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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey

An Evaluation of the Survey

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NEW ISSUE

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
SURVEY 1994: AN EVALUATION OF THE SURVEY**

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ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIH&W	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Studies
AMA	Australian Medical Association
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AG's	Attorney-General's Department
BIMPR	Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research
BRACS	Broadcasting to Remote Aboriginal Communities System
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CD	Collection District
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DSS	Department of Social Security
HSH	Department of Human Services and Health
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
NATSIS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey
NCATSIS	National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
OAD	Office of Aboriginal Development
OATSIHS	Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SAC	Survey Advisory Committee
TRG	Technical Reference Group

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

A review of the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) was included in the Treasury Portfolio Evaluation Plan for 1995-96 as a significant activity of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The NATSIS, which was conducted in response to recommendation 49 of the report by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), aimed to provide comprehensive national information on a range of topics relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Royal Commission had highlighted the inadequacy of existing statistical information for monitoring the wider social and economic experience of Indigenous people.

The evaluation was overseen by a steering committee chaired by the ABS and comprising representatives from several Commonwealth government departments and agencies. The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of NATSIS in meeting its objectives which were, in summary, to provide the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas; to provide a stronger information base for planning the empowerment of Australia's Indigenous peoples; and for meeting and measuring progress in meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Stakeholders believed it was important to have up-to-date information to meet the great statistical need in relation to issues affecting Australia's Indigenous population and strongly suggested a further survey is needed.

The fact that the existing NATSIS topics relate to key issues which are applicable to the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is considered a strong aspect of the survey. There should be scope, however, to modify the questions to enable more comprehensive and detailed data to be elicited.

There should be ongoing involvement of Indigenous people in the development and conduct of another survey, as this ensures that the survey both addresses the right issues and is carried out in a culturally appropriate way.

The issues of appropriateness of the survey output mediums and accessibility to those outputs are fundamental to the NATSIS. Recognition of the importance of ensuring accessibility to results and the associated resourcing is an issue that should be addressed by the ABS in conjunction with key stakeholders, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1 To ensure effective monitoring of change in the social, health, education and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, there be follow-up surveys to the NATSIS at about five-yearly intervals.
- Recommendation 2 An integral part of the development should be the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development and operation of the survey. As was the case with the last survey, a body comprising Indigenous people, other stakeholders and the ABS should be established to advise on the development and operations of the survey.
- Recommendation 3 Consistent with their integral role in the survey, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be given the opportunity to participate in both the collection and dissemination phases of the next survey.
- Recommendation 4 Account should be taken of inherent differences among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Survey procedures, where appropriate, should be modified to take account of those differences and ensure the relevance of the survey to Torres Strait Islanders and within major groups of the Aboriginal population.
- Recommendation 5 The dissemination strategy for any future survey should ensure that results are readily accessible to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and sufficient funding should be allocated for this component. To ensure accessibility and subsequent use of the information, the ABS should seriously consider delivering basic statistical training in the interpretation of results to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Recommendation 6 That, in respect of the last recommendation and the fact that a considerable amount of statistical output is yet to be released from the 1994 survey, the ABS determine and test how such a strategy might best be developed and implemented prior to the next survey.
- Recommendation 7 While the evaluation found that the methods used by the NATSIS were sound and alternative methods were not currently considered likely to be more effective or efficient, it is recommended that the ABS continues to be aware of international developments and that these be taken into consideration during the development of any future survey.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

BACKGROUND TO THE NATSIS

The NATSIS, which was conducted in 1994 by the ABS in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), was a direct response to recommendation 49 of the report by the RCIADIC. Released in February 1995, the initial results of the survey have been in the community for one year. Other outputs, such as thematic papers, joint ABS/ATSIC regional statistics books¹ and the unit record file, are progressively being developed and released.

The NATSIS was evaluated to assess its effectiveness in meeting its objectives. These were to provide the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the Commonwealth Government and State and Territory Governments, while also providing a stronger information base for planning the empowerment of the Indigenous population and for measuring progress in meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs.

This evaluation of the first NATSIS is for Commonwealth Government purposes and has been included in the Treasury Portfolio Evaluation Plan for 1995–96. Consequently, the evaluation is being overseen by a steering committee chaired by the ABS with representatives from several Commonwealth departments and agencies. As well as Commonwealth departments and agencies, a number of State government departments and agencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and research institutes were invited to contribute to the evaluation.

NEED FOR IMPROVED STATISTICAL INFORMATION

In the last 10 years, several major government reports on Indigenous issues have expressed concern at the lack of statistical information about the social and economic circumstances of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.² In addition, there is a growing need for relevant statistics for monitoring specific outcomes of major policy initiatives such as the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy and the Aboriginal Education Policy.

While the ABS survey program addresses topics covering economic and social concerns, none of these surveys provide separate detailed information on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This is because of the relatively small size of the population and the consequently high relative standard errors in standard sample surveys. Operational difficulties associated with conducting surveys in remote Indigenous communities affect about 20% of the Indigenous community. There are also issues of conceptual relevance and data quality for data collected from these more traditional people.

1 A set of wall charts *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey: Regional Overview* (4192.0.40.001-036). *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey: Regional Statistics* (4196.0.40.001-036).

2 Australia, Parliament 1985, *Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs — Report of Committee of Review, August 1985*, Parl. Paper 418, p. 4, Canberra. Australia, Parliament 1985, *Aboriginal Education — House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education Report, September 1985*, Parl. Paper 357, p. 1, Canberra.

In some surveys, (for example, the 1989-90 and 1995-96 National Health Surveys and, on an experimental basis, the Monthly Labour Force Survey), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are separately identified but only at a broad level, nevertheless very useful information can be derived from them.³ The ABS advised that while it is desirable to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in other surveys to allow for comparisons to be made, this is both operationally and conceptually difficult.

The Population Census is the most important official national data collection which provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. However, it provides only limited, albeit important, information on, for example, employment and education but nothing at all on health, traditional culture and law and justice.

The various sources of information available have not been viewed, in the past, as providing a basis for nationally comparable measures or for monitoring social and economic well-being over time. The importance of nationally comparable statistical information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is scarce compared to the range of information available about the general Australian population, is one which the RCIADIC raised in its report.

REPORT OF THE RCIADIC

Overall, the RCIADIC found that the disadvantaged and unequal position (socially, culturally and economically) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian society was the factor that most contributed to their over-representation in custody.⁴ Contributing factors include poor health, inadequate education, separation from natural families and employment.

Support for self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, together with the need to address the disadvantage in all important aspects of social life, were fundamental themes to the recommendations in the Royal Commission's Report.⁵ There is an annual report by the Commonwealth Government and State and Territory Governments on implementation of the recommendations. This includes the implementation and monitoring of recommendation 49 by the ABS.

The inadequacy of statistical information for monitoring deaths of people in custody and the wider social and economic experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was highlighted by the Royal Commission.⁶

While several of the Royal Commission's recommendations address the issue of improved statistical data collection, including development of

3 ABS internal paper, NATSIS Report 03 — Introduction/3.2 Survey Purpose, (refer 3.2.2).

4 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody National Report, Overview and Recommendations, p. 15.

5 Three Years On: Implementation of Commonwealth Government Responses to the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1995, Volume 1: Overview Reports, Annual Report 1993-94, pp. 2-3, Canberra.

6 Aboriginal Deaths in Custody — Overview of the Response by Governments to the Royal Commission, 1992, p. 57, AGPS, Canberra.

social and economic indicators, recommendation 49 specifically recommended a special national survey.

RECOMMENDATION 49

The NATSIS was conducted by the ABS in consultation with ATSIC from April to July 1994 as part of the Commonwealth Government's response to recommendation 49 of the RCIADIC report. Recommendation 49 states:

That proposals for a special national survey covering a range of social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal population with full Aboriginal participation at all levels be supported. The proposed census should take as its boundaries the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission boundaries. The Aboriginal respondents to the census should be encouraged to nominate their traditional/contemporary language affiliation. I further recommend that the ATSIC Regional Councils be encouraged to use the special census to obtain an inventory of community infrastructure, assets and outstanding needs which can be used as data for the development of their regional plans.⁷

The Commonwealth's official response to recommendation 49 included the following:

... More regular estimates of population growth and demographic trends are vital to effective program management.

The Commonwealth, through Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) will mount a national survey of social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In mounting the survey, the ABS will involve and employ Aboriginal people in all stages of design, conduct and interpretation. The Commonwealth notes the detailed terms of this recommendation and will take them up in consultation with ATSIC ...⁸

A complete record of the Commonwealth's response and that of the States and Territories is included in Attachment A.⁹

7 *Three Years On: Implementation of Commonwealth Government Responses to the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1995*, Volume 2: Reports on Programs and Recommendations, Annual Report 1993-94, p. 168, Canberra.

8 *Three Years On*, Volume 2, pp. 168-169.

9 *Aboriginal Deaths in Custody -- Response by Governments to the Royal Commission 1992*, Volume 1, AGPS, pp. 161-163, Canberra.

SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE EVALUATION

PURPOSE

A review of the NATSIS was included in the Treasury Portfolio Evaluation Plan for 1995-96. The survey was evaluated to assess its effectiveness in meeting its objectives which were:

- to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory Governments with the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas; and
- to provide a stronger information base for planning the empowerment of Australia's Indigenous peoples, for meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs, and for measuring progress in meeting those objectives, aspirations and needs.

The evaluation is also to assess how well the NATSIS strategy can contribute in an ongoing way to meeting the objectives of the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics project, which are:

- to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their organisations, Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies and other non-government institutions to more effectively plan, monitor and evaluate programs and initiatives; and
- to inform Australia's Indigenous peoples, and the Australian community in general, by providing (and coordinating the production within ABS and other agencies) statistics relating to the Indigenous population and by improving the quality, appropriateness, availability and timeliness of such statistics.

KEY ISSUES

The key issues that this evaluation addressed were:

- applicability of NATSIS content to issues relevant to the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- effectiveness of the survey, if ongoing, as a base for monitoring of outcomes for Australia's Indigenous peoples;
- appropriateness of the output mediums;
- accessibility of results to Australia's Indigenous people, their organisations and government service providers; and
- garner views on the appropriateness of NATSIS against alternative strategies for meeting needs for statistical information on the social and economic experience of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee oversaw the evaluation of the NATSIS, with a project officer, Ms Janine Ramsay from the Department of Human Services and Health working to the committee. The committee was chaired by the ABS with representatives from ATSIC, the Department of Finance and the Public Service and Merit Protection Commission (list of members, Attachment B).

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), through the Indigenous Policy Branch, asked, and was kept informed, of the committee's work.

RESOURCES UTILISED

An amount of \$25,000 for salaries, travel, etc. was allocated for this evaluation.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

The following methodology was agreed to by the steering committee and adopted in the evaluation of the NATSIS.

OVERVIEW OF THE NATSIS

Discussions were held with ABS NATSIS survey managers and other ABS staff, ATSIC officers and other key people involved in the development and design of the survey, to clarify the NATSIS process.

Original submissions to NATSIS, the RCIADIC Report and the associated response by governments, and other material that informed the development of, was produced as part of, or was an outcome of, the NATSIS, were considered.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

An outline of NATSIS outputs and ways in which the results have been disseminated were an input to the evaluation.

CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The consultation process to target key stakeholders under the following broad categories:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations;
- Commonwealth and State government departments and agencies; and
- research institutes and professional groups.

FINDINGS

An analysis of responses by stakeholders to assess whether these were in accordance with the survey's objectives and within the evaluation framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are outlined in both the summary and main body of the report.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONDUCT OF THE NATSIS

BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth Government's intention to conduct a national survey of the social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was announced by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on 31 March 1992.

Options While not directly linked to the NATSIS, it is worth noting that the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University convened a workshop in April 1992 to consider options for a national survey. The workshop, which included an ABS representative, aimed to demonstrate the 'correlation between the availability of accurate statistical information and the possibility of addressing a range of factors that perpetuate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage'.¹⁰

A range of views, predominantly with a socioeconomic focus, identified a range of conceptual, methodological and cultural issues associated with the conduct and content of a national survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ATSIC involvement The ATSIC Commissioners supported the need for information from a national survey and advised the ABS that it should be conducted in a culturally appropriate way which would, in turn, lead to a well-considered response.¹¹

Discussion with ATSIC and its Board continued throughout the development of the survey, with the ABS seeking advice from ATSIC and other agencies on whom to consult. ATSIC also had a role, through the chair of the overarching Survey Advisory Committee (SAC), in the oversighting of consultations in relation to the design and conduct of the survey.¹²

ABS' role From the outset, the ABS' position was that '... the survey would reflect the aspirations and expectations of Indigenous people and provide them with the information they considered was needed for their purposes'.¹³ As a part of this, there was a commitment by the ABS to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both in the ABS and through outside consultation, in the development and conduct of the NATSIS.¹⁴

Funding of \$4.4 million was allocated to the ABS for the survey. A breakdown of features of the budget is in Attachment C.¹⁵ The ABS took the view that the size of the budget meant that the survey would be able

10 Altman, J.C. (ed.) 1992, *A National Survey of Indigenous Australians: Options and Implications*, Research Monograph No. 3, p. xii, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU, Canberra.

11 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, *Annual Report, 1994-95*, p. 21, ABS, Canberra.

12 Internal file letter from ATSIC to Wungatha Regional Council, dated 21 October 1994.

13 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, *Annual Report, 1994-95*, quote from Richard Madden, acting Australian Statistician, p. 19, ABS, Canberra.

14 *Three Years On*, Volume 2, p. 168.

15 Internal ABS paper, NATSIS Report 03 — *Introduction/3.3 Resources and Timetable* (refer 3.3.7).

to produce detailed national statistics and reasonable State statistics, but that regional statistics would be more limited. In view of Recommendation 49, however, there was a commitment by the ABS to producing some data that ATSIC Regional Councils could use in regional planning.

There was criticism early in the development of the survey because the ABS was not designing it to produce detailed regional statistics. The ABS noted that a substantially larger budget would be needed with little prospect of it being available. The sample design did take into account regional structures, although the ABS acknowledges that the survey budget did not allow samples large enough to produce more than basic statistics at a regional level to enable detailed analysis at that level.

The timetable of the survey from July 1992 until the launch of its first results in February 1995 is at Attachment D.¹⁶

CONSULTATION STRATEGY

The principles of empowerment and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the role that access to appropriate statistical data can play in implementing those principles, were considered by the ABS to be integral to an effective survey.¹⁷ To assist in ensuring that the survey was accepted and useful to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, a consultation strategy was developed that comprised ATSIC, a Survey Advisory Committee, several Technical Reference Groups, and a wider consultation process.

An important outcome of the consultation process for the survey was that both the information collected and the methods used in its collection took account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values and priorities.

Statistical Advisory Committee

The SAC was established in mid-1992 with representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and from major service delivery and research agencies. The agencies represented on the SAC were as follows.¹⁸

- ATSIC — four nominees of the ATSIC Commissioners (including Commissioner Charles Jackson as Chair; two Regional Councillors from Broken Hill and the Torres Strait; and an ATSIC official);
- Commonwealth agencies — one nominee each from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), the Department of Social Security (DSS), the Department of Human Services and Health (HSH) and the PM&C Aboriginal Reconciliation Unit;

16 Internal ABS paper, *NATSIS Report 07 — Sampling/7.1 Sample Design* (refer 3.3.7).

17 Internal ABS paper *NATSIS Report 03 — Introduction/3.3 Resources and Timetable* (refer 3.3.1).

18 Internal ABS paper *NATSIS Report 04 — Consultation/4.1 Survey Advisory Committee* (refer 4.1.1).

- State and Territory Governments — one member each from the New South Wales and the Northern Territory Governments; and
- other — members from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS); and Institute of Aboriginal Development.

The SAC's role was to advise the ABS on broad survey content including setting priorities, and issues such as methodology, output, cultural aspects and public relations.

Technical Reference Groups

Five TRGs supported the SAC during the survey's development stage from late 1992 through to the end of 1993. The TRGs included a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with expertise in specific areas. These groups had an academic and research focus and their role was, within topic areas, to provide advice to the SAC and the ABS on data priorities and collection methodology.

Groups were established for family and culture, health, education and training, employment and income, while less formal groups provided advice on housing and law and justice areas.

Wider consultation

The wider consultation process began in December 1992 when the ABS wrote to a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations asking for advice about the survey. Papers on the proposed and final content were drafted in March and November 1993 and February 1994. They were broadly distributed and, when required, followed up by ABS staff.

The consultation process included a campaign launched by the ABS in March 1993 to raise public awareness of the NATSIS. In the course of this campaign, three newsletters about the survey's development were distributed to approximately 2,000 people and organisations. There were radio and television segments about the survey, with local initiatives being perceived by the ABS as more effective than the national.¹⁹ In addition, brochures and posters were distributed, together with videos through the Broadcasting to Remote Aboriginal Communities System (BRACS), and the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA).

The distribution of publicity material was supported, in a more direct way, in the States and Territories through visits by ABS survey staff to many organisations, such as Regional Councils, to inform them about the survey. Approximately 200 organisations were visited by the ABS over the consultation period.

¹⁹ Internal ABS paper, NATSIS Report 06 — *Methodology/6.5 Field System* (refer 6.5.3).

The quality of the consultation process was acknowledged at the NATSIS launch by Mr Charles Perkins, then Deputy Chairperson of ATSIC, who stated that:

... Theirs [ABS] was a model [consultation] process and ensured the success of the National Survey.²⁰

CONTENT

In order to determine the content of the survey, the ABS worked in close consultation with ATSIC, with an extensive consultation process with a variety of interested parties, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals.

Government agencies were consulted on identifying the statistical information needed to achieve the NATSIS purpose. Major submissions came from ATSIC, DEET, DSS, HSH, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIH&W). All known Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations were advised in writing in late 1992 that the survey was being developed and were asked for input and how information should be collected.²¹

Most prioritising of topics for inclusion or exclusion from the survey was done through the SAC and TRGs. Topic development generally followed a cycle of field testing, then TRG consideration, and finally SAC consideration before the next test. Outlined below are the main milestones in the development of the NATSIS content:²²

- understanding in the ABS from approaches regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data that had been made over many years;
- seeking of submissions from all interested agencies;
- March 1993 discussion paper and ensuing consultations;
- June 1993 SAC meeting;
- September 1993 SAC meeting; and
- final content in January 1994.

In deciding the most important new information to collect, the TRGs and SAC considered its potential use; acceptability of the questions to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; available related information; and the accuracy with which the questions could be answered.

20 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995, *Annual Report, 1994-95*, p. 20, ABS, Canberra.

21 Internal ABS paper, *NATSIS Report 01 - Overview* (refer 1.4).

22 Internal ABS paper, *NATSIS Report 05 - Survey Content and Questionnaire/5.1 Content*, p. 1.

METHODOLOGY

A culturally appropriate survey

The ABS paper *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey — Survey Content and Methodology*, which was widely distributed as part of the consultation process, outlined the procedures to be used in the survey. The latest version of the paper is dated February 1994 (Attachment E). In order to design a survey that would best meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ABS was keen to conduct the survey in a culturally appropriate way. It was anticipated that this, in turn, would lead to a successful response and outcome.

While there was involvement through consultation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also involved in the development and conduct of the survey as part of the survey and management team. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations assisted in the recruitment of Indigenous survey interviewers. The 90 interviewers had a one-week training course and were supported throughout the survey by ABS State survey managers. The excellent response rate of 90% to the survey and its timely completion was largely attributed by the ABS to those interviewers and to the public awareness campaign which was successful in involving Indigenous people in the survey.

Survey sample design

The NATSIS required a design that was different to any of the ABS' previous household surveys. One of the unique characteristics involved the census collection districts (CDs), which are the basic collection, coding, processing, tabulation and publication units. In the NATSIS, the CDs were stratified by ATSI region and size.

Survey estimates were based on information obtained from a sample of approximately 5,000 dwellings with 17,500 people, covering about 6.6% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as reported in the 1991 Census of Population and Housing.²³ A sample of this size was required for the NATSIS to produce results with the standard errors required.

Given the survey's origin in the RCIADIC report, a sample of prisoners was included. This was to ensure that the estimates at the State, Territory and national levels reflected the characteristics and attitudes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Testing

In all, a series of five survey tests were conducted from late 1992 through to the final test in late 1993 in metropolitan, rural and remote areas in various regions of Australia.

Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals during the testing was to ensure content and questions would be understood and acceptable to the majority of people participating in the survey.

23. *Ipsos*. ABS paper: NATSIS Report 01 - Overview (refer 1.5).

RELEASE OF RESULTS

The initial results of the survey were launched on 21 February 1995 by The Honourable Robert Tickner MP, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, and Mr Charles Perkins.

Also released were: *1994 NATSIS: Detailed Findings* (4190.0) (hereafter referred to as *Detailed Findings*); *1994 NATSIS: Getting Results — Australian Summary* (4191.0) (referred to as the *Getting Results Summary*); and *1994 NATSIS: Regional Overviews* (4192.0.40.001–036), overview wall charts for each of the 36 ATSIC Regions and the Torres Strait areas (referred to as the *ATSIC Regional Overviews*).

It was expected that there would be a wide audience for the *Detailed Findings*, which contained a statistical summary of the initial results. However, it was envisaged that the audience for the *ATSIC Regional Overviews* would be more likely to have a specific interest in a particular region. It was planned that there would be a range of different outputs progressively released to meet the varying needs of different users.

POTENTIAL NATIONAL BENCHMARK

A major aim of the NATSIS was to overcome gaps in existing statistical information which, in keeping with the spirit of the report by the RCIADIC, should contribute information to empower Australia's Indigenous people in striving for self-determination. The extent to which this has happened, together with the issue of whether another survey is the best way to ensure a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is maintained, are key considerations of this report.

DISSEMINATION OF SURVEY RESULTS

As well as providing information to Commonwealth and State government agencies and other organisations, such as research institutes, it was intended by the ABS that the value of the data would be increased substantially if presented in a way that would enable use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is consistent with the statement in the ABS NATSIS methodology paper that:

This survey is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ABS is therefore keen to ensure that the survey results are made available very widely within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities ...²⁴

It is also in keeping with recommendation 51(c) of the RCIADIC report which states:

The requirement that Aboriginal people from the relevant community or group receive the results of the research delivered in a form which can be understood by them.²⁵

As previously outlined, the initial release of the survey results was through three products, the *Detailed Findings*, the *Getting Results Summary*, and *36 ATSIC Regional Overviews*. To ensure the immediate availability of results, several strategies were employed by the ABS. An overview of these, together with evaluation comment, follows.

ABS DISSEMINATION AT STATE LEVEL

While the level of awareness of the NATSIS results would be associated with national strategies, it is also linked with the extent of local ABS dissemination initiatives which have always been dependent on the availability of resources such as staff. Following the release of the survey results, the State survey managers were responsible for feedback and dissemination within that State or Territory. The extent of that feedback varied, e.g. while the Tasmanian ABS office was not able to provide follow-up due to lack of resources, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory contacted an extensive number of government and Aboriginal organisations. There was a perception by several of the ABS officers who participated, that this was well received and should be supported by an ongoing infrastructure.

In Western Australia, there has been an ongoing and extensive dissemination program since the release of the NATSIS results, and talks and seminars on outputs have been continually provided to a range of interested organisations. On the basis of the feedback, the ABS survey managers in Western Australia and New South Wales have both expressed reservations about how Indigenous organisations were able to access and utilise this information.

²⁴ 1994 *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey - Survey Content and Methodology*, February 1994, ABS paper, p. 7.

²⁵ *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody National Report*, Volume 5, p. 80.

These issues, combined with the varying extent of survey feedback in the States and the Northern Territory and the comments on the lack of use of results by Australia's Indigenous organisations, highlight the need for the ABS to consider the joint issues of dissemination and accessibility of the results of the existing and any future NATSIS.

GENERAL ABS DISSEMINATION

The results of the NATSIS are accessed in a number of ways through the ABS.

Publication of initial results

The ABS was keen to ensure that the initial results were widely made available. At release, the *Detailed Findings* were subsidised from the survey budget. In addition, with funding of \$15,000, the ABS' National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATSIS) provided two copies of the *Getting Results Summary* to every known Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation. Regional Councils were a main target for the distribution through ATSIC of the *ATSIC Regional Overviews*.

From the responses of stakeholders to this evaluation, it would appear that the initial products were reasonably well targeted to their target audiences, i.e. the impressions and views of the Indigenous community are largely based on the *Getting Results Summary* and the *Regional Overviews* while those of service providers, government departments and agencies and research institutes are largely based on the *Detailed Findings*.

Toll-free telephone service

A toll-free telephone service based in NCATSIS and advertised in the *Getting Results Summary*, provided an invaluable interactive supplement to the published results.

The service, which was used so extensively by organisations and individuals during the first six months that it required utilisation of two full-time people, still receives several calls per day. It also provides an important link to the consultancy service offered by NCATSIS.

Consultancy service

This service offers consultancies and special tabulations which range from very small jobs to weeks of work. A wide range of organisations have used the service which aims to meet the specific requirements of those agencies on a user pays basis.

As part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of NATSIS, a telephone survey of several major users of the ABS consultancy service was conducted by Yvonne Dunn of NCATSIS. Users of this service, including some of those consulted in the more general consultation process for the evaluation, expressed a high level of satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of this service.

Projects that have utilised NATSIS information gained through this service include:

- a number of reports by the Crime Research Centre of Western Australia, including *Measuring the Extent of Domestic Violence*, *Aboriginal Youth and the Juvenile Justice System in Western Australia* and *Aboriginal Contact with the Criminal Justice System and the Impact of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. The Centre advised that the results were particularly important because there are no other sources of such data available and because of the ability to get State specific as well as national data;
- an exercise to identify and describe those Aboriginal people who have been removed from their natural families was undertaken by the Department of Finance. This preliminary study was possible due to the survey content including a question on whether an individual was brought up by their natural family. This information does provide reasonable national data but because of the relatively small population there are limitations on the extent the information can be used. However, the information is important as there are no other sources that could be used to estimate the size and characteristics of this group; and
- a basis for comparison between Torres Strait and mainland Torres Strait Islander people for planning Commonwealth-funded health programs by IISH. NATSIS was the major source of information used.

Several major government agencies, however, took issue with the fact that they have to pay for information through the consultancy service, both on principle and because of limited budgets. One State government agency suggested that, because there was such a need for good social data on the position of Indigenous people, the information should be made accessible through a consortium (possibly facilitated by the ABS) of potential users.

Joint ABS/ATSIC regional statistics books

Although available resources have not allowed NCATSIS to have intensive consultation and contact with Indigenous organisations about the NATSIS in recent months, another round of contact and consultation is planned following the release of the joint ABS/ATSIC regional statistics books in February 1996.

Due to the combination of the tight evaluation time frame over December-January, protocol observations and the February 1996 release of the regional statistics books, the evaluation consultation process sought, but had difficulty accessing, some of the representatives of the elected arm of ATSIC for comment. Comment was made by the chairs of several ATSIC Regional Councils, however, that the NATSIS concept was worthwhile, particularly in terms of information for regional planning.

This evaluation recommends that further comment and suggestions are sought from representatives of ATSIC Regional Councils and the ATSIC Commissioners once the regional statistics books have been available to Regional Councils for around 12 months.

TIMING OF OUTPUT AND DISSEMINATION

There are a wide range of products, several of which are collaborative projects with other agencies, which target a range of audiences and will help ensure that NATSIS information is made available in formats that meet users' needs. For example, there will be jointly produced thematic publications on health (ABS and AIH&W), housing (ABS and AIH&W), and law and justice (ABS and AIC). There are, therefore, specialist organisations other than the ABS who are contributing to dissemination of the survey results. Further products are: seven State and Northern Territory statistics books shortly to be released; a publication *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey: Australia's Indigenous Youth* (4197.0); the electronic unit record file; and the ongoing consultancy/special tabulations service. Attachment F contains a list of the existing and planned output of the survey results.

There has been an issue raised by some stakeholders with the time delay between initial output and products now emerging. NCATSIS, as the area that is responsible in the ABS for the outputs, has advised that this has come about essentially because of the lack of resources devoted to the NATSIS output, compounded with a number of other issues. These include the complexity of the survey data in developing the unit record file and producing the 36 regional statistics books which were the highest priority item. Both these items have absorbed much of the available resources over the past year.

This raises the issue of resourcing for outputs and dissemination of information for any future survey. The ABS' traditional role in undertaking surveys has been largely completed with the initial survey output, with further survey output being undertaken on a user pays basis. This was reflected in the allocation of a total of \$150,000 of the total survey budget of \$4.4 million to NCATSIS for NATSIS output, including analysis and dissemination, following the development of the initial three products.

This allocation does not, however, take into consideration that a full output program would be needed for a survey of this type. It is important in the development of any future survey to consider and allow for the resources required to ensure the development of, and accessibility to, survey information.

ATSIC PERSPECTIVE

ATSIC views NATSIS as containing information not available elsewhere and covering a range of data that can be cross-compared. It is also the only consistent data source.

The dissemination of findings has meant that information has been provided to Regional Councils nationally. ATSIC has published *Regional Information Packs* which have been useful for regional planning activities undertaken by various Councils. These have assisted in providing a current perspective of the strengths and weaknesses existing within respective regions and have also assisted Councils to prepare

up-to-date regional profiles on the data collected. Preparation of *Regional Information Packs* has ensured the data is presented in an easy-to-use format.

The ability to include data from the 1991 Census and NATSIS in ATSIIC publications is particularly useful. The comparative results should assist Councils in their planning activities and have the potential to drive policy direction for the whole organisation. Strong support exists for NATSIS to be separate from census activities as it is able to provide information on a staged basis.

The capacity to use the findings was also evidenced in the staged introduction of needs-based funding allocations between regions. Furthermore, information contained in the *Detailed Findings* has been used in conjunction with the Census and the 1992 National Housing and Community Infrastructure Needs Survey in the provision of policy advice. Overall, the NATSIS will provide an excellent base for program and policy development information.

On a less positive side, ATSIIC had some concerns with the dissemination of data. The use of data was limited because of the lack of State and community findings. This, together with anecdotal evidence that the posters on regional findings were shallow, and concerns about the timeliness of data should be taken into consideration in planning the output documents from a future survey. Other comments conveyed to ATSIIC would indicate that there is a desire for more detailed findings, with some degree of interpretation, to be published.

SUMMARY COMMENT

The public commitment by the ABS at the time of the NATSIS to advocating accessibility of the survey results to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples raised the issue of responsibility for accessibility to, and dissemination of, results. A program of timely and appropriate outputs should be considered as part of this, both in the context of existing survey results, and the development and funding of any future survey.

A question of balance was raised between the budget for the design, data collection, analysis and reporting of the initial results, and the component relating to further output. These issues are addressed in the context of the analysis of stakeholders' responses in the section on appropriateness of outputs and accessibility of results.

CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

A questionnaire agreed by the steering committee formed the basis for consultation with stakeholders (Attachment G). The questions asked were targeted according to the knowledge and interest of the stakeholder. Interviews were conducted by Chris Spencer and other staff of the Western Australia ABS office, Yvonne Dunn of NCATSIS, and Janine Ramsay, the project officer undertaking the evaluation.

Recognising that any findings may have to be input to the 1996-97 budget round, the evaluation of NATSIS was originally scheduled to be completed by the end of March 1996. The steering committee noted at the outset that the period for consultation (December to January) would present difficulties in terms of accessing people, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. The consultation phase was not intended to be a comprehensive consultative process, but rather a representational gathering of views of stakeholders.

In view of the limitations of the consultation phase and short time frame, the steering committee agreed that it was important to target key stakeholders and approved the attached list (Attachment II) which identifies organisations and people from whom comment was sought.

To ensure consistent information for the evaluation, responses were mostly recorded according to a pro-forma response sheet (Attachment I). A set of formal responses from the project officer's consultations are included in Attachment J. All responses have been drawn on to form the basis of the evaluation.

FINDINGS — ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES BY STAKEHOLDERS

APPROACH TAKEN BY EVALUATION IN ANALYSING STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSES

Responses by stakeholders have been analysed against the key issues agreed by the steering committee and outlined in this report under Key issues — Scope and scale of the evaluation.

Each key issue has a short summary, followed by a section identifying themes and a discussion segment. Recommendations have then been developed against the key issues. Once all key issues had been addressed, they were drawn together in a conclusion outlining the extent of the effectiveness of the NATSIS in meeting its objectives.

KEY ISSUE 1

Applicability of NATSIS content to issues relevant to the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Summary

The topics surveyed in the existing NATSIS were universally viewed as a real strength of the survey by stakeholders, who emphasised that the content was applicable to issues relevant to the condition and experience of Australia's Indigenous community.

The involvement of Indigenous people in the development and conduct of the survey was seen as having been an integral part in ensuring that the survey addressed the right issues and was carried out in a culturally appropriate way.

In order to make the survey even more relevant, there were suggestions for inclusion of new areas and for the fine tuning of existing questions to enable more focused and comprehensive information to be available. Consideration should also be given to how to better cover the situation of the Torres Strait Islander population.

Themes

Overall content

There was general consensus by Commonwealth and State government agencies, Indigenous organisations and research institutes that the survey content was relevant to the Indigenous community. There was a qualifier by several representatives of government agencies who emphasised that they could not speak on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

All key topics canvassed in the existing NATSIS were felt to be necessary in order to gain a complete picture of the situation of the Indigenous population. An important factor in retaining those areas in any future survey was the interrelatedness of topic areas.

There was a general belief that the content areas should remain much the same in a future survey, with some mention of flexibility to incorporate or substitute additional data to allow the collecting of information on a particular issue. There was also recognition that too much additional data could mean the survey growing to an unacceptable size.

While it was thought that the issue of content would appropriately be addressed by those involved in any future development of the survey, suggestions included additional topics on the environment (land management and economic development); on consumers' perceptions to services provided; more information around language (e.g. including Kriol); and including a Commonwealth Electoral Roll question. The role of the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in the measure of employment would need to be examined, while youth and gender issues (particularly relating to women) were considered important by some Torres Strait Islander representatives.

Relevance and applicability

An important issue raised by stakeholders was the relevance and applicability of the NATSIS. A general thread emerged about the importance of ensuring comparable data between the existing, and any future, survey. Some stakeholders linked this to a desirability of only marginally changing existing questions to ensure comparability, while others saw more scope to modify a number of questions to make them more useful for future analysis.

A number of stakeholders commented that the questions should be formatted to elicit more quantitative information. These people saw the questions, because of their generality and attitudinal nature, as being value laden, subjective, or open to different interpretations. Several commented that the responses as reported in the results, such as in education, appeared not to reflect reality or differed when compared with other information or perceptions. One organisation that criticised the use of English in the survey, rather than the language of the respondent, saw this as playing a part in the quality of responses.

There was a feeling that some questions were not understood by, or not clear to, respondents (e.g. table 59 on p. 65 of the *Detailed Findings* indicates a high percentage response of 'I don't know' to several questions). One State government agency considered that separate housing information for private, community, State housing and other government housing, would facilitate policy analysis (i.e. in tables 23 and 24 of the *Detailed Findings*, the data for renters should be published in the same format as table 27).

Law and justice was a NATSIS subject area that several stakeholders regarded as providing national information that was highly relevant, reliable, comprehensive and comparable when there had previously been no other sources of data available. This had greatly assisted in the development of a number of research projects and reports on key issues in Aboriginal communities (e.g. extent of domestic violence, and perceptions of, and attitudes to, the police). A user, who was also involved in the development of the survey, commented that questions in the law and justice section were designed to ensure they would be comparable with other data sets on the Australian population generally.

Education and health were two areas that stakeholders regarded as very important in the survey and with the potential to provide better information.

Education There was a general feeling by some Commonwealth, State and Aboriginal organisation stakeholders that the published result of the question 'Are you happy with the education our children are receiving at school' was not consistent with other perceptions and statistics (e.g. DEET's retention rates, State statistics, and statistical annex to the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1994). There was a concern by these stakeholders that publication of high satisfaction levels may lead to a lack of activity in improving education levels or even as a justification for less funding by government.

However, another view was that the NATSIS data provides invaluable information on where resources should be targeted, i.e. at the areas of high satisfaction which may indicate a low expectation on the part of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on what the education system can provide.

It was generally felt that, as well as seeking satisfaction levels, information should be obtained on a more objective level so that the responses could be interpreted in context.

Health The Commonwealth, research institutes and the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) Aboriginal Health Advocate raised a number of issues in relation to the health section of the survey. The outcome was generally perceived as helping to meet an important gap.

While the self-reporting method was considered to be valuable by some organisations, the issue was raised by several others of the validity of results of the health component of the survey, e.g. one suggestion was that clinic data would be a better benchmark for the percentage of the Aboriginal population with diabetes.

One stakeholder commented that averages do not reflect the diversity of opinion in one region, while the ABS advised that it is important to not only take account of the averages in the results but also the dispersion around the averages to ensure they illustrate the diversity of opinions.

Other comments raised the issue of whether another survey was the most effective means of ongoing monitoring, particularly in regard to the extent to which a survey can be cross-referenced to other surveys so comparisons can be made with the non-Indigenous population, and the extent to which it can be compared with other information in other collections.

While acknowledging the value of NATSIS, another stakeholder said it was essential to have comparisons between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population. The ABS response is that a conscious decision of design was made to only collect Indigenous data in the

NATSIS. However, comparative data from other sources is sometimes available and, although not presented in the initial output, it will be in some of the output products to be issued in the near future.

Some doubt was expressed about the accuracy of enumeration in the NATSIS. The ABS recognises that there are problems and issues with enumerating data for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and is committed to further improving enumeration procedures in the Population Census in consultation with ATSIC.

There were a number of issues raised regarding the detail of questions. These appeared to reflect the relative interests of the stakeholders. Examples included the need to talk to health services and to have information on people's perceptions of access to services; an issue with questions relating to alcohol including the absence of an alcohol consumption question; the importance of a question on immunisation; and the need to have additional information for health e.g. risk taking behaviour in relation to diabetes.

Torres Strait Islander issues

In the current NATSIS, only results for Queensland could be presented for the Torres Strait Islander population. It has not been possible, therefore, to break down the results for the mainland Torres Strait Islander population in each State.

The representatives of two Torres Strait Islander organisations (Magani Malu Kes Resource and Information Centre, Townsville, and Iina Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, Brisbane) advised they could not comment on the content in the existing NATSIS. They believed it should be up to Torres Strait Islander people to develop the questions, and thus the content areas, in a future survey.

Both representatives agreed that it is incorrect and unacceptable to have a survey that treats both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as one identity, as there are diverse cultural differences. This difference in cultural heritage was emphasised by another Torres Strait Islander person, who cited enforced separation from the natural family as being a key issue that had affected the Aboriginal but not the Torres Strait Islander community. It was considered, therefore, that the content and questions of the survey would be affected by the fact that certain issues do not apply to Torres Strait Islanders.

The representatives from Magani Malu Kes Resource and Information Centre and Iina Torres Strait Islanders Corporation highlighted that Torres Strait Islanders must not be subsumed, e.g. a comment was made that the Aboriginal central artwork on the NATSIS publications was unacceptable for a publication purporting to represent both cultures. Although there was a regional councillor from the Torres Strait on the SAC, for these two representatives the concept of ATSIC regional representation, both as a basis for the survey sampling and on the SAC, was seen as representing Aboriginal interests and marginalising Torres Strait Islanders further.

It was emphasised that Torres Strait Islanders must be actively involved in the development of any future survey and that this may mean a separate component of the survey. Dissemination had to be in a way that was acceptable to the Torres Strait Islander population.

Discussion While there were some comments on adding topics in a future survey, there was overall support for the subject matter as it stands. In general, stakeholders advocated there should be scope for ensuring the questions in any future survey enable additional or more detailed data to be collected.

An overall theme emerging from the consultations was that a basis for comparison between the existing and any future survey results should be planned for. The current main use for NATSIS data is to provide a snapshot picture of how the situation is now and many stakeholders agreed that the information does fulfil this role. However, while this was seen as meeting a vital statistical need, many users also believed that the data should not be stand-alone, i.e. it should be used in conjunction with other data and there should be some basis for comparison.

Use of the data is enhanced by comparisons from the same data set and NATSIS can provide this between subsections of the Indigenous population. However, this particular use was not commented on specifically during the evaluation's consultation process. This could be due to a number of factors, including no current need for this requirement, or simply that this use was not stated.

On the issue raised by some stakeholders of comparability between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates, a draft NATSIS issues report, which includes the availability of comparative sources of data, has been prepared but has not yet been released.

There was a concern expressed about the NATSIS questions being too open to different interpretations. There was a perception by some that it would be an improvement to have more direct rather than, or as well as, attitudinal questions and that better-targeted questions were warranted.

These issues will need to be considered in the development of any future survey, particularly in regard to the education and health topics. Such comments are an indication that stakeholders have expectations or needs that are not entirely being met by the current NATSIS. Whether this is due to a deficiency in the survey, or in the way in which results were reported, are issues that need to be examined. Also, whether or not the NATSIS is the means to achieve the particular information sought by these stakeholders should also be considered as part of that examination process.

The consultation process with Torres Strait Islander people indicated that there are issues that need to be considered by the ABS in the development of any survey addressing issues relating to that particular group. The nature and extent of these should be considered in a way that takes account of, and involves, Torres Strait Islander people.

KEY ISSUE 2

Effectiveness of the survey, if ongoing, as a base for monitoring of outcomes for Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Summary There was a general theme that it was essential to ensure effective monitoring of change in the social, health, education and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Consistent with ensuring the effectiveness of the survey as a base for monitoring of outcomes for Indigenous people was the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development and conduct of the survey. To ensure an effective monitoring base across all areas, including government, other key stakeholders should also have a role in informing any future survey.

Themes While the evaluation focused on the results of the survey, there were comments from stakeholders that reflected well on the process followed during the development of the NATSIS.

The consultation process, including the lead role of the SAC and the TRGs, appeared to form the basis of the positive perception that many stakeholders had gained of the NATSIS. Associated with this was the fact that the SAC and TRGs had a number of Indigenous representatives who had key roles in not only the development of the survey, but also in the end product. Linked to this perception may also be the active involvement of Indigenous people who were employed in the collection of data for the survey. These were issues that the then Deputy Chairperson of ATSIC, Mr Charles Perkins, commented on favourably at the launch of the initial NATSIS results.²⁶

There were a number of views on the effectiveness of the NATSIS to date and on the possibility of another survey. Stakeholders' comments were based on their perceptions about the survey, on the existing NATSIS output and proposed outputs, and use of the consultancy service through NCATSIS. Organisations consulted for the evaluation, universally agreed that it was imperative to have information that was kept up-to-date. Many stakeholders considered that another NATSIS would meet this criterion, but that a number of modifications were required.

Mr Charles Jackson, former Commissioner of ATSIC and Chair of the NATSIS SAC, commented that another survey was needed in terms of a vision for the future and thinking strategically. The caveat he placed on this related to feedback to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1995. *Annual Report, 1994-95*. p. 20, ABS, Canberra.

communities first and is included in the next section in this report on appropriateness and accessibility of results.

A key issue with the NATSIS is that currently no baseline exists with which to compare it. A common theme from consultations was that another survey would not only give an idea of comparison, but also greatly enhance the use of NATSIS because trends would be established. It was commented that there was a need to establish an ongoing basis on which the authenticity of trends can be assessed.

The continuation of the NATSIS was seen as providing monitoring information which influences policy and program change and funding for programs, as well as meeting the need for comparison of information to see whether the situation and attitudes have changed. A comment was made that policy and program development depends on an accurate perception of what people think and say they need.

In line with this, NCATSIS has presented three further uses for the NATSIS data which provide a basis for comparison but on which it is generally too early for most users to be in a position to comment.

These are the relationships between different social characteristics; monitoring progress towards change; and evaluation of programs. The last two uses require comparable survey data at another point in time. While it is too early to assess the NATSIS against these issues, they should be borne in mind in the development of any future survey.

General comments included advocating the need for national, relevant and quality information. One comment was that, in the absence of specific data, the survey is a step forward and has validity in that this is how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people view themselves.

While there was a majority recommendation for another survey, there were a number of comments suggesting the national Population Census could be an alternative and that the issues dealt with in the survey should be incorporated within it. While several stakeholders recognised that there were factors, such as size and funding, around this, they presented the advantages as mainstreaming the survey, efficacy of information, and having information and data consistent with the rest of the population from one source. There was one comment that, unlike the broader Census, the survey provided the detail to enable a qualitative judgement.

There were varying views on how frequently the NATSIS should be conducted, with 4–5 years being seen as a period that would enable trends to be identified while also taking account of the fact that policy and structure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues is moving quickly. There was also a comment that there should be ongoing follow-up on any future survey after the launch as well as linking into a broader range of areas by the ABS to disseminate. This issue has been considered as part of this evaluation in the section on accessibility and dissemination of results.

There were some issues raised by stakeholders in regard to sampling, with one comment that the existing sampling method meant that it was hard to get information that was local enough to be useful and that detail at the local level is needed for planning.

In November 1995, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs wrote to the Treasurer on behalf of the Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister about the fact that the Australian Capital Territory figures from the NATSIS were included within the Queanbeyan ATSI region and no specific interpretation could be given for the Australian Capital Territory. The evaluation understood that due to the focus on ATSI regional areas and sampling constraints, NATSIS could not provide Australian Capital Territory specific data. It is understood that this issue has been, and is continuing to be, discussed between the Australian Capital Territory Government and the ABS and will be taken into consideration in the development of any future survey.

Discussion

While it is too early to draw any conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of the survey as a base for monitoring outcomes for Australia's Indigenous people, this evaluation has enabled a first snapshot and provided the basis for looking towards a future survey in a vital area of needed statistical information.

This key issue of monitoring of outcomes is located in the NATSIS aim relating to the empowerment of Australia's Indigenous peoples through a stronger information base. It is also linked to the key issue relating to appropriateness of output mediums and accessibility of results.

In view of these linkages and the fact that it is still early in the dissemination of NATSIS outputs, it would be important for the ABS to consider another assessment once further survey information, particularly the joint ABS/ATSI regional statistics books, but also the thematic publications and the unit record file, have been released for a period of time.

It is recommended that such an assessment should form the initial component of a consultation strategy prior to the development of any future survey. This would also address another area which has been seen as a gap by a number of stakeholders and by some ABS staff, i.e. it would provide an opportunity to give feedback to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations while also gaining an indication of whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people believe the NATSIS has facilitated self-determination and empowerment through access to appropriate statistical data.

There is general support by the stakeholders consulted for up-to-date information. While not all believed that another survey was necessarily the way to meet this need, bearing in mind that the alternatives would be far more costly, a number of stakeholders did advocate another NATSIS.

It was generally considered that the statistical need in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was great and that it was important to continue to gather this information. Issues were raised around the type of questions asked, including the level of detail, and these would need to be addressed in the consideration of a future survey.

Recommendations coming out of key issues 1 and 2

- Recommendation 1* To ensure effective monitoring of change in relation to the social, health, education and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, there be follow-up surveys to the NATSIS at about five-yearly intervals.
- Recommendation 2* An integral part of the development should be the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the development and operation of the survey. As was the case with the last survey, a body comprising Indigenous people, other stakeholders and the ABS should be established to advise on the development and operations of the survey.
- Recommendation 3* Consistent with their integral role in the survey, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be given the opportunity to participate in both the collection and dissemination phases of the next survey.
- Recommendation 4* Account should be taken of inherent differences among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Survey procedures, where appropriate, should be modified to take account of those differences and ensure the relevance of the survey to Torres Strait Islanders and within major groups of the Aboriginal population.

KEY ISSUES 3 AND 4

Appropriateness of the output mediums; and accessibility of results to Australia's Indigenous peoples, their organisations and government service providers.

Summary The issues of appropriateness of the output mediums and accessibility of results are fundamental to the NATSIS in view of its objectives and the commitment by the ABS to ensuring these are met.

Generally, there have been positive comments on the output to date. The fact that there are a range of output products yet to be released may have affected the perceptions of stakeholders at this early stage on accessibility of output.

The accessibility of results and the associated resourcing and consultation that will involve are important issues for the ABS to address in conjunction with key stakeholders, particularly Indigenous people.

Themes The issues of appropriateness of the output mediums and accessibility of results are being addressed together in this evaluation report because many stakeholders view the two as interlinked.

While accessibility may simply imply the physical availability of a document, this report is also using the term in its broader sense of being understood. The appropriateness of an output medium, either published or electronic, to a user will influence the extent to which it is understood or accessible. This in turn affects the extent of, and purpose for which, it is utilised by that user.

An issue raised by several stakeholders was the loss of momentum once the survey was launched. It is seen as essential to keep on informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on what is currently available and what is being produced. This is a theme picked up in comments by Mr Charles Jackson, the Chair of the NATSIS SAC.

Mr Jackson advised that, to his knowledge, no practical use has been made of the results of the survey by organisations on the ground. He stressed the need to inform Aboriginal people about the results achieved from the first survey because he believes they will not participate in a second unless they receive feedback on how the results are used. Mr Jackson also recommended establishment of an independent monitoring body comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure that the survey results are utilised in the development of government policy and the service delivery of government programs.

The importance of accessibility through appropriate mediums was addressed by comments made on behalf of Mr Patrick Dodson as follows:

The NATSIS would have an even greater impact if it could be promoted and distributed more widely, including among Indigenous communities themselves. This would probably require summarising and popularising its main results and conclusions, admittedly not an easy task for such a comprehensive report. However, the benefits of doing so would make the work well worthwhile.

In terms of ensuring availability of documents, there were comments from both government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations about the lack of awareness of the NATSIS publications. While there was a perception that there was a lot of publicity about NATSIS at the time of its development and launch, some of those consulted in the evaluation process have suggested that the ABS should be addressing the issue of marketing, to ensure that organisations have accessibility to the results.

As well as ensuring availability of documents, this also raises the issue of whether there is a responsibility for the ABS to ensure accessibility to potential users through assisting their understanding of data. Comments from consultations indicated that for many organisations, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations at the grassroots level, ensuring that data is understood involves training, i.e. improving an understanding of statistics, outlining their relevance in decision making, and facilitating their use. Comments from representatives of Australia's Indigenous organisations also indicated that this is a crucial issue for

many of those organisations and a primary reason why the results are not being used.

While stakeholders may have knowledge of potential NATSIS outputs, such as the thematic publications and the joint ABS/ATSIC regional statistics books, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from their comments. This is because they are commenting on a concept rather than on an actual product that has been developed and distributed. However, it will be useful to assess, further down the track, how well the regional statistics books have met their intended purpose in assisting regional planning, which was an integral component of the RCIADIC's recommendation 49. There was a view put forward by a Commonwealth agency that the books should be made available for general use.

Comments indicated that various stakeholders anticipate that they will welcome the additional information and analysis in forthcoming NATSIS outputs. The fact that a new output is targeted for particular audiences was perceived to offer a broader perspective for some users, but to be of little or no relevance to others. However, there was a general feeling that any additional information could only help meet the statistical need.

There was some interest in accessing NATSIS information in a computer-readable form. In addition, there was a degree of interest in the unit record file by some Commonwealth agencies and research institutes. Comments from one Commonwealth agency indicated an early need for the unit record file and expressed the need for the organisation to have access to manipulation of the data itself, rather than go through the ABS consultancy service.

In general, government and research institute stakeholders advised that there was an existing published finding that suited their purpose. While this means that there was an output medium that was accessible to their organisation, this does not necessarily translate into complete satisfaction with the product.

In general, there is satisfaction with the format of the *ATSIC Regional Overviews* and the *Detailed Findings*, and a high level of satisfaction with the ABS consultancy service. There was a recommendation that, in future, dissemination of survey results should be in close succession at national, State and regional levels, with ongoing follow-up after the launches, and linking into other areas by the ABS to encourage dissemination. The ATSIC system of regional offices and councils enables dissemination of results within ATSIC and regional councils, but it would appear the responsibility for distribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations currently rests with the ABS.

There were several favourable comments on the *ATSIC Regional Overviews* which were regarded as being in an accessible format, including for regional councillors. Suggestions on these overviews included more artwork; standardisation of the wall chart information; and inclusion of photos to regionalise results which would lead to

greater identification with, and interest in, the information. It was suggested that results should be disseminated in the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that regional versions of the *Getting Results Summary* would be an ideal addition.

Pie charts and graphs were seen by a number of representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations as very important in disseminating results effectively to Australia's Indigenous people. An issue raised was the importance of acknowledging that not all people are literate in English and can read published documents. The development of specific outputs can assist in meeting that need. The mode of dissemination was raised by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. One suggestion which received support was direct dissemination to organisations by the ABS on technically complex material, with a view to subcontracting or utilising members in various communities to facilitate other types of dissemination sessions.

Consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have raised the importance of face-to-face feedback and also of training to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the interpretation of data. This is not specific to the NATSIS, but is a wider issue that encompasses it. Representatives of a number of organisations advised that they would like to use data but that there was a lack of skilled persons available to interpret and make best use of the data. The point was made that because it requires certain training, quantitative research often locks out Aboriginal people.

Discussion Consideration of the appropriateness of output mediums, together with accessibility of results to Australia's Indigenous people, their organisations and government service providers, are integral to the assessment of whether the survey is effectively meeting its objectives.

The ABS' commitment to the development of the existing and proposed outputs are evidence of the intent to meet these criteria. This commitment is, however, curtailed to an extent through a lack of resources, including funding, which can be sourced to the original budget for NATSIS. Also, the pricing structure for ABS products was raised as an issue by several government agencies who found it prohibitive and consequently had limited access to information which they regarded as very important to their policy and program work with Indigenous people. In its commitment to the provision of the most needed statistics and a stronger information base to Australia's Indigenous peoples in an appropriate and accessible format, the ABS should be considering these issues and ensuring that a future survey budget takes account of them.

In order to meet both the survey objectives and those of the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Project (stated in this report under the purpose in Scope and Scale of the evaluation), the ABS needs to be proactive not only in terms of development of survey outputs, but also in ensuring the dissemination of results to the wide

range of organisations likely to use the information. This area, which has been identified as a gap through this evaluation, can be redressed by establishing an ongoing strategy to ensure that results are being made accessible to potential users, particularly Indigenous people and organisations.

Recommendations coming
out of key issues 3 and 4

Recommendation 5

The dissemination strategy for any future survey should ensure that survey results are readily accessible to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and sufficient funding should be allocated for this component. To ensure accessibility and subsequent use of the information, the ABS should seriously consider delivering basic statistical training in the interpretation of results to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Recommendation 6

That, in respect of the last recommendation and the fact that a considerable amount of statistical output is yet to be released from the 1994 survey, the ABS determine and test how such a strategy might best be developed and implemented prior to the next survey.

KEY ISSUE 5

Garner views on the appropriateness of NATSIS against alternative strategies for meeting needs for statistical information on the social and economic experience of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Canadian approach

The steering committee overseeing the NATSIS evaluation wanted to look into available overseas practice. The closest international equivalent to the NATSIS as a survey of a small Indigenous population was the survey conducted by Statistics Canada following their 1990 Census of the Canadian Indian and Inuit populations. The ABS has been advised that there is no Canadian/Aboriginal survey proposed from the 1996 Census.

The ABS looked closely at the content and the methodology of this survey in designing the 1994 NATSIS. The ABS understands that this methodology was chosen for two main reasons:

- it led to a coordinated collection of national census information and information specific to Indigenous communities. This overall package was attractive to Indigenous communities, many of whom had not participated well in previous censuses; and
- it was seen to be more cost effective than locating Indigenous people in an independent survey sample.

This approach was not available for the 1994 NATSIS because the census forms are destroyed once processing is finished, and no advice had been given to the providers of census information that names or addresses may be used as a basis for a follow-up survey. The ABS at first investigated locating Aboriginal people by obtaining addresses from local organisations or individuals but found this to be neither efficient nor effective. It then developed the NATSIS methodology whereby ABS interviewers visited selected CDs to determine the addresses of

Indigenous people at the time of the survey. The survey sample was selected from these addresses.

This methodology was found to be much more effective than the Canadian methodology in that it achieved a response rate of around 90%, which was considerably higher than the Canadian survey. In discussions with staff of Statistics Canada, the ABS established that the Australian cost per respondent of conducting the search operation to provide the addresses for sampling was far below what the Canadians anticipated it would have cost them when they first selected their methodology.

The ABS does not intend to retain addresses from census forms for other purposes. Census practice over many years has been to destroy names and addresses after the Census to guarantee confidentiality of individual information. Establishing coverage via the Census would mean the retention for a considerable period of names and addresses which, if becoming known, could affect the quality of the Census itself. The prospect of using addresses from census forms as the possible future methodology of an Indigenous survey was, at one stage, put to the ATSIC Commissioners who responded that they did not want such a list of Indigenous addresses compiled.

The ABS believes that a future NATSIS would best be conducted by refining and improving the sample design collection methodology developed for the 1994 survey. The evaluation recommends, however, that the ABS continues to be across international developments and that this, in turn, informs development of any future NATSIS.

Other alternatives During the evaluation process several options were raised as alternatives to a future NATSIS and the issue of comparative data highlighted.

The first option was to expand the role of the Population Census to include the NATSIS topic areas within the Census and thus have more questions in the Census. The advantages of this approach were seen to be the availability of comprehensive data for small regions and population groups and the enabling of direct comparisons between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population. The ABS regarded this option as not being feasible due to several factors, principally the high cost of including extra questions in the Census. Additional factors were the high response load that would be imposed on both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations through the Census being self-enumerated rather than interview based, and that concepts, classifications and data items were unlikely to be appropriate to both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

The second option was to include a sizeable sample of Indigenous people in the regular ABS population/household survey which uses field interviewers to collect the data. The ABS has reservations about this approach because of concerns about the validity of comparative information that would be derived from common collection instruments

and methods applied across different cultures. However, responding to strong representations from health data users, and using funds that they offered for this purpose, the ABS agreed to implement an enhanced Indigenous sample in the 1995 National Health Survey and to evaluate results.

The ABS acknowledged the key demand for data comparable across the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population and recognised that this can be difficult for Indigenous and non-Indigenous data collected under different methodologies, i.e. NATSIS and any non-Indigenous data used for comparison purposes. Considerable work still needs to be done on the most appropriate approach to transforming the NATSIS data to allow the most reliable comparisons with non-Indigenous data.

The ABS is of the opinion that, at this time, a future NATSIS-type survey offered the best prospect for monitoring the progress of the Indigenous population and, despite the difficulties mentioned above, offered good prospects for comparisons with the non-Indigenous population. The sample design and collection methodology used in the NATSIS proved successful and should be built on in future surveys, with particular attention paid to making comparisons with non-Indigenous data.

Recommendation 7 While the evaluation found that the methods used by the NATSIS were sound and alternative methods were not currently considered likely to be more effective or efficient, it is recommended that the ABS continues to be aware of international developments and that these be taken into consideration during the development of any future survey.

Conclusions from the Evaluation's Key Findings in relation to the effectiveness of the NATSIS in meeting its objectives and in relation to contributing in an ongoing way to meeting the objectives of the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics project.

The purpose of the first NATSIS was twofold in that it was to provide the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas, while also enabling a stronger information base for planning for the empowerment of Australia's Indigenous peoples and for measuring progress in meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs. The NATSIS was therefore a survey with unique requirements, not only in terms of its design and conduct, but also in its requirements for outputs and dissemination.

Stakeholders consulted as part of the evaluation process were generally very aware of the NATSIS. For a number of these, the awareness of the survey results appeared to link strongly to the positive perceptions gained during the development and subsequent launch of the initial results, rather than through any detailed use of the information. Contributing to this would be factors such as the short time that the results have been in the community, the progressive releasing of the outputs well into 1996, and issues around dissemination and level of accessibility.

Current and potential uses for the information were many and varied and included policy and planning; funding and other submissions; discussion papers; research work; press releases; housing and infrastructure planning; monitoring the performance of policy and programs; ATSIIC Annual Report for reporting on individual programs; various Regional Council annual reports and for planning and monitoring projects; ATSIIC regional planning and as a needs basis formula for funding Regional Councils; presentations; speeches; and to develop indicators for underlying issues of the RCIADIC.

The evaluation has found that the ABS has taken the first steps through the NATSIS in effectively meeting the objective of providing the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas. In doing so, the ABS has ensured the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in both the development of the content of the survey and also in its conduct. The comments by stakeholders, together with comments from any future consultative process, will assist in informing the development of a future survey in terms of approach, content and dissemination. As there was some criticism of the appropriateness of the survey to their circumstances by representatives of Torres Strait Islander organisations, consideration would need to be given to more adequately covering the situation of the Torres Strait Islander population. Recommendations have been developed to help ensure that the ABS continues to improve its performance in meeting this objective through encompassing these issues in any future survey.

The effectiveness of NATSIS as a stronger information base for planning the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and for meeting and measuring progress in meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs is more difficult to assess than the first objective. The evaluation acknowledged that this was an objective that should be assessed by Indigenous people. As an overall comment, the evaluation found that while there is a good awareness of the NATSIS itself, there is a need for a level of dissemination to ensure accessibility to the results by the Indigenous population.

While part of this issue may be met by the outputs of the NATSIS yet to be released, the other part relates to ensuring that the results are able to be interpreted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Evaluation recommendations have therefore been developed to address this need. It will be necessary to monitor the progress on this particular objective of the NATSIS through consulting with Indigenous people and organisations as part of the development of any future survey.

The assessment by the evaluation of how well the NATSIS can contribute in an ongoing way to meeting the objectives of the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Project relates to the issues already covered in the broader considerations relating to the NATSIS objectives. While the NATSIS strategy is contributing to the more effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of programs and initiatives by Indigenous organisations, governments, non-government institutions and also

providing statistics that are improving in the quality, appropriateness, availability and timeliness, there are specific issues that need to be considered to facilitate this. Planning for future surveys should ensure a more timely release of results, that these results be disseminated so that they are readily understood by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that training be given by the ABS on how to interpret the results and how to then use this interpretation in practical ways, such as policy formulation and funding submissions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- RECOMMENDATION 1 To ensure effective monitoring of change in the social, health, education and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and there be follow-up surveys to the NATSIS at about five-yearly intervals.
- RECOMMENDATION 2 An integral part of the development should be the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development and operation of the survey. As was the case with the last survey, a body comprising Indigenous people, other stakeholders and the ABS should be established to advise on the development and operations of the survey.
- RECOMMENDATION 3 Consistent with their integral role in the survey, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be given the opportunity to participate in both the collection and dissemination phases of the next survey.
- RECOMMENDATION 4 Account should be taken of inherent differences between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Survey procedures, where appropriate, should be modified to take account of those differences and ensure the relevance of the survey to Torres Strait Islanders and within major groups of the Aboriginal population.
- RECOMMENDATION 5 The dissemination strategy for any future survey should ensure that results are accessible to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and sufficient funding should be made for this component. To ensure accessibility and subsequent use of the information, the ABS should seriously consider delivering basic statistical training in the interpretation of results to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- RECOMMENDATION 6 That, in respect of the last recommendation and the fact that a considerable amount of statistical output is yet to be released from the 1994 survey, the ABS determine and test how such a strategy might best be developed and implemented prior to the next survey.
- RECOMMENDATION 7 While the evaluation found that the methods used by the NATSIS were sound and alternative methods were not currently considered likely to be more effective or efficient, it is recommended that the ABS continues to be aware of international developments and that these be taken into consideration during the development of any future survey.

ATTACHMENT A

RECORD OF RESPONSES BY THE COMMONWEALTH, STATES AND TERRITORIES TO RECOMMENDATION 49 OF THE REPORT BY THE RCIADIC

That proposals for a special national survey covering a range of social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal population with full Aboriginal participation at all levels be supported. The proposed census should take as its boundaries the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission boundaries. The Aboriginal respondents to the census should be encouraged to nominate their traditional/contemporary language affiliation. It is further recommended that the ATSIC Regional Councils be encouraged to use the special census to obtain an inventory of community infrastructure, assets and outstanding needs which can be used as data for the development of their regional plans.

POSITION/COMMENT	Commonwealth	Supported
	New South Wales	Supported
	Victoria	Supported
	Queensland	Supported in part
	Western Australia	Supported
	South Australia	Supported
	Australian Capital Territory	Supported
	Northern Territory	Supported

ACTION

Commonwealth The Commonwealth Government has noted that demographic change in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population will increase pressure on program expenditure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in relation to education, employment, income support, health, infrastructure and housing. More regular estimates of population growth and demographic trends are vital to effective program management.

The Commonwealth, through the ABS and in consultation with ATSIC, will mount a national survey of social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In mounting the survey, the ABS will involve and employ Aboriginal people in all stages of design, conduct and interpretation. The Commonwealth notes the detailed terms of this recommendation and will take them up in consultation with ATSIC.

The Office of Indigenous Women in ATSIC will establish a database as a foundation for designing strategies to counter the particularly disadvantaged situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

New South Wales	<p>New South Wales is willing to participate in such a national survey.</p>
Victoria	<p>The Victorian Government acknowledges that there is a real need for additional data on the social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at both a national and State level.</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government has proposed to mount a national survey of the social, demographic, health and economic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Victorian Government would support such a survey.</p>
Queensland	<p>This recommendation confuses the concepts of 'survey' and 'census'. A specific census for Aboriginals is not supported, but the collection of additional data through the national Census is supported. The Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs is participating in the development of procedures in the data systems of all relevant State administrative systems to establish identifiers of Aboriginality.</p>
Western Australia	<p>The Western Australian Government supports such a survey and recognises that it is a Commonwealth responsibility to organise and resource.</p> <p>Analysis of the 1991 Census of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander indicators should also be available on a State-by-State basis.</p> <p>The forthcoming National Housing and Community Infrastructure Needs Survey to be conducted early in 1992 will provide a useful basis for a wider reaching survey of the kind proposed in this recommendation.</p> <p>Although the recommendation proposes that the 'wider' survey should be conducted first, both the State and ATSIC believe that a quantitative and qualitative needs survey of housing and community infrastructure is required as first priority. Both ATSIC and the Western Australian Government have committed resources to this project. The results of the survey will be used for future project planning and service delivery.</p>
South Australia	<p>The Government strongly supports this recommendation. Its agencies will cooperate with the Commonwealth.</p>
Australian Capital Territory	<p>The Australian Capital Territory Government notes that this is a Commonwealth responsibility. The Australian Capital Territory Government would welcome cooperating on this matter.</p>

ATTACHMENT B

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE FIRST NATSIS

LIST OF MEMBERS

Mr George Sarossy, First Assistant Statistician, Social and Labour Division, ABS (Chair);

Mr Barry Johnson, Manager, Planning Section, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission;

Mr Bruce Shaw, Director, Statistical Research and Development Unit, Public Service and Merit Protection Commission;

Mr Geoff Gook, Assistant Director, Aboriginal Section, Department of Finance; and

Mr Geoff Sims, formerly Assistant Statistician, Social and Demography Branch, ABS, and currently Head, Health Division, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

ATTACHMENT C

FEATURES OF THE NATSIS BUDGET

- 26% of the total cost was paid direct to ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and interviewers;
- development costs were 26%, covering content and methodology consultation and development, PR, testing, sample design, estimation, etc;
- the cost of ABS interviewers locating the addresses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in selected areas was 6% of the total budget;
- enumeration, recruitment, training and supervision costs were 43%; and
- processing and dissemination costs were 21%.

ATTACHMENT D

NATSIS TIMETABLE, JULY 1992–FEBRUARY 1995

July 1992–September 1993	Undertake extensive consultation to understand the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other key users of the survey statistics about the content of the survey, and establish priorities for survey content.
October 1992–July 1993	Establish survey concepts and definitions. Design survey methodology and questionnaires. Design survey sample.
November–December 1992	Test survey methodology and questionnaires.
February–April 1993	Evaluate processing options and make recommendations.
July–August 1993	Major methodological and content test.
September–November 1993	Undertake small skirmish and refine survey design.
November 1993	Dress rehearsal primarily for methodological reasons. Commence State survey managers in each office and bring them to Canberra for a workshop.
December 1993–January 1994	Advertise for, and recruit, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers. State survey managers undertake PR visits to know recruitment areas. Process dress rehearsal and evaluate processing system.
January–March 1994	Prepare, print and distribute survey materials. Train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers.
March–July 1994	Conduct survey.
April–July 1994	Recruit processing staff and undertake survey processing.
August–December 1994	Validation of survey data. Consult widely on format and content of initial products. Prepare final manuscripts and gain senior management approval.
21 February 1995	Official launch of survey result by Dr Richard Madden, Acting Australian Statistician; The Hon. Robert Tickner, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; and Mr Charles Perkins, Deputy Chairperson, ATSIC.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Paper This paper describes the final content and procedures to be used in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey to be conducted from April to July 1994. These survey plans are the outcome of widespread consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which determined the most important new statistical information that they need and the best way to go about collecting it.

Outline of Survey It has long been the case that nationally comparable statistical information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a whole has been very scarce compared to the range of information available about the general Australian population. This hampers attempts to address the disadvantaged and unequal position of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Royal Commissioner into Black Deaths in Custody drew particular attention to this in his report and recommended that a national survey be conducted. The Federal Government and State/Territory governments agreed to this, and ABS was asked to prepare and conduct the survey.

The results of the survey will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with objective information needed for making informed decisions towards empowerment and self-determination.

It will provide data that will assist ATSIC Regional Councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in meeting their planning needs and responsibilities.

It will provide a better information base for influencing government policies and the delivery of services.

It will provide a benchmark against which future changes can be measured.

Although there have been many surveys conducted about Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders, there has never before been a comprehensive national survey that will provide comparable information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the wide variety of circumstances across the whole country.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was given the job of conducting the survey because it is Australia's official statistics agency and because of its experience in running national surveys. It is in a good position to conduct the survey in city, town, rural and remote areas alike.

ABS recognised that it needed considerable help to design a survey that would best meet the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Its approach to developing the survey was to consult as widely as possible with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations interested in the survey. The consultation process is

described below, along with the resulting content of the survey, the methodology that will be used to conduct it, and the initial plans ABS has to disseminate the results widely to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Consultation The ABS started work on the survey in April 1992. The first step was to write to all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that ABS understood may have an interest in the survey to explain that it was to be conducted and to ask for advice about the information that it should collect and how it should be collected. ABS staff also met personally with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including ATSIC Regional Councils, Land Councils and other organisations, who wished to discuss the survey face to face.

At the same time, a Survey Advisory Committee chaired by an ATSIC Commissioner and containing other representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations that would make considerable use of the data was established. It gave ABS advice on the relative priorities of topics proposed for inclusion in the survey, and on the best survey methodology.

Given the wide range of information that was likely to be requested in different social and economic areas, the ABS established five small groups (called Technical Reference Groups) of experts in particular topic areas to help the Survey Advisory Committee and the ABS assess the most important data in those particular areas and the best way of collecting it accurately in the survey. The areas of interest for the Technical Reference Groups are: Family and Culture; Health; Education and Training; Income; and Employment. The majority of members of the groups are Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Less formal groups also met to discuss Law and Justice as well as Housing issues.

These groups have met regularly over the period that the survey has been prepared and have played a major role in its development.

This first round of consultation about the survey allowed ABS to prepare a written proposal on the information that the survey might collect. This paper was circulated widely around the country in March 1993. It described the topics that had been proposed for inclusion in the survey, indicated the topics that ABS initially assessed were of highest priority and gave a broad account of how ABS understood the information would be used.

Comments on this paper came back to the ABS over a period of several months, and during that period a major test of the survey was conducted. ABS discussed the test results and the new advice first with the Technical Reference Groups and then with the Survey Advisory Committee, leading to the final survey content which is described in this paper.

ABS received very many requests for the collection of new information in this Survey. Overall, they vastly exceeded the number of questions that it

but will not attempt to force the person to provide the answer to that particular question.

Survey Methodology

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recognises that the survey data will best be collected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and has recruited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to do the survey interviews wherever possible.

The ABS has selected a sample that is nationally representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in all different circumstances spread right around this very large country.

ABS first looked at the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people counted in the 1991 Population Census in each of the 33,000 collection districts in the country. Based on this data, a scientifically selected sample of census districts has been chosen for the survey, including census districts of all different sizes in terms of number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in them at the last census. The survey also includes some census districts in which there were no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at census time to represent people who have moved into such areas since the last census.

To ensure that the survey sample properly takes into account where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live now, not just where they lived at the last census, ABS will also be utilising its work-force of survey interviewers who conduct regular household surveys of the full population of Australia. They will be given the task of visiting all houses and other dwelling places in the selected census districts to learn the addresses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living there now. A random sample of these houses will be visited shortly afterwards by the Aboriginal Survey interviewers to collect the survey information from approximately 15,000 people.

Testing of the survey has shown that this is the most accurate way of ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right chance of being selected in the survey sample.

Survey staff will ensure that people not living in conventional dwellings, including homeless people and people staying in hostels, boarding schools, caravans and so on are included in the survey by contacting local Aboriginal organisations in survey areas to make sure they know of the places where people are likely to be staying. A selection of people in prisons will also be included in the survey.

Since it is not reasonable to try and commence the survey in all parts of the country at the same time, the interviewing will occur over several months from April to July 1994.

Results of the Survey This survey is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ABS is therefore keen to ensure that the survey results are made available very widely within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The first delivery will achieve this in three ways.

One is to provide a summary of key facts from the survey about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations as a whole. These will be widely distributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other organisations across Australia. A detailed statistical publication will provide mainly national information but will also include some information for the States, the Northern Territory, for ATSI Regions, and for urban, rural and remote areas.

There will also be a series of statistical pictures of each of the 36 ATSI Regions presented in a straightforward non-technical way. Because the survey is a national sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than a census of all people (a census would cost far more than the survey budget), the range of survey information that will be available for individual regions will be less extensive than is available for Australia as a whole or the States. To ensure that the information provided for each ATSI Region is comprehensive, the survey data in the statistical pictures will be supported by census data and data from other sources such as ATSI's Housing and Community Infrastructure Needs Survey.

Because of the large amount of survey information to be processed in the second half of 1994, ABS cannot yet provide a certain date for the release of the data described above. We are aiming to have it out by the end of the year or early in 1995.

A much wider range of information from the survey will be released progressively during 1995.

2. TOPICS FOR INCLUSION IN THE SURVEY

The following broad topics will be covered in the Survey:

- Family and Culture
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Income
- Health
- Law and Justice
- Housing

Below is a detailed list of the topics proposed to be included in the Survey and the reasons why it is important to collect this information.

In many cases the Survey questions have been designed to provide data which is as comparable as possible with data from other sources for the

full Australian population of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In many other cases the questions have been designed to collect information which is unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

FAMILY CULTURE

Aboriginal/Torres Strait
Islander identification

- Whether Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Identification of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders will enable the release of separate information for these two populations. It will also be helpful in identifying the number of households consisting of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people.

Usual Residents and Visitors

- Usual residents
- Visitors

An understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household composition and families is critical to the delivery of services. Information on households and families will help direct funding for social support services for women, children, youth and the aged.

Housing requirements often need to take account of visitors. Asking whether visitors have been at the household for longer than 3 months will enable long term visitors to be identified separately to short term visitors.

Relationship

- Relationships within the household
- Type of family (for example, family with children or single parent family)
- Type of household (for example, single family household)

Information on relationships within the household will enable the grouping of people into families. This information will help direct funding for social support services for women, children, youth and the aged.

Age/Sex

- Age
- Sex

Age sex is essential information collected in all ABS surveys. As well as being useful on its own, it is used to help interpret other survey information.

Language

- Whether speaks an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language
- Main language spoken
- Difficulty with English
- Need for Interpreter services

Decline in the maintenance of culture is increasingly being seen as a major contributing factor in the alienation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Data on language use will provide a measure of cultural awareness for use in cultural maintenance programs. Data on language barriers will provide a measure of the extent of disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in accessing mainstream services. The data can also be used to assess the need for interpreters and translators.

Cultural Activities

- Participation in cultural activities in the last 12 months
- Reasons couldn't go to cultural activities
- Meeting place for cultural activities
- Identification with a Clan/Tribal/Language group
- Whether the role of elders is important

This information will help to provide a measure of the level of cultural maintenance, cultural identity and awareness, and whether there are any barriers to participation in cultural activities. They also identify whether a person has a place for their cultural activities or whether there is a need for a place to meet for cultural activities.

Homelands

- Recognition of homelands
- Importance of homelands
- Whether live in homelands, grew up in homelands or ancestors came from homelands
- Whether visited homelands in the last 12 months
- Whether homelands is a town or city
- Allowed to live in, or visit, homelands

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recognised the strong link between ties to traditional lands and economic and cultural well being. The above information, combined with that of other sections of the survey, will allow these links to be better established.

Childhood

- Whether taken away from natural family as a child by government or welfare,
- Who brought them up

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reported that of the 99 deaths investigated, 43 had been separated as children from their natural families. This suggests that people who had been separated from their families were more likely to come into conflict with the law.

This information will provide the first national indication of the extent of forced separation of children from their families. It will also show any links with the legal system and other issues covered in the Survey.

Fertility ■ Number of children

Collecting information on the number of children each female over 13 years has had, will assist in estimating the growth and future size of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and the estimation of populations between censuses. Such information is very important in estimating the future demand for services.

- Child care ■ Availability of child care services
- Use of child care services
 - Type of child care services used
 - Main reason for not using child care services
 - Reasons for using child care services

Information on the type of child care arrangements people use, the type of service people would like to use and the reasons they are not using those services will enable child care services to be targeted to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Information from these questions will also indicate if any preference exists for use of Aboriginal or mainstream services and the major reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using child care.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Access to Educational Institutions

- Distance to educational institutions

Information on the distance to schools and other educational institutions combined with that on educational participation and outcomes will identify the extent to which distance is a barrier to educational achievement. This information will also help to identify the geographical areas where the problems are greatest.

Schooling Being Undertaken

- Sector of school — e.g. Government/Independent school
- Level of school attending — e.g. primary/secondary
- Whether student receives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural lessons
- Whether student is taught an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language
- Whether student is taught by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Teacher, Education Worker or Community Member.

Knowledge of the level of participation in school will enable regional and national goals of increasing participation rates to be measured. Determining the extent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, content of courses, and languages taught will help to identify the importance of these factors in increasing participation rates.

Attitudes to School

- Cultural awareness programs for school teachers
- Preference for more say in children's education

- Whether Parent/Guardian is made to feel welcome at the school
- Parent/guardian involvement in decision-making at school
- Whether preferred to send children to an Aboriginal independent school
- Whether Parent/Guardian is happy with the education children are receiving at school

Information on parent's and guardians attitudes to schooling will assist in the identification of factors which contribute to children staying at school and the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policies.

Age and Year Left School

- Age left school
- Highest year of school completed

Age left school and the highest year of school completed are collected to determine the level of schooling a person has attained. The level of education achieved can be used to assess the effectiveness of the education processes. Education outcomes can also be linked to employment information and used to assist in the achievement of employment objectives.

Educational Qualifications

- Level of highest qualification obtained
- Main field of study of highest qualification
- Type of educational institution attended
- Whether qualification was part of an Apprenticeship or Traineeship

The information collected on qualifications that people have completed since leaving school combined with highest year of schooling completed will give an indication of their educational attainment. This information can be used to assess the effectiveness of the education processes. Education outcomes can also be linked to employment information and used to assist in the achievement of employment objectives.

Knowledge of the level of participation in and access to education will indicate the extent of education equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and can be used in the evaluation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP).

Training in the Last Year

- Number of training courses attended
- Type of training course attended
- Provider of training course
- Length of training course
- Whether completed training course
- Whether used the information gained from the training course

- Whether training was part of an Apprenticeship or Traineeship
- Current study

Increasing the participation rates in further education and training is a regional goal which can be assessed by using comparative information from the Survey. Determining the level of participation in training will assist in the evaluation of the 'Training for Aboriginal Program' and 'The Training Reform Agenda'.

Difficulties with Study

- Main reason for non-completion of courses
- Main difficulty with undertaking further study and training

Collecting data on the reasons for non-completion and difficulties of doing further study will help identify barriers to education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This knowledge can be used in the development of policies to reduce these barriers and improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobs

- Whether employed, unemployed or not in the labour force
- Whether an employee or employer
- Whether job is part of Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)
- Whether has more than one job
- Whether employed in government or private sector
- Usual hours worked per week
- Whether want to work more hours
- Whether work allows cultural obligations to be met

Information about the type of jobs people have, whether they are in the private sector, in community organisations or with the CDEP will provide a basis for measuring progress towards goals of increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the mainstream labour force. Goals of this sort are contained in both the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy and a number of Regional Council plans.

Preference for part-time and full-time work and whether work allows people to fulfil their cultural obligations will enable employment programs to take account of the flexibility of working hours that may be required.

Looking for Work

- Duration of unemployment
- Difficulties in getting a job
- If not looking for work — main reason

A number of Government programs are targeted at helping people who have been out of work for a long time get back into employment. Information from these questions will indicate the barriers that people feel exist to finding employment and also a measure of the level of long term unemployment amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- Employment History
- Number of employers worked for in last year
 - Months worked in last year

It is a stated goal at both the National and Regional level to increase long term employment. Looking at the time people have been in employment over the last 12 months will provide an indication of the extent of short term employment and long term employment and so provide a bench mark for measuring progress towards this goal.

- Voluntary Work
- Voluntary Work

In many cases people may not be considered to be employed, and yet they perform important work within the community. Collecting information on unpaid work will provide a measure of the amount and types of voluntary work being done.

INCOME

- Income
- Personal income (Gross)
 - Household income (Gross)
 - Main source of income
 - Types of Government payments received
 - Household income after housing costs

Information about the amount of income received from jobs and from government payments will provide an indication of overall living standards which will be comparable with the general population.

The information about sources of income is important in understanding what factors contribute to financial well-being, as well as the degree of reliance on Government support services.

It can be used to explain housing standards and combined with other items such as employment status, education qualifications and health status.

Income of non-Indigenous household members will also be collected and will allow information relating to the total household, to be released from the Survey.

HEALTH

- Recent Illness
- Whether experienced recent illness
 - Types of illness experienced
 - Actions taken in the last 2 weeks in response to recent illness

- Actions include:
 - Hospital Episodes
 - Doctor Consultations
 - Consultations with an Aboriginal Health Worker
 - Consultations with a Nurse
 - Use of Medications
 - Use of Bush Medicine
 - Days off or days of reduced activity

Knowledge of the types of illness/conditions which contribute to the disadvantage in health experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is important for communities and health authorities to act for the improvement of health. Data will be used to monitor the incidence of recent illness/conditions within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and in comparison with the general population.

Specific Illness/Conditions

- Specified current conditions
- Specified long term conditions (has had condition for 6 months or longer)
- Types of conditions:
 - Asthma
 - Diabetes
 - Heart problem/s
 - Chest problem/s
 - Skin problem/s
 - High blood pressure
 - Ear or hearing problem/s
 - Eye problems not corrected by glasses
 - Kidney problem/s

Knowledge of the types of illness/conditions which contribute to the disadvantage in health experienced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations is important for communities and health authorities to act for the improvement of health.

- ✓ Disability
 - Whether has a severe handicap
 - Whether receives any help

No comprehensive information on disability is available for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. It is apparent that the level of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is relatively

high. These questions will help identify those people who have a severe handicap and whether or not they are receiving any help. Social welfare policies and programs at the Commonwealth, State and Local level are in place and there is a continuous requirement for data on disability. This information will be used to assess the current utilisation and future need for services by people with disabilities.

Access to Health Services

- Distance to the nearest health services
- Whether uses the nearest health service and reasons for not using the nearest
- Whether Indigenous medical or health staff are available
- Type of Local Health Services available
- Whether garbage is collected
- Whether Flying Medical Service is available

A major problem facing people in more isolated areas is the extent to which they need to travel for treatment of health problems. Barriers of culture and language also exist which limit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to health services. Information on the availability of local services, distance to health services and whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed at the health services will provide a good indication of access to health services.

Mobility

- Whether gone away for treatment of a problem
- Number of trips
- Duration of each trip

A major problem facing people in more isolated areas is the extent to which they need to travel for treatment of health problems. This may present financial, social and emotional problems for the individual, especially if they are alone and unfamiliar with the town or city they need to go to. Information on this issue is needed to determine the extent of the problem.

Attitudes to Health

- Self-assessed health status
- Perception of main health problems in their community

Self-assessed health is considered a major factor in the usage of health services. This information complements measures of sickness and can be used to analyse usage of and the need for health services. It is therefore an important consideration in the development and targeting of preventative health programs.

Attitudes to Health Services

- Involvement of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people in the provision of health services
- Satisfaction with Local Health Services
- Problems with Local Health Services

Health service providers, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream services, will be able to use this information to better service the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations by providing better and more appropriate services.

Food Security Whether worries about going without food

- Whether any household members went without food
- Reasons for going without food
- Number of days went without food

These data items are collected to determine broadly the extent of stress which is experienced from going without food.

Height and Weight ■ Height and weight

A number of health problems experienced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are related to nutrition and lifestyle factors. Nutrition and lifestyle factors can be monitored by using information on diet and height and weight. Improving nutrition and dietary habits is a goal not only at the national level (through the National Aboriginal Health Strategy), but also at a more local level, through ATSIC Regional Councils and community planning. Information on height and weight can be used to construct a body mass index for each person. This information can be used in combination with other information from the survey as a proxy for nutritional status.

Fat and Sugar Consumption ■ Fat and sugar consumption index
■ Sugar consumption index

A number of health problems experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are related to nutrition and lifestyle factors. In particular excessive consumption of fat and sugar is believed to be a major problem. Information on these factors can be used to target those groups within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations most at risk from excessive fat and sugar intakes. People will be grouped into 4 different categories for each - Low, Low to Moderate, Moderate to High, and High.

Breastfeeding ■ Whether breastfed
■ Duration breastfed

Information on breastfeeding can be analysed in combination with information on recent or long term illness. Breastfeeding is believed to have a beneficial effect on a child's health status. This information may help to better understand this issue with the primary objective being to improve health for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Smoking ■ Whether smokes or not
■ Amount smoked per day

Information on smoking can be used as a standard against which smoking prevalence and the performance of local level smoking reduction programs can be assessed.

Alcohol, Substance Abuse

- Last time alcohol was consumed
- Attitudes to substance abuse

Problems associated with alcohol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been well documented and many communities have introduced measures to control abuse. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody identified alcohol and other substance abuse as having a direct relationship with the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Information from this survey can be used to address these issues.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Legal Services

- Whether used legal services
- Type of legal services used
- Reasons for not using legal services
- Distance to Legal Services

The access to and use of legal services is a major concern in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. The extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use mainstream services as opposed to services targeted specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not known. Information on these aspects can be used to better target legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Victims of Crime

- Whether verbally threatened and number of times
- Whether reported verbal threat to police and reasons for not reporting to police
- Whether attacked and number of times
- Whether reported attack to police and reasons for not reporting to police
- Whether suffered theft from dwelling

Having accurate information on victimisation and reporting levels will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as law enforcement agencies, to devise appropriate crime prevention initiatives specifically geared to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Family Violence

- Whether family violence is a common problem in the area

Family violence, although sensitive, is a major social issue. This information can be used to improve the services involved in the prevention and protection of victims of family violence.

- Policing
- Attitudes to police in dealing with crime
 - Attitudes to police in dealing with violence
 - Attitudes to police in dealing with family violence

Information on attitudes towards policing could be used at a State/Territory level to determine community preference for the way in which policing is undertaken. This can be used to help improve policing services.

- Experiences with Justice System
- Whether hassled by police
 - Whether victim of police assault
 - Whether arrested by police
 - Number of arrests
 - Whether treated fairly by police

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recognised the high rate of contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the legal system and strong links between rates of contact and issues such as education and employment. Information on experiences with the law and the justice system and the extent of repeat arrests, and how these relate to information on education and employment will be drawn from this survey. This can be used to develop and implement preventative measures and better target correctional resources.

- Attitudes to Police Relations
- Whether relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the police have improved
 - Whether Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Police Aides, Police Liaison Officers or Police Officers work in this area
 - Demand for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Police
 - Attitudes to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Police

Information on attitudes towards policing can be used at a State/Territory level to determine community preference for the way in which policing is undertaken. This could be used to help improve policing services.

- Voting
- Whether voted in last election

Knowing whether people vote in different elections provides information about the extent to which people are making use of their power to participate in the political process. This information can assist with the development of programs aimed at informing people of their right to vote and raising the general awareness of the importance of voting.

HOUSING

- Housing
- Type of dwelling
 - Whether dwelling is rented or being bought

Nyunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation
Department of Immigration, Local Government & Ethnic Affairs
Department of Health, Housing, Local Government & Community Services
Department of Finance
Department of Health — QLD
Institute for Aboriginal Development
Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies
Australian Local Government Association
Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet
Australian Institute of Family Studies
Department of Family & Community Services — SA
James Cook University — Townsville
Office of Indigenous Women — Canberra
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Sydney University
Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training & Industrial
Relations — QLD
Department of Community Services — WA
University of South Australia
Ministry of Education, Koorie Coord Unit — VIC
Aboriginal Education Consultative Group — NSW
Australian Institute of Health & Welfare
Department of Health — WA

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

The ABS would like to contact people who can help us make the survey, and its value, well known in local communities so that, the survey will be well received when the survey field officers come around. The ABS has produced brochures and posters to promote the survey. If you can display some of this material it will help to spread the message.

For further information about the Survey or supplies of brochures or posters, please contact:

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SECTION
AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS
Freepost 4
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

or Phone (Reverse Charges) on either:

(06) 252 7084

or

(06) 252 7058

or

Our Fax No. is: (06) 252 6326

3. ORGANISATIONS WHICH
HAVE REQUESTED SPECIFIC
INFORMATION FROM
SURVEY

Each of these organisations suggested the collection of information not previously suggested by other organisations. Many other organisations were consulted by the ABS, and they did not wish to add to the information that had previously been proposed.

As explained in the introduction of the paper, much more information was proposed for collection than could be included in this survey because too many questions would be needed.

Requested by

- Office of Aboriginal Affairs — NSW
- Aboriginal Health Unit — NSW Health Dept
- Aboriginal Legal Service
- WA Crime Research Centre
- The Western Australian Research Institute for Child Health
- Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority — WA
- Health and Community Services — VIC
- Redfern Aboriginal Corporation
- Aboriginal Advancement League, Preston — VIC
- Northern Land Council
- Menzies School of Health Research — Darwin
- Aboriginal Drug & Alcohol Council — SA
- Aboriginal Housing Board — SA
- Aboriginal & Islander Health Service — Brisbane
- Mary Graham & Assoc — Brisbane
- Aboriginal & Islander Corp for Women — Brisbane
- Iina Torres Strait Islander Corporation — Brisbane
- Aboriginal & Islander Corp for Legal Services — Brisbane
- Kimberley Language Centre
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Unit — ACT
- Department of Employment, Education, & Training
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission (at national, state and regional levels)
- Department of Social Security
- Commonwealth Grants Commission
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Australia Council for the Arts
- Yamatji Ngura — WA
- Kalgoorlie Aboriginal Medical Service
- Paupiyala Tjarutja Aboriginal Corporation
- Menzies Aboriginal Corporation
- Leonora Aboriginal Movement
- Marra Worra Aboriginal Corporation
- Wanang Ngari Aboriginal Corporation
- Ieramugadu Group Inc
- Roebourne Workers Aboriginal Corporation
- Karriyilli Adult Education Centre
- Mawarkarra Health Service
- Pilbarra Aboriginal Language Centre
- Halls Creek Language Centre
- Port Hedland Regional Aboriginal Corporation

OTHER OUTPUT

- Consultancies and special tabulations — from small jobs (half hour computer run) to weeks of work, done for a very wide range of agencies.
- Many short casual telephone enquiries.
- A few analytical consultancies being done by other areas of the ABS.
- PROTAB — an alternative means of access to social survey data for clients who do not have access to a confidentialised unit record file or for whom a unit record file does not have sufficient detail. It allows browsing the full listing of data from the survey, selection of individual items of interest, and production of unambiguous specifications for the production of customised reports from the database. ABS processes the request to produce a report on paper or in electronic form to suit the client's spreadsheet or publication packages.
- NATSIS results in other ABS publications:

Information Paper: Labour Force Statistics of Indigenous Australians, March 1994 (6247.0)

Australian Women's Yearbook (4124.0)

Yearbook Australia (1301.0)

Australian Social Trends, 1996 (4102.0)

New South Wales Yearbook (1301.1)

Victorian Yearbook (1301.2)

Queensland Yearbook (1301.3)

South Australian Yearbook (1301.4)

Western Australian Yearbook (1301.5)

Tasmanian Yearbook (1301.6)

ATTACHMENT F

OUTPUT — EXISTING AND PLANNED NATSIS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Audience</i>
February 1995	<i>1994 NATSIS: Detailed Findings</i> (4190.0)	Tables/text	Mixed
	<i>1994 NATSIS: Getting Results — Australian Summary</i> (4191.0)	Visual	Aboriginal organisations
	<i>1994 NATSIS: Regional Overviews</i> (Queanbeyan; Bourke; Coffs Harbour; Sydney; Tamworth; Wagga Wagga; Wangaratta; Ballarat; Brisbane; Cairns; Mount Isa; Cooktown; Rockhampton; Roma; Thursday Island; Townsville; Adelaide; Ceduna; Port Augusta; Perth; Broome; Kununarra; Warburton; Narrogin; South Hedland; Derby; Kalgoorlie; Geraldton; Hobart; Alice Springs; Jabiru; Katherine; Aputula; Nhulunbuy; Tennant Creek; Darwin) (4192.0.40.001-036)	Visual	Aboriginal organisations
February 1996	<i>1994 NATSIS: Australia's Indigenous Youth</i> (4197.0)	Tables/text/graphics	Mixed
	Regional data packs (ABS/ATSIC)	Graphics	Aboriginal organisations
March 1996	Data quality issues (ABS Information Paper)	Technical working group	Researchers
	Unit record file (ABS)	Computer file of confidentialised individualised people's survey records, to be used in detailed analytical studies by outside agencies/institutes	
April 1996	<i>1994 NATSIS: Employment Outcomes for Indigenous Australians</i> (4199.0)	Text	Mixed
July 1996	State publications (ABS)	Stats/tables	Govt departments
	Health (Health and Welfare Unit — ABS and AIH&W)	Text/tables	Mixed
	Housing (Health and Welfare Unit — ABS and AIH&W)	Text/tables	Mixed
	Law and justice (ABS and AIC)	Text	Mixed

QUESTION 2

If you haven't used the findings, are you likely to do so in the future?

- If so, what aspect are you likely to use?

QUESTION 3

The content of NATSIS aims to be applicable to issues relevant to the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as anticipated in recommendation 49 of the report of the RCIADC.

Background

The principal body which proposed content for the survey was the SAC which was chaired by an ATSIIC Commissioner (Charles Jackson) and had representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, State and Commonwealth government departments and research groups.

To ensure a balanced and appropriate emphasis on the different content areas, the SAC was supported during the development stage by five TRGs. These provided advice on data priorities and collection methodology within topic areas, i.e. family and culture; health; education and training; income and employment. Less formally structured groups also provided advice on law and justice and on housing issues. The TRGs comprised members who had expertise in that particular subject matter area, most of whom were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- Do you think the content of NATSIS is relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples — why?
- Do you have any suggestions as to how it could be improved? For example:
 - could there be better questioning or more appropriate questioning on existing topics on the survey?
 - do you want to suggest alternative or new topics that should be included in any future survey?

QUESTION 4

A key issue is accessibility of the results to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their organisations and government service providers. As part of this, different output mediums (i.e. ways of communicating results) have been developed for the various target audiences.

Background

Question 2 will have picked up the core of this for the Commonwealth Government and State Governments who are likely to have used the published findings or accessed the ABS.

While no systematic process was developed, examples include the hotline service; visits in each State to Aboriginal organisations and to other people involved in the survey to disseminate findings; media publicity; regional publication through wall charts; consultancy and tabulation services. (Examples of gaps may be full training programs on the findings and videos.)

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The issues in these questions provide the basis for consultation. As well as the different types of consultation, the type and level of NATSIS usage will vary, so questions will need to be phrased to be appropriate to the audience. They will not be used in a written questionnaire form.

The objectives of NATSIS were:

- to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Commonwealth Government and State and Territory Governments with the most needed statistics in a range of social, demographic, health and economic areas; and
- to provide a stronger information base for planning the empowerment of Australia's Indigenous peoples, for meeting their objectives, aspirations and needs, and for measuring progress in meeting those objectives, aspirations and needs.

QUESTION 1

Are you aware of the NATSIS results?

- If so, what aspect?
- How have you found out about them through, for example:
 - community information?
 - general background to specific policy issues?
 - in submissions for a specific increase in an existing or for a new service?
- How have you used the results, for example:
 - funding submissions?
 - to monitor programs?
 - policy papers?
- Has the information been presented in a format that you find useful?
 - * (e.g. published documents: book — *NATSIS: Detailed Findings 1994* (4190.0); pamphlet — *NATSIS: Getting Results, Australian Summary 1994* (4191.0); posters; *NATSIS Survey: Regional Overviews* (4192.0.40/001-36); wall charts).
- Were your needs met from the NATSIS results?
- How could the information be better provided for your purposes?
- In using the results, did you contact the ABS for further information or use the telephone hotline?
- Are you likely to use the results provided in the various publications to come? (e.g. regional publications, State publications, subject matter papers on specific areas of the survey, and unit record file?)

ATTACHMENT H

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED AS PART OF THE EVALUATION OF THE 1994 NATSIS

Comment was sought on the NATSIS from the following organisations and individuals:

COMMONWEALTH

- Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner (Mick Dodson)
- Chairperson, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Patrick Dodson)
- Department of Health and Family Services, The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services
 - Central office (Marion Dunlop, Jim Kennedy, Vicki Taylor, Joseph Murphy)
 - Northern Territory HSH office (Manager, Vipin Mahajan)
- Department of Employment, Education and Training
 - Central office (Peter Buckskin, Greg Miller)
 - Central office outposted officer, Northern Territory (Alan Haines)
 - Western Australia DEET, Port Hedland (Bonny Liddell)
 - Office of The Hon. Simon Crean, MP
- Indigenous Policy Branch, Department of the PM&C (Sandra Ellims, Yvonne Featherstone)
- Department of Finance, Aboriginal Section (Geoff Gook)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)
 - Central office (John Eldridge, Colin Plowman, Terry Moll, Wei Fong Yik)
 - State office, Northern Territory (Manager, John Kelly)
 - Regional office, Alice Springs (Jerry Tilmouth, Blue Presley)
 - Office of Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Benny Mills, Alex Woodcock)
 - Torres Strait Regional Authority (Manager, David Galvin)
- Elected arm of ATSIC:

Letter sent to ATSIC Chairperson (Lois O'Donoghue) regarding input from the elected arm. Comments sought from:

 - Commissioner Stephen Gordon (Bourke, New South Wales)
 - Chairperson Wayne Miller (Ceduna, South Australia)
 - Chairperson Stan Grant (Queanbeyan, New South Wales)
 - Commissioner Marion Hansen (Melbourne, Victoria)
 - Chairperson Bob Egan (Melbourne, Victoria)
 - Chairperson John Liddle (Alice Springs, Northern Territory)
 - Acting Chairperson Dick Lechleitner (Papunya, Northern Territory)

- Is there anything that you can identify that made you aware of the survey?
- Were you aware that this was a survey undertaken by the ABS?
- Do you tend to rely on other bodies/agencies to disseminate results and interpret them for you?
- Do you rely on them because you find the way the ABS produces material too specialised to understand?
- Do you think that in future it is more appropriate to make direct contact with you on survey results or via an intermediary organisation?
- Do you have suggestions as to how the results of this type of survey could be best communicated — both now and in the future?

QUESTION 5

The NATSIS survey, being the first of its type, measured the situation at a particular point in time.

Background The survey was the first of its type and cost \$4.4 million. It aimed to measure the situation at a particular point in time.

- Do you think there should be a future survey of this type?
- How frequently do you think they should be conducted?

- Australian Institute of Criminology (David McDonald)
- Attorney-General's Department (Gillian O'Malley, Auriel Bloomfield, Robert Mills)
- Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (Graham Bonnett)
- Department of Social Security (Tom Babin)
- Australian Electoral Commission (Paul Anderson)
- Commonwealth Grants Commission (John Henderson)
- Department of Communications and the Arts (Director, Personnel Policy)
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Geoff Sims)
- Department of Housing and Regional Development (Peter de Graaf)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (Director of Welfare Section, Jennie Widdowson, Elisabeth Davis)

STATE GOVERNMENT

State Aboriginal Affairs Departments/Offices were requested to incorporate, where possible, comment from relevant State departments such as Health and Education.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Western Australia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aboriginal Affairs Department (Leela de Mel) ■ Aboriginal Affairs Department, Port Hedland (Stanley Nangala) ■ Special Government Committee on Aboriginal/Police Community Relations (Robert Skesteris) ■ Police Department (Vince Katich, Bob O'Sullivan) ■ Education Department (John Logan) ■ Health Department (Shane Houston, Neil Thompson) ■ Pilbara Development Commission, Port Hedland (Rory Whitelaw) ■ Kimberley Development Commission, Kununurra (Liz Collins) ■ Northern Health Services, Derby (Lai Loke, Veronica Snook, private consultant) |
| Victoria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (Director, Terry Garwood, referral to Joy Elley) |
| South Australia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Department of State Aboriginal Affairs (Chief Executive Officer, David Rathman) |
| Queensland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Director, Jim Wauchope, referral to Gary Bell and Alby Dunn, Planning and Coordination) |
| Northern Territory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Office of Aboriginal Development (Director, Neville Jones, referral to David Coles, Mike Scott, Policy and Development) |

OTHER

- Office of The Hon. Robert Tickner MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
- Office of the Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Media Advisor, Christine Gallus, MP)
- Northern Australia Social Justice Project, Western Australia (Julian Smith)

- Iina Torres Strait Islanders Corporation (Administrator, Pamela Mam)
- Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs, Northern Territory (Glen Satour)
- Kimberley Land Council, Derby, Western Australia (Malcolm Allbrook)
- Magani Malu Kes (Executive Officer, Francis Tapim)
- Mamabulanjim Resource Agency, Broome, Western Australia (Phillip Bartlett)
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (Puggy Hunter)
- North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (Jenny Hardy)
- New South Wales Aboriginal Health Resources Cooperative (Sandra Bailey)
- Perth Aboriginal Medical Service, Western Australia (Ted Wilkes)
- Peter Sabatino
- Redfern Aboriginal Medical Centre (Naomi Myers)
- Tangentyere Council, Northern Territory (Mike Bowden)
- Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board, Northern Territory (Sue Murdoch)
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (Ian Anderson)
- Wanang Ngari Resource Centre, Derby, Western Australia (Ambrose Cummins)
- Warringarri Resource Agency, Kununurra, Western Australia (Peter Tozer)
- Charles Jackson, ATSIC Commissioner who chaired SAC at time of NATSIS
- Kenny Laughton, represented IAD on SAC at launch of NATSIS (refer to input from Congress)
- Employment, Russell Ross, Department of Economics, University of Sydney
- Education and Training, Colin Bourke, Dean, Faculty of Aboriginal and Islander Studies, University of South Australia
- Income and Expenditure, John Mallard, formerly Western Australia Department of Community Services (now Family and Children's Services)
- Family and Culture, Christine Kilmartin, Australian Institute of Family Studies
- Law and Justice, David McDonald (refer to input from AIC)
- Health, Ian Ring, Queensland Health Department

SAC AND TRGs

Wei Fong Yik, Acting Deputy Director — 30 November 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, high awareness of survey and results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Detailed Findings are useful but limited for people who have extra research needs. ATSIC needs to look beyond the basic findings. Delay in accessing the unit record file is a key issue for the Audit and Evaluation area as well as the fact that if there is less than 100,000, the unit record file can't be released. With funding divided at the ATSIC regional level, there is a need for an ATSIC regional field in the unit record file.

Another issue is the fact that ATSIC (which Wei Fong sees as the impetus for the survey) has to pay for assessment of tables. The NATSIS data has important funding implications and the lateness in information being available has implications for ATSIC. As a key funder of services and with the current limited use of data, ATSIC is totally limited. Believes there is an issue as to who should be given data and that ATSIC should be given priority and not treated like everyone else.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Advised that key areas of content are relevant to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples e.g. ATSIC has used for two projects in Audit and Evaluation area. However, there is an issue with the content of the questions. Would like additional issues in survey but aware of the issue of too large a survey, e.g. with alcohol issue — ask questions in such a way as to gauge the extent of the problem — misleading in current form. Be appropriate but direct.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Accessibility of results comments incorporated in Q2 and Q5.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Re dissemination of results, Audit and Evaluation's role in evaluation of all programs in ATSIC on any combination of issues means that they need to manipulate the data themselves. No ABS publication would give that detail, it would be too general.

ATTACHMENT I

PRO FORMA RESPONSE SHEET

- Are you aware of the survey and results?
- Current and possible use of results (including which type)?
- Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?
- Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?
- Whether there should be another survey and why?

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisation and government service providers)?

Overall comment that communication about results is an issue. Advised that high awareness of survey and *Detailed Findings* but no knowledge of other output mediums and no desire for electronic format.

Commented that experience is needed to interpret the results e.g. regional profiles by Geoff Dane.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Number of comments in relation to another survey:

- essential that there is consistency in surveys — for timing and outcomes;
- there should be integration with mainstream surveys to enable comparison with the mainstream population on whatever subject. Also raises the issue of marginalisation if there is no comparative base. e.g. in health, use data for comparative surveys, encapsulates picture at broader level — ATSIIC need the broad overview;
- recommend that the survey is linked to the Census; and
- as the Census has such useful information and is cost effective, there is a need to make it better. Census information is used extensively by ATSIIC. There is a need for the Census to be marketed to Aboriginal people.

Office of Torres Strait
Islander Affairs

Benny Mills, Manager and Alex Woodcock — 12 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of the survey and its results. Benny Mills has spoken to Tony Barnes of NCATSI about issues relating to NATSIS.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

There has been limited use of the survey results because NATSIS only gives a basic coverage of Torres Strait Islander populations.

In addition, because there is no clear indication of Torres Strait Islander populations within NATSIS, it's not possible to get a breakdown for different State departments e.g. health.

Benny Mills advised that this is an issue because States don't give adequate recognition to Torres Strait Islanders and then addressing their needs, e.g. health — Torres Strait Islander people don't access community health and it would be useful to investigate this (including what is already known — that the title isn't appropriate and that it isn't user friendly as largely Aboriginal oriented in its focus and members).

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should definitely be another survey. It provides benchmark information on which ATSI can determine how things have changed for the funding put into programs. Survey should be no more than every five years, ideally every three years.

More care should be taken with sampling e.g. undersampling of females (compared to Census), males speak for females, unemployment (questions asked when some people at work). Additional e.g. is in definition of homeland as no single definition amongst Aboriginal people — need for respondents to respond to 'perception of homeland' or define 'homeland' to respondent.

Community Services and
Health

Colin Plowman, Assistant General Manager; Terry Moll and Barry Johnson — 15 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Awareness of survey because of ATSI's involvement and of results through the *Detailed Findings*. No knowledge of wall charts or summary pamphlet.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Use results to supplement ATSI surveys and ATSI commissioned surveys e.g. NATSIS would supplement the Housing and Infrastructure Survey in order to evaluate extent of its usefulness.

In terms of monitoring programs and policy work, it would be of less use than ATSI material/data because of the small sample size (census data is very useful).

It is expected that results will be used in future work as a background e.g. on home ownership. Advised there is a high level of satisfaction, however, with the data.

As this Branch has a good relationship with NCATSIS, it would readily access them for further information if needed.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Yes, survey content applies to issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Content is broad ranging and specific interest is limited to program area as opposed to ATSI as a whole e.g. interested in health and housing. There is not enough detail but gives the broad picture.

In relation to health, NATSIS data is useful for overall summaries and overviews but more comprehensive detail is needed for ATSI's work in targeting needs i.e. at the project and program level.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Believed it was inappropriate for them to comment on this question and that Aboriginal organisations should comment on whether survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal people.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Wall charts and summaries have been made accessible through ATSIC to regional councils. Wall charts are popular (see Q5 for more detail on how to make them more relevant and increase their accessibility to people). *Detailed Findings* not appropriate to the literacy levels of many regional councillors. Important to bear literacy levels of regional councillors in mind in developing the regional data packs.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Wall charts are a good format. Indicator has been that regional councillors have taken them 'like hot cakes'. Recommend more artwork in wall charts as it is very popular. Recommend that photos be used to regionalise results leading to greater identification with, and interest in, the results. Particularly like *Getting Results Summary* — clear and concise but could be more comprehensive. Also, would be ideal to have summaries on a region-by-region basis.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Definitely yes, should be another survey. Issue of CDEP being included in employment data because this is then included in the funding formulae for ATSIC regions and throws things out. Believe this particular issue should be reviewed.

Social and Cultural Division

John Eldridge, General Manager, (incorporates Land, Heritage and Culture; Community Services and Health; and Legal Aid and Indigenous Rights Branches) — 18 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

High awareness of survey and its results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

ATSIC used the NATSIS results extensively in its annual report for reporting on individual programs.

The results provide another source to enable cross comparison, to raise questions or to confirm veracity of data from other sources. The data has

If relevant, results would be mostly used for policy and program work. They would assist the Office in monitoring all programs and performance in relation to Torres Strait Islander people. The Office will be increasingly developing consumer qualitative and quantitative information and this would assist in those functions. The Office reports to both the Commission and the Minister.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Survey content does apply to Torres Strait Islander people, including family and culture, housing, health and education. Youth and gender issues (particularly relating to women) are very important.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Benny Mills and Alex Woodcock agreed that the results would be more accessible if available on disc so information can be extrapolated and used.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Not specifically addressed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

It is essential to have up-to-date and relevant information. Alex Woodcock recommended, and Benny Mills agreed, that an ongoing process of updating the information would increase its quality and ensure that it was always current.

Regional Office, Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Jerry Tilmouth and Blue Presley (on behalf of the Acting Regional Manager) — 27 November 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of survey and use results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Survey results used in conjunction with other data/information to determine how much each regional council should receive to run their programs. Each council is then prioritised to determine funding levels based on needs. Once program is approved, results aren't used, however used again in assessments. Population figures assist in determining regional council numbers. Used in ministerial correspondence. Used in ATSI Annual Report and in draft Alice Springs Regional Council Annual Report as it gives background and an indication of the complexity of issues.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMISSION
MLC Tower Building
PHILLIP ACT 2606
PO Box 17
WODEN ACT 2606

Mr G Sarossy
First Assistant Secretary
Social and Labour Division
Australian Bureau of Statistics
PO BOX 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Sarossy

The Chairperson, Mr Lois O'Donoghue has asked me to respond to your minute of 20 November 1995 seeking agreement to consultations with the elected arm of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission on the results of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS).

I am sure that the Commission's elected representatives would welcome the opportunity to provide their comments on the Survey and understand that you have already made an informal approach to the Deputy Chairperson, Commissioner Perkins seeking his views.

In addition to Commissioner Perkins, may I suggest that you also arrange to consult with Commissioner Marion Hansen in Victoria and Commissioner Steve Gordon in NSW. Both Commissioners have had extensive involvement in the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and its evaluation and are well aware of the need to have access to detailed information in the areas of health, housing and infrastructure.

You also sought advice on consulting with selected Regional Council Chairpersons. In view of the short time you have left to complete the Evaluation, I suggest that it would be practical to consult the Chairpersons of the Regional Councils located in Ceduna (SA), Melbourne, Queanbeyan, Alice Springs and Papunya (NT). These Councils have been nominated as they are either relatively accessible or have been involved in considerable planning processes using data from the survey and other sources.

Mr Barry Johnson will be in contact with you shortly to advise the contact details of these Commissioners and Chairpersons.

Tim Cornforth
A/Assistant General Manager
Strategic Planning and Policy Branch
18 December 1995

led to the establishment of authoritative information, lessening the dependence on intuitive information.

As a lot of the NATSIS data was not available prior to the survey, it provides grist for the policy mill which leads to setting new directions and new channels for thinking.

The unit record file, thematic publications and regional data packs are all useful, with the latter particularly useful in feeding regional plans.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Content is highly relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. John Eldridge advised it is critical to have the same set of information so there is no interference with the validity of comparison. There is only marginal scope for tampering with existing questions, but some room for additional material.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users? (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results are accessible to users and dissemination is extended through the ATSIC system of regional offices and councils.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, it is absolutely imperative that there is another survey. May be a question over a third survey, but there must be a second so results can be compared.

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Attorney-General's Department (AG's) Gillian O'Malley, Aboriginal Justice Monitoring Unit; Auriel Bloomfield, Courts and Tribunals; Robert Mills from the Department — 13 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

As Auriel Bloomfield had been involved in the development stages of NATSIS and had attended the SAC meeting prior to the launch, she had a high awareness of the survey and results. Gill O'Malley was aware through receiving the documentation as part of this evaluation and Robert Mills had been involved in conducting the survey.

Major criticism of the report by Auriel Bloomfield is that explanatory notes do not help to interpret. To assist users, they should be in the text and not in Appendix B.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

The primary use of results would be in policy and program implementation. Auriel Bloomfield stated that data is not sufficient for their purposes in implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Interpreter Program. Gill O'Malley advised that the focus of the Aboriginal Justice Monitoring Unit was on law and justice and that the results were useful at a superficial level for policy and possible parliamentary questions. She stated that more detailed information would be useful. However, they did not believe that, on the basis of the results available, that approaching the ABS for more detailed information would be the solution but rather that more specific questions should have been asked.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

The content is useful to an extent. Issue with the high numbers of the response 'I don't know' (e.g. table 59 on p. 65 of *Detailed Findings* and questions related to interpreters) which gives an indication that the question has either not been understood or is not clear. Using local interpreters could assist in surmounting this problem.

Need more specific detail, e.g. whether people had/would like an interpreter (or an Aboriginal friend) present in interviews with the police. Issue with the fact that the language Creole/Kreole (used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) hasn't been addressed at all within the survey.

Results can appear to be misleading, e.g. wall charts' interpretation of results (e.g. education) can reflect the way a question is asked, so need to take account of ways in which data can be tested.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results were accessible in AG's through a set of publications to date. However, there was an issue about the artwork being appropriate. Also advised that the regional data packs should be for public consumption and not restricted as an in-house document.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Regarding dissemination of results, none of the AG's officers had been informed about the NATSIS results 'through the system' and advised this was a gap.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Rather than another survey, it was recommended that the Census should be dramatically improved in order to mainstream this survey relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Australian Electoral
Commission (AEC)

Paul Anderson, Head, Electoral Education Section (which has responsibility for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program) — 4 December 1995.

Paul Anderson was involved with a submission from the AEC to the NATSIS proposal in 1992. He raised this as an issue when we spoke about the evaluation. The AEC wanted a question included on 'Are you on the Commonwealth Electoral Roll', and had support from ATSIC for inclusion of this question, but it was dropped because of a perception that it was threatening. AEC thought that a question included in the survey on voting in ATSIC elections should be dropped because AEC have that information by ATSIC Regions anyway. AEC would seek support from other agencies in having the Commonwealth Electoral Roll question included in a future NATSIS because of its value related to jury service, and voting in Commonwealth and State elections.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware since the development days of NATSIS (note Paul Anderson's original correspondence referring to an advertisement for staff in *The Canberra Times* — 4 July 1992).

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Use *Detailed Findings* and ATSIC regional information, e.g. information on figures in regard to language other than English, education levels, and household in relation to ages are all useful. An example of usage by AEC is in looking at NATSIS regional information to provide insight into and to help determine whether a video should be translated into language.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Applicability of survey content to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples raised but not specifically addressed.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Advised that results are, and have been, readily accessible to AEC.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Satisfaction with format of wall charts and *Detailed Findings*. Advised hard copy was a good idea — disc may be easier to overlook and not use. Also, the ABS addressed a field conference in Perth on the NATSIS, including methodology and rationale which was considered to be very useful (there are 16 Aboriginal AEC field officers). While future thematic output may technically be of little relevance, they offer a broader cultural perspective.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, definitely should be another survey as important to have time series data. Worthwhile information which is useful for a variety of reasons. Sample surveys have some limitations and it would be ideal to have population statistics included. Suggest survey should be done every few years.

Australian Institute of
Criminology (AIC)

David McDonald, Senior Criminologist — 6 December 1995.

AIC is responsible for research and policy advice to the Commonwealth Government. David McDonald's area includes Aboriginal justice issues and Aboriginal deaths in custody.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

AIC was a participating organisation in the design of the survey in that it contributed a submission to the ABS in 1992 urging that the survey include a section on law and justice and suggesting areas to be covered. Also, David McDonald and AIC colleague John Walker advised ABS staff on the development of the law and justice questions.

High awareness of survey and results and has acted as an advocate/ambassador in referring NATSIS to a range of people, including Aboriginal organisations, journalists and academics.

Has found format of publications useful. Has used *Detailed Findings* and ATSI regional information:

- to inform himself generally in all areas of the survey;
- in preparing speeches and papers given by e.g. Pat Dodson;
- has presented detailed tables in law and justice;

- AIC has separate project with NCATSIS coming out of NATSIS (thematic paper on law and justice due next year);
- has referred specific tables to people looking for information on Indigenous justice issues;
- utilised NATSIS in academic writings and in presentations, including relationships between police and Aboriginal people and links of that to deaths in custody;
- ATSIIC commissioned AIC to do a study into the continuing over-representation of Aboriginal people in deaths in custody;
- has alerted people in Canberra/Queanbeyan area to existence of regional information; and
- has followed up with the ABS for further information and has been satisfied with the service.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

While David McDonald's focus is on law and justice issues, he has used every survey chapter as background material. His main area of responsibility, analysing the underlying issues of deaths in custody.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Advised not up to him to judge whether survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, he made the comment that the content is highly relevant to those who work in, and care about, issues affecting Aboriginal people.

Advised that the law and justice questions in the survey were designed carefully to ensure they would be comparable with other data sets on the Australian population generally, and put into a form that would enable information trends to be derived.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results are accessible to users. There was sufficient publicity to ensure that this was the case.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

With dissemination of results, considered that it was the ABS' role to get to the stage of having information available and to get the pricing structure right. Up to program areas, etc., to use the material to meet specific needs.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

It would be incredibly useful if the survey was repeated. It would greatly enhance the use of the survey because trends would be established (survey wasn't designed just to be a one-off) and money spent on the survey would be better used if repeated.

Overall comment that the methodology was flexible and benefits were reaped as a result. Believes the ABS was outstanding in the design, execution and presentation of the material.

For a future survey, while the law and justice section worked well in NATSIS, other priority areas should be included within that section.

Commented that there should not be less than four years between surveys (too short a period to see changes), but that five years is a good time frame because policy and structure in Aboriginal issues is moving quickly now.

Commonwealth Grants
Commission

John Henderson, Expenditure Analysis Branch — 4 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of survey and involved in its design. At that time, in 1992, the Grants Commission was interested in ATSIC Regional Council data in anticipation of the Commission's need to be involved in distribution of funding on that basis. However, that role has not eventuated.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Now, just a continuing interest in Aboriginal data in the normal work of funding across States. Would be interested in detail of data splitting up responses on the basis of geographical base of residence.

Detailed Findings look useful but have had no need to use them to date. Will need to check with health area to check views on survey results.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Not addressed.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Published findings look accessible.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

No comment on different ways of disseminating results because not of great use.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

No view on another survey unless there was data splitting up on geographic base of residence. If so, would be supported strongly.

Department of Employment,
Education and Training
(DEET)
Aboriginal Education Branch

Greg Miller, Acting Assistant Secretary — 12 January 1996.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Mr Miller advised that the Branch is aware of the results and has used the data in the *Detailed Findings*.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

The data has been helpful alongside other ABS statistics, DEET statistics and the National Schools Collection for policy and program work.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Issue with the question 'Are you happy with your children's schooling' in that they were surprised at the result because it wasn't consistent with other statistics (e.g. DEET's retention rates) and perceptions. Stated that it was a complex concept and that he would like to think it was explained by the questioner.

In order to know what the question is actually addressing, agreed it would assist if there was another level of detail attached to the question.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

No specific comment.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

No specific comment.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

The issue of whether there should be another survey is sensitive because of issues around over-surveying Aboriginal people and 'not another questionnaire'.

However, believes there should be another survey. Policy and program development depends on an accurate perception of what people think and say they need.

Northern Territory Office Alan Haines, outposted officer, national office (within the Aboriginal Education Branch of DEET) — 23 November 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

General awareness, also related to controversy in the Northern Territory over education questions which are value laden and don't reflect the reality.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Results not used for resources, strategies or priorities because only a benchmark. While useful as such, there is a need to have a broader and more regular knowledge of the issues.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Education is an issue that affects Aboriginal people. Need to know access, participation and outcomes. This is not the role of the survey but needs to be done on a regular basis by the responsible authorities.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Not addressed.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Not addressed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

While there is a role for a survey, believe there is more of a role for State education departments to meet the objective. Some of the existing questions mean nothing. It is useful as one component of the bigger picture.

On 12 February 1996, Alan Haines advised that he has subsequently used the ABS consultancy service offered through NCATSIS and gained some useful information from the NATSIS education results.

Department of Human
Services and Health (HSH)
Northern Territory

Vipin Mahajan, Manager — 1 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of the survey and the results from a number of sources but principally from the ABS.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Detailed Findings are used in planning and will be used in regional needs analysis and planning process. There are good links with the ABS. The thematic, as well as the statistical outputs, will be utilised in developing community profiles because of IISH's current responsibility for Aboriginal health. ABS's census is viewed as out of date so other sources such as NATSIS are relied on. There will be a definite use of the ATSIIC regional data packs when they are released early in 1996.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

No direct comment on content.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

The results of the survey are useful. Availability in electronic format would be very useful. The inhibiting factor is that the survey is funded by one part of the bureaucracy and the price is often too prohibitive (for ATSIIC and ABS products).

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Dissemination of results is linked to accessibility issues.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

No views on a future survey. Believes the issue is about resource utilisation. There is a need to look at how information can be incorporated into a general census survey, with updates to keep it current. Issue is therefore efficacy of information.

Office for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Health
Services (OATSIHS)

Ms Marian Dunlop, Assistant Secretary, Government Relations and Mr Jim Kennedy, Director — 8 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of NATSIS results. There has been usage by Vicki Taylor (separate interview) and there will be increased usage by the OATSIHS. Data will be needed for broad planning processes and monitoring outcomes. It is important for this data to be available to enable progress to be monitored in each State and region.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

To date, the work of the Office has concentrated on setting the broad arrangements and negotiations in the move of health from ATSIC to HSH. Now, however, there is a view to the future and an increasing need for information.

Specifically, data is needed for the bilateral discussions for joint planning arrangements, needs-based planning, and health outcomes (in terms of service delivery and assessing the impact at large on the health of the community).

Access to the unit record file is critical to OATSIHS for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes. All output, including thematic publications, will be of use.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

OATSIHS is specifically interested in content relevant to issues of access. Jim Kennedy commented that areas were very broad this time and that a future survey would be unwieldy if approached on the same broad areas. Suggested a future focus on specific areas. With regard to the questions, advised that the self-reporting method was of use because of the Office's need for information on how people view their access to services.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

New to using survey results, but have had no difficulty accessing information to date.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Different ways of disseminating results are appropriate and relevant to the work of the Office.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should be another survey. Suggest select certain areas to concentrate on and rotate those each survey.

OATSIHS — another
interview

Vicki Taylor — 11 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of survey and results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Has used the results in conjunction with other data for a range of issues including Aboriginal health workers, the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and issue of health services for Torres Strait Islanders. The ABS consultancy service in Darwin has provided the information for these

issues — there is a high level of satisfaction with the timeliness of, and the quality of, the service. There is an issue with the fact that HSH have to pay for the service.

A bigger sample size would give a better idea of what is happening.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Commented that there is no validation for the NATSIS (as a check and balance for a self-reporting document) as yet.

Regarding the content on health:

- need to talk to health services as well as to other groups;
- issue with asking questions about a two-week time frame;
- insufficient detail to determine the extent of illness for certain conditions;
- need a level of detail underneath morbidity patterns;
- need questions on immunisation;
- questions related to alcohol are unrealistic; and
- need to know additional information for health e.g. risk taking behaviour in relation to, for example, diabetes.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Accessibility of results addressed under Q5.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Aware of different output mediums, but go to NCATSIS consultancy service for information needed. Commented that there wasn't enough in the *Detailed Findings* e.g. through the sample size. Interested in being able to manipulate data but not to pay for it. Suggested Health Whiz equivalent so HSH and community groups can access information for health planning in communities.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Suggest there is a survey every five years.

BIMPR have population and multicultural research functions.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of survey and results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

NATSIS results are potentially a valuable resource and useful reference documents as BIMPR move into population and multicultural issues. As a workplan is still being developed, the areas are relatively new. The Bureau has in-house researchers, commissions research on identified issues, and allocates research grants to certain community groups for research proposals.

Graeme Bonnett advised that they are interested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues as they relate to population issues generally. BIMPR's role in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues is still evolving. Before the population research functions were added to BIMPR's charter, these issues were clearly the province of ATSIC. The distinction in research roles between the two organisations is now not as clear.

Have done analysis of population census data relating to Australian-born people. A separate analysis was done for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in conjunction with ATSIC. Census data, not NATSIS, was used, but additional data was sought from the ABS through ATSIC.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

No comment on survey content other than to say that NATSIS appears to cover the right sorts of issues.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

On accessibility and dissemination, advised that BIMPR was a major subscriber to ABS publications and received anything relating to population surveys and demographic issues. It would be useful to have data in a computer-readable form (issue with paying for consultancies to get further information). Could be interested in the unit record file if the data is needed for research.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

No direct comment on the need for another survey but commented that it is necessary to have periodic benchmarks. It would be useful to ask questions in the regular population surveys to ensure there is updated information and data that is consistent with the rest of the population from one source. The concepts and definitions in NATSIS are not fully consistent with those used in other ABS surveys.

Department of the Prime
Minister & Cabinet

Sandra Ellims, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Policy Branch, Office of Indigenous Affairs and Yvonne Featherstone, Director, Social and Economic Section — 5 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

High awareness of survey as PM&C part of the original working group involved in its development and also attended its launch.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

As PM&C does not administer programs and the Branch has a policy and coordination role, the results are used for policy development purposes.

Published material is continually used and also further information has been provided through the ABS consultancy service. There is a high level of satisfaction with the consultancy service.

Also, will use all upcoming material including the various thematic reports. There is, however, less likely to be a use for the unit record file.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

From a PM&C perspective, the survey content, i.e. the questions asked, are seen as pertinent and covering the required range of issues.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

A key issue with accessibility of results was coming across them by accident rather than by design. See this as an issue of marketing that should be addressed by the ABS. The ABS outposted officer at PM&C was eventually the person who gave information on NATSIS.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Published results have been/will be appropriate. Very positive about the ABS consultancy service.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Rather than comment specifically on the timing of another survey, would say that once a benchmark is provided, need to establish an ongoing basis on which the authenticity of trends can be assessed.

From a policy viewpoint, there is a need for a benchmark and it is useful to have a further survey but recognise that there are cost issues around timing.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS VICTORIA

Second Floor,
115 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy VIC 3065

2 January 1996

Mr G Sarossy
First Assistant Statistician
Social and Labour Division
Australian Bureau of Statistics
PO BOX 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Sarossy

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SURVEY 1994

Thank you for your letter of 22 November 1995 in which you enclosed a copy of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) and requested assistance in the consultation process as part of the evaluation of NATSIS.

You should note that the contact officer for the consultation process at Aboriginal Affairs Victoria is Dr Joy Elley, Manager, Planning and Development Branch, and Dr Elley can be contacted on telephone: (03) 412-7498.

The contact officers for the other portfolios which you requested are as follows:

Education: Mrs Jane Weston, Manager
Koorie Education Unit
Directorate of Schools Education
Department of Education
8/525 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Tel: (03) 9628-2486

Health: Mr Ron James, Manager
Koorie Health Unit
Public Health Division
Department of Health and Community Services
13/555 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Tel: (03) 616-8178

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(signed by)
TERRY GARWOOD
Director

VICTORIA

Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria
— another interview

Dr Joy Elley, Manager, Planning and Development Branch —
24 January 1996.

Dr Elley was very aware of the survey and has spoken to several people, including Tony Barnes, about the results. She said there were problems with quantitative data because it doesn't tell 'why'.

The Planning and Development Branch uses the results in the *Detailed Findings* extensively in their policy coordination across government role. Particular areas of usage are health, employment and education and training. What she would really like to access is the information on household structure which isn't available without payment.

Dr Elley advised she had a real issue with paying for data. She has a limited budget and cannot afford commercial rates for ABS information. As there is a need for good social data on the position of Indigenous people, she believed the information should be made accessible. Her suggestion was for a consortium, possibly facilitated by the ABS, of potential users to enable access to the data. Apparently something along these lines was done for one of the more recent censuses.

Advised there should be another survey and that they should continue to be done every four to five years.

QUEENSLAND

Office of Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Gary Bell, Planning and Coordination — 14 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of survey and its results.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Only beginning to use data in policy and planning. Use State government statistics and census data and will be looking at information from NATSIS, e.g. for document being developed on client needs profile. There is a question mark on whether the small sample size and the attitudinal nature of NATSIS will be credible enough for determining policy for program development. Also, a question over whether it is targeted enough at clients of services to assist in making an informed judgement about strategic approaches.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Content is relevant and responds to the concerns and issues being flagged by those involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander areas.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Not addressed.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Not addressed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

No firm views on another survey. Believes there is an issue as to whether it was cost effective in terms of what is needed to be known. Also, there needs to be debate as to whether this is the right formula.

Office of Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Affairs
— another interview

Alby Dunn, Planning and Coordination — 14 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

High awareness of survey. Involved in the design and development of the NATSIS in its first year of planning, and was therefore involved with the strategy for consultation (SAC, TRGs, community).

Advised that there was an initial commitment to produce benchmarks that can be used at the community level and that this has not been achieved through a sample survey — which is also a difficult concept to sell because it is not the Aboriginal way of doing things. Believes the original intention was for a census.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Has used *Detailed Findings* and regional material but finds that results aren't necessarily right, e.g. 97% of Cape York people employed and this isn't true. Uses census and State education and health statistics as there are holes in the NATSIS methodology and it is difficult to use attitudinal information.

Believes regional data packs will be of limited value for hard planning and policy.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Content is applicable and relevant, although commented that Aboriginal people don't necessarily compartmentalise like the areas in the survey.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

While many people may know that NATSIS took place, not a lot know about the results.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Does not think there should be another survey. Rather, existing sources of data should be improved, including the Census giving complete coverage.

Strengths

The main strengths of the NATSIS Survey are:

- Comprehensive nature - looking at broad range of key issues and interaction between these.
- The degree of geographic depth. In many ways the NATSIS Survey was one of the most difficult and complex surveys undertaken by the ABS and the ABS should be congratulated for the survey and the new methods pioneered by it.

Weaknesses

- On any issue be it housing or health, the worst circumstances are those of Aboriginal people and if the NATSIS is the only source of information, then it is necessarily sketchy because of the range of issues that have to be covered within the one survey.
- Force comes from figures in comparisons between Aboriginal and rest of population and NATSIS cannot provide these comparisons.

Issues

- Senior ABS staff have stated they regard NATSIS as providing an alternative to estimating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) in the National Health Survey. However these two approaches are complementary rather than alternatives.
- It is important to locate NATSIS conceptually in a wider scheme.
- Overall, health people believe NATSIS is very valuable because it highlights a broad range of issues as it allows interactions between health and other issues to be examined, and because it provides information down to the level of ATSI regions. However a national picture of Aboriginal people with full coverage of health issues as in the National Health Survey and comparisons between the Aboriginal population and the total population are essential.
- ABS tends to place an undue emphasis on a fixed approach rather than relating the approach to the issues. It is better to have something than nothing in order to get leverage for issues relating to Aboriginal people.
- Issue with the absence of the alcohol consumption question - this is a real deficit particularly since this is the issue that was rated most important by Aboriginal people and ABS was advised to include a question on alcohol consumption but in fact elected to remove a question which had been tested!
- There is a need to address issues around identifiers and the unit record file. States have the onus for delivering services for ATSI people but can't get a tape with State identifiers. A solution must be found to this problem.

- It is vital to have another survey - to be every 5 years. Measuring these standards must not be optional and conditional on external funding but core business for ABS as the natural statistics agency.
- Link the next NATSIS to the year 2000 and the Olympics to focus attention on the issues and draw attention to the regular processes that need to be implemented.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS — SA
GPO Box 3140
22 Pulteney Street
1st Floor Centrepoint Building
Adelaide SA 5001

Ms Janine Ramsay
Health Section
Australian Bureau of Statistics
PO BOX 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2617

Dear Ms Ramsay

Evaluation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS)

I would like to provide an initial response from this agency to assist in evaluating this survey.

In our view the most important information to come from the Survey has been

- the provision of up to date labour force data by ATSI region
- information as to the source of income - especially as this is not available from the Census
- data on law and justice
- population estimates

The major use of the Survey data by this agency has been in our 1994/95 Implementation Report responding to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

It would be fair to say that the Survey results have not been used as widely as they should by agencies and organisations including this one. This is most probably the result of ignorance as to the content of the survey and the range of uses to which survey data could be applied.

The South Australian Health Commission has made use of the Survey for studies in:

- Men's Health
- Youth Health

In addition Family and Community Services has made use of family violence data in its domestic violence policy making.

The Aboriginal Housing Policy Unit has included data from the Survey in its 1994/95 Aboriginal State Housing Plan.

The Australian bureau of Statistics should be commended on the manner in which the community was consulted about the Survey and the care taken to ensure that the final information for each region was made available in an accessible manner.

Areas for Improvement

Housing - in tables 23 and 24 of the Detailed Findings, the data for renters needs to be published in the same format as table 27 - i.e. separate information for private, community, State housing and other government - for any sensible policy analysis. The information for owners and purchasers could be combined.

Yours sincerely

David J Rathman
Chief Executive Officer
Department of State Aboriginal Affairs
20 February 1996

DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, TASMANIA

File No: 121/23824

Officer: Jim Everett

Ext:

Mr G Sarossy

First Assistant Statistician

Social and Labour Division

Australian Bureau of Statistics

PO BOX 10

BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Sarossy

Thank you for providing a copy of the detailed findings with your recent letter advising of current survey activities from the ABS. It will be a useful addition to information relating to a number of areas currently under consideration by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

I can advise that the NATSIS survey results will be used in projects under my responsibility. In particular, funding has been approved for my office to carry out a project addressing Aboriginal community needs in Tasmania in a response to the National Commitment strategy agreed to by Heads of Government, May 1992.

I am in the process of selecting a project team which will include a researcher to research, compile and analyse statistics and data for Tasmanian Aboriginal community profile. The Tasmanian profile survey will include those areas mentioned by you such as education and health. When the project is underway further communication concerning the information you have requested will be provided to Ms Janine Ramsay. I believe therefore that it will be after the Christmas break before further contact will be made by our project officers.

I trust this will be convenient to you. For further contact - Mr Jim Everett is the project manager in my office, phone (002) 33 67 99.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Gibbins

Manager

Office of Aboriginal Affairs

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Department of Health and
Community Services

Dr John Condon, Head, Epidemiology Branch and Dr Dayalan
Devanesen, Head, Primary Health and Acute Care Branch —
23 November 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of NATSIS results. However, there is an issue around chasing up information. There is a need to disseminate better as it is not marketed by the Department.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Regional findings are being awaited for health as there is a limited use of national surveys such as the National Health Survey as the Northern Territory sample size is too small in other surveys. The use of results for planning purposes is limited by the perceptions in the survey e.g. in good health. Aspects of the survey results are useful.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Applicability of survey content not commented on.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results not readily available to government (as per comment in Q1).
Accessibility of results addressed in Q5 with dissemination.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Believe that results should be disseminated/made more accessible through funding Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Service to supply training to health staff regularly going out to remote areas. In this way, dissemination forms part of the regular workload. This is the preferred option because the infrastructure for such a process is in the Department and not the ABS.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should be another survey to monitor improvements. It should be kept as consistent as possible to monitor change over time. Questions should be reviewed with some dropped and others improved. In the absence of specific data, the survey is a step forward. Has validity in this is how Aboriginal people view themselves. Other sources need to be used in conjunction with NATSIS.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of survey results and use them.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Also aware that other States and Territories, including Aboriginal Health Policy Units in those States, need to have a greater awareness of the results. While a self-reporting document, the results are useful. The best use is in looking at people's perceptions — this needs to be taken into the equation with implementation of programs. It helps to know how to provide services as people's behaviour is driven by what they think (e.g. links with alcohol/tobacco misuse) use of information constructively health promotion awareness.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Survey content directly relevant to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There should be some additional content on the environment (land management and economic development).

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

There was a comprehensive mail-out of results by the ABS. Sees it as less of an accessibility issue than as to whether the results are understood. To facilitate better understanding, there should be purpose-designed training programs for ATSIC Regional Councillors (through ATSIC Resource Councillors). Distribution needs to have interpretation and analysis. Pie graphs are important.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Proposed that once released, results should be disseminated at national level and then at State level within the same week, followed by regional level presentation. This should enable discussion of what the survey results mean (e.g. balancing people's perceptions and factual information). Should be emphasised that this is not a stand alone document and that it is designed to be used in conjunction with other data/information.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should be another survey. The survey results have the potential to be very effective if used adequately. There should be

ongoing follow-up and usage after the various launches and linking into other areas by the ABS to disseminate.

Department of Education

Peter Jones, Executive Officer, Aboriginal Education Policy Support Unit (referred by Chris Makepeace, Director, Schools Policy) — 23 November 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

General awareness. Peter Jones also spoke of controversy in the Northern Territory over education questions which showed Aboriginal people being happy with low education standards.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Unlikely, given the problem in Q1.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Overall, survey area of education does — the idea is good but research methodology needs to be better. Need to be careful to contextualise the question carefully as difficulty with people responding on a personal level, i.e. just because we like the teachers does not mean we are happy with low levels of educational outcomes.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Commented that results appeared to indicate that Aboriginal people were happy to have the lowest standards of education in Australia. He indicated that the National Review of Education and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (30 September 1994) has a statistical annex which provides statistical information to this effect.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Not addressed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Not specifically addressed, but advised that needed to be methodologically more rigorous.

OTHER

Anton Breinl Centre

Professor Ian Wronski, Director of the Centre and Head of the Department of Public Health and Tropical Medicine — 19 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Is aware of the survey and has used the NATSIS results.

Raised two issues:

- Enumeration

Advised that there has to be a better way of counting the Aboriginal population. In places that he knows, believes it was out by as much as 50%. Has read the methodology but can't ascertain the cause, e.g. Kununurra has about 3,000 people and the survey estimated 500; Palm Island shows 1,780 in NATSIS whereas the ATSIIC roll has 5,000 and there are 3,000 clinic charts. Professor Wronski does not believe that there would be mobility to that extent.

Advised that this is such a critical issue because it has implications for funding services on a per capita basis.

- Health

While recognising that there are always issues in using cross-cultural questionnaires, commented that he did not believe the results of the survey, e.g. 4% of Aboriginals had diabetes — would be better to give percentage for adult population and use clinic data as benchmark.

Had an issue with questions, e.g. what do you think of health services — need to take into account range of issues including whether there is a choice/no choice. Advised that it is hard to believe people are happy in areas when, e.g. in talking to organisations between Cairns and Mackay, some are happy and some are furious. Commented that this is part of the problem with averages.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

As for Q1.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Advised that content is applicable to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Thought household living standards, education and training, law and justice and income status were interesting and useful — but acknowledged that it may be that these are areas outside his main expertise.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Unrealistic to expect access to everyone but need to ensure that results are accessible to those making decisions. Commented that less of an issue with accessibility than with what's in the survey.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Don't know whether there should be another survey — perhaps in 2000. There is a need for national, general information provided it is interpreted with wisdom.

Raised issue of sampling — hard to get information that is local enough to be useful. Aboriginal societies are non-homogenous and can be quite diverse within a couple of hundred kilometres (e.g. Broome region). Therefore this information is not useful for planning purposes where detail at the local level is needed.

Thought survey probably couldn't be used to monitor change as it is dealing with averages and there is a need for focal information.

Emphasised that information must be correct — if it's incorrect and people handle it as if it's real, it eventually gets incorporated into funding formulae. If information is wrong, it leads to misallocation of funds.

Australian Institute of
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Studies

Dr Kingsley Palmer, Deputy Principal — 13 December 1995.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

AIATSIS was a member of the SAC so there is a high awareness of the survey and its results.

Impressed with the way the survey was set up. Believe the hard work put into a consultative, as well as a scientific process, paid off.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

The results would be used by research staff.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

As a member of the SAC determining the content, believe it is applicable to issues relevant to the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Accommodation should be made for different questions and issues in a future survey e.g. perhaps looking at different cultural questions.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Researchers need detailed information prior to analysis.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Another survey is needed to give value to NATSIS, which contains invaluable information. The main problem with the survey is that there is no baseline to compare it with. Another survey would give an idea of comparison. Important to refine samples and it would be best to stay with comparable populations.

Important to consult with key stakeholders and get support as with the previous survey.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE
GPO Box 570
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Mr G Sarossy
First Assistant Statistician
Social and Labour Division
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Cameron Offices
Chandler Street
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Mr Sarossy

Evaluation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey

Many thanks for the opportunity to comment upon the effectiveness of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) in meeting its objectives. The following observations are made in the context of the role of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in the collection and analysis of health-and welfare-related information on indigenous peoples.

The NATSIS is the first survey to yield national information on a wide range of indigenous issues, including health and welfare. Initial analysis is already underway through the ABS/AIHW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Welfare Information Unit in Darwin. Other units of the Institute, particularly the Population Health Unit, the National Injury Surveillance Unit, and the National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease, will also use the NATSIS data in their work.

As to the usefulness of the 1994 NATSIS data, it is really too early to comment constructively as several projects which will use NATSIS are just getting under way in the Institute. I would expect that NATSIS data will contribute to monitoring of public health in general as well as specifically in areas identified as high priority for monitoring National Health Goals and Targets - including cardiovascular disease and injury, both of which are addressed to some extent in NATSIS. An illustration of the data requirements for monitoring cardiovascular disease is attached to this letter.

Of course monitoring of this kind will require ongoing availability of information and, from this perspective, AIHW supports proposals for future NATSIS collections. However, the specific requirements for monitoring are likely to require measurement of indicators not covered in the NATSIS and to require information to be available more frequently than might be envisaged for NATSIS. Because of this, the AIHW is keen to be involved in development of strategies for data collection from the indigenous population. It would also welcome the opportunity to be involved in a review of NATSIS content in the light of new requirements for monitoring against National Health Goals and Targets.

Yours sincerely

(signed by)

Geof Sims ✓

Head

Health Division

23 February 1996

Comments on NATSIS from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease

The National Centre for Monitoring Cardiovascular Disease proposes to include a review of the NATSIS data from a monitoring perspective on its work program. If the survey were to be repeated at periodic intervals, it would provide valuable data for the following health indicators:

- health actions (particularly for cardiovascular conditions);
- illness conditions (particularly for cardiovascular conditions);
- health risk factors - in particular, period since last drank alcohol; whether smokes cigarettes, number of cigarettes per day, fat consumption index, and relative weight derived from measured height and weight; and
- access and attitudes to health services and facilities (for monitoring equity).

It would be desirable if information for other health risk factors, such as regular smoking of all forms of tobacco, alcohol consumption, exercise, blood pressure, blood lipids and dietary changes, was also collected.

The Centre is interested in monitoring inequalities as well as trends. therefore it is essential that information on the following topics is also collected:

- education and training
- employment and income
- language
- family size
- geographic and demographic variables.

The goals and target process has identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a priority population. The NATSIS, along with other national surveys such as the National Health and Nutrition Surveys with increased indigenous samples, could prove to be a useful vehicle for obtaining information on a number of indicators for monitoring progress towards the CVD goals and targets. The indicators for which regular information is required are:

- Prevalence of regular smoking
- Prevalence of smoking among adolescents
- Proportion of drinkers who, over the past 12 months, consumed alcohol at hazardous or harmful levels on at least one day a week
- Proportion of drinkers who, when they drink, usually consume alcohol at hazardous or harmful levels
- Proportion of adults not engaged in physical activity in a two-week period
- The contribution of fat as a proportion of total energy intake in adults 15-64
- The contribution of saturated fat as a proportion of total energy intake in adults 25-64
- The proportion of persons who report almost always adding salt to food after it is cooked
- Average blood cholesterol of persons aged 20-69

- The proportion of persons aged 20–69 years with high blood cholesterol
- The proportion of adults with a body mass index between 20 and 25 inclusive
- The proportion of adults who are overweight
- The proportion of adults aged 20–69 who are abdominally obese
- The average diastolic blood pressure level of persons aged 20–69
- The average systolic blood pressure level of persons aged 20–69
- The proportion of persons aged 20–69 with high blood pressure.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

High awareness of survey.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Has used *Detailed Findings* and spoken with NCATSIS in Darwin for further information. Would use the information for a variety of purposes, e.g. submissions, discussion papers and press releases.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Regarding content, commented that there was a need to touch on all the issues (not just population) and suggested an additional section on consumer's perceptions to services provided (e.g. do you have contact with the Commonwealth HSII).

Commented that the questions were value laden and that responses were not in keeping with reality. Recommended that the methodology be looked at e.g. question the standardised format. No issue with the small sample size.

Believes there is a need to give equal weighting to qualitative and quantitative research. Advised that there was a tendency to rely on quantitative research which often locks out Aboriginal people as it requires certain skills.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Emphasised the importance of face-to-face dissemination of results to make them accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, e.g. with overheads and videos. Explanations on how the information can be used should form an integral part of this. Important to acknowledge that not all people are literate and can read published documents.

Just who should do the disseminating should be determined by how the information is to be presented. If in the existing format, then the ABS because of the expertise required; if simpler, then there is an argument for sub-contracting people in the community.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should be another survey. There is a lack of data and it is needed. There is a need for quality information and there should be a reference group who can contribute to making the survey more appropriate.

Recommended that in the next survey there should be 'probing', e.g. further questions asked to gain an additional level of detail.

Cape York Health Council,
Queensland

Barbara Flick, Executive Director.

Ms Flick had a high awareness of the survey and was very positive about it. She commented particularly on the summary sheets (i.e. regional overviews) as:

- useful;
- used a lot;
- succinct; and
- accessible.

Detailed Findings were useful for managers to argue for more resources to try and address problems they have to deal with.

Ms Flick cited the development of NATSIS as a good exercise and that it was good for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to be involved.

Ms Flick advocated that it would be useful to continue doing NATSIS but that she would need to talk to others about the layout and whether there was a need for different information in the summary sheets. There may be issues around whether the current information is still relevant or whether different information is needed. A summary sheet may be needed to highlight those. Also, land councils and health councils may have specific priority areas that they believe should be highlighted.

Central Australian Aboriginal
Congress, Alice Springs,
Northern Territory

Kenny Laughton, Director and John Boffa, Senior Medical Officer —
27 November 1995. (Congress provides a number of services including
medical and dental services.)

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of survey. Advised they have a problem with the results not reflecting reality (particularly health and education) which leads to problems with using them in order to obtain funding.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Would not use most of the current results as have a view that they are flawed, e.g. people interviewed often had minimal education and yet results indicate 'happy' with education. Have, however, followed up with the ABS on some results and this has proven useful. Some data can be useful to use in submissions/in combination with other information, but in general, questions are too broad and need to be separated out.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Survey content definitely does apply to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal people. All the key areas in NATSIS would need to be covered in order to gain a complete picture. There is an issue with questions being asked in English and whether people therefore know what they're actually responding to. Questions were too subjective as depended on the experience of the person. Validity of statements are questionable.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Important to feed back results at the grassroots before any further survey is done — videos and audiotapes 'in language' would be recommended as enabling results to be accessible. However, the results are probably more useful for submissions and public health programs directions, so grassroots are secondary in terms of ensuring results are accessible.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Getting Results Summary is a good idea. People want this sort of information initially, and will go to the *Detailed Findings* and the ABS if more information is needed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Issue as to whether questionnaires are culturally appropriate. This has ramifications for information gathering and as to whether it is valid to use this format. Recent paper (by Tony McMasters and Jeannie Devitt of Congress) shows that it is culturally appropriate to gather Aboriginal people's views in an unstructured way, e.g. focus groups leading to building of relationships leading to survey. This would mean a smaller but higher quality product.

No specific support for another survey. Believe should go back to communities first with feedback and to provide facts/information so they can form an opinion and respond rather than have the subjectivity of the existing survey. It would be useful to have a response by government to the survey.

COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

Ms Janine Ramsay
c/- W3 GC N2
Australian Bureau of Statistics
PO BOX 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Ms Ramsay

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 1995 to the Council's Chairperson, Mr Patrick Dodson, concerning the evaluation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey. Mr Dodson has asked me to reply on his behalf and to make the following points:

1. The Council has greatly appreciated both the collection of the NATSIS data, and its professional and attractive presentation in the booklets. The collection and public provision of factual information about the contemporary lives and circumstances of indigenous Australians is extremely important, both for policy makers and for building knowledge and understanding between indigenous peoples and the wider community. The Council also has drawn upon specific pieces of information in the survey in the course of its work, such as the statistics about alcohol consumption.
2. The NATSIS would have an even greater impact if it could be promoted and distributed more widely, including among indigenous communities themselves. This would probably require summarising and popularising its main results and conclusions, admittedly not an easy task for such a comprehensive report. However, the benefits of doing so would make the work well worth while.

The Chairperson hopes that these brief comments are of assistance in your evaluation. Please do not hesitate to contact him again if you need further information or comments, either now or in the future.

Yours sincerely

(signed by)
Brian Aarons
Communications Director
18 January 1996

Curtin University,
Western Australian

Pat Dudgeon, Head of Aboriginal Studies — 19 December 1995

Pat Dudgeon commented that there should be another survey, using the same methodology and developed by Aboriginal people.

She advised that her area has been involved in the development of the NATSIS. Research staff in Aboriginal Studies used the survey results.

Institute for Aboriginal
Development (IAD), Alice
Springs, Northern Territory

Glen Satour, Administrator — 27 November 1995.

IAD — an Aboriginal-controlled adult education and resource centre for the Aboriginal community of Central Australia.

IAD was represented on the overarching NATSIS SAC.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, aware of the survey but thought the educational arm of the IAD (representative not available on the day) would have a greater knowledge.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Would use results in forming the basis of applications and submissions to ATSIC and DEET. It is important for comparisons in data between ATSIC regions to be available.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Advised that survey content applied to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal people. Useful that the survey covers a number of areas because of the interlinkages, e.g. lower educational standards having an effect on law and justice. Commented that should maintain existing survey areas as they are key areas affecting all Aboriginal people in the community. There is a need to consider whether there should be flexibility on changes to questions.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results should be made accessible through organisations. There is a need to assess whether people at grassroots level actually want the information disseminated directly to them. Once it is established as to whether this is an issue or not, should consider what would be an appropriate way to make results accessible at grassroots.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Wall charts with graphs and pie charts are very important in disseminating results as they are appropriate to many Aboriginal people.

Results should be disseminated directly to organisations by the ABS not through, for example, ATSIC.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Yes, there should be another survey. Important that it goes down to community level. An extensive consultation process is needed to get to know communities as it is critical that Aboriginal people input to the process. There is an issue about the results — questions should be targeted to get more direct information.

Office of Aboriginal
Development, Northern
Territory

David Coles, Assistant Director, Policy and Development and Mike Scott
— 22 November 1995.

OAD — whole of government approach, role to coordinate the mainstreaming of Aboriginal programs.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

High awareness and use of the survey. While assessment of need is the key issue, it is more important in terms of outcomes if resources are targeted effectively. ABS data is important as the basis for submissions (e.g. to achieve savings) and services to Aboriginal people are a principal issue in the Northern Territory. There is the need to have an objective standard that this provides.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Use of written material (including *Detailed Findings*) to inform the Northern Territory Minister about policy options in relation to Aboriginal people and vis-a-vis Aboriginal people in other States and Northern Territory non-Aboriginal. As OAD coordinates the monitoring of the implementation of RCIADIC recommendations for whole of the Northern Territory (has the ability to require information from other Departments and to gather the perceptions of Aboriginal people about what they think is being done), utilise NATSIS in providing information. Also, use NATSIS information to develop indicators for underlying issues of RCIADIC in order to bring together the data available. While some of the results are too general/insufficient, NATSIS data can be used as a national baseline — gives idea of where to look further.

State Treasury uses NATSIS for Grants Commission funding to States. Need to know characteristics of population and in the Northern Territory critical as 25% of population is Aboriginal. If information is produced by the ABS, can be presented as factual.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Content does apply to issues affecting Aboriginal people. Cited education as a NATSIS result where there was a general feeling that the high satisfaction levels indicated may lead to inactivity. Need additional

questions around this issue. Aboriginal organisations have high level of interest in statistical data because it leads to better targeting of resources.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results are accessible — wall charts information should be standardised across regions, also issue with ATSI regional material focusing on the negative.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

Dissemination of results not specifically addressed.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

Essential that NATSIS, or similar, should happen again. There are positive benefits in having the information available and there is a need to follow it up. It is particularly relevant in the Northern Territory where approximately \$860 million is spent on services to Aboriginal people (16% of Australian Aboriginal people). While it would be ideal to incorporate it into the Census, recognise there are issues around this such as size. Census gives the broader ongoing picture and survey has the detail to make a qualitative judgement.

SAC Chair Charlie Jackson (ATSIC Commissioner at time of NATSIS) — 7 December 1995.

As Chair of the SAC, Charlie Jackson had a key role in the NATSIS. Rather than confine our discussion to the feedback headings, I opened the topic up for his comment on any aspect.

Overall comment Mr Jackson advised that Aboriginal people do not talk about the survey and that he is disappointed that it hasn't 'taken off'. To his knowledge, no practical use has been made of the survey by outside organisations on the ground level where Aboriginal people can see a result. He believes that Aboriginal people will not contribute to another survey unless feedback is given to them at the ground level on the results achieved through the first survey.

Mr Jackson recommended establishment of an independent monitoring body comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure that the survey results are taken up by relevant parts of government. He emphasised the importance of there being a proactive role with the results.

General Mr Jackson expressed disappointment at not having been contacted by anyone about the survey since its launch. He believes that, for example, a briefing on where it's at would have been useful. He indicated that the

view could be taken that it was a typical survey and that the government and bureaucracy can say it's been done on behalf of Aboriginal people and that their commitment is now complete.

Content and questions Supported content and questions but believed bodies responsible for services/issues for Aboriginal people should be given the information to act on, otherwise there is the danger that the impression is created that all is well.

Dissemination A monitoring body to monitor the performance of government and the bureaucracy on whether areas have been taken up/put in place was advocated by Mr Jackson. This body should be independent of the ABS and ATSIC and made up of, and therefore owned by, Aboriginal people.

He suggested that every two years, one issue could be identified from the survey and the group could facilitate its implementation through different bodies.

Mr Jackson advocated the survey in terms of a vision for the future and thinking strategically. However, before any future survey takes place, he stressed the need to inform Aboriginal people on the results achieved from the first survey. He reiterated that, to his knowledge, as it stands the survey results have no profile in the Aboriginal community at ground level.

Australian Institute of
Tangentyere Council,
Northern Territory (Alice
Springs) Mike Bowden, Community Development Manager — 28 November 1995.
(Supporting town camps community through services, including housing, CDEP, youth and old people's services, bank, homemakers, night patrol, training, finance, administration and with links to education through Yipirinya School (set up by Tangentyere but now separate)).

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Yes, awareness of the survey through presentation by NCATSIS.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

No use of results to date. National snapshot not as useful as regional.

Useful for some purposes in order to have a national perspective, but specific data on specific situations more relevant to Tangentyere. This has led to the development of their own census (details follow).

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Related to comment on more specific data for Tangentyere, no specific comment on whether content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal people. However, major concerns with:

- education section in the *Getting Results Summary*. The results are deceptive because many Aboriginal people are unhappy with education; and

- classifying CDEP as a job. CDEP is designed to assist Aboriginal people to provide service to the community and there is an issue around the categorisation of it under employment — perhaps should be another category.

Advise that education and CDEP figures hide the facts and concerned that politicians will use the NATSIS to justify inactivity/current situation.

Believe that there would have to be compromises in order to get agreement on survey questions. To validate the information, a series of steps would need to be followed so data and the subjective are corroborated e.g. rate on scale — 'how do you think the school is serving your children' (subjective), followed by 'how often do they attend' (objective). This would require regular clear definition as part of the process.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Results would be more accessible if the Council had more copies of the ABS information.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

With dissemination of results, focused on dissemination of their census information (rather than NATSIS) which was through various regular meetings concerning a range of issues. There is an emphasis on verbal feedback.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

No opinion on another survey as national surveys have minimal impact and Tangentyere Council census has the information they require and use for providing services and funding submissions.

A copy of the census was sent to the ABS in Darwin for comment. It was the fourth census and asked standard information e.g. who lives there; family structure; place of origin; language. A database is being developed for the census results. DSS have asked for the information.

Torres Strait Islander representation

Francis Tapim, Executive Officer, Magani Malu Kes and Pamela Mam, Administrator, Iina Torres Strait Islanders Corporation — 12 December 1995.

✓

Magani Malu Kes is a Resource and Information Centre in Townsville and Iina is a Research and Resource Centre in Brisbane.

Overarching issue

Both Francis Tapim and Pamela Mam emphasised that there are diverse cultural differences between Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and that it is incorrect and unacceptable to have a survey that treats them as one identity.

ATSIC regional representation is seen by them as representing Aboriginal interests, which marginalises further Torres Strait Islanders.

It is essential to have a survey that ensures that the interests of Torres Strait Islanders are identified as a separate issue.

The following comments have been made in the above context.

Q1. Are you aware of the survey and results?

Aware of the survey, particularly Francis Tapim.

Q2. Current and possible use of results (including which type)?

Both organisations would be unlikely to use the results because they believe the figures do not reflect the reality. Pamela Mam made several comments on the issue of confusing Torres Strait Islanders with other Islander groups and the importance of having a survey or census that, as one of Australia's Indigenous groups, ensures that they are correctly identified as a separate entity.

Q3. Whether/how survey content applies to issues affecting the condition and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Both Francis Tapim and Pamela Mam agreed that it was not possible to comment on the content as exists in the current NATSIS, but that it would be up to Torres Strait Islanders to develop the questions (and thus the content areas) in a future survey.

Q4. Whether results are accessible to users (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and government service providers)?

Accessibility and dissemination of results were seen as intertwined. The importance of accessibility and dissemination of results in Creole was emphasised. Both Francis Tapim and Pamela Mam believed that Torres Strait Islander people would have the role of presenting to their own people through, for example, videos and wall charts.

They also agreed that Torres Strait Islander artwork was an important part of presentation and Pamela Mam found the Aboriginal artwork on the NATSIS publications unacceptable for a publication purporting to represent both cultures.

Q5. Whether the different ways of disseminating results (these would need explaining) are appropriate and any suggestions?

As for Q4.

Q6. Whether there should be another survey and why?

It was emphasised by both interviewees, that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders were two distinct races and that Torres Strait Islanders were a minority within a minority and it was essential for them not to be subsumed.

If there was to be another survey, regardless of the cost, it was imperative to ensure that Torres Strait Islanders were actively involved in its development in their own right, that the statistics were representative of reality and that dissemination was in such a way to be acceptable to Torres Strait Islanders. This may mean a separate survey for Torres Strait Islanders.

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