

From: [REDACTED]
To: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>
Cc: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], "Norfolk
[REDACTED], [REDACTED],
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, "AJ Lanyon"
<aj.lanyon@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
>

Date: 26/12/2019 05:47 AM
Subject: Re: Ancestry in Norfolk Island [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

CAUTION: External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender as safe.

Dear Chris,

RE: "Ancestry data reported for Norfolk Island from the 2016 Census is not comparable with Pitcairn ancestry data reported from Norfolk Island Censuses (2011 and prior). The ABS cautions against conclusions made on the basis of comparing the two. The following article explains the reasons why."

This short synopsis received from [REDACTED] is not what you, [REDACTED] and I agreed to at all and represents a complete about-face to what was a clear understanding of how to proceed on the 2016 Norfolk Island ancestry question. Only on the surety of that understanding did I decline [REDACTED] offer, and please correct me if I'm wrong, to allow me to preview the explanatory "caution" we three had developed, which she would produce, before it was published. This offer came with your concurrence. I must say I regret my trust.

There has never been any doubt that the ancestry data contained in the 2011 Norfolk Island Census (both versions) and the 2016 Australian Census are incomparable. The ABS document [REDACTED] links to in his email, ABS 2900.0: "Understanding ancestry in the Norfolk Island population", has been the ABS' attempt since 2017 to explain how the proportion of the Norfolk Island population of Pitcairn Island ancestry could drop from 46% (or 38%, depending) to 20% within five years. We agreed that the 2016 20% Pitcairn Island ancestry statistic was accurate to the extent it was the output of your methodology as the question is asked across Australia. We three equally agreed that although such was the statistical output, the data's interpretability, it's statistical reliability, with regard to Norfolk Island this first Australian census was questionable enough as to render the data too uncertain to use without clear and appropriate caveats. The matter reduced to a genuine lack of understanding of the structure of the ancestry question in that how it was asked in 2016 and the options provided to respond

were new compared to all previous Norfolk Island censuses. And, of course, not having a Norfolk Island ancestry category only added to the indecision. You and [REDACTED] also confided you thought the ABS had rushed elements of your preparation to include Norfolk Island in time. In that sense, as I put it, the 2016 Census was indeed new for all parties with sufficient confusion going into the Census as to make interpreting the results the issue it has become. So much for confidences.

[REDACTED], as author of ABS 2900.0, is the ideal person to explain the document. No one would know its content better than she. At the point in our discussion when she suggested an additional assumption to try to account for this wild data disparity (46%/38% to 20% within five years, in a population for which over 40% still speak the ancestral Pitkern/Norf'k language), I had to note that adding assumptions after the fact only tends to add noise, not clarity. The conclusion could only be that we simply don't know with *sufficient confidence* what the ancestry breakdown was on Norfolk Island the day of the Census. And it was your and [REDACTED] acceptance of this highly-problematic circumstance – anomalous we called it – that we accepted the approach which you have utterly failed to implement.

If we cannot with *sufficient confidence* be certain of the Norfolk Island ancestry data in the 2016 Census, then that ABS data must be identified as such, which was the entire basis of our agreement on how to proceed. And although this disparity will be corrected in the next Census, this 20% ancestry figure which no one can support in good conscience is still being cited today, and that is because it is still available on your website without qualification or condition. The simple solution was to identify these conditions as discussed so ABS data users, which include ministers of government as well as department decision-makers, consultants and anyone with the interest and access to the ABS website can be adequately informed of its limitations.

What words of caution the three of us thought appropriate and what the Bureau has issued is as though we had never met. This is a puzzle to understand. Is there anything about the discussion which I'm relaying that didn't occur?

Regards,

[REDACTED]

On Fri, 20 Dec 2019 at 14:52, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi all,

Following on from discussions we had in Norfolk Island last month, the ABS has added the following note at the top of the publication "Understanding Ancestry in the Norfolk Island population".

Data usage note


Ancestry data reported for Norfolk Island from the 2016 Census is not comparable with Pitcairn

ancestry data reported from Norfolk Island Censuses (2011 and prior). The ABS cautions against conclusions made on the basis of comparing the two. The following article explains the reasons why.

For your convenience, here is a link to the full published article
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2900.0~2016~Main%20Features~Understanding%20ancestry%20in%20the%20Norfolk%20Island%20population~10142>.

Don't hesitate to contact me should you have any comments or questions.

On a related matter, a change has been made to the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) to add Norfolk Islander to the classification. This came out of investigations post the 2016 Census. Following is a link to the updated classification

 (Subject: New releases of the ASCCEG and Year of Arrival in Australia; Database: NewsPoint; Author: 47F; Created:)

All the best for the festive season and I look forward to meeting again in 2020.

Kind regards

47F

Assistant Director, 2021 Census Field Operations

Census and Data Services Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(M) 47F
(E) 47F [47F@abs.gov.au">@abs.gov.au](mailto:<span style=) (W) www.abs.gov.au



Re: 2016 and 2021 censuses: Norfolk Island. [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED] 47F
 to: 47F 08/11/2019 10:06 AM
 Cc: "Chris Libreri", 47F
 From: 47F
 To: 47F @abs.gov.au
 Cc: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, 47F
 47F @abs.gov.au

History:
 This message has been forwarded.

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Dear 47F,

I look forward to seeing you.

Best regards,
 47F

On Thu, 7 Nov 2019 at 17:42, 47F @abs.gov.au wrote:

Dear 47F

My sincere apologies for the delayed reply. I have been quite busy with a publication release - [Gender Indicators](#) which came out on the 1st November and I'm still playing catch up with emails as a result! Thank you for your email and I must say I am looking forward to visiting Norfolk Island again next week (and meeting with you then).

In the meantime, thank you for attaching the paper. I have read it and have been considering the aspects you detail within. I will come prepared to discuss in more detail when we meet.

Best wishes

47F
 47F

Director, Household Characteristics and Social Reporting

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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47F

47F ---23/10/2019 07:44:17 AM---

From: 47F >
 To: 47F @abs.gov.au
 Cc: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, 47F @abs.gov.au, 47F @abs.gov.au
 Date: 23/10/2019 07:44 AM
 Subject: 2016 and 2021 censuses: Norfolk Island.

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Dear [47F],

I'm referring to an email thread between us in June, 2018, begun with [47F], regarding the Norfolk Island ancestry data contained in the 2016 Census. As much as anything, it contains my gratitude to you for your willingness to try to resolve what I believed was a need for data correction. The interaction left me with a highly favourable impression of the ABS as an organisation.

That I recall, you were on Norfolk Island in 2017 for a public meeting to explain the 2016 Census results and can attest that the ancestry data produced widespread disbelief within the community, including our elected officials and the Council of Elders. The immediate question was how the percentage of the Norfolk Island community of Pitcairn Island descent could reduce from 46% to 20% in the five years between the 2011 Norfolk Island Census and the 2016 Australian Census. The ABS subsequently attempted to address this obvious disparity in its online publication, "Understanding ancestry in the Norfolk Island population" (2900.0). The analysis spoke of the different constructs to the ancestry question in the Norfolk Island and the Australian censuses, but I believe it's safe to say it didn't reconcile those differences nearly enough to draw any appropriate conclusions and the data was left with a significant measure of uncertainty about it. The present ABS effort to review the subject for 2021 is an expression of that dilemma.

The grave concern I have had about the ABS publishing this data without clear qualifications, first expressed to [47F] and [47F], is the real possibility of decision-makers using that data unaware of its intrinsic ambiguity. And why it remains important to acknowledge these caveats, today, is studies are being produced and contracts let by Commonwealth departments which specifically refer to a 20% Pitcairn Island component to the Norfolk Island population and for the reasons this statistic is relevant to include, it is relevant to correct. We simply don't know with sufficient confidence what the ancestry breakdown was on Norfolk Island in 2016 and that ought to be made known.

I included an evaluation of the ABS ancestry assessment in my initial email to [47F]. It's a fairly credible analysis, though perhaps presumptuous in thinking busy professionals would read an unsolicited 2500-word critique of their organisation's work. It is attached here. I think it can help explain the present disconnect with Norfolk Island. Once again, years later, I am seeking your assistance.

Best regards,

[47F]

[47F]

(See attached file: ABS Response.docx)