



Australasian Federation of Family History organisations Inc
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2006 AUSTRALIAN CENSUS

The first National Census in Australia for which identified data has been retained since 1828 was the 2001 survey, of which only about 50% survives and this was because of lobbying by *Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations*.

It is AFFHO's policy that microfilm copies of all original returns for the above census and future surveys should be retained in the *National Archives of Australia* because they are an invaluable record of Australian family history.

The census is the only public record that comes close to recording the name, address and occupation of every Australian. No other sources, such as electoral rolls and birth certificates come close to national coverage.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) advised AFFHO on 12 February that it intends to seek the views of stakeholders and the community at large on this forthcoming survey. In particular it will be seeking views on the aspects of collection operations, processing, and output of results, privacy and confidentiality.

In July 2003, the ABS intends to publish (online and in hard copy) a paper called: *2006 Census of Population and Housing ABS Views on Content and Procedures* (cat. no. 2007.0). This publication will outline ABS plans in the above areas. We urge all genealogical societies to do the following:

- (1) Obtain a copy of the paper as soon as possible.
- (2) Make a submission in support of the AFFHO policy.

Those making submissions are invited to contact the *AFFHO Census Working Party* for advice at pr@affho.org

Nick Vine Hall
Chairman,
AFFHO Census Working Party
27 June 2003

AFFHO's recommended response (in email and hard copy by post) is:

NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR ORGANISATION or LETTERHEAD

DATE

Ms Roslyn Harvie
Population Census Development
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10 Belconnen ACT 2616
roslyn.harvie@abs.gov.au

Information Paper 2007.0 called *Census of Population and Housing - ABS Views on Content and Procedures, 2006* by RW EDWARDS.

Question 11 - 'Do you have any comments on any other aspect of the census?'

*I/we support the retention in the National Archives of Australia of name identified data in the 2006 and all future Australian censuses with a privacy embargo of 99 years. Identified census data has been proven over many years in many countries (e.g. the USA since 1790 and England since 1841) to be extremely valuable in genealogical, historical and medical research. The 'value of the information' and the 'specific consequences of non inclusion' of the census retention question have been clearly established by expert witnesses in the 1998 federal government report *Saving Our Census and Preserving Our History*, by Kevin ANDREWS. This report by the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs unanimously recommended retention of identified data in all future Australian censuses. It is an act of historical vandalism to destroy the history of the Australian culture. The cessation of this unfortunate practice is long overdue in Australia. There are huge gaps in the historical public records of this country. The Government does not currently ensure that basic records of every Australian are recorded and permanently stored for posterity. The 2001 census was the first national survey since 1828 for which at least some name-identified information has been retained. There was no public outcry when the census retention option was placed in the 2001 census and 53 percent of Australians said 'YES' to the retention of their records. This was in fact a national referendum in favour of census retention and demonstrated the majority view of the Australian people. I/We ask the ABS to recognise that view.*

Genealogists and historians appreciate that the census is a costly exercise (some \$300 million in 2001) and that a minimum undercount of the population is very desirable. We do not wish to save the whole census. We believe that only certain vital historical data should be retained in the format listed in (2) below. This will encourage greater compliance by respondents and considerably reduce microfilming and storage costs, which we understand were about one million dollars in the 2001 census. The 2001 census form comprised 16 pages. So the filming would be only 1/16th of the cost.

I/we request the ABS recommends to Government in its 2004 submission on the nature and content of the 2006 census that:

- (a) Special legislation be urgently passed to allow the 2006 survey to include the same optional census retention as did the 2001 survey.*
- (b) Responses to only eight key questions be retained in the 2006 census, namely: (1) surname; (2) full personal names; (3) exact date of birth; (4) exact town and country of birth; (5) date and port of arrival into Australia, if not born here; (6) religion; (7) full residential address; (8) occupation.*
- (c) The eight key questions cited in (2) be included on a single page in the front section of the census with a statement that this important data will be microfilmed for posterity under a 99-year privacy embargo in the National Archives. The retention question should appear at the base of this page with a 'tick the box' option.*
- (d) The necessary funding for microfilming and storage of the 'YES' vote returns in the 2006 Census be included in the appropriate government budget forthwith along the same lines as the amount allocated for the 2001 survey.'*

Signed: President etc

NOTE: Submissions must be received by the ABS by no later than 5pm Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, 30 July. **There are now genealogical societies based in virtually every federal electorate in Australia (i.e. 65 groups comprising over 100,000 members).** We successfully lobbied politicians to save the 2001 Census and we can do it again. Please **URGENTLY** send a hard copy of your submission by post to the Electorate Office of your local Federal Member of Parliament under a covering letter stating how many voters your society's membership represents, and asking that MP to write an urgent letter of support for retention to Mr. Peter Costello, MP, who is responsible for the Census. Should you require any assistance with your submission please contact the undersigned. Also send an email copies to the President of AFFHO and the undersigned for AFFHO's records.

NICK VINE HALL
Chairman, AFFHO Census Working Party
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