

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ACT 1975: sub-section 6 (3)
PROPOSAL NO. 14 OF 2012
BY
AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

AUSTRALIAN HEALTH SURVEY

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has extended the Australian Health Survey interviewing beyond February 2013 to account for a delayed start of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander component. This proposal updates the original proposal for the Australian Health Survey (Proposal No. 3 of 2011).

The primary purpose of the survey will be to assist the understanding of chronic disease and disease risk factors. The survey will inform the formulating, targeting and monitoring of health policies and programs, particularly in the areas of disease and illness prevention, health promotion, and the provision of services.

The survey has been conducted progressively from March 2011. It has expanded on previously conducted surveys including the National Health Survey in 2007-08, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey in 2004-05 and the National Nutrition Survey in 1995.

The survey is being conducted by personal interview and telephone interview from a sample of approximately 34,000 households nationally, including households in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Information is being collected on a range of indicators including:

- general health and wellbeing;
- long-term conditions and disability;
- consultations with doctors and other health professionals; and
- use of medications.

The survey also collects information on health related aspects of lifestyle such as:

- smoking;
- alcohol consumption;
- physical activity; and
- diet.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics seeks the consent of selected persons to allow the taking of physical measurements (height, weight, girth and blood pressure) using stadiometers, scales, tape measures and electronic blood pressure monitors. A subsample of respondents are also being asked to wear a pedometer for eight days following their interview to provide a measure of the amount of walking undertaken.

Selected respondents to the survey have been invited to attend an accredited pathology collection centre to provide a small sample of blood and urine, and to give consent for the results of pathology testing to be provided to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. While the survey is conducted under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* the physical measurement, pedometry and pathology components of the survey will be voluntary. Regardless of this, all information obtained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is covered by the secrecy provisions of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

The survey has been developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in the health field including government, professional and research agencies; community groups; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. In particular, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has liaised closely with the Department of Health and Ageing and the National Heart Foundation, which have provided funding for additional data collection in the survey.

In addition, the Department of Health and Ageing's Departmental Ethics Committee has considered and approved the pathology component of the survey. Ethics approval was also sought and granted from a number of jurisdictional Aboriginal Health Ethics Committees for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathology component.

The survey has been extensively field tested to ensure that the required data are readily available and that provider load has been minimised. To date; there has been a high level of respondent cooperation and no significant adverse respondent reaction is expected. The Privacy Commissioner has also been informed of the survey.

Results from the survey will be released progressively, beginning in late 2012.

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