ATTACHMENT B

Australian Bureau of Statistics

For Information

MB23-000004

Title:	**ABS and Census ethnicity - ANU proposal**
To:	**The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP** **Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury**
Recommendation/s:	1. That you note the update on ABS engagement with the Department of Home Affairs on the "Government that Works for Multicultural Australia' initiative. **Noted** ☑ **Please Discuss** ☐ 2. That you note the update on the engagement that the ABS undertakes to build knowledge and expertise in contemporary cultural diversity data requirements. **Noted** ☑ **Please Discuss** ☐ 3. That you note the update on the 2026 Census topic review process and the considerations that the ABS needs to make if there is a request to create or update its cultural diversity statistical standards and classifications. **Noted** ☑ **Please Discuss** ☐
Signature:	s47F **The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP** **Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury** 1/6/23 **Date**

Executive summary

- As requested, this brief provides an overview of how the ABS is engaging with the Department of Home Affairs on the "Government that Works for Multicultural Australia" initiative, and how this intersects with the 2026 Census topic review process.

Key points

- The ABS understands that improving the consistency in the whole of government approach for the collection of cultural diversity data is a priority for the Australian Government.
- ABS recognises that it is timely to review the standards for measuring Australia's cultural diversity. This will ensure measures remain relevant in contemporary Australia and can best inform multicultural policy, such as resource allocation, diversity in the workplace and service planning.

s47E

- ABS is proactively engaging with government, academics and advocacy stakeholders who have an interest in improving the suite of cultural diversity data in Australia, as we see value in drawing on the wider research and expertise in this field. This includes engaging with the ANU on their *Counting for Change* project.

Cleared by:	Denise Carlton, Program Manager Population Statistics Branch	**Contact officer:**	s47F Director Overseas Migration and Migrant Statistics
Date cleared:	12 May 2023	**Contact number:**	s47F / s47F
Consultation: Department of Home Affairs, 2026 Census Content Section and Statistical Standards and Infrastructure Section			

Released under FOI Act

- The ABS has facilitated connection between stakeholders with similar requests for the ABS to expand its suite of cultural diversity data. The ABS has encouraged these stakeholders to make joint submissions in phase one of the 2026 Census topic consultation process. This is to strengthen their submission and allow for the ABS to have a clear understanding of shared priorities. s47E

  s47E

- The ABS has received submissions on the collection of new cultural diversity topics during phase one of the 2026 Census topic consultation, including the submission from the ANU that was sent to your office. The ABS is currently triaging these submissions and will engage with key stakeholders on their data requirements throughout the topic review process as required.

- The ABS is about to commence its scheduled review of the cultural diversity standards and classifications in preparation for the 2026 Census (refer Appendix A). The ABS welcomes recommendations on whether the current suite of metrics in the Census and other ABS datasets is still meeting the needs of Australia. We will consider submissions into the 2026 Census topic consultation and the recommendations from the "Government that Works for Multicultural Australia" initiative to inform its direction in this space.

Issues/sensitivities

- The Census currently collects a rich suite of cultural diversity metrics, as referenced in the ANU submission. This includes: Country of Birth of Person, Country of Birth of Parent, Year of Arrival in Australia, Religious Affiliation, Main Language Used at Home, Proficiency in Spoken English, Indigenous Status and Ancestry, Citizenship. A number of these topics were added in response to the 1986 Borrie Review on the *Measurement of Ethnicity in the Australian Census of Population and Housing*. This Review recommended that a suite of metrics, rather than a single measure, was the most appropriate way to measure ethnicity.

- The ABS will consider the overall size and complexity of the Census form when developing its recommendation to the Australian Government. Any proposed new topics for the 2026 Census will need to be prioritised against existing content.

- Major redevelopment or creation of a new statistical standard or classification takes time and can be expensive. This is important in the Census context, as a complex topic may not be able to be appropriately developed or tested before the ABS needs to make a recommendation to the Australian Government on the 2026 Census topics.

- The ABS will consider the suitability of alternative data sources and the overall size and complexity of the Census form before making its recommendation to the Australian Government on the topics for the 2026 Census. This approach ensures the most appropriate data sources are used to inform policy and the value of the Census data is maximised without unnecessarily increasing the burden and cost to the Australian public.

- The ANU submission in the first phase of the 2026 Census topic consultation, sent to your office, states that the Census was unable to provide adequate data to inform the COVID-19 vaccination response. The ABS would like to clarify that the rich suite of cultural diversity data collected in Census, enhanced with data linkage, was key to enabling the accurate reporting on the uptake of vaccinations by specific culturally diverse groups. This was achieved by linking MADIP, which includes this Census data, with the Australian Immunisation Register, which provided a dataset that enabled near real-time analysis of the COVID-19 vaccine roll out.

- While we acknowledge the ANU submission about the importance of collecting cultural diversity measures in the Census, it is also important to consider the broader whole-of-government approach to meeting ongoing data needs.

Released under FOI Act

s22

Appendix A - Cultural diversity standards and classifications

Standards:

- Country of Birth of Person – see Country of Birth Standard
- Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home – see Language Standards
- Proficiency in Spoken English – see Language Standards
- Indigenous Status – see Indigenous Status Standard
- Ancestry – see Ancestry Standards
- Country of Birth of Father – see Country of Birth Standard
- Country of Birth of Mother – see Country of Birth Standard
- First Language Spoken – see Language Standards
- Languages Spoken at Home – see Language Standards
- Main Language Spoken at Home – see Language Standards
- Religious Affiliation – see Religious Affiliation Standard
- Year of Arrival in Australia– see Year of Arrival Standard

Further detail on the full suite of Cultural Diversity Standards and how they should be used together can be found in this publication: Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity, Australia

Classifications

- Classification of Countries - see Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)
- Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups – see Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)
- Classification of Languages - Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL)
- Classification of Religious Groups - Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups

Released Under FOI Act