

CENSUS AND STATISTICS ACT 1905 - section 13

PROPOSAL NO. 9 OF 2017

**BY
AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS**

RELEASE OF LISTS OF AGRICULTURAL FARM BUSINESSES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS AND SCIENCES

In accordance with the provisions of Clause 6 of the *Statistics Determination 1983* made under Section 13 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, the ABS intends to disclose to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) a list of approximately 95,000 de-identified farm businesses taken from the Australian Business Register (ABR) based Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Business Register, and subsequently, lists of names, addresses and telephone numbers, of up to 30,000 farm businesses selected by ABARES from the 95,000 farm businesses.

The lists will be used by ABARES in respect to its 2017 farm surveys program. The list of de-identified farms from the ABR-based ABS Business Register will be used to design and select samples for ABARES surveys relating to the agricultural industry; including:

- the agricultural and grazing industries
- the dairy industry
- vegetable growers
- resource management issues
- irrigation including water resource management and water markets
- regional surveys including a focus on social issues
- assessment of government programs
- pest management
- natural resource management incentives
- labour shortage in the agriculture industry
- beef cattle herd composition
- cost of production
- horticulture

The information to be released in respect of the 95,000 farm businesses will be:

- a measure of size, based on the Estimated Value of Agricultural Operations (EVAO) where available, or a Business Activity Statement derived size identifier
- one or more geographic codes including Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) down to Statistical Area Level 1, and latitude and longitude
- an industry classification code using the Australian and New Zealand Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)
- a secondary activity indicator (SAI), where available

The ABS will also provide a unique identifying number for each farm business for the purposes of sampling methodology. The identities of the businesses linked to these numbers are only known to the ABS.

For each farm business subsequently selected by ABARES, the ABS will provide name, address, and telephone number contact information. Not all farm businesses selected will actually be surveyed. This is based upon ABARES' sampling methodology which includes potential replacements for each selection (as participation is voluntary).

This service has previously been provided to ABARES since 2010 with two amendments in 2016 (the addition of latitude and longitude data as well as farm business telephone contact numbers). Before this the service was made available to the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) each year from 1988 to 2009, and to the former Bureau of Agricultural Economics for a similar purpose in 1985, 1986 and 1987. Access to ABS lists has improved the accuracy of ABARES' surveys, eliminated the need for ABARES to develop an independent register, and improved the comparability of the statistics derived from these surveys with those produced by the ABS.

ABARES has provided the ABS with a written undertaking that they will:

- a. use the lists specified in the Schedule to the undertaking only for the purpose of conducting the surveys and activities listed in the Schedule, which do not involve the enforcing of any obligation or liability applicable under any enactment
- b. not release the lists or any part of the lists, either directly or indirectly, to another person outside of ABARES other than to a contractor who may require access to the lists for the purposes of providing services to ABARES
- c. appoint a contact officer who will manage the processes for individuals within ABARES to request access to the lists; and will circulate information to individuals within ABARES who are granted approval by the ABS to access the lists
- d. maintain a register of all officers of ABARES who have access to the lists and provide a copy of that register to the ABS on request and on return of the lists to the ABS
- e. if necessary for a contractor to have access to the lists for the purposes of providing services to ABARES, ABARES will ensure that the contractor and every person employed by the contractor who has access to the lists provide the ABS with a relevant undertaking prior to accessing the lists
- f. advise respondents in writing that the survey:
 - i. is conducted by ABARES from a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers obtained from the ABS in accordance with legislative guidelines
 - ii. is not covered by the ABS guarantee of confidentiality
 - iii. is not compulsory
- g. clear any relevant explanatory material for the survey with the ABS prior to despatch

- h. provide a copy of the survey results and any information relevant to the maintenance of ABS registers if so requested by the ABS
- i. for the purpose of conducting a compliance audit concerning observance of the terms and conditions under which the lists are disclosed, allow ABS officers access to necessary documents and information
- j. destroy or return all copies of the lists to the ABS as soon as the surveys and activities have been completed

Tom Joseph
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