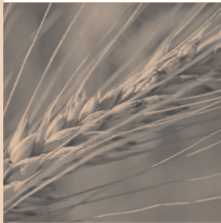




Australian Statistics Advisory Council

Annual Report
2010–11



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AUSTRALIAN STATISTICS ADVISORY COUNCIL

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The Hon Bill Shorten MP
Assistant Treasurer
Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation

Dear Minister,

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Report of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council for the year ending 30 June 2011.

The Annual Report outlines the work undertaken by the Council and is submitted to you for presentation to Parliament under sub-section 24(2) of *the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The Annual Report is dated on the day I approved the text for printing.

Geoff Allen

Geoff Allen
Chairperson

11/10/2011

Australian Statistics Advisory Council



Mission

To ensure that, in keeping with Council's statutory charter, the advice furnished to the Minister and the Statistician, in relation to the collection and dissemination of statistics, has due regard to relative priorities, is objective, relevant, timely, constructive and practical, and that it is sensitive to the needs of both suppliers and users of statistical data.

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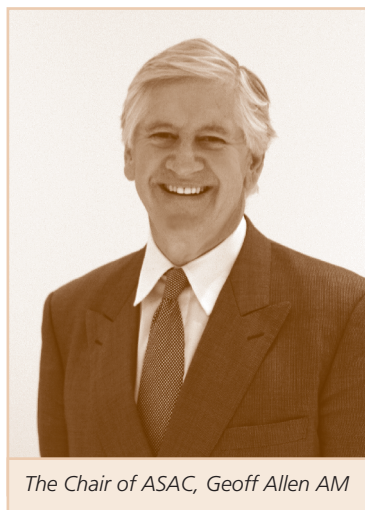
Note: After the first reference in this report, the Australian Statistics Advisory Council is referred to as the Council or ASAC, the Australian Bureau of Statistics is referred to as the ABS and the National Statistical Service is referred to as the NSS.

Foreword

The role of ASAC is to provide guidance to the Minister and the Australian Statistician on the directions of, and priorities for, official statistics. This includes the improvement, extension and coordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia.

The Council met in November 2010 and May 2011, with discussions covering a broad range of topics including the:

- National Statistical Service (NSS);
- 2010 NatStats Conference;
- Whole of Commonwealth government data integration initiative;
- ABS work program, including collaboration with other National Statistical Offices;
- 2011 Census of Population and Housing;
- OECD Income Consumption and Wealth Framework;
- ABS Information Management Transformation Program (IMTP).



The Chair of ASAC, Geoff Allen AM

A number of Council members were involved in the 2010 NatStats Conference in Sydney. At that conference, international guest speakers and members of the Australian statistical user and producer community contributed to a set of recommendations to assist in setting directions for shaping a future statistical system that will be relevant and responsive to future challenges in Australia. The Council will continue to review the progress of the ABS to align activities to these recommendations.

In February 2011, I travelled to New Zealand to attend a meeting of the New Zealand Advisory Committee on Statistics. I was impressed with the way Statistics New Zealand uses a tiered classification system to determine statistical priorities. This provides the New Zealand government with clear guidance on where to allocate funding for statistical work. ASAC is of the view that something similar should be done in Australia and welcomes the ABS's work in this area.

ASAC members were greatly interested in the progress of preparations for the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, which marks the centenary of national censuses. The Council supported the focus on closer engagement with stakeholders at all levels of government, community groups, and peak bodies to achieve an improved population count, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Council members were very enthusiastic about the ABS's intention to extend the use of e-Census facilities. Members agreed to promote this very important statistical event in their jurisdictions.

Membership

The Council has seen a number of changes to its membership this year. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Dr David Smith, Mr Ben Wilson, Mr Grant Bellchamber and Ms Lynne Williams whose ASAC memberships ended in the past year. The work Council members undertake to support the activities of the ABS, and further the development of the NSS, including membership of other statistical advisory groups, is certainly appreciated.

I would like to welcome Mr David Johnson, Mr Saul Eslake, Dr Gary Ward, Mr Chris McGowan, Mr Matt Cowgill and Mr Michael Court who have all joined the Council in the past year. Their combined experience and expertise with regard to the economy, workforce and social policy issues will add many benefits to the Council.

Ms Elaine Henry OAM and Mr Clem Doherty have agreed to be a part of the Council for a further three years and Ms Louise Sylvan for a further two years. Their experience, knowledge and expertise is extremely valuable, and their ongoing commitment to the Council is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank the Australian Statistician, Mr Brian Pink, and his team for their positive approach to working with the Council, and for their willingness to consider the advice we have provided during the year. I also thank the ABS staff members who provide secretariat services to the Council, arranging our meetings each year and administering ASAC memberships.

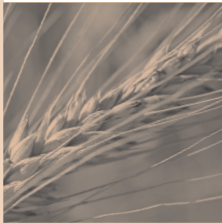
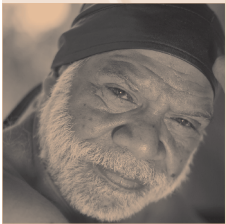
I continue to look forward to working with the Council, the Assistant Treasurer, the Australian Statistician and other key stakeholders in the National Statistical Service to continue to build stronger and richer official statistics within Australia.

This report will be available on the Council web site (www.asac.gov.au), which also contains information about the Council, including meetings, functions and membership.

Geoff Allen AM
Chairperson

Chapter 1

ABOUT ASAC



Chapter 1

About ASAC



ASAC was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (the Act).

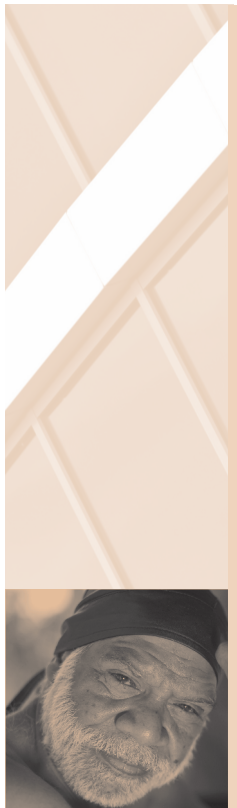
Under subsection 18(1) of the Act, the Council is to advise the Minister and the Australian Statistician on:

- (a) *the improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;*
- (b) *annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and*
- (c) *any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.*

The Act enables the Minister and/or the Australian Statistician to seek the advice of Council on these matters. The Council works closely with the Australian Statistician and the Council Chair meets regularly with the Minister to ensure advice and assistance is readily available to them.

The Act provides that the Council shall consist of a part-time Chair, the Australian Statistician (ex officio), and between ten and 22 part-time members, including one nominee from each State Premier or Territory Chief Minister. The responsible Minister appoints the Council Chair for five years and members for periods of up to three years. Members are eligible for reappointment when their membership expires. The membership of the Council as at 30 June 2011 is detailed at Appendix 1.

Subsection 24(2) of the Act provides that: *the Council shall, as soon as practicable after 30 June in each year, prepare and submit to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report relating to matters connected with the operation of this Act.*



Chapter 2

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2010–11



Chapter 2

Summary of activities for 2010–11



The Council held two meetings during 2010–11 on 16 November 2010 and 31 May 2011. (See Appendix 3 for full agenda listings).

National Statistical Service (NSS) and ASAC's role

The Council continues to focus on improving co-ordination, integration and cohesion of national statistics and making better use of administrative data sources.

The Council recognised that engaging with non-Government statistical producers was outside the scope of ABS's legislated role and resources. However, this was an area in which the Council itself could provide some leadership and assistance. The Council Chair agreed to raise it with the Minister responsible for the ABS. The Chair, in his capacity as President of the Committee of Economic Development in Australia (CEDA), also agreed to coordinate a high level workshop in conjunction with the COAG Reform Council, to examine the issues associated with improving the co-ordination, integration and cohesion of official statistics.

Statistical Data Integration

ASAC strongly endorses the establishment of a Data Integration Oversight Board, chaired by the Australian Statistician, with membership of three Commonwealth Portfolio Secretaries (Health and Ageing; Human Services; and Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and the ABS providing secretariat services. ASAC supports and encourages ABS in this leadership role in establishing a safe and effective environment for data integration involving Commonwealth government data for statistical and research purposes. ASAC also supports the ABS's role as an integrator of key enduring datasets for statistical and research purposes in areas of strong policy interest.

Council members made a number of constructive suggestions and encouraged the ABS to actively involve State and Territory governments, as holders of some key datasets, in the initiative.

Geospatial data issues

Council endorsed the involvement of the ABS in the APS 200 Location Project that was established in December 2010. The ABS is considered to be a critical part of the process to improve the means of collecting, sharing and using spatial information (including key social, environmental and economic statistical datasets that can be represented spatially such as the Census), particularly given the ABS's extensive experience and success in proving the worth of integrating statistical and spatial information. It was noted that the ABS is also the custodian of the Australian Statistical Geographical Standard, which provides a standard for classifying spatial information that can be applied in a flexible manner.

International collaboration and the Information Management Transformation Program

ASAC encouraged ABS's involvement with the international statistical community in a number of new collaborative statistical projects. These projects were aimed at increasing National Statistical Offices' (NSOs') capacity to pursue innovation, and improving their ability to meet the needs of the statistical community, through the collaborative development of statistical infrastructure. Working with other NSOs will provide the ABS with resources and expertise not currently available in Australia, and give ABS staff opportunities to share their professional skills and experience.

Progress of COAG Reforms

Ms Mary Ann O'Loughlin, Executive Councillor and Head of Secretariat of the COAG Reform Council (CRC), provided ASAC members with an update on COAG issues at the May 2011 meeting. Ms O'Loughlin reported that the Reform Council was about to begin its third year of reporting on National Agreements. However, the reporting process remains difficult with issues around comparability across State and Territory datasets, and the unavailability of data fit for reporting purposes.

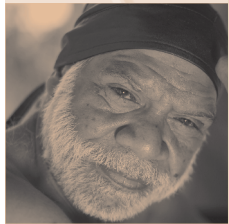
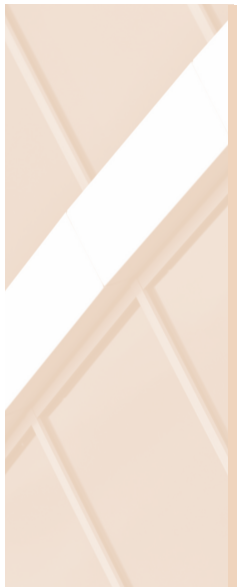
ASAC supported the ABS continuing to work with the COAG Reform Council on seeking ways in which improvements could be made.

ABS International Relations Engagement

ASAC also encouraged the ABS to continue to provide extensive support and assistance in the Asia-Pacific region and recognises the high regard in which the ABS is held within this area. The ABS has been elected to the Statistical Institute for the Asia and the Pacific Governing Council, and hosted a number of visits by Heads of Regional NSOs to the ABS. Ausaid has also funded the ABS to undertake two large technical aid programs with Indonesia and Pacific nations.

ABS Great Innovations Competition

The ABS Great Innovations program was held again in 2011 with three ASAC members providing their support as judges. Mr Geoff Allen AM, Mr Clem Doherty and Dr James Moody looked at a wide range of initiatives. They noted that the entries demonstrated a committed, innovative and highly skilled workforce at the ABS and that one of the new initiatives will be introduced for the 2016 Census. The winning team, Census Knights, provided a compelling business case on their vision for electronic collection of the 2016 Census highlighting the benefits of utilising new technologies.



Chapter 3

THE YEAR AHEAD – 2011–12



Chapter 3

The Year Ahead – 2011–12

ASAC members have agreed on the following issues as Council priorities in 2011–12:

Statistical directions and priorities

The Council plans to advise the Statistician and the Minister on statistical services and priorities on the ABS work program for 2011–12 to 2014–15. In addition, the Council will advise the ABS on the directions and priorities it should be considering in the longer term to enable it to remain relevant as Australia's National Statistical Office (NSO). The Council will continue to engage with members of international statistics committees to gain insights into priorities and risks facing other NSOs around the world.

COAG initiatives and reform

The Council will continue to monitor and support the statistical aspects of COAG initiatives. Council will keep abreast of the reform program across Commonwealth and State/Territory governments, and provide advice aimed at ensuring that needs are considered in the context of overall statistical priorities.

National statistical system

ASAC members have developed plans for a high level workshop in August 2011, to be held in conjunction with the COAG Reform Council and convened by the ASAC Chair Geoff Allen AM and Chair of the COAG Reform Council Paul McClintock AO. Delegates at the workshop will discuss opportunities for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's national statistical system. The workshop will revisit the issues examined in the 1970s Crisp Review, with the intention of improving the coordination, integration and cohesion of national statistics, and making better use of administrative data sources.

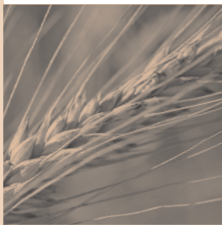
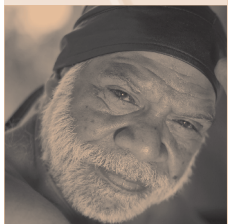
The workshop aims to produce a long-term vision of the system, with well understood objectives and tangible actions that promote shared values, co-ordination and co-operation across government. The workshop will include a number of ASAC members, senior government officials and a small group of invited experts and stakeholders, including academic and non-government participants, to help clarify the need for broader statistical policies.

Census of Population and Housing

The Council will continue to assist the ABS with the 2011 Census of Population and Housing preparations by ensuring their constituents remain informed on Census matters. This year marks 100 years of national census-taking in Australia, with the ABS Census of Population and Housing remaining the most comprehensive way of providing a snapshot of Australia, helping Australians understand how our nation is changing.

The Council will provide feedback and advice on developments for the 2016 Census, including when public consultation on topics for inclusion in the next Census commences in 2012.

Appendices



Appendix 1

Membership of ASAC

Member	Date first appointed
Mr Geoff Allen AM Director and Founder, The Allen Consulting Group	1 March 2007
Mr Brian Pink Australian Statistician (ex officio)	5 March 2007
Ms Glenys Beauchamp Secretary, Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	27 April 2006
Ms Pam Davoren Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Division, ACT Chief Minister's Department	18 November 2005
Mr Clem Doherty Chairman, Like Minded Individuals Pty Ltd	1 May 1997
Ms Elaine Henry OAM Chair, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth	15 May 2005
Professor Graeme Hugo University Professorial Research Fellow, Professor of Geography, and Director of the National Centre for Social Application of Geographic Information Systems, The University of Adelaide	15 May 2005
Dr James Moody Executive Director, Development, CSIRO	15 May 2005
Mr Tony Stubbin Deputy Under-Treasurer, Northern Territory Treasury	9 April 2009
Ms Louise Sylvan Commissioner, Productivity Commission	15 May 2005
Mr Peter Verwer Chief Executive Officer, Property Council of Australia	24 July 2008
Mr Peter Horn Director, Fiscal Strategy, New South Wales Treasury	01 May 2003
Mr Michael Taylor Chair, Gardiner Foundation	22 February 2010
Mr Peter Yu Chair, Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd	22 February 2010

Member	Date first appointed
Ms Serena Wilson Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	22 February 2010
Dr David Gruen Executive Director, Macroeconomic Group, Australian Treasury	18 June 2010
Dr David Johnson Director Macroeconomics, Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance	07 November 2010
Mr Saul Eslake Program Director, Productivity Growth, The Grattan Institute, Victoria	08 November 2010
Dr Gary Ward Assistant Under-Treasurer and Queensland Government Statistician	27 May 2011
Mr Chris McGowan Director, National Reform Implementation, South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet	22 May 2011
Mr Matt Cowgill Project Officer, Australian Council of Trade Unions	23 May 2011
Mr Michael Court Executive Director, Western Australian Department of Treasury and Finance	20 May 2011

Changes in Membership between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2011

07 November 2010	Appointment of Dr David Johnson
08 November 2010	Appointment of Mr Saul Eslake
22 May 2011	Appointment of Mr Chris McGowan
23 May 2011	Appointment of Mr Matt Cowgill
27 May 2011	Appointment of Dr Gary Ward
08 November 2010	Reappointment of Clem Doherty
08 November 2010	Reappointment of Louise Sylvan
21 January 2011	Reappointment of Elaine Henry
08 November 2010	Resignation of Mr Ben Wilson
10 November 2010	Resignation of Dr Lynne Williams
17 November 2010	Resignation of Mr Grant Bellchamber
14 February 2011	Resignation of Mr David Smith

Appendix 2

Operation of ASAC

The Australian Statistics Advisory Council was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The Chairperson of the Council receives an annual fee, set by the Remuneration Tribunal, and members are reimbursed their travel costs, where applicable. Apart from the Chairperson, no members receive remuneration for serving on the Council.

Secretariat services for ASAC are provided by the ABS. The office of ASAC Secretary is held by the Assistant Statistician, Office of the Statistician. Secretariat support provided by the ABS includes organising and recording meetings, administering membership and the members' web site, and the preparation of the Council's Annual Report.

All costs outlined above are met from within the ABS Budget.

Appendix 3

Agenda of ASAC Meetings



31 May 2011 Meeting – Agenda

1. Summary record of previous meeting
2. Chairperson's report
3. Statistician's report
4. Bringing Forward Member Issues
5. Review of ABS Household Survey Program
6. Geospatial data issues – development of the "My Region" website
7. ABS Resource Allocations in Outyears
8. Update on 2011 Census of Population and Housing
9. OECD Income Consumption and Wealth Framework
10. ABS Information Management Transformation Program (IMTP)/International Collaboration
11. ABS Use of Unit Record Personal Income Tax Data
12. Update of Whole of Commonwealth Government Data Integration Initiative
13. ABS Executive Level Staff Innovation Competition
14. Members closed session

16 November 2010 Meeting – Agenda

1. Summary record of previous meeting
2. Chairperson's report
3. Statistician's report
4. Bringing Forward Members Issues
5. ABS Enterprise Risks
6. ABS IMTP Business Case/International Collaboration Progress Report
7. ABS Organisational Capability (closed session)
8. ABS Strategic Directions
9. A Broad Overview of National Statistics
10. Furthering the objectives of the National Statistical Service (NSS)
11. 2011 Meeting Dates

Appendix 4

Freedom of Information Statement

Below is a statement, as required by section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, about the structure of ASAC and how members of the public can obtain access to information held by it.

Establishment, organisation and functions

For information regarding the establishment, organisation and function of ASAC see Chapter 1 – About ASAC.

Powers

As an advisory body, ASAC has no decision-making or other powers directly affecting members of the public. It does not administer any enactments or schemes.

Arrangements for outside participation

ASAC members are appointed by the Minister responsible for the ABS so that a broad range of views and interests are reflected in the advice that it offers to the Minister and the Australian Statistician. For membership details see Appendix 1.

Persons or bodies outside the Australian Government administration may participate in the Council's policy formulation by making representations to the Minister or the Chairperson on matters of concern to them.

Categories of documents

The ASAC Annual Report, which is tabled in Parliament, is available from all ABS offices, and on the ASAC and ABS websites. The ABS maintains files, on behalf of ASAC, which contain documents relating to: the administration of the Council; papers discussed at Council meetings; summary records of proceedings of meetings; and correspondence relating to the activities of the Council.

Freedom of information procedures and initial contact points

All inquiries concerning access to documents, including inquiries under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, may be directed on weekdays, between 8.30am and 4.30pm, to -

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c/- Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10
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Telephone: 02 6252 5533