u>
<b><i>Total other non-financial assets</i></b>	<b><u>7,273</u></b>	<b><u>7,728</u></b>

Other non-financial assets are represented by:

Current	4,836	4,966
Non-Current	<u>2,437</u>	<u>2,762</u>
<b><i>Total other non-financial assets</i></b>	<b><u>7,273</u></b>	<b><u>7,728</u></b>

No indicators of impairment were found for other non-financial assets.

**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements**

	<b>2008</b>	2007
	<b>\$'000</b>	\$'000
<b>Note 7: Payables</b>		
<b><u>Note 7A: Suppliers</u></b>		
Trade creditors	<b>6,430</b>	5,513
Sundry creditors	<b>309</b>	363
<b><i>Total supplier payables</i></b>	<b><u>6,739</u></b>	<u>5,876</u>

All supplier payables are current liabilities.

Settlement is usually made net 30 days.

**Note 7B: Unearned revenue**

Unearned revenue	<b><u>5,243</u></b>	<u>1,954</u>
<b>Total unearned revenue</b>	<b><u>5,243</u></b>	<u>1,954</u>

All unearned revenue is a current liability.

**Note 8: Interest Bearing Liabilities****Note 8: Loans**

Loans from Government	<b><u>4,821</u></b>	<u>6,245</u>
<b><i>Total loans</i></b>	<b><u>4,821</u></b>	<u>6,245</u>
Maturity schedule for loans:		
Payable:		
Within one year	<b>1,513</b>	1,424
In one to five years	<b><u>3,308</u></b>	<u>4,821</u>
<b><i>Total loans</i></b>	<b><u>4,821</u></b>	<u>6,245</u>

The loan was issued in 2001-02 and is repayable in quarterly instalments beginning in 2001-02 and ending in 2010-11. The interest rate implicit in the loan is 6.12%.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	<b>2008</b>	2007
	<b>\$'000</b>	\$'000
<b>Note 9: Lease Incentives</b>		
<b><u>Note 9: Lease Incentives</u></b>		
Lease incentives	<b><u>26,257</u></b>	<u>26,729</u>
Lease incentives are represented by:		
Current	<b>1,661</b>	1,598
Non-Current	<b><u>24,596</u></b>	<u>25,131</u>
<b><i>Total lease incentives</i></b>	<b><u><u>26,257</u></u></b>	<u><u>26,729</u></u>

**Note 10: Provisions**

**Note 10A: Employee Provisions**

Salaries and wages	<b>2,866</b>	1,579
Leave	<b>68,806</b>	65,801
Superannuation	<b>363</b>	265
Separations and redundancies	<b><u>211</u></b>	<u>75</u>
<b><i>Total employee provisions</i></b>	<b><u><u>72,246</u></u></b>	<u><u>67,720</u></u>
Employee provisions are represented by:		
Current	<b>63,456</b>	59,341
Non-current	<b><u>8,790</u></b>	<u>8,379</u>
<b><i>Total employee provisions</i></b>	<b><u><u>72,246</u></u></b>	<u><u>67,720</u></u>

The classification of current employee provisions includes amounts for which there is not an unconditional right to defer settlement by one year, hence in the case of employee provisions the above classification does not represent the amount expected to be settled within one year of reporting date. Employee provisions expected to be settled in twelve months from the reporting date is \$24,877,000 (2006-07: \$22,278,000), in excess of one year \$47,369,000 (2006-07: \$45,442,000).

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b>Note 10B: Other provisions</b>		
Provision for 'Make good'	-	1,000
<b>Total other provisions</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,000</b>
Other provisions are represented by:		
Current	-	1,000
Non-current	-	-
<b>Total other provisions</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,000</b>
 <b>Carrying amount 1 July 2007</b>	 1,000	 1,475
Amounts used	(736)	-
Amounts reversed	(264)	(450)
Unwinding of discount	-	(25)
<b>Closing balance 2008</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,000</b>

The ABS currently has 5 agreements for the leasing of premises which have provisions within the lease agreements which may require the ABS to restore the premises to their original condition at the conclusion of the lease. All five agreements are disclosed as contingent liabilities in the Schedule of Contingencies.



Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
<b>Note 11: Cash Flow Reconciliation</b>		
<b>Reconciliation of cash and cash equivalents as per Balance Sheet to Cash Flow Statement</b>		
Cash Flow Statement	6,806	6,435
Balance Sheet	6,806	6,435
<b>Reconciliation of operating result to net cash from operating activities:</b>		
Operating result	(1,487)	601
Depreciation /amortisation	30,763	33,443
Net write down of non-financial assets	5,167	1,288
(Gain)/Loss on disposal of assets	(43)	(130)
Assets first recognised	(52)	-
Other gain	(264)	-
(Increase) / decrease in net receivables	(13,442)	529
(Increase) / decrease in inventories	(12)	30
(Increase) / decrease in other non financial assets	455	386
Increase / (decrease) in employee provisions	4,526	1,461
Increase / (decrease) in supplier payables	863	(5,013)
Increase / (decrease) in unearned revenue	3,289	(3,802)
Increase / (decrease) in other liabilities	(1,185)	5,843
<b>Net cash from operating activities</b>	<b>28,578</b>	<b>34,636</b>

**Note 12: Contingent Liabilities and Assets**

**Quantifiable Contingencies**

The Schedule of Contingencies reports a contingent asset as at 30 June 2008 in respect of claims for damages/costs of \$669,000 (2007: nil).

The Schedule of Contingencies reports contingent liability as at 30 June 2008 in respect of a number of leases with make good clauses in them of \$4,886,000 (2006-07:\$4,714,000) and in relation to claims for damages/costs of \$58,000 (2007: nil).

**Unquantifiable and Remote Contingencies**

At 30 June 2008, the ABS was subject to a legal claim arising from its previous employment of the claimant over 17 years ago. The ABS has denied liability and is defending the claim (2006-07: Nil). It is not possible to estimate the amounts of any eventual payments that may be required in relation to these claims.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

<b>Note 13: Senior Executive Remuneration</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>
The number of senior executives who received or were due to receive total remuneration of \$130,000 or more:		
\$130 000 to \$144 999	1	2
\$145 000 to \$159 999	1	4
\$160 000 to \$174 999	10	10
\$175 000 to \$189 999	9	8
\$190 000 to \$204 999	11	5
\$205 000 to \$219 999	1	2
\$220 000 to \$234 999	2	2
\$235 000 to \$249 999	2	2
\$250 000 to \$264 999	2	1
\$280 000 to \$294 999	1	-
\$295 000 to \$309 999	1	2
\$430,000 to \$444,999	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>38</b>

The aggregate amount of total remuneration of senior executives shown above.

**\$8,496,144**      **\$7,254,704**

The aggregate amount of separation and redundancy/termination benefit payments during the year to executives shown above.

**\$ -**      **\$224,022**

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

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	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>
<b>Note 14:      Remuneration of Auditors</b>		
Financial statement audit services are provided free of charge to the ABS.		
The fair value of the services provided by the Australian National Audit Office was:	<u>117,000</u>	<u>110,000</u>
No other services were provided by the Auditor-General.		

**Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements**

	2008	2007
	\$	\$

**Note 15: Financial Instruments****Note 15A: Categories of financial instruments****Financial Assets**

## Loans and Receivables

Cash at bank	6,806	6,435
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Trade and other receivables*	3,994	2,821
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<b>Carrying amount of financial assets</b>	<b>10,800</b>	<b>9,256</b>
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**Financial Liabilities**

Government Loans	4,821	6,245
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Trade and sundry creditors	6,739	5,876
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<b>Carrying amount of financial liabilities</b>	<b>11,560</b>	<b>12,121</b>
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**Note 15B: Net income and expense from financial assets****Financial Assets**

Bad debts written off	2	16
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<b>Net loss from financial assets</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>
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**Note 15C: Net income and expense from financial liabilities****Liabilities**

Interest expense	351	435
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<b>Net loss from financial liabilities</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>435</b>
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**Note 15D: Fair value of financial instruments**

The carrying value of the financial instruments of the ABS is a reasonable approximation of the fair value of those financial instruments.

\*For the purposes of Note 15 Financial Instruments, trade and other receivables excludes appropriation receivable and GST receivable from the Australian Tax Office.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

**Note 15E: Credit Risk**

The ABS is a 100% owned Australian government entity, which is primarily funded for its activities through the budget process.

The majority of services provided by the ABS are delivered to other government entities and therefore represent minimal credit exposure for the agency.

The maximum exposure to credit risk is the risk that arises from potential default of a debtor. This amount is equal to the total amount of trade and other receivables (2008: \$3,994,000 and 2007: \$2,821,000).

The ABS has policies and procedures in relation to debt recovery techniques, that are to be applied. The ABS holds no collateral to mitigate against credit risk.

	<b>Not past due nor impaired 2008 \$'000</b>	Not past due nor impaired 2007 \$'000	<b>Past Due or impaired 2008 \$'000</b>	Past Due or impaired 2007 \$'000
<b>Loans and Receivables</b>				
Cash and Cash equivalents	<b>6,806</b>	6,435	-	-
Trade Receivables	<b>1,780</b>	1,240	<b>1,445</b>	1,193
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,586</b>	7,675	<b>1,445</b>	1,193

## Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

**Note 15E: Credit Risk**

Ageing of financial assets that are past due but not impaired for 2008

	0 to 30 days \$'000	31 to 60 days \$'000	61 to 90 days \$'000	90 + days \$'000	Total \$'000
<b>Loans and Receivables</b>					
Trade Receivables	1,200	116	105	24	1,445
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1,445</b>

Ageing of financial assets that are past due but not impaired for 2007

	0 to 30 days \$'000	31 to 60 days \$'000	61 to 90 days \$'000	90 + days \$'000	Total \$'000
<b>Loans and Receivables</b>					
Trade Receivables	910	135	50	98	1,193
<b>Total</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1,193</b>

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

**Note 15F: Liquidity Risk**

The ABS is appropriated funding from the Australian Government. The ABS manages its budgeted funds to ensure it has adequate funds to meet payments as they fall due. In addition, the ABS undertakes cash forecasting to ensure it can meet these liabilities as they fall due. The ABS has policies in place to ensure payments are made on time.

The exposure to liquidity risk is based on the notion that the ABS will encounter difficulty in meeting its obligations associated with financial liabilities. This is highly unlikely due to appropriation funding and mechanisms available to the ABS (e.g. Advance to the Finance Minister) and internal policies and procedures put in place to ensure there are appropriate resources to meet its financial obligations.

The following table illustrates maturities for financial liabilities

	On demand 2008 \$'000	within 1 year 2008 \$'000	1 to 5 years 2008 \$'000	> 5 years 2008 \$'000	Total 2008 \$'000
<b>Other Liabilities</b>					
Government loans	-	1,513	3,308	-	4,821
Trade and sundry creditors	-	6,739	-	-	6,739
<b>Total</b>	-	8,252	3,308	-	11,560

	On demand 2007 \$'000	within 1 year 2007 \$'000	1 to 5 years 2007 \$'000	> 5 years 2007 \$'000	Total 2007 \$'000
<b>Other Liabilities</b>					
Government loans	-	1,424	4,821	-	6,245
Trade and sundry creditors	-	5,876	-	-	5,876
<b>Total</b>	-	7,300	4,821	-	12,121

**Note 15G: Market risk**

The ABS holds basic financial instruments that do not expose the ABS to “currency risk” or “other price risk”.

**Interest rate risk**

The only interest-bearing item on the balance sheet is the Government Loan. The Government Loan bears interest at a fixed interest rate and will not fluctuate due to changes in the market interest rate.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

**Note 16: Appropriations**

Note 16A: Acquittal of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations

Particulars	Departmental Outputs		Total	
	2008	2007	2008	2007
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Balance brought forward from previous period	10,580	15,121	10,580	15,121
Appropriation Act:				
Appropriation Act (No.1) 2007-2008	302,260	413,823	302,260	413,823
Accrued Appropriation, Appropriation Act (No.2) 2006-07	-	608	-	608
Departmental Adjustments by the Finance Minister (Appropriation Acts)	-	-	-	-
Advance to the Finance Minister	-	-	-	-
Concover receipts (Appropriation Act s13)	-	-	-	-
FMA Act:				
Refunds credited (FMA s 30)	1,374	1,919	1,374	1,919
Appropriations to take account of recoverable GST (FMA s30A)	11,308	12,734	11,308	12,734
Annotations to 'net appropriations' (FMA s31)	28,203	18,679	28,203	18,679
Total appropriations available for payments	353,725	462,884	353,725	462,884
Cash payments made during the year (GST inclusive)	(331,929)	(452,304)	(331,929)	(452,304)
Appropriations credited to Special Accounts (excluding GST)	-	-	-	-
<b>Balance of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations and as represented by:</b>				
	21,796	10,580	21,796	10,580
Cash at bank and on hand	3,839	6,434	3,839	6,434
Departmental appropriations receivable	17,492	3,608	17,492	3,608
Receivables – GST receivable from ATO	465	538	465	538
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,796</b>	<b>10,580</b>	<b>21,796</b>	<b>10,580</b>



Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 16B: Acquittal of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for other than Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations

Particulars	Non-operating		Total	
	Equity			
	2008	2007	2008	2007
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Balance carried from previous period (Appropriation Acts)	1,542	-	1,542	-
Appropriation Act:				
Appropriation Act (No.2) 2007 - 08	622	666	622	666
Appropriation Act (No.4) 2007 - 08	5,879	-	5,879	-
Accrued appropriation-Appropriation Act (No.2) 2007-08	-	876	-	876
Adjustments determined by the Finance Minister	-	-	-	-
Advance to the Finance Minister	-	-	-	-
FMA Act:				
Refunds credited (FMA s30A)	-	-	-	-
GST credits (FMA s30A)	-	-	-	-
Transfer to/from other agencies (FMA s32)	-	-	-	-
Administered appropriation lapsed or reduced	-	-	-	-
Total appropriations available for payments	8,043	1,542	8,043	1,542
Cash Payments made during the year (GST inclusive)	(5,076)	-	(5,076)	-
Appropriations credited to special Accounts	-	-	-	-
<b>Balance of Authority to Draw Cash from the CRF for Other Than Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations and as represented by:</b>				
Cash at bank and on hand	2,967	1,542	2,967	1,542
Appropriations receivable	2,967	-	2,967	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,967</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>2,967</b>	<b>1,542</b>

**Note 17: Special Accounts**

**Note 17A: Trust Fund and Other Trust Moneys**

Trust Fund and Other Trust Moneys	2008	2007
	\$'000	\$'000
Legal Authority: <i>Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 Section 20.</i>		
This account is non-interest bearing.		
<i>Purpose:</i> For the receipt of moneys temporarily held on trust or otherwise for the benefit of a person other than the Commonwealth. Any money held is thus special public money under section 16 of the <i>FMA Act 1997</i> .		
Balance carried from previous period	107	92
Receipts during the year from customers	2	15
Available for payments	109	107
<b>Payments made</b>	-	-
Balance carried to the next period	109	107
Legal Authority: <i>Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 Section 20.</i>		
<i>Purpose:</i> For expenditure in connection with services performed on behalf of other Governments and bodies that are not FMA agencies. *		
Balance carried from previous period	-	-
Receipts during the year from customers	-	-
Available for payments	-	-
<b>Payments made</b>	-	-
Balance carried to the next period	-	-
*The ABS does not incur any expenditure in connection with services performed on behalf of other Governments and bodies that are not FMA agencies. The ABS is in the process of having this account closed.		

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2008 \$	2007 \$
<b>Note 18: Compensation and Debt Relief</b>		
No 'Act of Grace' payments were made during the reporting period, and there are no amounts owing as at year end.	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>
No waivers of amounts owing to the Commonwealth were made pursuant to subsection 34(1) of <i>(the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997)</i> .	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>
No payments were made under the 'Defective Administration Scheme' during the reporting period.	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>
No payments were made under s73 of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> during the reporting period.	<u>Nil</u>	<u>Nil</u>

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 19: Reporting of Outcomes

Note 19A: Net Cost of Outcome Delivery

	Outcome 1		Total	
	2008	2007	2008	2007
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Departmental	330,019	437,595	330,019	437,595
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>330,019</b>	<b>437,595</b>	<b>330,019</b>	<b>437,595</b>
Departmental	5,808	9,176	5,808	9,176
<b>Total costs recovered</b>	<b>5,808</b>	<b>9,176</b>	<b>5,808</b>	<b>9,176</b>
<b>Other external revenues</b>				
Departmental				
Net Gains	476	154	476	154
Other	197	533	197	533
Goods and Services Revenue from Related Entities	19,791	13,792	19,791	13,792
<b>Total Departmental</b>	<b>20,464</b>	<b>14,479</b>	<b>20,464</b>	<b>14,479</b>
<b>Total other external revenues</b>	<b>20,464</b>	<b>14,479</b>	<b>20,464</b>	<b>14,479</b>
<b>Net cost/(contribution) of outcome</b>	<b>303,747</b>	<b>413,940</b>	<b>303,747</b>	<b>413,940</b>

Outcome 1 is described in Note 1.1.

Net costs shown include intra-government costs that are eliminated in calculating the actual Budget outcome.

**Note 19B: Major Classes of Departmental Revenues and Expenses by Output Groups and Outputs**

Outcome 1	Output Group 1.1				Outcome 1 Total	
	Output Group 1.1.1		Output Group 1.1.2			
	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000	2008 \$'000	2007 \$'000
Departmental expenses						
Employees	116,800	110,417	103,671	184,264	220,471	294,681
Suppliers	38,716	40,285	34,365	67,228	73,081	107,513
Depreciation and amortisation	16,297	12,531	14,466	20,912	30,763	33,443
Other expenses	3,022	734	2,682	1,224	5,704	1,958
Total departmental expenses	174,835	163,967	155,184	273,628	330,019	437,595
Funded by:						
Revenues from government	168,279	157,070	133,981	257,361	302,260	414,431
Sale of goods and services	7,606	7,070	17,993	15,898	25,599	22,968
Other non-taxation income	59	164	138	369	197	533
Total departmental revenues	175,944	164,304	152,112	273,628	328,056	437,932

Outcome 1 is described in Note 1.1. Net costs shown include intra-government costs that are eliminated in calculating the actual Budget Outcome.

Output Group 1.1 - National Statistical Service

Output Group 1.1.1 - Economic Statistics

Output Group 1.1.2 - Population and Social Statistics

\*- The prior year comparative departmental expenses for 2006-2007 which are split between Output Group 1.1.1 and Output 1.1.2 have been reclassified in the current financial report. The reclassification saw an increase in Output 1.1.1 expenses of \$21.1m and a corresponding decrease in Output 1.1.2 expenses. The change was made to more accurately reflect expenses by each Output Group.

## section viii

APPENDICES

[illegible]

# appendix 1

## Contact details

For enquiries about the ABS Annual Report, please contact:

**Director, Corporate Planning, Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616.

Telephone: 02 6252 7809

Email: [heather.olley@abs.gov.au](mailto:heather.olley@abs.gov.au)

Access to ABS documents (including the ABS Annual Report) and statistics is available through the ABS website <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>.

For any queries about statistical information, contact the National Information and Referral Service from anywhere in Australia between 8:30am and 5:00pm on:

1300 135 070 (Australian residents).

International clients may call +61 2 9268 4909

Alternatively, you can email your query to [client.services@abs.gov.au](mailto:client.services@abs.gov.au)

The ABS has offices in every state and territory, as listed below:

Office	Street Address	Postal Address
Central Office (Canberra)	ABS House 45 Benjamin Way Belconnen ACT 2617	Locked Bag 10 Belconnen ACT 2616
New South Wales	5th Floor St Andrews House Sydney Square Sydney NSW 2000	GPO Box 796 Sydney NSW 2001
Victoria	5th Floor Commercial Union Tower 485 LaTrobe Street Melbourne VIC 3000	GPO Box 2796Y Melbourne VIC 3001
Queensland	Level 3 639 Wickham St Fortitude Valley QLD 4006	GPO Box 9817 Brisbane QLD 4001
South Australia	Level 9 ANZ House 11 Waymouth St Adelaide SA 5000	GPO Box 2272 Adelaide SA 5001

Western Australia	Level 15 Exchange Plaza Sherwood Court Perth WA 6001	GPO Box K881 Perth WA 6842
Tasmania	200 Collins Street Hobart TAS 7000	GPO Box 66A Hobart TAS 7001
Northern Territory	7th Floor AANT House 81 Smith Street Darwin NT 0800	GPO BOX 3796 Darwin NT 0801
ACT	Level 5 33–35 Ainslie Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601	Locked Bag 10 Belconnen ACT 2616



# appendix 2

## User groups advising the ABS

### National groups

- ◆ Advisory Committee on Australian and International Disability Data
- ◆ Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
- ◆ Agriculture Statistics User Forum
- ◆ Analytical Community Reference Group
- ◆ Australia-New Zealand Population Workshop
- ◆ Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations Reference Group
- ◆ Australian Bureau of Statistics-Australian Taxation Office High Level Liaison Committee
- ◆ Australian Bureau of Statistics-Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources High Level Liaison Committee
- ◆ Australian Government Statistical Forum
- ◆ Biotechnology Statistics User Group
- ◆ Business Longitudinal Database External Advisory Group
- ◆ Centre of Environment and Energy Statistics Advisory Board
  - ◆ Energy Statistics Group
  - ◆ Water Statistics User Group
  - ◆ Land and Natural Resource Management Statistics User Group
- ◆ Childcare and Early Years Learning Survey Reference Group
- ◆ Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Cultural Ministers' Council Statistics Working Group
- ◆ Data Mapping Pilot—Early Childhood Working Group and Project Board
- ◆ Demography Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Economic Statistics User Group
- ◆ Education and Training Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Family Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ General Social Survey Reference Group
- ◆ Health Data Standards Committee
- ◆ Health Statistical Information Committee
- ◆ Health Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Household Income and Expenditure Statistics User Advisory Group
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology Statistics Reference Group

- ◆ Innovation Survey Technical Reference Group
- ◆ Input-Output Statistics User Group
- ◆ International Accounts Reference Group
- ◆ International Trade in Services User Group
- ◆ Labour Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Longitudinal Studies Advisory Group
- ◆ Methodology Advisory Group
- ◆ Migrant Statistics Reference Group
- ◆ Migrant Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Mining User Advisory Group
- ◆ National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data
- ◆ National Ageing Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ National Committee for Housing Information
- ◆ National Community Services Information Management Group
- ◆ National Corrective Services Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ National Crime Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ National Criminal Courts Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ National Health Information Group Management Principal Committee
- ◆ National Health Information Group Statistical Information Committee
- ◆ Passenger Card Data User Group
- ◆ Passenger Card Steering Group
- ◆ Personal Safety Survey Advisory Group
- ◆ Population Estimates Technical Workshop
- ◆ Population Health Information Development Group
- ◆ Private Hospital Statistics User Group
- ◆ Productivity Measurement Reference Group
- ◆ Research and Development Statistics User Forum
- ◆ Rural and Regional Statistics Advisory Group
- ◆ Standard Business Reporting Program Board and Steering Committee
- ◆ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport Research Group
- ◆ State Accounts User Group
- ◆ Statistical Clearing House User Group
- ◆ Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision
- ◆ Steering Group for the Crime and Justice Information Development Plan

- ♦ Structural Issues in the Workforce Sub-Committee, Workforce Profile Working Group (CDSMAC sub-committee)
- ♦ Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers Advisory Group
- ♦ Survey of Education and Training Reference Group
- ♦ Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing Reference Group
- ♦ Time Use Survey Advisory Group
- ♦ Transport Statistics Network

## State government groups

- ♦ Statistical Coordination and User Forum (New South Wales)
- ♦ Victorian Statistical Advisory Forum
- ♦ Queensland Statistical Table
- ♦ Government Agencies Statistical Committee (South Australia)
- ♦ State Statistical Forum (all states and territories)
- ♦ Statistical Policy Committee and Economic (Western Australia)
- ♦ Social Statistics Consultative Groups (Western Australia)
- ♦ Statistical Policy Committee (Tasmania)
- ♦ Tasmanian Statistical Advisory Committee
- ♦ Northern Territory Statistical Liaison Committee
- ♦ Australian Capital Territory Statistical Co-ordination Committee.

# appendix 3

## Consultancy services

### Policy on selection and engagement of consultants

ABS policy on the selection and engagement of consultants is consistent with ABS Chief Executive Instructions (CEIs), and the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines. The ABS selects and engages consultants in a way that provides value for money.

### Total consultancies let in 2007–08

During 2007–08, the total expenditure on consultancies was \$677,999. Twenty-four new consultancies were engaged to carry out projects, or provide professional and technical advice that could not be provided by staff of the ABS. The total expenditure of these was \$584,843. Six consultancies had been let in previous years, and continued into 2007–08, with an expenditure of \$93,156 during 2007–08.

Appendix table 3.1 shows the total expenditure on all consultancies for 2004–05 to 2007–08. The larger consultancy contracts (those to the value of \$10,000 or more) are detailed in Appendix table 3.2, along with brief notes on the procurement method used.

*Appendix Table 3.1: Consultancy services engaged by the ABS*

	Consultancies (number)	Expenditure (\$) including GST
2004–05	24	825,069
2005–06	37	941,861
2006–07	23	794,618
2007–08	30	677,999

*Appendix Table 3.2: Consultancy services contracts let in 2007–08 to the value of \$10,000 or more*

Vendor Name	Description	Amount (including GST)	Justification and Type of tender (1)
Access Testing Pty Ltd	Census output web load and performance testing.	\$29,392	Select Tender (a) (d)
Answerz Pty Ltd	Re-Certification of ABS internet gateway.	\$17,894	Select Tender (a)
Bibliology Pty Ltd	Managing ABS IT museum collection for ABS library.	\$13,968	Direct Sourcing (a)
Corefiling	XBRL tools licence and related integration and support services.	\$17,300	Open Tender (a)

Dimension Data Pty Ltd	Assist in the design and build of voice and data networks.	\$20,851	Direct Sourcing (d)
Excelerated Consulting	Development financial management software.	\$17,146	Select Tender (a)
IBM Australia Ltd	Assist with the development of the costing scenario for the People Processes Service improvement project proposal.	\$22,044	Direct Sourcing (a)
Information Management Australia Pty Ltd	Assistance with setting up evaluation matrix for evaluating XBRL tools tender.	\$15,400	Direct Sourcing (a)
KBR	Physical security review for ABS House.	\$33,537	Select Tender (a) (d)
King Partnership	Data modelling and government harmonisation for Standard Business Reporting.	\$109,995	Direct Sourcing (a)
Little Oak Pty Ltd	Advise and assist the ABS on issues related to Metadata and provide information on industry and academic developments related to Metadata technology.	\$15,239	Direct Sourcing (a)
Nirmana Pty Ltd	Technical assistance to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office to compile, produce and publish the 2006 National Accounts.	\$27,500	Direct Sourcing (c)
Peter Collins and Associates Pty Ltd	Provision of, and guidance with, implementing a Strategic Alignment Program.	\$58,941	Direct Sourcing (a)
Leon Pietsch	Technical assistance to the Vanuatu National Statistics Offices for the Household Income and Expenditure Survey.	\$32,137	Direct Sourcing (a) (c)
Sigma Management Science Pty Ltd	Project assurance advisory role for Standard Business Reporting project.	\$39,600	Direct Sourcing (a)
Tactics Consulting Pty Ltd	Keep the knowledge project initiation & Beta version.	\$33,000	Direct Sourcing (a)
Terry Offner	Technical assistance to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office to assist with the rebase of the Consumer Price Index.	\$19,120	Direct Sourcing (a) (c)
The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia	Grant for writing research papers for a CAP project.	\$100,000	Direct Sourcing (a)

(1) Explanation of selection process terms drawn from the *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines* (January 2005):

**Open Tender:** A procurement procedure in which a request for tender is published inviting all businesses that satisfy the conditions for participation to submit tenders. Public tenders are sought from the marketplace using national and major metropolitan newspaper advertising and the Australian Government AusTender Internet site.

Select Tender: A procurement procedure in which the procuring agency selects which potential suppliers are invited to submit tenders. Tenders are invited from a short list of competent suppliers.

Direct Sourcing: A form of restricted tendering, available only under certain defined circumstances, with a single potential supplier or suppliers being invited to bid because of their unique expertise and/or their special ability to supply the goods and/or services sought.

Panel: An arrangement under which a number of suppliers, usually selected through a single procurement process, may each supply property or services to an agency as specified in the panel arrangements. Tenders are sought from suppliers that have pre-qualified on the agency panels to supply to the government. This category includes standing offers and supplier panels where the consultant offers to supply goods and services for pre-determined length of time, usually at a pre-arranged price.

Justification for recourse to consultancy arrangements:

- (a) Need for specialised skills
- (b) Need for access to the latest technology and experience in its application
- (c) Lack of available in-house resources
- (d) Need for an independent study.

## appendix 4

### Advertising and market research

ABS paid \$23,851.92 for advertising in 2007–08. There was no expenditure for market research, marketing or public relations consultancies for the year. The reduction in expenditure from 2006–07 was due to the Census campaign in that year.

# appendix 5

## Freedom of information requests

### Introduction

Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* requires the ABS to provide detail on the structure of the ABS, and how members of the public can gain access to information held by the ABS.

Detail on the structure of the ABS can be found in Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS.

### Information held by the ABS

*Appendix Table 5.1: Categories of documents in the possession of the ABS*

<b>Documents open to public access upon payment of a fee</b>	The ABS does not hold any of these types of documents.
<b>Documents available for purchase or customarily available free of charge</b>	The ABS has a wide range of statistical publications available free-of-charge on its website < <a href="http://www.abs.gov.au">http://www.abs.gov.au</a> >, and through major public libraries. Charged publications can be purchased via the ABS National Information Referral Service (Ph: 1300 135 070).
<b>Government and Parliament</b>	The ABS holds policy-related documents, ministerial briefings, ministerial correspondence, replies to parliamentary questions, and tabling documents.
<b>Meetings and conferences</b>	The ABS holds agenda papers, submissions, and records of proceedings of internal and external conferences, management meetings and workshops.
<b>Statistical and statistical services projects</b>	The ABS holds research, development and evaluation papers; records of consultations with suppliers and users of data; statistical classifications; lists of businesses; maps; data collection, processing and publication manuals and instructions; and mailing lists.
<b>Administration and management</b>	The ABS holds work program and planning documents; finance, staff and establishment papers and manuals; personnel files; recruitment files; files on selection and promotion of staff; staff development and training papers; officer services documents; and tenders.
<b>Privacy</b>	The ABS holds a record of the extent and nature of ABS holdings of personal information, as contained in the <i>Personal Information Digest</i> published by the Privacy Commissioner.
<b>General</b>	The ABS holds correspondence, manuals on general subjects, internal reports and administrative circulars.



## ABS freedom of information activities

Matters relating to the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* within the ABS are the responsibility of the Office of the Statistician, which is located in Central Office. Authority for decision making under this Act has been delegated to the Deputy Australian Statisticians, the First Assistant Statistician, Corporate Services Division, and the Assistant Statistician, Office of the Statistician.

A significant part of ABS information holdings is information collected under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. This information is exempt from the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

The following table provides details of freedom of information (FOI) activities during the years 2003–04 to 2007–08 inclusive. Three requests were made to the ABS under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* during 2007–08.

*Appendix Table 5.2: Freedom of Information Activities, 2003–04 to 2007–08 (number)*

	2003–04	2004–05	2006–07	2007–08
<b>Requests received</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Decisions made</b>				
Access granted in full	1	3	-	0*
Access granted in part	-	-	1	0*

\*No information was released to the requestors under the FOI Act during 2007–08. However, the ABS released some information to the requestors separately to the FOI Act, where the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* allows for such a release.

## Where to get information

### Freedom of Information Inquiries

All inquiries concerning access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* may be directed to the Freedom of Information Contact Officer, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616; Ph: (02) 6252 5559; Email: [secretariat@abs.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@abs.gov.au).

### General Information

The ABS offers an initial contact point for all information requests:

Telephone: 1300 135 070

Email: [client.services@abs.gov.au](mailto:client.services@abs.gov.au)

Facsimile: 1300 135 211

Mail: Client Services, ABS, GPO Box 796, Sydney, NSW, 2001.

# appendix 6

## Online appendices

The following appendixes are available in the online version of the annual report:

1. Disclosure of unidentified information
2. Professional papers by ABS officers
3. Submissions to parliamentary committees
4. Documents tabled in Parliament
5. Special articles in previous annual reports
6. Legal services expenditure



## section ix

### GLOSSARY AND INDEX

# glossary

ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABS cat. no.	ABS catalogue number
ABSDL	Australian Bureau of Statistics Data Laboratory
ABGR	Australian Building Greenhouse Ratings
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACLC	Australian Culture and Leisure Classification
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEI	Australian Economic Indicators
AGATISIS	Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
AGSF	Australian Government Statistical Forum
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALLS	Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ANZSIC 2006	Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006
ANZSRC	Australia and New Zealand Standard Research Classification
APPSIM	Australian Population and Policy Simulation Model
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ARIMA	Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average
ASAC	Australian Statistics Advisory Council
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BPM	Balance of Payments Manual
BPS	Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia)
CAI	Computer Assisted Interviewing
CCTR	Childcare Tax Rebate
CDPP	Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions
CDS	Commonwealth Disability Strategy
CEIs	Chief Executive Instructions
COAG	Council of Australian Governments

CPI	Consumer Price Index
CURF	Confidentialised Unit Record File
DCM	Data Collection Methodology
DHM	Division Heads Meetings
DOTARS	Department of Transport and Regional Services
ESUG	Economic Statistics User Group
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNAF	Geocoded National Address File
GPF	Government Partnership Fund
GST	Goods and Services Tax
GVG	Greenhouse Vehicle Guide
HILDA	Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia
HR DHM	Human Resources Division Heads Meeting
IBCS	Integrated Business Characteristics Strategy
ICES	Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy
ICP	International Comparison Program
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDC	Interdepartmental Committee
IDP	Information Development Plan
IDSC	Information Development Steering Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INES	International Indicators of Education Systems
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IT	Information Technology
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGPC	Local Government Purpose Classification
LSAC	Longitudinal Study of Australian Children
LSIC	Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children
MAP	Measures of Australia's Progress
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAGATSIHID	National Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data
NATSEM	National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling
NDN	National Data Network
NEIS	National Environmental Information System
NIRS	National Information and Referral Service

NOD	Notices of Direction
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSS	National Statistical Service
NSTI	National Statistical Training Institute
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
OH&S Act	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991</i>
OPALS	Organisational, People and Learning Systems
PCU	Provider Contact Unit
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
Qld	Queensland
RADL	Remote Access Data Laboratory
RSE	Relative Standard Error
SA	South Australia
SBR	Standard Business Reporting
SCH	Statistical Clearing House
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SEASABS	Seasonal analysis, ABS Standards (seasonal adjustment software)
SEEA	System of Environmental and Economic Accounts
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SES	Senior Executive Service
SLCD	Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset
SMS	Short Message System
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
SNA	System of National Accounts
SSF	State Statistical Forum
STSS	State and Territory Statistical Services
Tas	Tasmania
VCAMS	Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System
Vic	Victoria
VNSO	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
WA	Western Australia
WAIFS	WA Indicator Framework System

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