

# S22

From: "Sharon Lindsay" <sharon.lindsay@swanhill.vic.gov.au>  
To: <david.gruen@abs.gov.au>  
Cc: <council@swanhill.vic.gov.au>  
Date: 14/10/2020 01:23 PM  
Subject: Population of Robinvale - Victoria

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

Dear David,

Please find attached letter from Swan Hill Rural City Council's CEO, John McLinden.

Kind regards,

**Sharon Lindsay**  
Executive Support Officer  
Swan Hill Rural City Council  
p: (03) 5036 2348 | f: (03) 5036 2340  
w: [www.swanhill.vic.gov.au](http://www.swanhill.vic.gov.au)



Message protected by MailGuard: e-mail anti-virus, anti-spam and content filtering.  
<http://www.mailguard.com.au/mg>



RobinvalePopulation\_DavidGruen\_ABS.pdf

REF: 2969/20/  
JM/SKL

14 October 2020



David Gruen  
Australian Statistician  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Level 3, 818 Bourke Street  
Docklands VIC 3008  
david.gruen@abs.gov.au

Dear David

### POPULATION OF ROBINVALE, VICTORIA

Council has for a long time held concerns that the population as reported in the ABS census data under represents the true population of this agricultural centre.

In response to Council's concerns, a study was commissioned and was undertaken by Geografia who looked at a number of other indicators of true population. Geografia have identified that there are between 7000 and 8800 people, estimated to be living in Robinvale, which is significantly more than the figure of 3359 as contained in the 2016 ABS census. Council provided the ABS with a copy of that report on 20 February this year but have not received any response in relation to the ABS's view of this work.

I write to strongly encourage the Australian Bureau of Statistics to review its census methodology for horticultural towns such as Robinvale, and to publish an interim finding in respect of Robinvale, more accurately reflecting the true population of this dynamic horticultural centre. I would be happy to discuss this matter with you in some detail and I can be contacted on (03) 5036 23 48, I look forward to your considered response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JML', written over a white background.

John McLinden  
Chief Executive Officer



**Fw: Letter from Australian Statistician re Population of Robinvale  
[SEC=OFFICIAL]**

**David Gruen** to: [REDACTED]

08/12/2020 10:06 AM

Sent by: [REDACTED]  
This message is digitally signed.

----- Forwarded by [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS on 08/12/2020 10:06 AM -----

From: David Gruen/Staff/ABS  
To: council@swanhill.vic.gov.au  
Cc: [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 30/10/2020 02:55 PM  
Subject: Letter from Australian Statistician re Population of Robinvale [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
Sent by: [REDACTED]

---

Dear Sir/Madam

Please see attached letter to Mr John McLinden from the Australian Statistician in response to his letter of 14 October 2020.

Thank you.

Kind regards

*Sent by [REDACTED] on behalf of*

David Gruen  
**Australian Statistician**

W: 02 6252 6705  
E: david.gruen@abs.gov.au



201030 Ltr D Gruen to J McLinden Swan Hill re Population of Robinvale.pdf

## AUSTRALIAN STATISTICIAN

Mr John McLinden  
Chief Executive Officer  
Swan Hill Rural City Council PO Box 488  
SWAN HILL VIC 3585

*By email: [council@swanhill.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@swanhill.vic.gov.au)*

Dear John

### **Re: Correspondence 14 October 2020 – Population of Robinvale**

Thank you for your letter concerning the population of Robinvale in the Swan Hill Rural City Council.

I apologise that you did not receive a response to the report that you provided in February this year. We are investigating what happened to your correspondence, but please be assured that the lack of response from the ABS was not intentional. We have now reviewed this report and other correspondence with your organisation in 2019.

You have asked that the ABS review its census methodology for horticultural towns such as Robinvale. The basis of your request is that the population that obtains services from Robinvale is substantially greater than the population that is reported, and this has implications for the levels of services that are needed.

As a key purpose of the Census is to collect information for the compilation of official population estimates, it is critical that the Census is conducted in a nationally consistent manner. It is for this reason that the ABS does not use different methodologies in different areas.

You note that Council is concerned that the population count reported in the 2016 census data does not adequately represent the full population that you service in Robinvale. The study commissioned by Geografia looked at a range of indicators of daily population. This report indicates that in areas like Robinvale where there is a high proportion of semi-permanent residents and seasonal workers, there can be a large difference between the service population and the estimated resident population (ERP) produced by the ABS.

The ERP is the official estimate of the Australian population and is based on place of usual residence within Australia, in keeping with international standards. Usual residence refers to that address at which the person has lived or intends to live for six months or more in a given reference year. The concept of usual residence is important so that each person is counted once and only once in Australia's population.

ERP is not intended to measure temporary populations and we have heard from stakeholders such as yourselves that there is also a need for an alternative measure. There are a range of regions around Australia that experience differences between their resident and service populations, including agricultural areas such as Robinvale with a seasonal workforce; fly in fly out workers to mining towns; and tourist areas such as coastal towns that experience higher demand during the warmer months. The ABS is currently undertaking a pilot project that explores aggregated telecommunications data at the Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) to estimate temporary populations. The project will provide insights into temporary populations and fluctuations from official population estimates as published in ERP. The ABS will continue to investigate the feasibility of estimating non-resident populations, subject to resources and accessibility to nationally consistent data sources.

Thank you for your interest in the Census and for sharing the report on Robinvale population determination. I have forwarded your correspondence to our demography and Census teams. If you have any further questions, please contact S22 Director, 2021 Census Data Assurance, Macro Editing and Dissemination at S22

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Gruen".

Dr David Gruen  
30 October 2020