

Annual Report 2008-09

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS





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Guides to ABS services, and other selected documents, including a comprehensive range of ABS statistics, are available on the ABS website: http://www.abs.gov.au

The 2008–09 ABS Annual Report can be found at: http://www.abs.gov.au

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Senator The Hon Nick Sherry Assistant Treasurer

In accordance with the provisions of subsection 24(1) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, I hereby submit to you, for presentation to the Parliament, this report on the operations of the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year ended 30 June 2009.

This report complies with subsection 63(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, which requires that I, as Agency Head, must give a report to the Agency Minister, for presentation to the Parliament.

The report is dated on the day I approved the finalised text for printing.

Brian Pink

7 August 2009

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Section 1

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Section 2

INTRODUCTION



chapter 1



AUSTRALIAN STATISTICIAN'S REVIEW OF 2008–09



Introduction

The environment in which the ABS has been operating over the last 12 months has continued to be a challenging one. That being the case, the efforts of ABS staff to continue to uphold the ABS mission, including some significant achievements across the entire scope of the ABS work program is to be commended. It is a time of significant change for the ABS, and the challenges we face over the next 12 to 18 months, and the ways in which we deal with them, will set the directions for the ABS and its staff over the next decade.

The onset of the global financial crisis has impacted on the ABS in a number of ways, including increased demand for a range of economic indicators as businesses react to the changing economic climate and governments have sought to respond to the effects of the crisis on Australian society. It was highly encouraging to see the high degree of support for the ABS through this period, and in particular the recognition of the value of ABS outputs that was demonstrated in the outcomes of the Federal Budget, which I will return to later in my report.

The ABS has continued to reassess how to ensure that it has the most effective and efficient structure in place in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead and to ensure our continued relevance within the Australian community. I am confident that the current and planned activities will enable us to balance the achievement of our shorter term goals whilst laying the foundations for the organisation to play a strong, active and leading role within the national statistical service into the future.

ABS activities in 2008–09

The ABS has made further progress with respect to its activities in re-aligning the roles and responsibilities of the executive team at all levels, and in light of the tight financial position that the organisation continues to face, has continued to advance the implementation of the updated planning and budgeting cycle and related activities in order to ensure the ongoing sustainability of a statistical program that is relevant and responsive to emerging user needs. The ABS had a number of significant achievements in 2008–09, both in terms of statistical developments and in its relationships with Government and the wider user community.

I will now outline some of the more notable achievements of 2008-09.

Base funding review and funding outcomes from the 2009 Federal Budget

In response to the reductions made to the 2008–09 ABS work program, the Federal Government's Expenditure Review Committee commissioned an Agency Functions and Finances review for the ABS that was conducted by the Department of Finance and Deregulation with the assistance of the ABS and the Commonwealth Treasury. The review covered an examination of the end-to-end processes undertaken by the ABS to deliver its legislated functions, the broad cost of delivering the functions, and identification of opportunities to reduce costs and/or rationalise some processes.

The outcomes of the review reinforced the view that the ABS conducts its operations with a high degree of efficiency in fulfilling its mission, and acknowledged the necessity of the work program reductions applied in 2008–09 due to a significant budgetary shortfall. As a consequence, the ABS secured an additional \$15m per annum in Government appropriation in the 2009–10 Budget. This facilitated the reinstatement of the majority of work program reductions, most notably the reinstatement of the full sample for the Labour Force Survey and the monthly Retail Survey. These decisions were influenced by an extensive user consultation process, which I will address in more detail further in this report.

As well as the additional \$15m mentioned above, the ABS also secured further funding in the 2009–10 Budget: (1) to cover the creation of a new index to measure the out-of-pocket living costs experienced by households whose principal source of income is derived from a pension or other government benefit; (2) to assist in the measurement of progress in reforming human service delivery, using performance indicators in COAG National Agreements, specifically in the areas of health, disability, education and housing; and (3) to cover Census field staff pays to ensure compliance with the new National Employment Standards under the revised workplace relations system. This equates to an extra \$32.8m

over four years to fund the new work and \$79.5m for Census field staff pays for the 2011 Census. At the COAG meeting in July 2009, the ABS was provided with \$34.1m funding towards improvement of information concerning Indigenous people. The additional appropriation indicates a vote of confidence by the Federal Government in the ABS and recognises the important work carried out by the ABS and its people.

User consultations and influence on ABS work program in 2009–10 and beyond

In the lead up to the Federal Budget in May, ABS senior executives undertook an extensive round of user consultations to discuss possible savings initiatives for 2009–10 and beyond, in the event that additional appropriation was not received, or proved insufficient to cover the deficit position in the out-years. The ABS' role is to provide a set of statistics and related services of value to governments, business and to the Australian community that is sustainable within its agreed funding. For this reason, the user consultations were undertaken across a range of federal, state and territory government agencies, business groups, and community based organisations.

To aid the consultation process, a list of possible savings initiatives was drawn up for discussion. The starting point for consideration was that, in the absence of any additional funding, the ABS would continue the 2008–09 savings into 2009–10 and beyond. A list of options spanning the out-years' statistical, analytical and service delivery elements of the Bureau's work program were provided to stakeholders as examples of potential savings.

During the user consultation process, I was encouraged by the goodwill towards the ABS. In a broad sense, the review process for the forward work program, and the challenges we went through resulted in a broad range of the user community taking a strong interest in our situation, including how we might address emerging issues in the future. One initiative was to include an agenda item on strategic statistical issues on a Heads of Treasuries meeting on an annual basis. The first of these will be included at the August 2009 meeting.

I will continue to monitor the ABS work program and consult with users to ensure the delivery of services that are timely, relevant, responsive and respected for their integrity and quality.

Progress on the National Statistical Service

The ABS has been progressing a range of activities to further develop the National Statistical Service (NSS). These include playing a key role in a range of collaborative projects with both Commonwealth and state government agencies; making statistical resources easily accessible on the NSS website; providing statistical training; hosting seminars, workshops and conferences to share information on statistical activities across government; and promoting government statistical initiatives through the NSS newsletter.

Over 470 delegates from government, business, community and research sectors attended the first ever NatStats Conference in Melbourne on 19–21 November 2008. With the participation of international and national speakers, the event painted a broad picture illustrating the role statistics can play in policy and decision-making now, and in the future. Delegates were encouraged to provide input on the main conference themes: Informing the

Nation; Measuring Progress of Societies; and Environmental Information for Informed Decisions.

The response to the conference was overwhelmingly positive from speakers and participants alike. NatStats08 placed the spotlight on statistics as a valuable resource for the country, injecting some timely debate into the current focus on evidencebased policy and decision-making.

Following on from the success of the NatStats Conference, the ABS is pleased to be hosting a Community Indicators Summit in Brisbane on 22–23 July 2009. The Summit will provide a unique opportunity for those interested in community-based indicators to share learnings, exchange ideas and strategies and report on advancements in the field of community indicators in Australia and internationally.



Statistical developments

In August 2008, the ABS released a new statistical profile of the Murray–Darling Basin. The Basin is an area of national significance for social, cultural, economic and environmental reasons. The social impacts of changes in agriculture and environmental events, such as drought, are important for people living, and business operating, in the Basin. The project was developed in consultation with the Murray–Darling Basin Commission and following public demand identified by the ABS for basin statistics, particularly water information. This publication provides statistics to inform decision-making, research and discussion about the Basin within governments and in the wider community.

In May 2009, the ABS released a publication presenting experimental life tables for male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians for the reference period 2005–2007. This release introduced a new method of producing life tables with a new method for accounting for under-identification of Indigenous deaths.

In the next few months, the ABS is also planning to release the final product in the suite of 2006 Population Census outputs, called TableBuilder. TableBuilder is an online tool which allows people to create their own tables of Census data by accessing all variables in the Output Record File. It is a subscription service aimed at users who are familiar with the Census data. TableBuilder includes a new innovative confidentiality method that dynamically applies essential measures to the tabular output just prior to it being returned to the data user. Previous methods used to confidentialise Census data did not provide sufficient protection to support this level of user customisation of data outputs. The method used within TableBuilder is considered best practice by our colleagues in peer agencies around the world. TableBuilder has the potential to be extended to much broader uses such as for other ABS household surveys, and potentially more widely both nationally and internationally.

International work

The ABS is an active member of the international statistical community, contributing its efforts and resources across a wide range of activities and statistical fields. Its activities are focused on building the capacity of developing countries' statistical systems, especially in the Asia–Pacific Region, as well as influencing and shaping the development of international statistical standards and approaches. In the context of the many international demands on ABS expertise, the ABS has now developed a strategy to guide the ABS leadership role in international statistics.

In 2008–09, under the AusAID Government Partnerships Fund 2009, the ABS hosted two visits from BPS–Statistics Indonesia focusing on information and communications technology (ICT) development and also on applications for their upcoming 2010 Census. The ABS also attended by invitation the Technical Workshop on the Establishment of a Crisis Monitoring System, conducted by the United Nations Development Programme for Indonesia in March 2009.

Assistance by the Census Program continues in Vietnam and Mongolia for their upcoming Censuses in 2009 and 2010 respectively, and we have recently joined the newly formed Iraqi Census Advisory Technical Board.

The ABS continues to be active in the Pacific region via a range of other programs, funded by AusAID, providing assistance to Pacific country national statistics offices in corporate governance matters such as strategic planning and project management. In addition to the AusAID program, the ABS is continuing to identify opportunities to strengthen its ties with Statistics New Zealand, which is particularly useful at the current time with both agencies facing a similar range of challenges.

In early June 2009, senior ABS staff met with Statistics Canada. The discussions focused on the role of the national statistical office in society; the global statistical system; implications for future population censuses; and infrastructure renewal. Despite the different environments that the two organisations operate in, the meeting was very useful in identifying a number of initiatives being pursued by Statistics Canada which may have application in the ABS context, and in identifying areas for collaboration looking ahead over the next few years.

Going forward

ABS strategic directions

The ABS work program is established in response to current and emerging statistical priorities of users, and in the context of the ABS mission and overall strategic directions. The statistical drivers and demands of the government and community are broad ranging and are increasing both in volume and complexity. As Australia's national statistical agency, the ABS has a responsibility to respond to these demands, within the limitations of the resources allocated to it. The ABS statement of strategic directions therefore presents the broad objectives that the ABS has chosen to pursue, which shape its priorities and work program for the period 2009–10 to 2012–13. Some of the key priorities for the future are discussed below.

Supporting COAG measurement issues

As previously mentioned in this report, the Government has provided \$14.2m over four years to the ABS to help implement the performance reporting framework underpinning the measurement of progress against key COAG initiatives. The ABS will develop data for a range of performance indicators specified in the National Agreements on healthcare, education, affordable housing, disability, skills and workforce development and Indigenous reform, as well as playing a leading role in the provision of advice and direction on quality improvement in data sources.

The COAG meeting in July 2009 provided the ABS with an additional \$34.1m towards improvement of information concerning Indigenous people. The ABS will undertake work to improve the enumeration of the Indigenous population in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing and reverse the trend of under-enumeration, particularly in problematic areas, including rural and remote areas and regional centres. To complement this work, the Census Post Enumeration Survey will be expanded to include very remote areas and discrete Indigenous communities, strengthening Indigenous population estimates. Additional work will also be undertaken linking the 2011 Census data with national mortality data to better identify the Indigenous persons in both collections. Information from this work will then be used to improve the accuracy of life expectancy estimates for Indigenous people. Work will also be undertaken in parallel to improve the linkage techniques applied to Indigenous-related data. Another initiative will assist the ABS to work with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to assess the extent of Indigenous identification in key data sets (births, deaths, education) and make recommendations about how these collections might be improved.

These developments reinforce the ABS pursuit of its core strategic directions for the next four years, primarily in actively building relationships and targeting specific areas to progress the NSS, determining the next generation of statistical and information management infrastructure requirements, and securing the necessary funding to enable this to occur.

Environmental statistics programs

Australia continues to face critical challenges in water and energy security, reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. The Government has placed a high priority on managing these challenges for Australia. However, comparatively little is known about the connections between the state, condition and price of these issues and socio-economic outcomes. Without this knowledge, it is not possible to measure change and develop, implement and evaluate policies or programs, nor direct investment where it is most needed. The ABS is working closely with the community and governments to further build the fourth information pillar, that is, environment statistics, to complement the more established information bases around the population, society and the economy. One essential aspect of this development work is focused on the integration of environmental statistics with Australia's economic and social statistics.

The ABS and the international statistical community are currently mainstreaming integrated environmental-economic accounting as part of national statistical systems. Environmentaleconomic accounts are a satellite system of the System of National Accounts, and enable the relationship between the environment and the economy to be analysed and understood. Such an environmental statistics program would deliver regular integrated environmental-economic accounts to provide the insight into who is using Australia's natural resources, the distribution of environmental resources across different parts of the economy, and the economic implications of environmental actions.

Renewal of Core Business System Infrastructure

Even with the positive outcome in the 2009–10 Budget, the operating position of the organisation in future years remains tight. Several whole-of-government initiatives currently underway, including Operation Sunlight and the implementation of recommendations from the Gershon review into government use of ICT, will have a potentially significant impact on the way the ABS approaches capital investment decisions on ICT infrastructure and systems in the future. Compounding this is the fact that the organisation currently has many elements of its Core Business System Infrastructure ageing and in need of replacement in order to allow the ABS to continue to keep pace with the demands of both data providers and users.

The ABS financial situation is not uncommon among many national statistical offices around the globe, and as such, I have recently been having discussions with colleagues in these peer agencies on the development of a business case for much stronger collaboration on the next generation of statistical infrastructure between our agencies.

Demands for data integration

As the search for further efficiency in data collection continues in concert with increasing research and policy-maker demand for linkages between social, economic and environmental datasets, the need for strong and consistent governance, methods, policies and protocols around data integration becomes ever greater.

The ABS is engaging in discussions with a variety of user communities, including the provision of expert advice on data linking and associated confidentiality issues. The potential gains of bringing together, in a controlled and secure manner, data from portfolios such as health, education, migration and family support are immense. However, the potential risks of poorly managed data linkage activities on the Census and other ABS collection activities, and to policy makers and researchers, are significant. It is important to engage the broader community in discussions around data linkage activities as, without their acceptance, the advantages of the linked datasets will be lost.

Conclusion

Over the past year, the efforts of ABS staff in meeting the challenges facing the ABS have been critical to the ongoing success of the organisation in pursuing its mission, and I thank them for their ongoing commitment. I would also like to specifically acknowledge the significant contribution of ABS interviewers who are out in the community, providing the link between households and the statistical outputs of the organisation. I would like to express my gratitude for their efforts in the last year, particularly for their resolve in responding to emerging issues such as floods and bushfires which understandably hamper the data collection efforts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to the many thousands of householders and businesses that contribute to the official statistics released by the ABS each year. Their active participation in a wide range of ABS social, economic and environmental collections is vital in ensuring the accuracy and relevance of the official statistics of the nation.

The support of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) and its Chairperson, Mr Geoff Allen, have also been critical in this last year as the organisation has responded to the pressures facing the ABS work program. I would like to thank all members of ASAC for their assistance in advocating the importance of the ABS among the wider community, and I look forward to actively advancing a work program for the ABS which has benefited from, and been shaped by, their sound advice.

Finally, I would like to thank all Government Ministers for their support in the last 12 months, and in particular the Treasurer, and the previous Assistant Treasurer, for their active support in the budget process. I look forward to building a strong working relationship with the new Assistant Treasurer, Senator the Hon Nick Sherry in the coming year as the ABS continues to fulfil its role as an independent producer of statistics for the government and for the Australian community, and the leader of the nation's statistical service.

chapter 2 OVERVIEW OF THE ABS



Introduction

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency. It was established as the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, following enactment of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The agency became the 'Australian Bureau of Statistics' in 1975 with the passing of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*. This Act also established the role of the Australian Statistician and defined the functions of the ABS.

The role of the ABS

The ABS provides statistics on a wide range of economic, social and environmental matters, covering government, business and the community. It also has an important coordination function with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both in Australia and overseas.

The mission of the ABS

We assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS Corporate Plan can be found on the ABS website at http://www.abs.gov.au. The plan outlines the strategies the ABS is using to achieve its mission, and sets out the direction for the ABS to meet future challenges.

Authority and legislation

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides the Statistician with the authority to conduct statistical collections and, when necessary, to direct a person or an organisation to provide statistical information. The Act imposes obligations on the ABS to publish and disseminate compilations and analyses of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* sets out the functions and responsibilities of the Statistician and the ABS

- (a) to constitute the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the governments of the states, provide statistical services for those governments;
- (b) to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information;
- (c) to ensure coordination of the operations of official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and related information, with particular regard to:
 - the avoidance of duplication in the collection by official bodies of information for statistical purposes;
 - the attainment of compatibility between, and the integration of, statistics compiled by official bodies; and
 - (iii) the maximum possible utilisation, for statistical purposes, of information, and means of collection of information, available to official bodies;
- (d) to formulate, and ensure compliance with, standards for the carrying out by official bodies of operations for statistical purposes;
- (e) to provide advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics; and
- (f) to provide liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organisations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters.

Section 6 of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975 also established the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) to provide valuable input to the directions and priorities of the ABS work program.

Under the *Statistics (Arrangements with States) Act 1956*, Australian and state government statistical services have been integrated since 1958 (from 1924 for Tasmania). Although not covered by legislation, similar arrangements apply in both territories.

There were no amendments made to the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* or the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* during 2008–09.

Organisational structure

The ABS is led by the Australian Statistician—a statutory office established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The ABS has three statistical groups, each reporting to a Deputy Australian Statistician. These groups are:

- Macroeconomics and Integration
- > Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Statistics, and
- Social Statistics

The ABS also has four divisions reporting directly to the Statistician:

- Integrated Collection and Dissemination Services
- Methodology and Data Management
- Technology Services, and
- Corporate Services

The ABS has a central office in Canberra and regional offices located in the eight state and territory capitals. All regional offices, apart from the ACT Office, have some responsibilities for national statistical activities.

Regional offices are also primarily responsible for the delivery of statistical services to their state or territory. These offices have ongoing engagement with state and territory governments on statistical services and priorities, generally through state and territory committees set up for that purpose. In Western Australia and Tasmania, the Regional Director administering the ABS regional office is also the State Government Statistican.

All Regional Directors have a direct reporting line to a Deputy Australian Statistician (see organisational chart for more detail).

Australian Statistics Advisory Council

ASAC is the ABS' key advisory body and was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975.* It provides valuable input to the directions and priorities of the ABS work program and reports annually to Parliament. ASAC meets twice yearly.

As set out in the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the role of the Council is to advise the Minister and the Statistician in relation to:

- (a) the improvement, extension and coordination 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 Chairperson of ASAC is Mr Geoff Allen, Director, The Allen Consulting Group. ASAC members include nominees from each of the state premiers and the territory chief

ministers. The other members are appointed by the minister responsible for the ABS, and are chosen to represent a broad cross-section of perspectives, including business, government, academic and community interests.



The mission of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council is:

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.

Further information on ASAC can be found on their website at http://www.asac.gov.au or by contacting the ASAC Secretariat by mail to: ABS, Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616 or by phone on 02 6252 5533. The Council's annual report can also be found on its website.

State Statistical Forum

Every year the ABS hosts the State Statistical Forum (SSF), with the state and territory government members of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council coming together to discuss their statistical priorities, with an emphasis on regional data issues.

During 2008–09, the SSF has focused on improving statistics about Indigenous Australians, children and youth statistics, and demography and economic development at the local level. In addition to these, the SSF has considered the issues of data linkage, and the inclusion of geocoding of Australian Business Numbers on state administrative datasets.

Organisational Chart (as at 30 June 2009)





SECTION 2 INTRODUCTION CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW OF THE ABS



KEY

DAS: Deputy Australian Statistician FAS: First Assistant Statistician AS: Assistant Statistician **RD:** Regional Director **CFO:** Chief Financial Officer

Responsible Minister



The ABS is an agency under the Treasury portfolio.

From November 2007 until June 2009, the Minister responsible for the Australian Bureau of Statistics was the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs. In June 2009, Senator the Hon Nick Sherry was sworn in as the Assistant Treasurer, and took over responsibility for the ABS.

Outcome and outputs structure

ABS Outcomes

In the Portfolio Budget Statement 2008–09, the ABS has one outcome:

Informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community based on the provision of a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

ABS Outputs

Within the context of the Portfolio Budget Statements, Output Group 1.1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics), the ABS produces and disseminates statistics in two key areas to meet the above outcome, namely:

- Output 1.1.1—Economic Statistics
- Output 1.1.2—Population and Social Statistics.

Economic statistics are produced predominantly from the ABS business survey program. They include an extensive range of statistical outputs relating to the structure and performance of the Australian economy.

Population and social statistics are produced mainly through the ABS household survey program. They include statistical information relating to the Australian population, including census and demographic statistics, as well as information relating to the social and economic wellbeing of the population.

Both outputs provide an objective source of information that is used by governments and the community to inform their decisions. Both areas of statistics involve extensive data collection through censuses, surveys and from administrative data sources.

The ABS statistical programs are supported by service areas that deliver assistance and advice on statistical methods, data and metadata management, information technology, client management, dissemination, human resources and other corporate services.

Outcomes and Output Groups



Financial position

As noted above, the ABS has two outputs: Economic Statistics and Population and Social Statistics. Table 2.1 provides, for 2008–09, a financial summary of ABS outputs and prices of outputs. The full financial statements are provided in Section 7.

Table 2.1: Summary of financial resources

	2008–09	2007–08
	\$m	\$m
Price of Departmental Outputs		
Output group 1.1.1–Economic statistics	177.7	174.8
Output group 1.1.2–Population and Social Statistics	148.3	155.2
Total Output/Outcome	326.0	330.0
Revenue from Government appropriations	282.6	302.3
Revenue from other sources	29.2	25.8
Total for Outcome 1	311.8	328.1

The ABS conducts a discretionary grant program, which is a scholarship program, in conjunction with four Australian universities. A list of grant recipients can be found on the ABS website, www.abs.gov.au.

Table 2.2: Summary of financial performance

	2008–09	2007–08	Change
	\$m	\$m	\$m
Appropriation revenue	282.6	302.3	(19.7)
Other revenue	29.6	26.2	3.4
Total income	312.2	328.5	(16.3)
Employee expenses	219.5	220.5	(1.0)
Supplier expenses	67.0	73.1	(6.1)
Other expenses	39.5	36.4	3.1
Total expenses	326.0	330.0	(4.0)
(Deficit)/Surplus	(13.8)	(1.5)	(12.3)

The \$13.8m deficit is due to accounting adjustments. These adjustments include asset write-offs and the effect of the movement in long term interest rates on the employee leave provisions.

Compared to 2007–08, appropriation revenue decreased in 2008–09, largely due to the cyclical nature of Population Census funding.

Employee expenses, as a percentage of total revenue, increased to 70% (67% in 2007–2008). This is a result of a change in accounting estimate for internally generated software. The reduction in supplier expenses includes savings in property rental and related costs.

Table 2.3: Summary of financial position

	2008–09	2007–08	Change
	\$m	\$m	\$m
Financial assets (a)	33.9	28.8	5.1
Non-financial assets (b)	136.9	153.3	(16.4)
Liabilities (c)	121.1	115.3	5.8
Net assets (a+b-c)	49.7	66.8	(17.1)

The significant changes contributing to the ABS' reduced net asset position include:

- appropriation received for expenses recognised, but not paid for in 2008–09, increased the financial assets
- asset write-offs and the expensing of previously capitalised costs (see the financial statements) decreased non-financial assets, and
- the effect of the long term bond rate on leave provisions and an increase in unearned revenue increased liabilities.

Section 3

SPECIAL ARTICLES



chapter 3

THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL STATISTICAL AGENCY IN A GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

A major change to the environment in which the ABS is operating has been the onset of the global financial crisis (GFC).

Internationally, there is general agreement on the causes of the GFC. In analysing the effects and proposing solutions, official statistics have been widely quoted and used. This article examines the role of a national statistical agency during the current GFC and some of the statistical issues that arise, and outlines the actions being taken by the ABS to deal with these.

Challenge to 'business as usual'

Various outputs of the national statistical system are used to monitor economic performance and inform policy action. These outputs should be appropriate for the purposes of detecting emerging economic problems, informing policy makers on the segments of the economy that are weak or being impacted during the evolution of the crisis, and informing policy makers on the responses to policy initiatives as they track remedial action. In principle, the statistical infrastructure needed to support these purposes is not different from that required during a period of stable economic conditions. However, increased scrutiny may place additional pressures on a range of issues surrounding data quality. In addition, economic crises provide challenges additional to those faced in operating an effective statistical program during times of steady economic growth.

Tracking the evolution of the crisis

The first challenge relates to the effectiveness of the statistical outputs in detecting the emergence of the crisis. There has been relatively little discussion of whether some improvement or reconfiguration of economic and financial statistics may have enabled the GFC to be foreseen. In contrast to other financial crises (for example the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s), where deficiencies in official statistics were seen as a major contributing factor, policy makers have not indicated that there were significant shortcomings in official statistics that hampered their ability to foresee the GFC. In fact, the crisis developed in countries with well-developed statistical systems that include the compilation of detailed financial statistics.

Most countries, including Australia, have a range of economic statistics to inform on economic and financial developments. The macro-economic accounts (National Accounts, Balance of Payments, Government Finance Statistics) provide a comprehensive picture of economic activity. The System of National Accounts (SNA 2008) provides a good framework for analysing macro-economic impacts. Partial indicators have a strong role to play, as they are often more timely and/or frequent than the macro-economic accounts. Statistics on retail sales, employment, lending, new motor vehicle sales, manufacturing production and construction activity are examples of key partial indicators.

Financial statistics are important in understanding the causes of the GFC and a full set of national accounts, which include financial accounts and balance sheets, as produced by the ABS, has proven its worth in tracking both the economic and financial impacts of the crisis.

There is general agreement that a poor understanding of risk was a significant factor in the GFC. However, the international official statistical system, despite its comprehensive inclusion of economic and financial statistics, is not set up to measure risk very well. The ABS is contributing to international discussions on the scope for developing statistical standards to provide a better representation of risk and better analysis of risk using existing data.

Tracking the effects of the crisis

The second challenge is that, as the crisis develops, the economy does not perform as it does during a period of steady economic growth. The unusual activity and unforeseen structural changes in the economy cause statistical measurement difficulties. Such economic events in Australia include:

- the rapid decline of securitisers
- the drop in financial services as private equity deals and merger and acquisition activity slowed
- new home owners' incentives
- falls in equity values
- mergers and takeovers in the Australian finance industry
- Reserve Bank of Australia US dollar swaps with the US Federal reserve
- interest rate reductions
- banks passing on varying amounts of interest rate cuts to customers
- banks and businesses changing their sources of funding
- the Australian Government guaranteeing bank deposits up to \$1m and wholesale funding by banks
- financial businesses failing
- large exchange rate fluctuations, and
- large commodity price fluctuations.

Policy response

A closely related challenge to statistical measurement of an economy in crisis is that of ensuring the policy initiatives in response to the crisis are captured and interpreted appropriately. The Australian Government reacted to the GFC with a number of stimulus initiatives including:

- Tax Bonus for Working Australians
- Single-Income Family Bonus
- Farmer's Hardship Bonus
- Training and Learning Bonus
- Back to School Bonus
- > Building the Education Revolution for new facilities and refurbishments in schools
- Small Business and General Business Tax Break
- Energy Efficient Homes Program, including free ceiling insulation for uninsulated houses, and additional funding for the low emissions plan for renters and the solar hot water rebate
- public and community housing for low-income households
- additional defence housing funding
- additional investment in the Black Spot program
- funding for boom gates at rail crossings
- ▶ Repairing Regional Roads and Funding for Community Infrastructure, and
- assistance to the automotive industry.

These initiatives were, or are, being delivered by a range of mechanisms both directly and indirectly to beneficiaries, quite often through cooperative arrangements with State and Territory Governments or via the tax or welfare systems. Changes in monetary policy need to be understood and accounted for in statistical systems.

Identifying the impact of a specific policy measure from other impacts is difficult. While it would be useful to identify the impact of a particular measure, if, for example, it happens at the same time as a big shift in the exchange rate, major changes in commodity export prices and falling economic growth, it is unlikely to be possible. This may lead to a demand for one-off statistics to measure the impacts of particular policy responses. The ABS deals with these on a case-by-case basis, taking its existing work program and budget into account.

Social impacts

The GFC started in the financial system, moved on to the economy and may increasingly have social impacts. The ABS has a significant role in producing the information to help understand these social impacts. Statistics on the labour force are important, frequent (monthly) and timely. In a country like Australia with a well developed safety net, the administrative processes can be expected to deliver real time measures of:

- the number of new claims for unemployment benefits, or for age pensions if assets or private incomes fall as a result of the GFC
- increases in the rates at which pensions are paid (as customers move back up income and asset taper)
- ▶ changes in the average duration of payments for certain types of income support
- > demands for crisis support (e.g. crisis payments, emergency housing etc), and
- increased demand for other services such as relationship services, financial counselling etc in response to the effects of the GFC on families and individuals.

The use of such rich administrative data sets can help inform on the impacts on population groups that might be particularly vulnerable.

Statistics on other aspects of social wellbeing such as household income and wealth, education, and health are also important in tracking the impacts of the crisis. Annual data are compiled and published on many aspects of income, education and health that can be used to track movements against the trend. However, measures of some aspects of these variables are not designed to provide short term indications of change within the year and surveys are generally only conducted annually, biennially or less frequently. While most impacts of the GFC in these areas are likely to be evident in the longer term in existing administrative datasets (hospitalisations, use of Medicare, school enrolments, truancy) as well as in survey data, discerning the significant movements from the noise on a monthly or quarterly basis is difficult.

The ABS response

Part of the strategic statistical development work program is to digest the lessons of the current crisis for the purpose of improving the statistical infrastructure's ability to cope with any future crisis. Just as a statistical work program emerged from the Asian crisis, so too the GFC will provide indications of quality improvements for the future, notwithstanding the fact that the existing infrastructure served well as the GFC unfolded. One requirement is to develop better measures of risk. Other potential developments include:

More timely statistics as a reaction to the rapidity of events. Many countries produce early estimates of economic growth (known as flash estimates), effectively an early estimate of gross domestic product, more quickly than the ABS produce their quarterly national accounts. However, flash estimates are compiled using complex methods and data modelling based on data from past periods. Their reliance on historical patterns means that they perform poorly at times of significant change, that is, when they are most needed. There are some indications that there will be a push internationally to introduce flash estimates in countries like Australia which do not produce them. The ABS is not convinced investment in compiling flash estimates is productive, but needs to engage in the debate to ensure that, for example, the production of flash estimates does not become part of the international standards against which we are judged.

- Largely in response to a perceived lack of timeliness of some official statistics, policy makers and other analysts are making greater use of information provided by non-official sources to assess economic impacts. Examples are in the areas of consumer sentiment surveys, business outlook surveys and monthly consumer price measures. The ABS needs to be able to advise policy makers on the strengths and weaknesses of these alternative sources, and, where appropriate, develop the case for expanding its own range of timely partial indicators.
- Improved linkage of macroeconomic data and social impacts, through more data relating to household income and wealth that is consistent with the macroeconomic accounts.
- Improved quality of existing infrastructure that performed less well during the GFC. An example is reviewing financial and related statistics standards, classifications and frameworks, especially in regard to the ability of these statistics to measure and present risk (balance sheets and asset prices are particular areas for focus).

The ABS, like statistical agencies in most developed countries, is part of a network of government and private sector data gathering institutions. It is also part of the international statistical network. There is a role for the national statistical agency to coordinate and promote standards within these networks. Internationally, the ABS is:

- monitoring changes made to regulations and accounting standards
- ensuring the compilation of good quality global statistics so that global effects can be analysed
- ▶ working towards maximum harmonisation of relevant statistics across countries, and
- providing assistance to countries with less developed statistical systems in the provision of statistics to understand the impacts of the GFC and the policy responses.

At the Australian level, ABS activities include:

- reviewing sources and methods to ensure that they track developments in a timely and robust manner
- implementing new standards e.g. Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)/SNA 2008
- improving the integration and coherence of data
- highlighting developments and measurement issues in publication commentary
- maintaining an active dialogue with policy makers and other decision makers on information needs to support analysis of GFC impacts and responses
- working with other providers of official statistics, e.g. the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, to promote a coordinated approach

- identifying innovative ways to meet information requirements, particularly where information from traditional sources is not sufficiently timely for decision making purposes
- helping policy makers use non-official information sources in the best possible way
- ensuring that sources and methods for official statistics are robust enough to track the impacts of the GFC and the policy responses, and
- ▶ tracking business demographics in the light of possible business failures.

Conclusion

The GFC has 'stress tested' the ABS statistical infrastructure, with broadly good results. However, the unusual and unforeseen changes in the financial system have highlighted areas which need improvement and enhancement and this will inform the future work of the ABS in maintaining and enhancing its ability to fulfil its mission.
chapter 4



CLIMATE CHANGE AND OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Introduction

Climate change and measures to respond to climate change are expected to change the Australian economy, society, and environment. Business, industry, households and communities will all be affected in one way or another. Remaining responsive to the existing and emerging information needs of governments and the community is a key objective of the ABS.

This article outlines impacts of recent developments in government responses to climate change on official statistics in Australia and internationally. It discusses the role of the ABS and official statistics, including the need for measures to ensure the robustness of existing statistics and to meet emerging information needs through the production of new statistics.

Climate change and official statistics in Australia

The Australian Government's response to climate change consists of: i) reducing emissions; ii) adapting to unavoidable climate change; and iii) playing our part in a global response.¹ Addressing the Natstats 2008 conference, Dr Martin Parkinson, Secretary, Department of Climate Change stated that 'making progress against all three pillars will only be achievable if decision-making is supported by a robust, systematic information base' and that 'it is no surprise that the demand for information to support decision making in relation to both emissions reductions and adaptation is accelerating'.²

Collaborative cross-agency work will be an important aspect of improving the climate change related information base. In addition to statistics about businesses and people, physical, or 'scientific' information is fundamental to understanding the impact of climate change. Organisations other than the ABS are in the best position to meet scientific information needs and there are a number of significant initiatives currently underway to address these needs. One fundamental challenge will be to relate the scientific information to economic and social impacts, a challenge the ABS is well placed to address in collaboration with these other organisations.

¹ Climate Change Budget Overview 2009-10. Australian Government Department of Climate Change, p. i.

² Climate Change Information Frameworks—Present and Future, Dr Martin Parkinson, Secretary, Department of Climate Change—Address presented to Natstats, 21 November 2008.



Forecasting and modelling are also key to understanding the impact of climate change. Organisations other than the ABS are well placed to provide forecasts and undertake modelling, such as the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Another challenge will be to ensure the statistics needed for these forecasts and models are available, robust, relevant and enduring.

During 2008, the ABS assessed how the impacts of climate change and climate change initiatives are expected to be reflected in ABS statistics. The assessment focused on statistics primarily related to business and households, which is the area where the ABS traditionally adds the greatest value. The assessment, which was discussed at a Climate Change Information Needs Roundtable with over twenty Australian stakeholders, as well as with the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, found that economic statistics will directly and immediately reflect the impacts, particularly by the planned implementation of an emission trading scheme.

Population, social and environmental impacts of climate change will be more gradual, and therefore these statistics will reflect less dramatic change than is expected for economic statistics. The assessment noted that the impacts of climate change that have already occurred may not be adequately reflected in Australia's current population, social or environmental statistics.

The ABS can make some progress on statistical issues associated with climate change from within its existing resources. However, to provide comprehensive information would require additional resources. The ABS will continue to explore how such resources might be made available.

Ensuring the robustness of existing statistics

As Australia's central statistical authority, it is the ABS' responsibility to assist and encourage informed discussion and debate within governments and the community. The ABS fulfils this role through the delivery of an extensive range of economic, population and social statistics and a growing number of environmental statistics which are trusted by governments and the community. Established ABS statistics will also reflect climate change and measures to address climate change.

The ABS produces a range of main economic indicators, such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and it is critical the impacts of climate change strategies are reflected in such indicators to ensure they continue to meet their core purposes. For example the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) will have a direct impact on the CPI as it will cause changes in the relative prices of goods and services purchased by households. Other statistics that will show the impact of the introduction of CPRS include Producer Price Indexes, GDP, overseas trade and input-output tables.

There will be a need to separately identify any financial instruments created around carbon pollution permits and the holdings and flows of these in various sets of financial statistics and accounts. This will require the ABS to ensure holdings of permits, financial instruments and trading activity associated with primary and secondary markets are captured in domestic and international statistics such as Balance of Payments, International Investment and Financial Accounts. Government Finance statistics will also need to accurately capture, record and report permit values, and transfers through the tax and social security systems.

Economic statistics are produced within a coherent statistical framework called the System of National Accounts. To maximise integration of relevant climate change items into this framework, it will be critical to revisit economic standards and classifications in a holistic manner. For example, the input-output tables used in modelling for the CPRS posed some challenges as climate change impacts are cross cutting, yet different product classifications were used across the economic, environmental, and social collections.

Statistics to understand and support—mitigation

Reducing emissions is fundamental to the Government's climate change strategy and the CPRS will result in a substantial transformation to Australia's economy.³ The strategy introduces a carbon market, and governments, business and the community will be seeking carbon-related information.

The Department of Climate Change is responsible for the production of *Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts*. The Accounts provide greenhouse gas emission estimates for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for tracking Australia's progress towards its Kyoto Protocol target and to inform and monitor domestic policy including the

³ Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper Summary, July 2008, Australian Government Department of Climate Change pp.i-v.

CPRS. A range of ABS statistics are utilised in compilation of the Accounts and more broadly to inform mitigation strategies. For example, ABS input-output tables were used to support modelling undertaken as part of the design of the CPRS.

The Department of Climate Change is also responsible for the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System. The objective of the reporting system is to ensure: robust and transparent emissions and energy reporting for an Australian emissions trading scheme; a streamlined national reporting point for greenhouse gas emissions and energy data; consistent information to the Australian public; and that Australia's international reporting obligations are met. Data from the system can be made available to the ABS for statistical purposes.

Existing ABS socio-economic statistical datasets, such as agriculture production, energy use, energy supply, motor vehicle usage, water and land use, and household income and expenditure, must remain responsive to information priorities. In addition, new statistics to understand and support mitigation strategies, including the CPRS, are likely to be needed. Examples of where new statistics are needed include:

- regular and timely statistics relating to emissions and emission permit trading
- regular benchmarking of Australia's energy statistics
- energy use and supply statistics brought together into an integrated environmental-economic account, to enable the derivation of indicators such as energy and emission intensities
- regular and timely information on the prices of energy products and services
- more detailed and up-to-date statistics relating to the energy industry, and
- environmental management statistics, such as management practices, adoption of new technologies, and expenditure on environmental management by businesses and households which are reflective of the response of various sectors to climate change initiatives.

ABS' legislation seeks to avoid duplication in the collection of information. One of the many mechanisms in place to achieve this is to enable information collected by official bodies to be suitable for, and used for, statistical purposes. Customs and taxation data are examples of where this occurs in practice. As new reporting systems are developed, such as the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System and permit registers, the ABS will work with the owners of these data to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, they are suitable for statistical use, and can be accessed for statistical purposes.

Statistics to understand and support—adaptation

In April 2007, COAG agreed to a National Climate Change Adaptation Framework that identified medium-term actions to build Australia's capacity to manage the risks of climate change impacts and to reduce the vulnerability of key sectors and regions.

Scientific or observation based information, such as temperature and rainfall measures, will be essential for governments, business and the community to 'adapt to climate change we cannot avoid'. Statistics that measure the interaction between human activities and the

environment will provide the understanding of where adaptation is required as well as the impact of adaptation plans. As noted by Dr Martin Parkinson at the Natstats 2008 conference, 'we require tools that make use of social and economic datasets to understand adaptation. This is the forté of the ABS and it is in this field where consideration needs to be given to a concerted statistical effort by Australian and global statistical institutions.'⁴

Environmental-economic accounts bring together environmental and economic information in a common framework to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy, the impact of the economy on the environment, and the efficiency of the use of environmental resources within the economy. The ABS is actively contributing to the development of environmental accounting through contributions to international fora, an environmental accounts training course and the production of environmental-economic accounts such as the *Water Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no.4610.0) and the *Energy Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no.4604.0).

Reliable, basic information is needed to support forecasting and modelling. Information such as population, poverty, migration, labour, business counts, land use, water use and harvest and crop production are examples of the statistics required to support forecasting and modelling. The ABS already produces a range of statistics that can support forecasting and modelling, and maintaining the relevance of these existing collections and products to information priorities and analytical uses will be essential.

New statistics are likely to be needed to understand and support adaptation strategies. These can be summarised as follows:

- regular and timely statistics on the supply and use of water in the Australian economy
- targeted, land-based surveys of coastal, storm surge, peri-urban and other regions of interest such as the Murray-Darling Basin will be required to understand the effect of climate change on local communities, on land holders and on local economies. It is expected that regional studies will be a key input into climate change adaptation analysis and integrated vulnerability assessments
- benchmark and performance measures about the emerging environment industry
- information on changes to local government activities due to climate change related strategies, for instance changes to planning processes and building codes, as well as environment-related expenditure and activity data, and
- timely release of statistical snapshots on energy use, energy production, water use, environmental management, and other environmental topics for use by governments, business and the community to inform and promote climate change related issues and trends.

The island continent of Australia features a wide range of climatic zones, from the tropical regions of the north, through the arid expanse of the interior, to the temperate regions of the south.⁵ Climate change impacts can only be adequately analysed if economic and social information is integrated into an environmental context such as the biophysical features of the land through river basins or water catchment areas.

⁴ Climate Change Information Frameworks—Present and Future, Dr Martin Parkinson, Secretary, Department of Climate Change—Address presented to Natstats, 21 November 2008.

⁵ Year Book Australia 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics p.39

The spatial scales required to appropriately inform discussion and debate are likely to place increasing pressure to disseminate spatially-relevant statistics. The implementation of geographical building blocks (Mesh Blocks) in key datasets such as the Census of Population and Housing, the Agricultural Census and administrative data, will facilitate the building of comparable spatial outputs.

The ABS has a range of statistics available across various spatial scales and dissemination tools that support inter-regional comparison across statistics would provide greater transparency and usability of this information by governments, business and the community.

ABS statistics to inform the climate change debate

As noted above, the ABS produces a range of social and economic statistics that can be used to inform climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. In addition to these, a program of environmental statistics has been implemented by the ABS since the early 1990s and is progressively becoming the fourth pillar of official statistics for Australia.

Information on the environmental behaviour and practices of Australian households and individuals has been collected since 1992. This includes information on:

- energy use and conservation (insulation in dwellings, use of energy saving lights, sources of energy including use of renewable energy, use of heaters, coolers and other appliances, awareness of and willingness to pay extra for Green Power, etc.)
- > waste management (recycling and reuse of glass, plastics, organic waste, etc.)
- transport use (motor vehicle ownership, type of fuels used in motor vehicles, use of public transport, etc.), and
- water use and conservation (sources of water, use of rainwater tanks, water conservation measures such as use of grey water, use of dual flush toilets, etc.).

A key focus of the environment program has been to respond to an increasing demand for information linking the relationship between social, environmental and economic statistics. The System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) is the de facto international standard for Environmental-Economic Accounts and is used by many countries, including Australia. In line with the general principles outlined in SEEA, the ABS recently released *Energy Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no.4604.0) which directly links data on energy use with economic data and provides a time series of energy intensity measures.

These two examples are illustrative of the type of statistics available. The ABS produces many other statistics that can inform on climate change.

Environmental Issues: Energy Use and Conservation, Mar 2008 (ABS cat. no.4602.0.55.001)

Solar energy was used by 7% of Australian households for heating water in 2008. This was a 61% increase from 2005 when 4% of households used solar energy for hot water systems.



Energy Account, Australia (ABS cat. no.4604.0)

Australia's energy intensity fell 36% over the 30 years from 1976–77 to 2006–07, from 4,880 to 3,100 gigajoules (GJ) of energy consumed per \$m Industry Gross Value Added (IGVA). Whilst most industries' energy intensity levels fell over the 30 year period, Mining and Agriculture increased. Transport and Construction experienced large reductions in energy intensity (49% and 79%, respectively).



Energy Intensity, All industries, 1976–77 to 2006–07

International developments in climate change and official statistics

In recognition of the importance of the role of official statistics in climate change issues, the first International Conference on Climate Change Statistics was organised by the international statistical community in 2008. The conference, held in Oslo, Norway, was attended by 116 participants representing 55 countries and 15 organisations. A second conference on Climate Change, Development and Official Statistics in the Asia-Pacific Region was held in Seoul, South Korea in December 2008. The ABS represented Australia at both conferences and contributed several papers:

- ▶ Climate Change and Water: How Water Accounts Can Help Our Understanding, April 2008
- Statistical Office Support for Emissions Trading Schemes: Developments in Australia, April 2008
- Climate Change and Official Statistics: The Way Forward, presentation, December 2008.

Building on the recommendations of the conferences held in Oslo and Seoul, the ABS was invited by the United Nations Statistics Division to review how official statistics can better contribute to the climate change debate. The report presented a review and analysis of users' needs and challenges. It explored areas where official statistics can provide input and add value to the analysis of the environmental, social and economic aspects of climate change and the related adaptation and mitigation measures. The paper made specific recommendations to mainstream climate change in official statistics both at the national and international levels.⁶

The ABS submitted the review to the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Commission recognised that climate change is an important global issue with social, economic and environmental impacts and that official statistics have an important role to contribute to closing data gaps. It also considered expanding the mandate of a United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting to cover the area of climate change related statistics.⁷ This committee is currently chaired by Australia through ABS Deputy Australian Statistician, Mr Peter Harper.

The ABS participates in and contributes to other relevant international initiatives including:

- a United Nations City Group (London) on Environmental Accounting, which plays a leading role in advancing methodologies on environmental-economic accounting and in providing a forum for sharing national and international expertise in the field including elevating integrated environmental-economic accounting to an international statistical standard, and
- a United Nations City Group (Oslo) on Energy Statistics which was formed to contribute to the development of improved methods and international standards for energy statistics including the United Nations handbooks and manuals on energy statistics.

7 'United Nations Statistical Commission Report on the fortieth session (24 to 27 February 2009)', Economic and Social Council Official Records 2009, Supplement No.4

^{6 &#}x27;Report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Climate Change and Official Statistics', Fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission New York, 24-27 February 2009.



14th Meeting of the London Group on Environmental and Economic Accounting 27–30 April 2009, Canberra

Conclusion

Ensuring Australia's statistics remain responsive to the impacts of climate change and climate change strategies will require measures to ensure the robustness of existing statistics as well as enhanced and new information to understand and support mitigation and adaptation strategies. Medium and longer term priorities need to be established. It will be important for the ABS, as Australia's central statistical agency, to provide a leading role in meeting these information needs. The ABS must lead and support and collaborate with jurisdictions, industry and governments in developing and exploiting information to present a rich statistical picture to address climate change information needs.

chapter 5



THE ROLE OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS IN COAG INFORMATION-RELATED INITIATIVES FOR MEASURING OUTCOMES

Official statistics play a vitally important role in Australian society. While their use by government is obviously very important, it is also true that access to official statistics provides businesses and citizens with a window on the work and performance of government itself. Official statistics show the scale of government activity in every area of public policy, allowing the impact of public policies and actions to be assessed, especially in terms of outcomes for society.

COAG and the new Intergovernmental Agreement

The role for official statistics outlined above is picked up explicitly in a new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations emanating from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Through this agreement COAG has reaffirmed its commitment to cooperative working arrangements between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. The objectives of the IGA include rationalising payments between the Commonwealth and the states and territories and reaching agreement on a reform agenda aimed at boosting productivity, workforce participation and geographic mobility, and supporting wider objectives of better services for the community, social inclusion, closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and environmental sustainability.

In key areas of service delivery such as healthcare, housing, disability and education, objectives and outcomes sought through the reform process are documented in new National Agreements. A number of new National Partnerships have also been signed to fund specific projects and to facilitate and/or reward states and territories that deliver on nationally significant reforms.

The IGA puts new performance reporting in place to enable the community to better assess the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery by all governments. Specifically, the new federal financial framework aims for:

enhanced public accountability through simpler, standardised and more transparent performance reporting by all jurisdictions, with a focus on the achievement of outcomes, efficient service delivery and timely public reporting.

The IGA also establishes the COAG Reform Council (CRC), which is independent of individual governments. The CRC will report directly to the Prime Minister, as chair of COAG, on the new National Agreements and National Partnerships. The CRC aims to strengthen accountability for the achievement of results through independent and evidence-based

monitoring, assessment and reporting of the performance of all governments. Through its assessment and reporting process, the CRC would also highlight examples of good practice and performance by jurisdictions. However, the CRC does not have a policy advising role.

Relevance of IGA/CRC for official statistics

Taken together, the performance reporting arrangements under the IGA have the potential to improve:

- the relevance of official statistical information that is collected, compiled and reported by government, by focusing on high level outcome indicators and through prioritising the information required for reporting on key outputs, and
- the quality of that information for decision making through a continuous improvement process.

Improvements in data quality, transparency and accountability in the IGA reporting arrangements may also have spin-off benefits for other uses of official statistics to inform decision making in Australia.

The ABS role in COAG performance reporting

As Australia's official statistical agency, the ABS will play several roles in the new arrangements for COAG performance reporting. The ABS will be a significant provider of information to be used in the performance reporting, covering a range of performance indicators specified in the National Agreements on healthcare, education, affordable housing, disability, Indigenous reform, and skills and workforce development. The ABS will also be undertaking development work to address deficiencies in Indigenous data required for measuring performance indicators in the National Agreements.

In addition to directly measuring a number of performance indicators in the various National Agreements, the ABS will also provide many of the denominators for use in rates and proportions identified either as COAG performance indicators, or as proxy measures until necessary data development is undertaken to better meet the requirements of indicator construction.

All data collection agencies providing information for performance reporting purposes are required to prepare quality statements about the information provided. These quality statements are based on the ABS Quality Framework. In this regard, the ABS will need to report on the quality and fitness for purpose of the information it provides. In addition, the ABS will need to monitor and maintain its Quality Framework to ensure its continued effectiveness in supporting the public accountability aspects of the COAG reporting framework.

It is envisaged that the ABS will also play a lead role as adviser to other agencies in respect of the quality assurance of non-ABS data being used for COAG performance reporting. Another important role for ABS official statistics will be for 'bench testing' the fitness for purpose of some COAG indicators developed from other sources. The ABS already provides such advice on sources, methods and meaning to a wide range of users and producers of statistics.

Section 4

NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM



chapter 6



THE ABS AND THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

Introduction

The National Statistical Service (NSS) is the community of government agencies, led by the ABS as Australia's national statistical organisation, building a rich statistical picture for a better informed Australia. The objectives of the NSS are to:

- deliver a high quality, up-to-date, comprehensive, coherent statistical picture of the economy, society and the environment to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the wider community
- provide a world class official statistical service that retains the confidence and trust of the Australian society as both providers to, and users of, the resultant official statistics
- maximise the use for official statistical purposes of data available within government administrative systems by government agencies and instrumentalities
- > minimise the burden of statistical reporting at all levels of the Australian community, and
- document and retain, as an enduring national resource, key statistical outputs and their underlying data sources.

The NSS Pyramid

The ABS has identified four essential elements of a successful NSS: valuing statistics, statistical capability, statistical infrastructure, and statistical content.

By **valuing statistics**, Australian governments and the community will expect to have and to be able to use good quality information that is trusted and accessible to all.

Building **statistical capability** will enable government agencies to have the skills and knowledge to unlock and exploit the statistical potential of the data in their custody, and to apply statistics to enable better public debate, research and decision-making. It will also assist the community in understanding the statistical dimensions of Australia's economy, society and environment.

Investing in **statistical infrastructure** will facilitate the development, production and use of statistical information and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the NSS.

Accessing the **statistical content** held by government agencies at all levels will provide the information required by stakeholders to meet their statistical priorities.



National Statistical Service initiatives

The ABS has been progressing a range of activities to further develop the NSS. These include playing a key role in collaborative projects with both Commonwealth and state government agencies; making statistical resources easily accessible on the NSS web site; providing statistical training; hosting seminars, workshops and conferences to share information on statistical activities across government; and promoting government statistical initiatives through the NSS newsletter. Specific initiatives worth highlighting in the last 12 months are outlined below.

NatStats08 Conference

The ABS hosted the inaugural NatStats Conference in Melbourne in November 2008. The event, which attracted over 470 delegates, brought together for the first time the key users and producers of official statistics to discuss improving the statistical information base for Australia in regards to the use of information for monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs, accessing data for the community, and reducing overall costs for the provision of government information services. There was lively debate and discussion across the three conference themes of Informing the Nation, Measuring the Progress of Societies, and Environmental Information for Informed Decisions.

The conference attracted a range of high calibre speakers including Enrico Giovannini (Chief Statistician, OECD), the Hon John Lenders (Treasurer of Victoria), Professor Glyn Davis (Vice Chancellor and President, University of Melbourne), Dr David Gruen (Executive Director, The Treasury), Ben Rimmer (Deputy Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) and Dr Martin Parkinson (Secretary, Department of Climate Change).

One of the key outcomes from the conference was the endorsement of a Statistical Declaration by conference delegates to help guide the development of a national statistics strategy in the 21st century. The Declaration covers areas such as measuring societal progress and the environment, the better use of information, improving statistical literacy, and the role of the ABS.

The Declaration and videos of the conference presentations are available from the conference web site at: http://www.nss.gov.au/natstats.



Enrico Giovannini, Director of Statistics & Chief Statistician, OECD spoke about measuring the progress of societies at the NatStats08 Conference

Community Indicators Summit

The ABS will host a Community Indicators Summit in Brisbane in July 2009. Around 180 invited delegates are expected to participate in the Summit which will provide a unique opportunity for those involved in developing community-based indicators to share learnings, exchange ideas and strategies and report on developments both in Australia and internationally. A feature of the program will be practical workshops to explore issues in the development and application of Community Indicators.

Key speakers at the Summit include Jon Hall (Manager, OECD Global Project, Measuring the Progress of Societies), David Tune (Associate Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet), Michael Hogan (Assistant Director-General, Queensland Department of Communities) and Dr Lance Emerson (CEO, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth). The outcomes from the Summit will be presented at the OECD Third World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, 'Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life' which will be held in Korea from 27 to 30 October 2009.

The proceedings of the Summit will be recorded and made available for viewing from the conference web site at: http://www.nss.gov.au/communityindicators.

Council of Australian Governments

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance, and which require cooperative action by Australian governments.

The ABS provided a staff member to the COAG Reform Council to assist with their role of monitoring, assessing and reporting on the performance of governments in implementing nationally agreed reforms in regard to National Agreements, National Partnerships and Water Management Partnerships. Through this placement, the ABS provided the Council with advice in regard to performance indicators, data collection and verification, and technical analysis.

The ABS is providing data for a range of COAG performance indicators specified in the National Agreements on healthcare, education, affordable housing, disability, and skills and workforce development. The ABS also has a lead role in providing advice and direction on quality improvement of indicators, consistent with its role of providing the data quality framework that underpins the quality statements prepared by all data collection agencies that provide data for performance indicators.

STATISTICAL PROGRAMS

National Accounts	The National Accounts program provides quarterly and annual data about the level of economic activity and the structure of the Australian and state economies within a coherent system of concepts and classifications.
International Accounts	The International Accounts program provides statistics on Australia's Balance of Payments and International Investment position.
International Trade	The International Trade program provides statistics on Australia's exports and imports of goods and services. Statistics on merchandise (goods) exports and imports are derived from records lodged by exporters and importers with the Australian Customs Service.
Financial Statistics	The Financial Statistics program compiles statistics on the financial assets, liabilities, borrowing and lending of financial institutions, and on the stocks and flows of finance for the various sectors of the economy.
Prices	The Prices program compiles the Consumer Price Index, the House Price Indexes, the Labour Price index (which is an annual series comprising a quarterly Wage Price Index and an annual non wage price index), and a range of Producer and International Trade Price Indexes.
Public Sector Accounts	The Public Sector Accounts program provides Government Finance Statistics in respect of the Australian government, state and territory governments, their public non-financial corporations and public financial corporations, universities and local governments.
Business Indicators	The Business Indicators program is responsible for the provision of a range of sub-annual main economic indicators. The indicators include:
	 monthly statistics of turnover by selected retail industries and the takeaway food services industry
	 quarterly statistics of company profits, inventories, sales and labour costs
	 quarterly statistics of actual and expected new capital expenditure
	 quarterly statistics of actual and expected mineral and petroleum exploration, and
	 bi-annual statistics of expected mineral and petroleum expenditure.
	These data are essential inputs to the compilation of quarterly and annual national accounts and supply-use tables.

Innovation and Technology	The Innovation and Technology Statistics program provides data to assist the understanding of the impact of research, experimental development, innovation and new technologies on economic and social outcomes. It provides measures of the penetration of selected new technologies, particularly information and communication technology as well as innovation, within Australia.
Business Demographics	The Business Demographics program is responsible for the provision of a range of information about the structure, characteristics and performance of businesses in the Australian economy and conceptual developments regarding business definitions and classifications. This information is part of a consistent framework for all ABS business statistics. A particular, but not exclusive, focus of the program is on providing information about small businesses.
Agriculture	The Agriculture program aims to satisfy the statistical needs of agricultural policy makers and other key users of agricultural statistics by providing reliable and relevant information on commodity production, economic performance, and environmental practices. The main collections include an annual agricultural survey, a five-yearly agricultural census, and a range of monthly, quarterly and ad hoc surveys covering specific aspects of agriculture and related activity.
Construction	The Construction program provides regular data on levels of activity in residential building, non-residential building and engineering construction. Building and construction statistics are widely used for monitoring and forecasting the effects of economic policy and analysis of the economic cycle, and are an important input to the Australian national accounts. They are also used in the analysis of issues affecting the building and construction industries as well as the finance and investment sector. Building statistics are also used in estimating population change, which is an essential input to regional planning processes and most economic and social models in use in Australia.
Transport	The Transport program is responsible for producing statistics on transport and transport related activities and undertakes a coordination and liaison role between producers and users of transport data. Statistics from the transport collections are used to assist in policy and planning deliberations by governments and transport organisations, particularly in the areas of long term planning, the regulation of road transport operators and for accident exposure and fuel use analysis.

Tourism	The Tourism program is responsible for producing regular, timely and coherent data on tourism activities. It also undertakes a coordination and liaison role between tourism statistics users and other areas of the ABS that produce tourism related statistics. Data include the Australian Tourism Satellite Account, overseas arrivals and departures, tourism related exports and imports indicators, Survey of Tourist Accommodation and data collected under the Industry Statistics program. The program is also responsible for the development and maintenance of tourism frameworks, standards and concepts.
Environment and Energy	The ABS Environment and Energy program meets the growing need for environment and energy information by integrating environmental, economic and social data.
	Data usage is varied and includes meeting international reporting obligations as well as the formulation of policies, economic analysis, research and forecasting—all of which assist in managing the nation's environment.
Census of Population and Housing	The Census program conducts a five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. Its aims are to accurately and efficiently measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on census night. This provides a reliable basis to estimate the population of each state/ territory and local government area, primarily for electoral purposes (including determining the number of seats allocated to each state and territory in the House of Representatives) and for distribution of government funds to the states including Goods and Services Tax revenue and payments for specific purposes.
Demography	The key objective of the Demography program is to produce estimates of the recent and projected population, and analysis of the components of population growth and related demographic trends. These data are provided at the national, state/territory and regional level. These statistics are produced to:
	 meet a range of legislative requirements that make reference to population estimates
	 assist in the formulation and monitoring of government policies, and in the planning and administration of government programs
	 enable planning and market analyses by businesses and community organisations, and
	 enable research and analyses by governments, businesses, academic institutions and others into the causes and consequences of population change.

Labour Statistics	The key objectives for the Labour Statistics program are to address labour statistics priorities and be responsive to user needs by producing high quality labour statistics in a timely, efficient and effective manner. The Labour Statistics program provides information about the structure and performance of the labour market. The program produces statistics on labour supply (such as labour force participation, unemployment, employment conditions and broader measures of labour under-utilisation); labour demand (such as employee earnings, job vacancies and labour costs); and industrial relations.
Health	The Health Statistics program provides information about aspects of the health of Australia's population, and about health related services. This includes statistics relating to health status, disability, risk factors and impacts on sub-groups within the population. Statistics on health and disability describe an important aspect of wellbeing, which can impact on people's capacity to participate in the labour force, and more broadly in the community. Changes in the levels of health measures, such as health conditions, risk factors, and disability, can inform both the development of interventions for prevention and care, and the need for related services over time. These statistics support the policy development, program delivery and evaluation of key government and non-government agencies involved in health, community and family services. They provide information on the impacts of programs and service provision, and can be used to assess areas of unmet need. They are heavily used in research related to health and community issues.
Education and Training Statistics	The Education and Training Statistics program covers the activities of the National Centre for Education and Training Statistics, which include the development and compilation of statistics from national administrative collections and the conduct of a number of surveys relevant to learning in Australia. Key elements of the program in this field include the expansion of the annual National Schools Statistics collection to a comprehensive whole of education system statistical information base; the regular conduct of a number of surveys related to education, training and work; and the work of the National Education and Training Statistics Unit. This Unit, in partnership with other government agencies that have responsibility for education and training policies and programs, promotes greater comparability of information across the various education and training sectors and addresses issues such as standards, collaboration, efficiency and resource use across the sectors.

Crime and Justice Statistics	The Crime and Justice Statistics program leads national statistical activity aimed at developing and improving the information available in this field. The program covers the activities of the National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics, which comprises three separate user-funded statistical units: the National Crime Statistics Unit; the National Criminal Courts Statistics Unit; and the National Corrective Services Statistics Unit. These units compile and publish national statistics on recorded crime, courts and corrections, and work to improve the quality of these collections in cooperation with statistical practitioners in the jurisdictions. Boards of Management oversee the work of each of the units. Board Members include jurisdictional representatives responsible for police services, courts administration and corrective services.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics program covers the activities of the ABS National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATSIS), the development and conduct of ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surveys, and other Indigenous statistics produced by the ABS. NCATSIS has responsibility for leadership and coordination of national statistical activity about Australia's Indigenous peoples, both across the ABS and more broadly.
Living Conditions Statistics	The Living Conditions Statistics program provides information about the material living conditions of the population within a framework of areas of social concern and population groups. Household income, wealth, expenditure, housing, superannuation and other aspects of material living conditions are central to monitoring material wellbeing. Related areas of measurement and analysis include economic hardship and financial stress, which help to provide a wider picture of the material circumstances and living conditions of Australians.
Family and Community Statistics	The Family and Community Statistics program provides leadership for, and information on, statistics related to family and community wellbeing within a framework of areas of social concern and population groups. It provides statistics from collections including those based on registration systems (such as for marriages and divorces), the Census of Population and Housing, the monthly population survey (including topics on families, pregnancy and employment transitions, and child care), and from surveys of families, time use, volunteering, work and family balance, and social capital. Statistics are provided for women, men, couples, one-parent families, children, youth, older people, carers and other population subgroups.

Culture and Recreation Statistics	The Culture and Recreation Statistics program covers the activities of the ABS National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics (NCCRS). The NCCRS has responsibility for the leadership and coordination of national statistical activity in the fields of culture, sport and leisure. Its activities include understanding current and emerging policy issues and debates, and determining what statistics might be appropriate to inform decision making.
Migrant Statistics	The Migrant Statistics program covers the activities of the ABS National Migrant Statistics Unit, which has focus on temporary and permanent migrant settlement within Australia. The unit provides data relevant to migrant populations, and is involved in the development and compilation of a range of survey and administrative data outputs relevant to migrants. Activities include understanding current and emerging policy issues and debates, and determining what statistics might be appropriate to inform decision making relevant to migrants and diverse ethnic groups.
Rural and Regional Statistics	The Rural and Regional Statistics program aims to improve the availability of regional data including data at metropolitan, non- metropolitan, urban and rural levels. Activities undertaken under the program include improving access to, and dissemination of, ABS data and data from other sources, and developing new indicators where feasible. A particular focus of this work is on utilising administrative data maintained by Australian government and state/territory government agencies, where data have a location identifier with the potential to be used in presenting data geographically. The activities of the Rural and Regional Statistics Program are undertaken by the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre.
Analytical Services	The Analytical Services program develops new analytical products and provides analysis services to producers and users of social and economic data. Its major areas of focus include time series analysis (including seasonal adjustment), the construction and interpretation of socio-economic indexes, the development of data confidentialisation methodology, and general modelling and forecasting. The provision of new and innovative analytical products, such as modelled estimates, indexes and other analysis, are an important contribution of the Analytical Services program for improving ABS processes and for influencing external policy development and decision making. Data confidentialisation methods, especially when applied to microdata files, allow researchers outside ABS to undertake much more detailed analyses of their own on statistical data than would otherwise be the case.

chapter 7 ECONOMIC STATISTICS



Introduction

The ABS releases a range of economic statistics, which are used by governments, businesses and community groups to: formulate and assess economic policies (at both macro and micro level); evaluate economic performance; understand the drivers of economic growth; and understand the structure of, and the emerging trends in, the Australian economy. State, territory and regional dimensions of these issues are important, and emphasis is given to servicing these statistical needs. The ABS also plays an active role in the international comparability of economic statistics.

The ABS framework for economic statistics is based on the United Nations System of National Accounts 2008 (SNA). The SNA provides a comprehensive framework for compiling economic data in a coherent and consistent manner for the purposes of economic analysis, and the compilation of national accounts in particular. A range of other connected international standards is also used including the Balance of Payments Manual (BPM), the standards on Government Finance Statistics, manuals on Consumer and Producer Price Indexes, and Research and Development Expenditure. Information on revisions to the international framework used for economic statistics can be found below and in Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

The main economic indicators released by the Economic Statistics Program are the quarterly national accounts (containing the latest estimates of gross domestic product and household saving), the quarterly consumer, producer and house price indexes, the quarterly balance of payments, the quarterly wage price index, the quarterly business indicators publication and the monthly retail trade publication. These sub-annual releases provide a comprehensive picture of Australia's economic performance and form the basis for economic commentary, analysis and policy development.

The ABS also releases a range of environment and energy statistics which directly assist in the management of the nation's environmental and natural resources and can be used to inform climate change, energy efficiency and water security issues. Regional dimensions of the data are of particular importance and the ABS is continuing to invest in methods aimed at improving regional environmental data.

For environment statistics, the ABS is engaged in ongoing international collaboration on the implementation of a framework to support environment and energy statistics, which is known as the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA). The SEEA is aligned with the SNA and will meet the needs of users for a coherent and consistent data system that allows for integrated environmental-economic analyses, for example, links of natural resource use and emissions to economic growth and distribution of income and wealth. For more information on SEEA, see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/seea.asp.

A wide range of other statistics about the economy are also produced. These statistics focus on more targeted areas of the economy such as capital expenditure, building activity, government finance statistics, housing finance and tourist accommodation. Annual publications provide more detailed structural information on the Australian economy, including areas such as innovation, and research and development.

Environmental accounting

There has been a shift in policy focus away from considering the economy, society and the environment as separate issues, to a more integrated approach to decision making. While general measures of environmental phenomena help guide certain aspects of environmental policy, many of the solutions that are promoted to address environmental issues can also have significant economic and social effects. In addition, decisions made regarding economic and social policy have impacts on the environment which need to be understood in order to put relevant environmental policies in place. There is also an emerging need to be able to model and forecast what these impacts may be.

Environmental-Economic Accounts provide a framework for an integrated information system to support this broader policy focus. They bring together environmental and economic information in a common framework to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy, the impact of the economy on the environment, and the efficiency of the use of environmental resources within the economy.

Households are a key component of an Environmental-Economic Accounts framework. Social indicators such as average per capita water use, or household consumption of energy, can be derived from an Environmental-Economic Accounts framework, and this information can be linked to expenditure, income and demographic information for socio-economic analyses.

Environmental-Economic Accounts can complement what others are producing. For example, *Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts* may be combined with a range of economic information, consistent with the SNA, to produce Environmental-Economic Accounts.

Environmental-Economic Accounting can allow the analysis of the effectiveness of specific environmental/economic policies, such as an emissions trading scheme. In Denmark, Statistics Denmark utilised existing information held by their Ministry of Climate in the CO_2 emissions permit registry to describe the flow of CO_2 permits within the Danish economy based on the Environmental-Economic Accounting framework. This link to the economy enables analyses of the relationship between CO_2 permits and economic activity, for example, output, gross value added, and employment.

In Australia, the ABS has used data from a variety of sources to describe the flow of water in the Australian economy using an Environmental-Economic Accounting framework. Statistics from *Water Account, Australia* and *An Experimental Monetary Water Account for Australia* can be used for determining efficient water allocation, achieving cost recovery for water infrastructure assets and analysing trade-offs between alternative water and economic policies.

The ABS has also used data from a variety of sources to describe the flows of energy and energy stocks in the Australian economy using an Environmental-Economic Accounting framework. Statistics from *Energy Account, Australia* can be used to compare the physical flows of energy with their accompanying monetary flows for analysing trade-offs between alternative energy policies. In the 2001 edition, greenhouse gas emissions associated with the physical flows of energy were released.

Statistical developments in 2008–09

Using administrative data

During 2008–09 the ABS undertook a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of linking commodity production data collected as part of the Agricultural Census with Business Income Tax and Business Activity Statement data from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The linking process was very successful and the project has moved to the next phase of validating the statistics created. If successful, this linked dataset will provide a rich source of information to inform discussions on the economic performance of businesses operating within the agriculture industry.

Estimates of the value of irrigated agriculture

Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production (GVIAP) estimates have been a core component of *Water Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no.4610.0) which is produced every four years. Growing demand from policy-makers and other users has led to an increasing demand for the ABS to produce more accurate and more frequent estimates of GVIAP. During 2008–09, the ABS developed an improved methodology for calculating GVIAP, which is described in the information paper *Methods of Estimating the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production* (ABS cat. no.4610.0.55.006) released in October 2008. Following on from the development of the methodology was released in May 2009 in *Experimental Estimates of the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production (ABS cat. no.4610.0.55.008)*.

Energy Account, Australia

The Energy Account, Australia, 2006–07 (ABS cat. no.4604.0) was released in June 2009 and presents a range of outputs including estimates of Australian supply and use of energy products over the period 2001–02 to 2006–07. The energy account draws together a range of data sources related to energy products, and presents them in an integrated framework known as the System of Integrated Environmental-Economic Accounting. This edition of the Energy Account introduces experimental monetary estimates of the use of various energy products for 2004–05, alongside corresponding estimates of physical use. Other features of the account include: energy stocks, in both physical units and as monetary values as presented in the National Balance Sheet from the National Accounts; and a time series of industry energy intensity measures which relate energy use to industry gross value added from the National Accounts.

Land Management and Farming

Land Management and Farming in Australia, 2007–08 (ABS cat. no.4627.0) was released in May 2009 and presented information on agricultural land management practices from a new resource management survey conducted in respect of 2007–08. The survey provided important information on a variety of management practices of Australian agricultural businesses including cropping and pasture management, soil management, fertiliser use, surface water and effluent management, natural environment conservation protection and farm management. The statistics provide benchmark data on resource management practices for the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program, a Commonwealth government initiative that seeks to achieve an environment that is healthy, better protected, well managed and resilient, and provides essential ecosystem services in a changing climate.

Wheat Use and Stocks

The first release of a new series, *Wheat Use and Stocks, Australia* (ABS cat. no.7307.0) was released in January 2009. The new monthly series presents estimates of wheat grain stocks and use for selected manufacturing and agricultural businesses, licensed exporters and bulk grain handlers. Estimates are compiled from various surveys including a Grain Handlers Stocks Survey, Wheat Use Survey and Wheat Export Sales Survey, and from administrative data relating to wheat grain exports. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics uses the data to compile a monthly report on the Australian wheat industry. This information informs policy and decision making following the passage of the Wheat Export Marketing Bill on 1 July 2008.

Survey of Foreign Currency Hedging by Australian Enterprises

The ABS is conducting a user-funded Survey of Foreign Currency Hedging by Australian Enterprises. The results of this survey will extend the ABS' program of macro-economic statistics to include data on the exposure of the Australian economy to currency fluctuations. Data will be collected for the March 2009 reference period with aggregated results scheduled for release in October 2009.

Review of international macroeconomic standards

In 2008–09, the ABS continued to make a significant contribution to the review of key international macroeconomic standards (System of National Accounts and Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, sixth edition (BPM6)). The focus of the review has been on maintaining relevance in a changing economic environment and on ensuring the various economic standards are appropriately aligned.

Implementation of the revised international macroeconomic standards

The ABS is well underway in the implementation of the revised macroeconomic standards, in conjunction with the implementation of the Australia New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC 2006), for the 2008–09 release of the annual national accounts in November 2009.

The various quarterly releases (including the national accounts, balance of payments and financial accounts) will be released on the basis of the new standards beginning with the September quarter 2009 releases, and changes to the monthly balance of payments and international trade series will occur with the July 2009 release. The ABS has undertaken consultation with key users on its implementation plans for the revised standards. Discussions have been held with relevant Australian government agencies and the ABS convened its Economic Statistics User Group, which includes representatives from state and territory governments, academia and private industry. This was followed by the release of an *Information Paper: Introduction of Revised International Standards in ABS Economic Statistics in 2009* (ABS cat. no.5310.0.55.001). The ABS plans to release further information on the statistical impacts of the changes during 2009.

Prices statistics

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) continues to be a robust measure of general price inflation for Australian households. Over 2008–09, the ABS provided assistance to the Harmer Pension Review as it investigated measures to strengthen the financial security of seniors, carers and people with disabilities. As part of the Government's Secure and Sustainable Pensions package, which was developed with the assistance of Dr Harmer's report, and announced in the 2009–10 Budget, the ABS has agreed and been allocated funding, to develop an alternative measure of price change which is more fully responsive to specific changes in pensioners' purchasing power. The new index will represent changes in prices of the out-of-pocket living costs experienced by pensioner and beneficiary households. This index will be known as the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (ABS cat. no.6466.0), outlines a description of the PBLCI and the approach being taken for its construction and future development.

During 2008–09, the ABS provided material to and participated in the following hearings and Senate inquiries:

- Review into pension indexation arrangements in Australian Government civilian and military superannuation schemes
- Senate inquiry into waste
- Senate inquiry into climate change and agriculture sector, and
- Senate inquiry into climate change policies.

Across the Prices program there have been a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring the statistics remain relevant and are well understood by users, including:

- publication of an appendix in the June quarter 2008 issue of the CPI covering measurement of deposit and loans facilities in the CPI, to coincide with increased attention on this area in the context of the Global Financial Crisis
- reviews of various components of the CPI, including fruit and vegetables, bank samples for financial services, alcohol, overseas holiday travel and accommodation, hospital and medical services, and child care
- a review of the Stage of Production Producer Price Indexes to ensure these indexes continue to effectively inform on measurement of inflation, and
- a review of the house price index involving, from the December quarter 2008 onwards, use of updated housing weights based on quantity data from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing and introduction of a new method of stratification to control composition changes (detailed in an appendix to the December quarter 2008 issue of the House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities (ABS cat. no.6416.0)).

chapter 8 POPULATION AND SOCIAL STATISTICS



Introduction

The Population and Social Statistics program produces statistical information relating to the Australian population, including its size and composition, and information relating to social, environmental and economic wellbeing. This information provides a picture of the ways in which people's lives are changing over time. The program also undertakes work focusing on different groups in the population. Population and social statistics are produced mainly through the ABS household survey program, the Census of Population and Housing, and a range of administrative by-product data from governments. This chapter provides a range of ABS highlights in relation to population and social statistics.

Census of Population and Housing

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires that the '...census shall be taken in the year 1981 and in every fifth year thereafter...'. The last Census was held on Tuesday, 8 August 2006, with the next Census scheduled for 2011.

The Census is the largest statistical collection undertaken by the ABS and one of the most important. There are two broad objectives that underpin the Census. The first of these is to accurately measure the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on census night and the dwellings in which they live. The second is to provide timely, high quality and relevant data for small geographic areas and small population groups, to complement the rich but broad level data provided by ABS surveys.

Source: How Australia takes a Census (ABS cat. no.2903.0)

The ABS framework for social statistics, as published in *Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics* (ABS cat. no.4160.0), is built around two dimensions. The first dimension relates to a number of key areas of social concern:

- health
- family and community
- housing
- education and training
- work

- economic resources
- crime and justice
- culture and leisure, and
- population.

The second dimension focuses on population groups, which are of particular interest to the community and to governments because they may have special needs or be disadvantaged. These groups include:

- older people
- children
- youth
- families with children
- long-term unemployed
- lone parents
- people with disabilities

- carers
- recipients of various government benefits
- people with low incomes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- migrants, and
- people whose language background is not English.

Indigenous population estimates and life expectancy at birth

Final Indigenous population estimates, based on the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, were released in August 2008 in *Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006* (ABS cat. no.3238.0.55.001). Estimates were presented for various geographic levels of Australia.

Life expectancy at birth of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was released in May 2009 in *Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007* (ABS cat. no.3302.0.55.003). A new method to account for under-identification of Indigenous deaths, based on information from the 2006 Census Data Enhancement Indigenous Mortality Quality Study, was used to produce the life tables.

The Labour Program

Statistics on labour force participation, employment and unemployment are published monthly in *Labour Force, Australia* (ABS cat. no.6202.0). More detailed labour force information covering age, country of birth, family status, industry, occupation, hours of work and duration of unemployment is released on the ABS website either monthly or quarterly. In addition, data on under-employment and labour underutilisation are updated quarterly. Statistics on particular aspects of the Australian labour market, including labour force experience, working arrangements, forms of employment, labour mobility, under-employment, job search experience, independent contracting, labour hire, working time arrangements, retirement and retirement intentions, barriers and incentives to labour force participation, and marginal attachment to the labour force, are published periodically.

The program produces regular statistics on earnings, employee benefits and labour costs. Statistics on average weekly earnings of employees are published quarterly in *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia* (ABS cat. no.6302.0). Distributional data on employee earnings and hours, data on occupational earnings, and data on award and agreement coverage are available every two years in *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia* (ABS cat. no.6306.0). Data on details of major labour costs are available about six-yearly. Information on the number of employees and total employee earnings for the public sector (by state and territory, level of government and industry group) are available annually.

Statistics on job vacancies are published quarterly in *Job Vacancies, Australia* (ABS cat. no.6354.0). Data on industrial disputes, including working days lost, cause of dispute and reason work resumed, are also published quarterly in *Industrial Disputes, Australia* (ABS cat. no.6321.0.55.001).

The quarterly publication *Australian Labour Market Statistics* (ABS cat. no.6105.0) brings together a wide range of ABS labour data covering demographic characteristics of the labour force, employment and unemployment, labour under-utilisation, earnings and labour costs, industrial relations and job vacancies. It also includes feature articles on current labour market issues.

Did you know ... in trend terms, the average annual unemployment rate decreased from 7.4% for the financial year ended June 1999 to 4.9% for that ended June 2009. Since March 2009, the unemployment rate has risen by 0.5 percentage points to stand at 5.8% in June 2009.

Source: Labour Force, Australia (ABS cat. no.6202.0)

Statistical releases in 2008–09

Population and social statistics produced by the ABS include some regular series, as well as a range of measures that are produced less frequently or on a periodic or one-off basis. The regular series include: monthly labour force measures; quarterly population estimates; quarterly average weekly earnings figures; annual statistics on recorded crime, courts and prisoners; annual data on migration, births and causes of death; and biennial data on housing, household income and child care.

In 2008–09, results released from less frequent series included:

- A Profile of Carers in Australia (ABS cat. no.4448.0), produced with funding from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (ABS cat. no.4326.0), which provides internationally comparable data on three major disorder groups: anxiety disorders, affective disorders and substance use disorders, as well as information on level of impairment, health services used, physical conditions, social networks and care-giving
- 2007–08 National Health Survey (ABS cat. no.4364.0), which provides information on the health status of the population, health related aspects of lifestyle and other health risk factors, and the use of health services and other actions people have taken in relation to their health
- Information Paper: Census Data Enhancement—Indigenous Mortality Quality Study 2006–07 (ABS cat. no.4723.0)
- Research Paper: Experimental Estimates of Adult Literacy for Local Government Areas (Methodology Advisory Committee) (ABS cat. no.1352.0.55.094)
- Research paper: Exploring Measures of Low Social Capital (ABS cat. no.1351.0.55.024)
- Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia, 2007 (ABS cat. no.6361.0) and associated state data cubes, confidentialised unit record file (CURF) and survey user guide
- Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007 (ABS cat. no.3302.0.55.003). A new method to account for underidentification of Indigenous deaths, based on information from the 2006 Census Data Enhancement Indigenous Mortality Quality Study, was used to produce the life tables.

Other significant population and social statistical releases during 2008–09 are outlined below.

Outputs from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Final Indigenous population estimates, based on the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, were released in August 2008 in *Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006* (ABS cat. no.3238.0.55.001). Estimates were presented for various geographic levels of Australia.

Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices

The ABS released *Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices* (ABS cat. no.4602.0) in December 2008. This edition focused on energy use and conservation, and covered a range of issues including energy sources, appliances and energy saving measures.

A new output *Environmental Views and Behaviour* (ABS cat. no.4626.0.55.001) was released in June 2009. The output provides information on environmental concerns, personal energy and water use, waste collection and disposal and environmental involvement. Data from this survey are used to obtain a better understanding of the factors that influence people to participate in environmental activities and energy and water conservation practices.

Australian Social Trends

During 2008–09 the ABS converted its annual *Australian Social Trends* publication to a quarterly publication, with the first quarterly edition appearing in March 2009. Articles published in the March and June editions included articles about Australia's ageing population, health literacy, and student achievement in maths and science.

Release of the quarterly labour force underutilisation rate

The Australian labour market has experienced significant changes in the past few decades. Among these is the increase in the proportion of employed people working part-time (from 15% in 1978 to 28% in 2008). As part-time employment has become more prevalent, so too has underemployment, reflecting that underemployment is largely associated with part-time work. The quarterly labour force underutilisation rate was first released by the ABS in July 2008. This rate is the sum of the unemployment rate and the underemployment rate, and is becoming an important indicator of labour supply. The quarterly rate replaces the previous annual labour force underutilisation rate and is based on improved methodology, and provides more frequent and timely measures of changes in underemployment and, in turn, underutilisation than the previous annual measure.

Improved family estimates

Family estimates from the Labour Force Survey can be used to examine labour market activity within families, such as the concentration of employment and unemployment in two-parent, one-parent, and childless families. Family estimates have recently been improved with the introduction of a new methodology and expanded use of data collected in the Labour Force Survey. Information on these improvements is available in *Information Paper: Improvements to Family Estimates from the Labour Force Survey* (ABS cat. no.6224.0.55.002).

Release of a Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours CURF

The two-yearly Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) provides statistics on the composition and distribution of weekly earnings of employees, the hours they are paid for, and the methods used to set their pay. Estimates from the survey are used in developing and reviewing wages and labour market policies and in wage negotiation processes. A CURF from the Survey of EEH was released on Tuesday 31 March, as an expanded CURF available via the ABS Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL[™]). The release follows ongoing user interest in the greater availability of EEH data. The CURF was released under ABS cat. no.6306.0.55.001 and the associated technical manual released under cat. no.6306.0.55.002.

Redevelopment of the Forms of Employment Survey

The Forms of Employment Survey (FOES) collects information about the nature of employment arrangements in the Australian workforce. In 2008, FOES underwent major redevelopment in order to more precisely capture 'independent contractors' and other business operators. From 2008, information on independent contractors will be collected on an annual basis, while information on people who found their job through a labour hire company or employment agency will be conducted every three years. FOES was run in November 2008, with the results released in June 2009.

Benchmark revision of the Labour Force Survey

Every five years, the ABS rebases Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates to reflect more up-to-date estimates of the population based on the most recent Census of Population and Housing. Re-benchmarking took place in early 2009, when LFS estimates were revised using population benchmarks based on the 2006 Census. LFS estimates were revised back to June 2001.

Statistical developments in 2008–09

Development of an Australian Learning Statistics Information Base

In 2008–09, the ABS, in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and state and territory education and training authorities, commenced a feasibility trial for a significant enhancement to the National Schools Statistics Collection to create a new Australian Learning Statistics Information Base, incorporating statistical information on pre-school and school students allowing detailed analysis of learning pathways and outcomes.

Culture and leisure

The ABS released the *Information Paper: Defining Sport and Physical Activity, A Conceptual Model, 2008* (ABS cat. no.4149.0.55.001) in November 2008. This publication presents a conceptual model defining key concepts commonly used in survey research on sport and exercise. The model provides definitions of sport, exercise and physical recreation and examines the relationship between these concepts with the aim of aiding interpretation and future development of surveys in this field.

Towards Comparable Statistics for Cultural Heritage Organisations, 2008 (ABS cat. no.4916.0) was also released in November 2008. This publication identifies a set of key measures and standard methodologies to facilitate information sharing, benchmarking and time series comparisons among cultural heritage organisations. This is a first step towards an improvement in the overall quality and comparability of key data collected by Australia's cultural heritage sector, which encompasses museums, libraries, art museums and archives. Key measures covered include number of visits to the organisation, visitor satisfaction, age and sex distribution of visitors, size of the collection, number of employees/volunteers and financial information.

Census Data Enhancement Project

The ABS Census Data Enhancement project aims to enhance the value of the Census of Population and Housing data through linking it to other data sets. The project is designed to extract a 5% sample of the Australian population from the Census and link this, through probabilistic means, to the same sample of people in 2011 Census and beyond. The outcome of this work will be to examine shifts in population characteristics over time of the same cohort and to establish linkages to other data sets such as mortality, labour force and migrant data. This linkage can occur for a single Census or to the longitudinal data set.

In 2008–09 work was undertaken to test the robustness of the data linkage approach. This knowledge will allow the ABS to ensure accurate data linkage to the 2011 Census and beyond, and to other data sets. Further, work has been undertaken to ensure appropriate data management systems, project documentation and method assessment are put in place. Publications, presentations and interactions with key stakeholders have been undertaken to ensure information about the project is disseminated. Planning has already commenced toward the 2011 Census and the collection, processing and linkage of these data. Privacy considerations for the project have also been managed through consultations with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. One of the key outcomes of this project to date is the examination of the concordance of Indigenous people identified in the Census and the mortality data. The 2006 Census Data Enhancement Indigenous Mortality Quality Study involved linking Census records with death registration records to examine differences in the reporting of Indigenous status across the two datasets. This project assessed the under-coverage of Indigenous deaths in death registration records and established the basis for calculating and applying adjustment factors to improve estimates of Indigenous mortality and life expectancy.

Ivan Copley—2009 South Australian of the Year

Ivan Copley was named as the 2009 South Australian of the year. Ivan's role in the ABS as South Australian Indigenous Engagement Manager, in part largely reflects the significant amount of activity he has undertaken over many years relating to his devotion to reconciliation and helping indigenous Australians. Ivan is a committed man of Aboriginal descent from the Peramangk people, the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains and the Minang people of Western Australia. As founder and Chair of the Campbelltown Council Reconciliation Committee he has achieved excellent results, including the signing of a Statement of Reconciliation by the Mayor, CEO of the Council and himself. Through his work with Rotary he established the first clean drinking water purifier in the Aboriginal community of Leigh Creek, having raised the funds for it himself. Whilst at the Australian Bureau of Statistics he arranged for second-hand computers to be installed in Aboriginal communities without computer access. Recently he established an Aboriginal Funeral Fund to assist family members to travel to funerals. He raises money for the Fund through sales of merchandise in his spare time. These are just a few of the many ways in which Ivan is putting his heart and soul into bettering his community. He has been described as a 'bridge for all peoples.'


Demography

The ABS released population estimates for the states and territories at 31 December 2007 and 2008, components of population growth for the calendar year 2008, and other summary statistics in *Australian Demographic Statistics, Dec 2008* (ABS cat. no.3101.0) in June 2009. Regular annual statistics on births, deaths and migration were also released in separate publications.

To complement the release of population estimates, the ABS released *Population Estimates: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2009* (ABS cat. no.3228.0.55.001) in June 2009. This contains detailed descriptions of the concepts, sources and methods used by the ABS in the production of population estimates.

2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

The 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) was enumerated from July 2008 to March 2009. For the first time, the NATSISS collected information about Indigenous children as well as adults. Additional survey content was included, and the survey sample was expanded with user funding. The survey results, to be released from October 2009, will provide information about a wide range of topics such as family and culture, health, education, work, income and housing, law and justice, and transport.

2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

The 2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers is being enumerated from April to December 2009. Additional survey content was included and the survey sample was expanded with user funding. The survey results, to be released from October 2010, will provide information about three population groups—people with disability, older people (aged 60 years and over), and people who provide assistance to others because of a disability or the effects of old age.

Health surveys

During 2008–09, development of the 2010–11 National Health Survey and the 2010–11 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey commenced. Results from the surveys are expected to be released from March 2012 and will provide information on health status, health related aspects of lifestyle and other health risk factors, and the use of health services and other actions people have taken in relation to their health.

2009 Patient Experience Survey

Development work for a new survey of patient experience was completed in 2008–09. Data will be collected from July to December 2009, with first results due to be published in July 2010. The survey will collect information in relation to people's experiences with GP, specialist, hospital, pathology, diagnostic imaging and other medical services.

New crime victims data on relationship of victim to offender, and the Indigenous status of victims

For the first time since 2004, data on the relationship of an offender to a victim have been included in the annual *Recorded Crime—Victims* (ABS cat. no.4510.0) publication. Information has been included for all states and territories except Western Australia. Also included in the 2008 release of *Recorded Crime—Victims* is a significantly expanded set of data on the Indigenous status of victims for selected states and territories. Together, these data provide an important insight into understanding the nature of crime in Australia.

Children and Youth

Children and Youth Information Development Plan

The Information Paper: Improving Statistics on Children and Youth—An Information Development Plan, 2006 (ABS cat. no.4907.0), which was released in December 2006, is reviewed annually and the latest Annual Progress Report (including updated data development actions) was published on the National Statistical Service website in December 2008. More information on progress can be found in Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

> 2008 Childhood Education and Care Survey

The Childhood Education and Care Survey, which includes child care and early years learning topics, was enumerated in June 2008 and processed during 2008–09. The survey results, to be released in July 2009, will provide information about the number of children participating in pre-school programs, in both dedicated pre-schools and as part of pre-school programs conducted in long day-care centres. The survey collected data on child care costs, usual and average care usage (in addition to the historical short reference period measure of care use characteristics) and the need for child care. It will also provide some information about children starting school who have, or have not, participated in some form of pre-school program, the reasons for not attending, and reasons why parents would like more attendance.

> Information paper on data sources, gaps and opportunities in early childhood learning

Early Childhood Learning and Care: Data Sources, Gaps and Opportunities (ABS cat. no.4105.0.55.001) was released in April 2009. This information paper reports on a data mapping pilot project undertaken by the ABS (in collaboration with several other agencies) with the aim of improving the evidence base on early childhood.

2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing

Enumeration for the 2007–08 Survey of Income and Housing was completed in July 2008, and results were processed throughout 2008–09. This survey cycle contains new content on child care, and expanded content for housing including: housing mobility; intentions to move; dwelling characteristics such as structural problems, need for repairs, sources of water and energy, and smoke alarms; additional detail on sources of finance for first home buyers and for housing loans and refinancing; renter lease arrangements; changed rental circumstances and difficulties; public housing waiting lists; and neighbourhood characteristics. Results are expected to be released from July 2009.

2009–10 Household Income and Expenditure Survey

Development of the 2009–10 Household Income and Expenditure Survey was completed during 2008–09. This survey collects demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, child care arrangements, disability status, perceptions of financial situation, and financial details (for income, assets, liabilities and expenditure). The results will be used to: analyse and monitor the social and economic welfare of Australians, including household income distribution and the expenditure patterns of households within potentially disadvantaged groups (such as pensioners, one parent families and the unemployed); and assist in the planning of services and support arrangements. The survey is also the main basis for updating commodity weights in the Consumer Price Index.

However, additional development work is underway to expand the collection to meet new objectives for the survey. First, the sample size outside of capital cities, for income, housing and wealth measurement, has been significantly increased to improve the capacity of the survey to support COAG performance indicator reporting. Second, the capital city sample size for expenditure reporting is being very significantly increased, and the sample design and survey instruments are being redeveloped, to support the development and compilation of a new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index. This sample expansion is expected to go into the field in October 2009.

Handbook on Household Income Statistics

The ABS is chairing an international task force, brought together for 18 months under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians, to update the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics. Most of the work of the task force will be managed via teleconferencing, with a final face-to-face meeting to sign off the updated handbook for publication.

Developments in client engagement and output enhancement

The ABS has continued to work closely with its population and social statistics clients to ensure that:

- products and services continue to be relevant
- emerging needs of users of statistics are understood, and
- ▶ ABS decisions about collections and releases are explained.

The ABS continues to look for ways to strengthen engagement with key stakeholders and has established new partnerships, has strategically positioned outposted officers in Australian Government agencies, and initiated regular bilateral discussions at a senior level on key policy areas requiring a statistical input. Some highlights of client engagement and product enhancement activities follow, with more information on engagement with users of statistics in Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

Support for agencies

The ABS has continued to support the work of other agencies in developing population and social statistical products and capability. A major focus during 2008–09 was support for the Working Groups established under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to develop the new reporting framework associated with National Specific Purpose Payments Agreements and National Partnerships. For further information see Chapter 5, The role of official statistics in COAG information—related initiatives for measuring outcomes. In addition, advice and expertise continued to be provided through membership of steering and working groups associated with:

- ▶ COAG's 'Report on Government Services' and 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage', and
- key government-funded surveys for which other agencies are responsible, including the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth and the Australian Early Development Index national implementation.

During 2008–09, the ABS continued its strong engagement with the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) by providing survey development and data collection services for wave three of the study, under a partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The ABS also provided in principle agreement to extend the LSAC partnership and support waves five to eight of LSAC (including mid-waves), and to undertake a broader range of services than the ABS has been supplying in respect of LSAC waves two to four. The enhanced role proposed for ABS in future LSAC waves will build upon the statistical infrastructure strengths that the ABS can bring to such large survey operations.

More information on support for agencies can be found in Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

Did you know... the proportion of people aged 25 to 64 years with a non-school qualification increased from 47% in 1998 to 61% in 2008.

Source: *Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2009* (ABS cat. no.1383.0.55.001)

Section 5

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION



chapter 9



SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Introduction

The ABS:

- ▶ is the central statistical authority for the Australian Government
- provides statistical services for the state and territory Governments
- ▶ collects, compiles, analyses and disseminates statistics and related information
- ensures the coordination of the statistical activities of, and provides advice and assistance to, other government agencies, and
- provides liaison between Australia and other countries and international organisations on statistical matters.

The ABS is required to report against the outcomes and outputs specified in the 2008–09 Portfolio Budget Statements, presented to the Parliament in May 2008. As noted in Overview of the ABS (Chapter 2), the ABS has one outcome and one output group (Australian Bureau of Statistics). There are two subgroups in the output group—Economic Statistics and Population and Social Statistics.

The Portfolio Budget Statement for the ABS sets out performance indicators, used to evaluate the outcomes for the ABS. Four of these are against the overall outcome, and three are against the output group, as shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Performance indicators for the ABS

Performance information for Outcome 1	Performance information for Output 1.1
1. Integrity in statistical operations	1. Improve the quality of outputs
2. Relevance of ABS output	2. Increase the quantity of outputs
 Appropriate use of statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies 	3. Achievement of cost effective outputs
 Improving coordination of the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics produced by other official bodies 	

A summary assessment against each of the performance indicators is outlined below. Some topics are explained in more depth in the subsequent chapters:

- Engagement with users and producers of statistics
- Provider/respondent relationships
- Quality and timeliness
- Communication of statistics
- Extended analysis of statistics
- Statistical standards and infrastructure
- International engagement, and
- Effectiveness of activities.

Summary of performance information for Outcome 1

Integrity in statistical operations

1.1 An objective statistical service, as demonstrated by:

release of reliable/accurate statistics

During 2008–09, the ABS reviewed its approach to quality assurance, and has commenced implementing a range of measures aimed at maintaining a low incidence of statistical errors. For example, The ABS introduced Quality Declarations on its website from October 2007. Quality Declarations describe the quality of statistical release, allowing users to determine the fitness for purpose of the product being viewed. In addition, the ABS releases information on any errors found in the statistics it produces.

The ABS continues to refine its products to ensure they remain relevant. For example, during 2008–09, the ABS continued implementing a revised classification of industry, *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006* (ABS cat. no.1292.0), which will enable ABS statistics to better reflect the economy in the real world.

For further information see Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness; Chapter 13, Communication of statistics; and Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

open statistical process

In 2008–09, the ABS undertook extensive user consultation on a range of statistical developments. For example, the Economic Statistics User Group (ESUG) met to discuss recent developments in ABS economic statistics, such as: proposed reductions to the ABS work program; upcoming development in labour force statistics; the ABS response to the global financial crisis; ABS plans for enhanced economic analysis using microdata; and statistical issues associated with climate change.

Methodological developments were open to scrutiny, through information papers and the Methodological Advisory Committee. The Committee meets twice a year and consists of

professional statisticians external to the ABS, who provide peer review of methodological developments in the ABS.

For further information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics; Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness; and Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

trust and cooperation of providers

The ABS recognises its obligation to respondents in statistical collections, and has produced service charters relating to both business surveys and household surveys. Continuing high response rates demonstrate a good level of cooperation by providers. The ABS works hard to secure the trust and confidence of data providers, and endeavours to reduce the burden placed on data providers by expanding the use of administrative data.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires the ABS to publish and disseminate compilations and analysis of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act. The ABS meets the confidentiality requirements of the Act by ensuring that information provided is securely maintained, used only for statistical purposes, and used only in unidentifiable microdata files to support research and analysis. In addition, the ABS ensures that identifying information provided by a household is not revealed.

For further information see Chapter 11, Provider/respondent relationships.

2 Relevance of ABS output

2.1 Statistical output which meets the needs of key economic and social data in terms of:

support to decision making

The ABS continued to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion by increasing accessibility to the outputs of statistical activities. In 2008–09, ABS statistics were used to support decision making and research.

For further information see Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

demonstrated high levels of use

The ABS website remains the primary access point for the majority of users of ABS information, with website users accessing ABS web pages 193,519,053 million times in 2008–09. This is an increase of 27% over 2007–08 and 47% over 2006–07.

The National Information and Referral Service (NIRS) is the main entry point to the ABS for basic information and statistical enquiries from external customers. The number of emails received by NIRS during 2008–09 was approximately 3% higher than those received in 2007–08, while the number of calls answered has decreased by 12%. The decrease in call volume reflects the waning Census cycle, the reduction in opening hours for the telephone service, and possibly an increase in web literacy and increasing reliance on the free data available on the ABS website.

For further information see Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

2.2 Openness of planning process

The ABS mission statement and corporate plan provide the context and high level framework for making decisions on the ABS' forward work program. While much of the ABS work program remains constant from year to year, the planning process requires the ABS to examine the environment in which it is working and identify future statistical needs.

The ABS undertakes user consultation regularly to gather the views of users about aspects of the ABS' work. For example, during 2009, the Statistician and senior members of the executive undertook a round of user consultations to discuss priorities for 2009–10 and beyond, in order to determine possible savings initiatives or programs that might be reinstated or expanded.

For further information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics; Chapter 18, ABS corporate governance; and Appendix 2, User groups advising the ABS.

3 Appropriate use of statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies

3.1 Lead the development of national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies, and their implementation within the broader Australian statistical system

The ABS develops national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies, which are applied, as appropriate, to all ABS statistical collections, including business and household surveys. For example, during 2008–09, the ABS released a new edition of the Standard Economic Sector Classifications of Australia (SESCA 2008), and the second edition of the Australian Culture and Leisure Classification.

The ABS takes a leading role by encouraging other Australian, state and territory government agencies to adopt these standards, frameworks and methodologies in their statistical activities.

For further information see Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

3.2 Contribute to the development of key international standards, frameworks and methodologies, and implement them as appropriate

The ABS supports sound methodological approaches to the development of standards, aids international comparability, where meaningful, and helps ensure that such standards and statistical developments reflect Australian user interests. User interest in these types of studies continues to develop.

During 2008–09, ABS staff have continued to be active participants in the review of key international macro-economic standards, which began in 2003. The review focused on maintaining the relevance of economic statistics in a changing environment and on ensuring the various economic standards are appropriately aligned. The ABS intends to implement the revised macro-economic standards, in conjunction with the implementation of Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006, for the 2008–09 release of the annual national accounts in November 2009.

For further information see Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

Improving coordination of the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics produced by other official bodies

4.1 Statistical Clearing House activity

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) pays particular attention to eliminating duplication in business surveys, and ensures that surveys conducted follow good statistical methodologies and practices.

In 2008–09, the SCH approved 74 surveys to proceed. Of the 74 approved surveys during 2008–09, 19 of these were high profile reviews which were large surveys that approached more than 5,000 businesses or have a sample size of more than 2,000 businesses.

For further information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

4.2 Assisting other official bodies with integration of administrative and statistical data, including outposting ABS officers, and providing training on statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies

The ABS provides assistance through outposted officers and training courses, and by supporting projects on statistical developments. In 2008–09, ABS officers were outposted to eight Australian Government departments, and 20 state and territory government departments.

The National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI) in the ABS, along with the State and Territory Statistical Services units in each regional office, coordinated the development and presentation of a wide range of training courses on statistical issues in 2008–09. The NSTI conducted a number of training courses for users and producers of ABS statistics during 2008–09, including the 'Turning Data into Information' and 'Analysing Survey Data Made Simple' courses.

The ABS supports projects on statistical developments. For example, in 2008–09, the ABS worked closely with the Bureau of Meteorology on water information, including work to articulate respective roles and understand the relationships between our different water statistics products, and to minimise duplication of data collection from providers.

For further information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

4.3 Identifying, storing and disseminating statistics from other official bodies

The ABS works closely with a range of partners to extend the use of statistics by exploring information needs, examining potential data sources, and advising on issues around the collection of statistics.

For example, during 2008–09, the ABS worked closely with Police Commissioners in all states and territories to obtain high quality comparable data across jurisdictions for the compilation of national crime statistics. To aid in this work, a significant amount of effort has gone into the development of a National Crime Recording Standard and this standard has now been implemented in all jurisdictions. The ABS continues to support efforts in all states and territories to improve the quality and comparability of crime data.

For further information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

Summary of performance information for Outcome 1, output group 1.1

Improve the quality of outputs

1.1 Achieve or exceed timeliness, statistical reliability, response rates and accuracy objectives:

timeliness

The timeliness of statistical information can be measured by the gap between the reference period (the period the data relate to) and the date of release of results. The ABS continues to adhere to pre-announced release dates and make improvements, where possible, to the timeliness achieved.

The high standard of timely release of statistical tables was maintained in 2008–09. In addition, elapsed time between the end of the reference period and the supply of confidentialised unit record file (CURF) data has significantly improved over recent years.

For further information see Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness.

statistical reliability

The ABS aims to produce high quality statistics that can be used with confidence. In 2008–09, the ABS continued to take steps to maintain and improve the reliability of statistics. The ABS regularly reviews the methodologies used to produce statistics, providing the opportunity to make improvements and incorporate new approaches, where appropriate.

For example, the ABS minimises the impact of non-sampling errors by use of best practice procedures in questionnaire design, interview procedures, data validation and repair, and processing. Any significant changes to questionnaire wording or data collection methods are carefully trialled and evaluated before they are implemented.

For further information see Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness.

response rates

In 2008–09, the ABS has maintained high response rates for both household and business surveys. For example, the Quarterly Business Indicators Survey has a target response rate of 85%. In 2008–09, the response rate for the survey was 92%. The ABS works hard to improve response rates, where needed.

For further information see Chapter 11, Provider/respondent relationships.

accuracy

The accuracy of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure. Descriptions of accuracy, as well as extensive information on the statistical methods used in collections, are routinely provided in concepts, sources and methods publications, the explanatory notes in publications, and through the Statistical Clearing House.

In 2008–09, the ABS continued to work towards ensuring that statistics released were accurate. For example, any major changes to methodology are explained in feature articles or information papers, such as *Changes to Weights of the Price Indexes for the Output of the General Construction Industry, 2008* (ABS cat. no.6406.0) about changes to producer price indexes, and *Experimental Estimates of Industry Multifactor Productivity, 2007* (ABS cat. no.5260.55.001) about new methods for industry level multifactor productivity estimation.

For further information see Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness.

2 Increase the quantity of outputs

2.1 Increase the range of statistics disseminated

The ABS releases a wide range of information from its collections through publications (in electronic, and in some cases, paper formats), spreadsheets and datacubes. The ABS released an extensive range of statistics in 2008–09. The number of publications released in 2008–09 was 805.

During 2008–09, the ABS released 15 new CURFs, including Expanded CURFs. There are currently 181 (latest edition) CURFs available and all but nine pre-2001 Basic CURFs are accessible on the Remote Access Data Laboratory RADL[™].

For further information see Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

2.2 Innovative outputs

In 2008–09, the ABS continued to make statistical outputs more accessible. For example, a number of improvements were made to the ABS website during 2008–09 including the introduction of open access licensing to the bulk of the content on the ABS website through the Creative Commons 'Attribution 2.5 Australia' licence.

For further information see Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

3 Achievement of cost effective outputs

3.1 Conduct efficiency reviews and audits, and implement their recommendations

The ABS endeavours to find ways to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. A number of processes, systems and controls have been implemented, for both statistical and non-statistical activities, to assist the ABS to meet these goals of greater efficiency and effectiveness. These include the strategic audit and review program, operational and statistical reviews, as well as special initiatives such as the operations research initiative.

During 2008–09, the Data Collection Methodology section has provided methodological leadership to the development of electronic data collection with the aim of improving response rates and data quality. This was achieved by improving cost efficiency for a range of ABS surveys, including the simplification of survey forms, and improving respondent communication strategies for surveys.

For further information see Chapter 17, Effectiveness of activities.

3.2 Test operating efficiencies of statistical activities by benchmarking internally and externally

Many of the reviews and audits conducted seek to ensure that the ABS achieves costeffective outputs, either as a primary or secondary objective. A key approach in achieving this is reviewing ABS activities, which provides the opportunity for the ABS to understand and learn from best practice, and to improve its performance.

Key reviews that were conducted during 2008–09 include an audit of general risk management practice across the ABS, a review of compliance with various clauses of the Statistics Determination, and an audit of the system for paying ABS interviewers.

For further information see Chapter 17, Effectiveness of activities; and Chapter 18, Corporate governance.

3.3 Market test a number of non-statistical activities to identify possible outsourcing opportunities

The ABS selects and engages consultants in a way that provides value for money. During 2008–09, 28 new consultants were engaged to carry out projects, or provide professional and technical advice that could not be provided by staff of the ABS. The total expenditure of these was \$688,791. Fifteen consultancies had been let in previous years, and continued into 2008–09, with an expenditure of \$664,214 during 2008–09. The ABS engages consultants for a number of reasons, including: the need for specialised skills; access to the latest technology and experience in its application; the need for independent studies; and a lack of available in-house resources.

For further information see Appendix 3, Consultancy services.

3.4 Minimise respondent load

The ABS endeavours to minimise respondent load by promoting efficiency and effectiveness of ABS operations, and the ABS survey program. Information is not requested unless the collection is of high priority for the national statistical program. To further reduce respondent load, forms are carefully designed, and thoroughly tested, for ease of use.

For business surveys, there is close liaison with representative groups, in relation to both the survey program and the demands on businesses.

For household surveys, the ABS seeks to ensure that information is obtained from selected dwellings with minimum inconvenience. For example, ABS interviewers are trained to be flexible and organise interview times that are most suitable for respondents, as well as enter responses directly into a notebook computer in an efficient manner.

For further information see Chapter 11, Provider/respondent relationships.

Agency resource statements and resources for outcomes

Agency resource statement 2008–09

Agency Resource Statement 2008–09	Actual Available Appropriation	Payments Made	Balance Remaining
	(a)	(b)	(a-b)
	\$'000	\$'000	\$′000
Ordinary Annual Services Departmental appropriation			
Prior year departmental appropriation	21,796	20,311	-
2007–08 Departmental appropriations reduced Act 3	(1,485)	-	-
Departmental appropriation Act 1	282,775	252,550	29,036
Departmental appropriation Act 3	982	982	-
2008–09 Departmental appropriations reduced Act 1	(1,189)	-	-
S.31 Relevant agency receipts	34,299	33,014	1,285
S.30A Appropriations to take account of recoverable GST	10,407	10,407	-
S.30 Repayments to the Commonwealth	1,811	1,811	-
Total	349,396	319,075	30,321
Total ordinary annual services	349,396	319,075	30,321
Other than Ordinary Annual Appropriations Departmental non-operating			
Prior year non-operating appropriation	2,967	-	-
2007–08 Departmental appropriations reduced Act 4	(2,968)	-	-
Equity injections	5,365	2,211	-
2008–09 Departmental appropriations reduced Act 2	(3,153)	-	-
Total	2,211	2,211	-
Total other than ordinary annual services	2,211	2,211	-
Special Accounts			
Opening balance	109		109
Non-appropriation receipts	29		29
Closing balance	138		138
Total Resourcing and Payments	351,745	321,286	30,459

Resources for outcomes

Resources for Outcomes 2008–09	Budget	Actual Expenses	Variation
	(a)	(b)	(a-b)
	2008-09	2008–09	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Outcome 1			
Informed decision making, research and discussion with governments and the community based on the provision of a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service			
Output Group 1.1			
Departmental outputs			
Output Group 1.1.1 Economic statistics	144,018	177,653	
Output 1.1.2 – Population and social statistics	138,757	148,317	
Revenues from independent sources (section 31)	17,960	-	
Special Accounts			
Opening balance	112	-	
Receipts	6	-	
Total for Outcome 1	300,853	325,970	(25,117)*
Departmental	300,853	325,970	(25,117)
Average staffing level (number)	2,579	2,575	4

The Budget (column a) is consistent with Table 2.1 Total resources for outcome 1 in the 2008/2009 Portfolio Budget Statements. The Actual Expenses (column b) reconciles to the Departmental Expenses in Note 21B – in the 2008/2009 Financial Statements.

* Note: The variance of \$25.1m is due to:

Additional Revenue from independent sources and other gains	\$11.5m
2008/2009 Operating Deficit	\$13.8m
Amendments to Appropriation	(\$ 0.2m)

chapter 10



ENGAGEMENT WITH USERS AND PRODUCERS OF STATISTICS

Introduction

The ABS leads an effective national statistical service. This involves providing statistical services that meet the needs of users in government and the broader community and working with those who are holders or custodians of statistical data. The ABS coordinates these statistical services, as well as assisting data custodians, such as state and territory governments, in making the data available. ABS engagement with users and producers of statistical services is vital to meeting this objective.

Reflecting the wide range of users and producers of statistical services, the ABS uses a variety of mechanisms to engage with them, including:

- meeting with key users and producers of statistics
- working in partnership with both users and producers
- placing outposted officers in departments and agencies, and
- conducting training courses.

Working with users of statistics

The ABS encourages the use of statistics, for informed decision making, research and discussion. As well as making statistics readily available and easy to understand, by employing the website, using the media, presenting at conferences and other forums, and providing a range of consultancy services, the ABS actively looks for ways to work with users of statistics and those needing information to develop and/or evaluate policy. For more information, see Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

The ABS works closely with users of statistics to enhance user understanding of ABS products, and to ensure that ABS statistics are relevant to user requirements. Engagement with users of statistics takes place in a number of different ways, including:

- user and advisory groups
- meetings with representatives of government agencies using ABS statistics for policy development, implementation and evaluation purposes
- forums involving non-government and/or government delegates, where ways of producing useful information are considered
- consultations, and
- submissions to parliamentary and government reviews.

Australian Statistics Advisory Council	The Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC) is the highest level statistical advisory body, with its advisory role to the Minister and the Australian Statistician set down in the <i>Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975</i> . Members of ASAC are generally users of statistics, with representation from producers of statistics as well (see Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS or www.asac.gov.au for more information about ASAC).
State Statistical Forum	The State Statistical Forum (SSF), involving the state and territory government members of ASAC, is another important advisory group for the ABS. The forum meetings are opportunities for the ABS to hear about state and territory government priorities, and to provide information to these representatives about the data that is produced by the ABS.
Australian Government Statistical Forum	The Australian Government Statistical Forum (AGSF) encourages communication among senior staff of Australian Government agencies with important roles in the National Statistical Service (NSS). The forum aims to: promote NSS initiatives among agencies; identify and promote partnerships and collaborations; and encourage the use of best practice in data collection and management.

Other examples of engagement with users of statistics include:

User consultation on the forward work program

In early 2009, the Statistician and senior members of the executive undertook a round of user consultations to discuss priorities for 2009–10 and beyond, in order to determine possible savings initiatives or programs that might be reinstated or expanded. The outcomes of all these consultations were discussed with the Australian Statistics Advisory Council in April 2009 to seek their comments and advice. The 2009–10 work program was finalised, taking account of user comments.

User and advisory groups established by the ABS

A full list of user and advisory groups is presented in Appendix 2, User groups advising the ABS.

The **Housing Statistics User Advisory Group (HSUAG)** has representation from state and territory governments and the Australian Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Treasury; Productivity Commission; and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Members also include community sector and industry representatives, and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Following the May 2008 HSUAG meeting comments from members provided input to the housing Information Development Plan, which is expected to be published in late 2009.

The **Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group** met in September 2008 to the discuss the progress of data development activities identified in the 2006 Children and Youth Information Development Plan, and to consider contributions to the progress report that was subsequently published in December 2008. The ABS also informed members about, and sought advice on, the many developments in the ABS forward work program relating to children and youth statistics. These developments included: the Data Mapping Pilot on Early Childhood; Census Data Enhancement; and census developments relating to children and youth.

The **Migrant Statistics Advisory Group** considers statistical priorities relevant to migrant outcomes, with a particular focus on improving understanding of differential outcomes for migrants entering Australia under different migration programs.

The **Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics** met in June 2009 to discuss new ABS directions in the Indigenous Administrative Data project, plans for Indigenous enumeration in the 2011 Census and a draft statistical framework for Indigenous wellbeing.

The **Labour Statistics Advisory Group** includes academics and key users of ABS labour data. The group meets annually and provides feedback and advice on labour issues and priorities from a wide range of perspectives. Issues discussed in 2008–09 included: the strategic directions for labour market statistics; Labour Force Survey developments; the redevelopment of the Forms of Employment Survey; the review of the Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey; and proposed developments relating to the measures of labour underutilisation.

The **Demography Statistics Advisory Group** was formed to provide an annual forum for key users and experts in the field of demography statistics. The aim of the group is to provide feedback and advice to the ABS on issues relating to the Demography Statistics program.

The annual **Agriculture and Land Statistics Workshop** met in March 2009, with members advised about the current agricultural collection program including an update on the Agricultural Resource Management survey and the new suite of surveys undertaken for the wheat use and stocks collection; the proposed collection strategy for 2008–09 and beyond with particular reference to the 2010–11 Agricultural Census year; the Caring for our Country initiative with a presentation from the Department of Agricultural Resource Economics (ABARE) on their farm surveys; and an outline of other work undertaken by the ABS which relates to agriculture including the multifactor productivity work and the integrated financial statistics collection. An outline of the work undertaken by the ABS to better spatially represent data collected as part of the agricultural and resource management collections was also provided.

The **Water Statistics User Group** considers issues relating to water statistics and information needs including the ABS water statistics work program. The Water Statistics User group met in March 2009 with topics discussed including: water information initiatives arising from the *Water Act 2007*, with presentations from the Bureau of Meteorology on the National Water Account and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority about information

needs for the Basin Plan; the National Water Commission and Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts gave overviews of their information requirements; and an update on the progress towards water accounting standards was presented by the Water Accounting Development Committee Office. The group also heard of the ABS' plans for the next *Water Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no.4610.0) and of recent and upcoming ABS water statistics releases.

The **Energy Statistics User Group** met in June 2009 to hear progress on a number of key initiatives relating to Australia's energy statistics. The ABS reported on its 2007–08 Energy Supply survey, its household survey outputs, its international engagement, its soon to be released Energy Accounts, alternative view of energy activity and the upcoming 2008–09 Energy, Water and Environment Survey. ABARE outlined the recent developments in compiling Australia's energy statistics. The Department of Climate Change described progress with the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System. The Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts presented a paper on commercial buildings energy use. The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism described their Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program and Energy Efficiency Data Project.

During 2008–09 the **International Trade in Services User Group (ITSUG)** met to discuss recent work in the international trade in services area of statistics, both by the ABS and other departments/agencies. A particular area of interest was the Mortimer review of Export Policies and Programs, with ITSUG members preparing responses and funding proposals to go with that review.

During 2008–09, the **Economic Statistics User Group (ESUG)** met to discuss recent developments in ABS economic statistics, such as:

- proposed reductions to the ABS Work Program
- upcoming Development in Labour Force Statistics
- the ABS response to the global financial crisis
- ABS Plans for Enhanced Economic Analysis Using Micro-Data, and
- statistical issues associated with climate change.

ESUG was also advised of ABS plans for reviews in the areas of merchandise trade statistics, financial statistics and the stage of production price indexes.

The **Australian Transport Statistics Network (ATSN)** met three times during 2008–09. Specific projects that have been progressed through this group during 2008–09 include:

- exploring the addition of Australian Business Number to Motor Vehicle Registrations. As well as providing direct measures of business use of vehicles, it would allow more efficient survey design for transport collections such as Survey of Motor Vehicle Use, Freight Movement Survey and Transport Industry Survey
- nature and content of a future freight movement survey, and
- modelling of Survey of Motor Vehicle Use.

The ATSN has provided useful input into the work of the data subgroup of the Strategic Transport and Technology Working Group, of which the ABS is a member. This Working

Group was set up by the Australian Transport Council to develop frameworks and a work program to implement the National Transport Policy Framework.

In late 2008 ABS Victoria completed a **Victorian State Government** engagement review. The outcomes were presented at the April 2009 Victorian Statistics Advisory Forum (VSAF) where all recommendations were endorsed. The key outcome of the review was that VSAF was to continue as the key engagement forum for identifying statistical priorities but that representatives needed further support to engage across their respective departments. The Victorian outposted officer program was strongly endorsed as an effective strategy to engage with Victoria State Government to progress the NSS. Further, it was identified that there were opportunities to engage at more senior levels across Victoria, in particular through the Secretaries Coordination and Management Committee.

The ABS Tasmanian Office continued to provide statistical support to the **Demographic Change Advisory Council** in 2008–09. Chaired by the Tasmanian Treasurer, this Council brings together senior government ministers and community and business representatives to research and analyse trends relating to demographic change, to lead and influence discussion and encourage information sharing regarding Tasmania's demographic opportunities and challenges. The Tasmanian ABS Regional Director sits on the Council as ex-officio member and the ABS Tasmanian Office contributed to the development and review of papers released by the Council on topics such as:

- Demographic change: challenges that Tasmania faces now and into the future: discussion paper
- Demographic change in Tasmania: strategies for addressing challenges and opportunities: discussion paper
- Workforce health
- Demographic change: impact on state schools
- Ageing and its impact on disability and housing
- ▶ Tasmania's population 1996–2006: what's changed?, and
- Migration trends in Tasmania.

In addition, the ABS supported the Department of Treasury and Finance to develop and produce sub-state population projections within Tasmania.

In 2008–09, the ABS Tasmanian Office continued its support for the **Tasmania Together** process, providing ongoing statistical support and input into the development and improvement of benchmarks and indicators. Outputs included the Online Benchmark Reporting system, which was launched in July 2008. The new system allows visitors to the Tasmania Together website to see the most current information available for benchmarks and indicators, including graphs, explanations of measures, sources and comments from the Progress Board. The ABS also completed a project to examine the potential to report benchmark data at sub-state level, and assisted with the development of a community survey to provide data for new benchmarks.

Information Development Plans

Information Development Plans (IDPs) involve a review of the needs of users in a particular area of statistics, a review of available sources of data, an assessment of the gaps and overlaps in information available, and recommendations on a future work program. These recommendations are agreed with users of statistics, as well as other data custodians.

During 2008–09, progress on a number of IDPs was made, including:

Australian Capital Territory Information Development Plan, 2008–2011

During 2008–09, the ACT Regional Office, in conjunction with the ACT Government progressed implementation of the *Australian Capital Territory Information Development Plan (IDP), 2008–2011* (ABS cat. no.1344.8.55.003) under the leadership and coordination of the ACT Whole of Government Information Development Steering Committee (IDSC). In February 2008, the Information Development Working Group (IDWG) was established to supplement work done by the IDSC and provide expertise in data collection, use and storage as well as provide a vehicle for ACT agencies to compare and share best practice in data and information development. Membership for the IDSC and IDWG consist of representatives from ACT Government agencies and the ABS.

Arts and Heritage Information Development Plan

An Arts and Heritage IDP, which was released in 2008, sets out major information needs and priorities across a range of areas including the economic and social contribution of arts and heritage, as well as cultural identity and access to arts and heritage services. The plan identifies a number of research themes that could be pursued by researchers in this field. To facilitate this, a meeting was held in early 2009 with researchers and representatives from government agencies. A number of key directions for new research to address gaps identified in the IDP were determined and will be progressed in partnership arrangements between researchers and agencies such as the Australia Council.

Partnerships with government in 2008–09

In June 2009, the ABS and the **Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR)** signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). The first related to an ABS contribution to an Innovation Measurement Framework, while the second is for DIISR funding support for the conduct of the Business Characteristics Survey 2008–09 and publishing related aggregate data. In May 2009, a MOU was signed with DIISR in respect of full survey services for the 2008–09 Survey of Venture Capital and Later Stage Private Equity.

The ABS and the **Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE)** signed a MOU in June 2009, relating to the inclusion of questions relating to cyber-safety in the ABS Children's Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities Survey and provision of related survey data.

A MOU was signed in March 2009 with the **Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA)** in respect of full survey services for the March 2009 Survey of Foreign Currency Hedging by Australian Enterprises.

In 2008–09, the ABS entered into a MOU with the **Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry** to provide data on wheat grain stocks and use at the national and state levels. ABARE uses the outputs provided by ABS to produce a monthly report on committed and uncommitted wheat grain stocks in Australia.

In addition to these new partnerships with government, the ABS also has many ongoing partnerships in place.

Department of Climate Change	The ABS has been working with the Department of Climate Change and other stakeholders to ensure Australia's future energy and emission information needs are met. The National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System was introduced from 1 July 2008, with reporting entities required to report their 2008–09 energy production, energy use and emissions by October 2009. It is hoped that this data will be a key data source for Australia's future energy and emissions information needs.
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	The Natural Resource Management and Environment Protection and Heritage Standing Committees commissioned a Joint Working Group on Improved Environmental Reporting to develop a National Environmental Information System (NEIS). The NEIS is designed to establish a national environmental information system that will enable the enduring provision of policy relevant, consistent, accurate and timely environmental data at national to regional level. During 2008–09, the ABS continued working closely with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and a range of other national and regional agencies, to progress the NEIS. In particular, the ABS assisted with an Environmental Information Initiatives Stocktake and Assessment project commissioned by the Department on behalf of the Natural Resources Policies and Programs Committee, a project aimed at providing background information to the Committee's deliberations on development of a NEIS.
Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	During 2008–09, the Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts funded the ABS to conduct a 2008–09 Land Management Practices Survey in the catchments of the Great Barrier Reef. The survey outputs will provide baseline measures of the agricultural land management occurring in the catchment which would directly impact the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Departments of Resources, Energy and Tourism, and Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	The Departments of Resources, Energy and Tourism, and Innovation, Industry, Science and Research have funded the ABS to provide accurate, comprehensive industry-wide information on energy use and management, water use and management, and general environmental management in the business sector for the 2008–09 reference year.
Water Accounting Development Committee Office	The ABS has been working with the Water Accounting Development Committee Office to develop water use accounting standard and guidelines, and during 2008–09 outposted an officer to the office to assist in this work.

Forums involving non-government and/or government delegates

The ABS is a member of the **Technical Reference Group for the national implementation of the Australian Early Development Index** and, in 2009, provided technical advice to the group on statistical issues arising from the project, particularly with regard to data access and confidentiality.

The ABS is a member of the **COAG Productivity Data Development Group**, which is responsible for coordinating data development work required for the accurate measurement of indicators agreed under the three National Agreements that fall under the Productivity Agenda.

The ABS was also represented at the **National Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data** meetings, held in October 2008 and June 2009. Topics covered included estimates of life expectancy, the measurement of social and emotional wellbeing in national surveys and continued work to improve the identification of Indigenous people in administrative collections.

The ABS participates in a wide variety of other information, data development and modelling forums, including: the steering committee and technical working group for the **Australian Population and Policy Simulation Model**; the **National Housing and Homelessness Information Management Group**; the **National Community Services Information Management Group**; and the **National Housing Supply Council Data Subcommittee**.

The ABS is a member of a **Natural Resource Management (NRM) Knowledge and Information** task group. This group was established by a Natural Resource Policy and Program Committee following a decision by the NRM Ministerial Council to make NRM knowledge and information a priority area. The group is developing a strategy paper to recommend strategies to integrate NRM knowledge and information activities.

Consultations

The ABS periodically undertakes a major review of its household survey program to ensure that emerging issues are being adequately addressed and ongoing measures remain relevant to users. In the latest review, priorities identified through the consultation undertaken have been developed into a broad coordinated long-term survey program that has generally been supported by key stakeholders. The funding implications of both sustaining the existing program, and expanding it to meet identified priorities, are being explored.

A review of the content and strategy for the Agriculture Statistics Program was undertaken during 2008–09 to address the increasing demands being placed on ABS for a wider range of economic, social and environmental information. A number of changes to the frequency and timing of content have been made commencing with the next Agricultural Commodity Survey (to be dispatched in June 2009).

The ABS held a roundtable discussion on climate change and implications for statistics in November 2008. Over 30 representatives from both the public and private sector discussed the implications of climate change and climate change initiatives on existing ABS statistics, as well as emerging new information demands.

Submissions to reviews

ABS submissions to parliamentary inquiries are listed in Appendix 8.

During 2008–09, the ABS contributed submissions to the **Review of Broadband and Digital Economy Future Directions** by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

In February 2009, the ABS made a submission to the **Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities**. The submission highlighted the importance of quality statistics in providing evidence with which to assess the wellbeing of regional and remote Indigenous communities.

The ABS was involved in providing input to the Attorney-General's Department as part of the overall government response to recommendations from the **Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission**.

In May 2009, the ABS made a submission on 'A National Waste Policy: Managing Waste to 2020; Consultation Paper by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and The Arts'. This submission reinforced the role of the ABS in waste statistics, and how the ABS could potentially contribute in this field. This submission complemented the 2008 ABS submission to the **Inquiry into the Management of Australia's Waste Streams**.

In September 2008, the ABS made a submission to the **Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper**. This submission highlighted the importance of climate change issues to economic, social and environmental statistics and the role of the ABS in addressing these issues. Particular statistical issues relating to the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme were also addressed. In October 2008, the ABS made a submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce. The submission advised the Standing Committee of relevant measures to inform their Inquiry. In addition, in September 2008, the ABS organised a workshop on the gender pay gap to help inform key stakeholders of data issues associated with the measurement of pay equity.

The ABS published an article on paid maternity leave entitlements in Australia. The article was produced to meet the statistical needs of the Productivity Commission inquiry into paid maternity, paternity and parental leave and was published in the July 2008 edition of *Australian Labour Market Statistics* (ABS cat. no.6105.0). The article led to further data provision to the Inquiry.

In August 2008, the ABS was invited to contribute to the **Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Improving Access to Victorian Public Sector Information and Data**, with the Victorian Regional Director invited to appear before the committee. The ABS submission promotes key aspects and principles that must be considered in improving access to Victorian public sector information and data. In particular, the submission articulates the logic behind the advancement of the National Statistical Service (NSS) and considers that the benefit from efforts to increasingly share information would be maximised if a broad national and collaborative perspective is taken. A full copy of the submission is available at http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/edic/inquiries/access_to_PSI/default.htm.

Working with producers of statistics

In addition to the ABS, Australia has many producers of statistics, including other specialist research organisations such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and ABARE. In addition, universities, other research centres and other government agencies carry out surveys to collect information needed for policy development and other purposes.

The ABS works closely with a range of producers of statistics, both within Australia and internationally. Cooperation takes many forms, including undertaking joint projects, joining advisory and technical working groups, carrying out evaluations, and providing information for international studies.

Examples of working with producers of statistics

The Australian Customs Service and the ABS. The ABS sources its international trade in goods data from the Australian Customs Service.

During 2008–09 a Head of Agency Agreement was signed, a number of Subsidiary Agreements were drafted, an Agency Head and Deputy level meeting was held, and both agencies participated in an ABS-organised workshop on container statistics which was attended by a range of representatives from industry, state government and federal government.

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) and the ABS. The ABS has a tripartite arrangement with APRA and the RBA to collect financial statistics. APRA is the collecting agency.

In October 2008, the ABS facilitated and conducted an Editing Workshop for APRA Statistics staff. The workshop was also attended by staff from the Reserve Bank of Australia and ABS, representing key APRA clients. The workshop was conducted over two days, covering editing principles and practice, followed by a workshop to create an editing strategy for APRA data.

The **Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)** has been given responsibility for the development of a National Water Account and National Water Information Standards under the *Water Act 2007.* During 2008–09 the ABS and BoM have built a strong working relationship around water information, including work to articulate respective roles and understand the relationships between our different water statistics products, and to minimise duplication of data collection from providers. The ABS is represented on the BoM's National Water Account Committee and interdepartmental committee on water information.

Working with producers of administrative data

The ABS works closely with Australian and state/territory government agencies producing administrative data. For example:

▶ The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the ABS.

The ABS sources business-based data from the Tax Office for use in a range of annual and sub-annual economic collections.

In June 2009, the ABS and the ATO signed agreements covering arrangements for the provision of Australian Business Register, Business Activity Statement, and Business Income Tax Data. These agreements are subsidiary to the ABS/ATO Memorandum of Understanding signed in May 2009.

The two agencies have further agreed to manage the implications of incoming government proposals through ongoing interagency forums.



Brian Pink, Australian Statistician and Michael D'Ascenzo, Commissioner of Taxation signing the Memorandum of Understanding in May 2009

Government Health Ministers

During 2008–09, the ABS was represented at a number of information committees reporting to Health Ministers, including the National eHealth Information Principal Committee, the National Health Information Standards and Statistics Committee and the Public Health Information Development Group. At these committees, the ABS provided advice on data development, national reporting indicators, surveys and data sources, data linkage and ongoing issues relating to data items and definitions. The ABS also sought advice from these committees on its National Health Survey, Mental Health Survey and the development of the Indigenous Health Survey.

Government Education Ministers

The ABS works in partnership with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and state and territory education and training authorities under the National Education and Training Statistics Unit (NETSU) agreement. In 2008–09, a review of the NETSU agreement was undertaken to examine the role of the Unit and its relationship with other statistical agencies and producers of administrative data.

The ABS is represented on a number of national statistical committees reporting to education and training Ministers including the Performance Monitoring and Reporting Taskforce and the National Training Statistics Committee.

State and Territory Police Commissioners

The ABS works with Police Commissioners in all state and territories to obtain high quality comparable data across jurisdictions for the compilation of national crime statistics. To aid in this work, a significant amount of effort has gone into the development of a National Crime Recording Standard and this standard has now been implemented in all jurisdictions. The ABS continues to support efforts in all states and territories to improve the quality and comparability of crime data.

Statistical Clearing House

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) was established in response to a recommendation in 1996 by the Small Business Deregulation Task Force. Their report recommended that a central clearance process be established for business surveys conducted by the Australian Government. The purpose of the process was to ensure that surveys are necessary, well designed and place minimum burden on business respondents. As such, all surveys that are directed to businesses that are conducted by or on behalf of any Australian Government agency (including the ABS), are subject to clearance by the SCH. In view of its statistical expertise and statutory coordination role, the ABS was empowered to administer the clearance process.

The SCH pays particular attention to eliminating duplication and ensuring that business surveys conducted by Australian Government agencies follow sound statistical methodologies and practices. During 2008–09 there were 109 surveys submitted to the SCH for clearance. Of these, 74 were approved, 5 were classified as 'In-scope—not to be reviewed', 23 were out of scope and 7 were in the review process at the end of June 2009. 'In scope—not to be reviewed' is applied to surveys where the respondent burden is minimal, i.e. the total time taken for all respondents to complete the survey questions was considered low.

Table 10.1 presents the number of surveys approved over the last five financial years, for both the ABS and other government agencies. Of the 74 approved surveys during 2008–09, 19 were high profile reviews which were large surveys (more than 5,000 businesses or with a sample size of more than 2,000 businesses).

Year	ABS	Other Government Agencies	Total
2004-05	33	83	116
2005-06	29	89	118
2006-07	25	82	107
2007-08	33	47	80
2008-09	24	50	74

Table 10.1: Statistical Clearing House—number of approved surveys by financial year and agency

The SCH's Australian Government Business Surveys Register (available on the Internet at http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/About+SCH) provides access to information on collections that have already been conducted. It also includes information on survey design standards and best practices for organisations developing surveys.

Working with users and producers of data

Outposted officers for key clients

Outposting statistical officers in a range of Australian and state/territory government agencies is an important means for ABS to engage with key users and producers of statistics. The primary objectives of longer term outpostings are to:

- identify opportunities for the ABS to assist with identifying or providing information for policy development, implementation or evaluation purposes
- keep the ABS informed about emerging issues, so the ABS forward work program remains relevant and useful
- develop statistical capability in government agencies, to improve understanding and use of statistics
- enhance cooperation between government departments, and
- ▶ support agencies' current and future information and analytical needs.

In addition, ABS outposted officers assist with coordinating statistical activities, including collection and dissemination of data, so that duplication is reduced and quality is improved. Coordination reduces costs and provider load associated with information collection, as well as improving comparability of data.

During 2008–09, an ABS officer was seconded to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC), with a focus on assisting the OIPC in understanding data sources and data development needs to support the measurement of progress against the Government's targets for improving Indigenous life outcomes.

Table 10.2: Agencies with long-term outposted officers, 2008–09

Level of government	Number in 2007–08	Number in 2008–09	List of ABS outposted officers in 2008–09
Australian	7	14	Australian Taxation Office (a)
			Commonwealth Grants Commission
			Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (b)
			Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (c)
			Department of Health and Ageing
			Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
			Productivity Commission
			Treasury
State and Territory	14	22	Australian Capital Territory Department of Justice and Community Safety
			New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs
			New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet
			Office of the Chief Information Officer in the South Australian Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure
			Queensland Department of Transport
			Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research
			South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services
			South Australian Department of Trade and Economic Development
			Tasmanian Department of Police and Emergency Management
			Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet
			Victorian Department for Planning and Community Development (d)
			Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
			Victorian Department of Justice
			Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet
			Victorian Department of Primary Industries
			Victorian Department of Transport
			Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance
			Western Australian Department of Indigenous Affairs
			Western Australian Department of State Development
			Western Australian Public Sector Commission

(a) Five outposted officers during 2008-09

(b) Two outposted officers during 2008-09

(c) Two outposted officers during 2008–09

(d) Two outposted officers during 2008-09

During 2008–09, the ABS NSW Office provided the NSW Department of Planning with an outposted officer. Significant improvements were made to the quality and consistency of administrative data recorded about major project assessments, leading to the publishing of a monthly report by the Minister (see http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/planningsystem/pdf/may_09_0306.pdf).

The ABS South Australian Office provided an outposted officer to the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services to provide advice and leadership regarding the development and implementation of a methodology that will better enable state government agencies to respond to data requests in a data linking environment.

Another South Australian ABS officer worked within the Office of the Chief Information Officer to assist in readying the SA State Government for the implementation of the requirements of the Water Act, which was passed in 2007.

The ABS Queensland Office collaborated with the Office of Economic and Statistical Research on Indigenous reporting, including an outposting to Queensland Treasury. This assisted in improving the quality and processes surrounding the use of the Indigenous Identifier within Queensland Government administrative datasets, as well as the preparation of regular Queensland Government statistical reports on 'Closing the Gap'.

In the environment and energy fields, the close working relationship between ABS and partner agencies lead to valuable outposting opportunities. Two ABS officers were outposted to the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) during 2008–09, (i) to assist in the development of water use accounting standards, and (ii) to contribute to planning water resource assessments and other information products to be produced by BoM. ABS officers were also outposted to the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism to (i) analyse and evaluate Energy Efficiency Opportunity information and (ii) manage the Energy Efficiency Data Project.

Training courses assisting users to optimise their use of ABS statistics

The ABS conducts a range of training courses to assist users in understanding ABS statistics. These courses can also be beneficial to the ABS staff conducting them, providing an opportunity to build their facilitation and training skills, as well as to discuss user needs and concerns.

The National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI) in the ABS coordinated the development and presentation of a suite of training courses on statistical issues in 2008–09. Course scheduling, development and delivery were supported by a number of other areas in the ABS including Demography, Labour Force, Methodology and Environment units, as well as State and Territory Statistical Services (STSS) units in each regional office. To harness the increasing demand for statistical training, the ABS is currently undertaking a number of initiatives to improve the curriculum available and promote courses to external agencies. This includes working with clients to identify statistical skills required and to review courses and other learning opportunities offered through the external training programs.

During 2008–09 a large number of courses and seminars continued to be offered through the NSTI, STSS, National Statistical Service and Statistical Literacy programs. Courses range from information sessions on the ABS website offered through the Information Skills program, to skills based courses such as 'Turning Data into Information' and 'Analysing Survey Data Made Simple', which are aimed at improving the statistical skills of staff in other agencies. A new course on 'Valuing Australia's Environment' has recently been added to the external training curriculum and NSTI have also trialled the delivery of the 'Introduction to Macro-economic Statistics' to external clients.

In addition, the ABS has developed a new training course, 'Valuing Australia's Environment', on environmental-economic accounting. The development of the training course is key to raising capacity, both within the ABS and more broadly, in environmental accounting. In 2008–09 this course was delivered to external participants in Canberra, Darwin, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Institute of Public Administration Australia training collaboration

During 2008, the ABS WA Regional Office formed a collaboration with the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA). The ABS sought to expand its training through collaboration with IPAA. IPAA expressed interest in two courses that educated state government employees in the uses of statistics, one for graduate employees, the other for those in policymaker roles. The ABS entered into this partnership to broaden the scope of its contact with statistical users, facilitate greater statistical literacy of statistical users, and promote ABS courses to a wider audience.

The first course, 'Statistics and Their Uses' was delivered in April 2008 and was attended by 20 graduates. The response to advertising from IPAA was very strong and demonstrated the advantage of working with an organisation that has strong skills in promotion. In September of that year a follow up course, aimed at more experienced staff, 'Statistics for Policy Writers' was presented.

Subsequent to this, IPAA and ABS have entered into an arrangement to present both these courses twice a year.

Table 10.3: NSTI training courses conducted in 2008–09 for users of ABS statistics

Course	Number of Participants from other agencies
Analysing Survey Data Made Simple	70
Basic Survey Design	53
Introduction to Labour Statistics	61
Making Quality Informed Decisions	69
Principles of Questionnaire Design	47
Turning Data into Information	257
Understanding Demographic Data	153
Valuing Australia's Environment	61
Introduction to Macro-economic Statistics	8
Using ABS Datacubes in Supertable	46

chapter 11

PROVIDER/RESPONDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

The work of the ABS is only possible due to the continuing cooperation of businesses, households and others who provide information requested of them. The information collected from ABS data providers forms the basis of our high quality statistical products. The ABS works hard to secure the trust and confidence of all data providers, without which the provision of a quality statistical service would be jeopardised. The ABS also continues its endeavours to reduce the burden placed on providers of data by expanding the use of administrative data.

ABS Survey Charters

The ABS recognises its obligation to respondents in statistical collections, and has produced service charters relating to both business surveys and household surveys. These charters include the rights and obligations for the relationship between the ABS and those who participate in our surveys, and outlines the expected standards for the ABS in managing complaints. Currently the survey charters are under review, including an assessment of the possibility of combining them into one Survey Respondent Charter.

Both charters, which are available on the ABS website at http://www.abs.gov.au, are produced in English, Italian, Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese and Arabic.

Business Surveys Charter

The Business Surveys Charter is provided to new respondents in collections involving businesses, and sets out the relationship between the ABS and businesses which provide information for statistical purposes. The charter explains how businesses can seek help from the ABS, and also specifies how businesses can request a review of the handling of any complaints. Performance against the standards for responding to written complaints is summarised in Table 11.4 below.

Household Surveys Charter

The Household Surveys Charter sets out the relationship between the ABS and members of the public who provide information about themselves and their household for statistical purposes. The charter explains what people can expect when dealing with the ABS and ABS interviewers. The charter includes information on the way that household surveys are conducted, the way complaints are handled, and invites comments and other feedback.

Confidentiality of data

The ABS depends on the goodwill and cooperation of Australians, businesses and other organisations to provide information in response to its many data collections. A critical way of maintaining such cooperation and goodwill is by ensuring the information supplied remains confidential. The ABS continues to maintain an enviable reputation for the preservation of the confidentiality of reported information, and for the protection of its statistical data holdings from unauthorised release.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* requires the Australian Statistician to publish and disseminate compilations and analyses of statistical information, and to maintain the confidentiality of information collected under the Act. The ABS meets these confidentiality requirements by making sure that all provided information is:

- securely maintained, and
- used only for statistical purposes.

In addition, the ABS ensures that identifying information provided by a household or business is not revealed, e.g. where microdata files are released under a Determination to support research, only unidentifiable files are released. However, there are a very small number of situations where information about businesses, but not households, may be released. These exceptions are tightly prescribed by Determinations of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. Release under a Determination requires the approval of the Australian Statistician.

A statement outlining the importance of confidentiality of data provided, and how the ABS protects the confidentiality of data, is available on the ABS website: Survey Participant Information—How the ABS Keeps Your Information Confidential, at http://www.abs.gov.au.

Provider load

In order to fulfil its mission of providing information to support informed decision making, research and discussion, the ABS is authorised to collect information, about a range of issues, from businesses and households. The ABS is mindful that the needs of users of information must be balanced against the extent of requests for information from businesses and households. The amount of time taken to complete ABS surveys, totalled for all collections and all respondents, is referred to as 'provider load'.

The ABS endeavours to minimise provider load by promoting efficiency and effectiveness of ABS operations and the ABS survey program. Information is requested only for those collections that are identified as high priority for the national statistical program. To further reduce provider load, forms are carefully designed, and thoroughly tested, for ease of use. For business surveys, there is close liaison with representative groups, in relation to both the survey program and the demands on businesses.

Over the last two decades, the ABS has had significant success in reducing provider burden, while at the same time expanding on the range of statistics available. The increased use of administrative data and the use of smarter statistical methods have contributed to this reduction, as has an increased focus on strategies to improve provider relations and reporting mechanisms.

Provider load in business surveys

The unadjusted provider load (measured in thousands of hours taken to complete statistical forms) imposed on businesses by the ABS for 1997–98 through to 2008–09, is shown in Graph 11.1. The total ABS provider load on businesses fell to its lowest level of 362,000 hours in 2008–09. The peak in 2006–07 was due mainly to the conduct of the Agricultural Census, which imposed a load of around 150,000 hours.

The average total load on all businesses during the past five years, of around 433,800 hours/year, is 17.5% lower than the total load experienced by businesses in 1997–98. For small businesses, the average total load during the past five years has been around 197,000 hours/year, or 25% lower than in 1997–98.





(a) Defined as businesses with employees (or a derived estimate of employees) of less than twenty.

(b) Higher provider load estimates for 2001–02 and 2006–07 reflect the conduct of the five-yearly Agricultural Census.

Provider load figures from 1997–98 to 2008–09 have been smoothed using an 11-term Henderson moving average to reveal the underlying trend. This smooths the effect of irregular and regular contributors to provider load, such as the five-yearly Agricultural Census.

In 2008–09, the trend of small business provider load has started to decrease again after peaking in 2006–07. The peak in 2006–07 was once again due to the five-yearly Agricultural Census, as mentioned above for unadjusted provider load. The trend of medium and large business provider load has continuously decreased since 2003–04 and as a result, total provider load for all businesses has also started to decline as shown in Graph 11.2.


Graph 11.2: Smoothed provider load imposed on businesses by the ABS

(a) Defined as businesses with employees (or a derived estimate of employees) of less than twenty.

Provider load in household surveys

Table 11.1 shows household provider load over the last four years. The household survey program varies considerably from year to year, with many major surveys on three-six yearly cycles. The ABS recognises the need to balance the pressure to expand the household survey program to meet the need for information about the population, with the load on providers. As a result, the ABS has a range of measures in place to minimise provider load:

- all household surveys are rigorously tested, to ensure they can be completed as accurately and quickly as possible
- ▶ the minimum sample size to achieve reliable results is used, and
- the sample design is such that dwellings cannot be selected in more than one survey in a specific five year period (for example, a dwelling selected in the Adult Literacy and Life skills Survey cannot be selected in the Time Use Survey in the five-year period).

The ABS focuses on developing the professionalism of the ABS interviewers, and building their skills in obtaining information from the residents of selected dwellings, with the minimum of inconvenience. ABS interviewers are trained to be flexible and organise interview times that are most suitable for respondents, as well as being efficient in entering responses directly into a notebook computer.

Year	Survey	Achieved Interview Time (mins) (a)	Total Fully Responding Households (b)	Total Provider Load (Household Hours) (c)
2005-06	Monthly Population Survey (d)	6.3	367,705	38,609
	Multi-purpose Household Survey	10.6	14,234	2,514
	General Social Survey	45.3	13,404	10,120
	Personal Safety Survey	27.9	16,430	7,640
	Survey of Education and Training	36.3	13,857	8,383
	Survey of Income and Housing	39.6	10,158	6,704
	Total		435,788	73,970
2006-07	Monthly Population Survey (d)	7.1	376,701	44,576
	Multi-purpose Household Survey	13.8	13,945	3,207
	Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation	42.7	13,705	9,753
	Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey	99.1	8,703	14,374
	Time Use Survey	39.2	3,938	2,573
	Census Post Enumeration Survey	9.2	32,730	5,018
	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children	71.8	9,063	10,845
	Total		458,785	90,346
2007-08	Monthly Population Survey (d)	6.9	352,522	40,540
	Multi-purpose Household Survey	11.3	13,999	2,636
	Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing	82.5	8,452	11,621
	Total		346,394	52,025
2008-09	Monthly Population Survey— July 08 to April 09 (d)	7.9	202,629	22,914
	Multi-purpose Household Survey— 10 months only to April 09	13.03	10,332	2,244
	Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation	43.4	13,722	9,926
	National Health Survey/ Survey of Income and Housing	51.5	24,043	20,637
	Survey of Mental Health and Well Being	85.4	8,955	12,746
	National Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Social Survey	114.4	6,346	12,100
	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (Wave 3)	96.4	8,714	14,001
	Total	N/A	285,523	95,980

Table 11.1: Household provider load (approximate financial year data)

(a) Interview time comes from PTA reports.

(b) Fully Responding Household (FRHH) population comes from CAIWMS.

(c) Total Provider load = (FRHH/60mins) x interview time.

(d) Includes the Labour Force Survey.

Response rates

The ABS has consistently had very high response rates for both household and business surveys as shown in Table 11.2.

The response rates for selected business collections generally exceed the target response rates set by the ABS. This can be attributed to the high regard for the ABS in the business community and the follow up procedures used to help business survey participants respond to our surveys in a timely manner. These procedures are developed to target those businesses that are most significant to the collection. That is, those businesses with typically high turnover or employment relative to the rest of the industry. For example, the response rate for businesses in the Economic Activity survey might be 90%, but the businesses that have responded may comprise 94% of the total employment in the industry.

	Target response rate (%) (b)	Final Response rate 2006–07 (%)	Final Response rate 2007–08 (%)	Final Response rate 2008–09 (%)
Business surveys				
Retail Business Survey (c)	95	96	97	96
Quarterly Business Indicators Survey (c)	85	92	92	92
Capital Expenditure Survey (c)	90	95	95	95
Economic Activity Survey	90	93	90	90
Survey of Tourist Accommodation (c)	90	89	92	90
Business Characteristics Survey	95	96	97	96
Vineyards Survey	85	89	91	87
Survey of Average Weekly Earnings (c)	98	98	97	98
Survey of International Trade in Services (c)	90	94	95	95
Household surveys				
Labour Force Survey	97	97	97	97
Multi-purpose Household Survey (e)	87	82	89	86
Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation	85	82	(d)	(d)
Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey	85	78	(d)	(d)
Time Use Survey	73	69	(d)	(d)
Census Post Enumeration Survey	95	94	(d)	(d)
Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children	85	91	(d)	88
National Health Survey	90	(d)	91	(d)
Survey Income and Housing	85	(d)	86	(d)

Table 11.2: Response rates for selected surveys (a)

(a) Response rates apply to the year in which the data are collected.

(b) Target response rate can reflect differing measures (i.e. a form receival rate or a live response rate).

(c) Average response rate over the year.

(d) Survey not conducted during the year.

(e) The results for the Multipurpose Household Survey are used in several ABS publications. The survey is enumerated monthly and the response rates are a simple average.

It is important to note that the activities of small businesses are just as important as large businesses, as they have different characteristics from large businesses and make an important contribution to the Australian economy, especially at state and territory levels. Usually, a sample of smaller businesses is selected to represent other like businesses and as such, their impact on the survey results is important. For some specific industries, such as mining, small businesses can be significant in their own right.

Table 11.2 also demonstrates the high levels of response gained for household surveys. Maintaining high response rates is a major focus for the household survey program, particularly given the increasing number of interviews that are conducted during the limited evening hours (up to 8pm).

Complaints from providers

The majority of businesses and households selected in ABS surveys understand and support the need for high quality statistics and as such willingly provide information requested by the ABS. Only a very small percentage (less than 0.5%) of the 200,000 businesses and around 400,000 households selected in ABS surveys each year complain in writing to the ABS. Households or businesses have a number of avenues available to them if they have queries or complaints about being selected in a survey, or about the processes involved. Free call contact numbers are provided with all information sent to survey participants and, for the majority of cases, when participants call these numbers their concerns are resolved by the ABS officers receiving the calls.

In addition, there are a range of other complaint mechanisms which can be used by householders and businesses, including writing to or emailing the ABS, writing to the ABS Complaints Review Officer, approaching a parliamentarian, or contacting the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Information about written complaints to the ABS and ministerial correspondence is summarised in Table 11.3.

A key goal for the ABS is to maintain and build strong relationships with the community, by increasing the understanding of respondent issues and requirements and take appropriate action. In 2008–09, the ABS introduced new and streamlined correspondence recording, acknowledging and resolution procedures which have improved the quality, consistency and timeliness of response to correspondence from businesses selected to participate in ABS surveys.

As ABS business surveys are predominately mail based, the number of written complaints is higher than for household surveys which are predominantly conducted via personal interviewing. For the 12 months to 30 June 2009, the ABS received a total of 627 written complaints from businesses. This is notably larger and not comparable to reported complaints for previous years due to the introduction of the improved procedures described above which resulted in improved management information systems, allowing the full capture of all incoming correspondence.

During 2008–09 there were no complaints made about business surveys to the ABS Complaints Review Officer, and there was one complaint received from the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman regarding the household survey.

Table 11.3: Written complaints received within the financial year from providers in ABS surveys

	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09		
Complaints direct to ABS survey areas							
397	300	360	290	283	627(a)		
(b)	(b)	(b)	(b)	37	14		
ninisterial co	rrespondence)						
10	15	14	15	18	14		
6	7	9	11	5	5		
	397 (b) hinisterial con	397 300 (b) (b)	397 300 360 (b) (b) (b) inisterial correspondence 114	397 300 360 290 (b) (b) (b) (b) inisterial correspondence) 11 15	397 300 360 290 283 (b) (b) (b) (b) 37 inisterial componence) 10 15 14 15 18		

(a) Increase on previous years is a result of introduction of improved processes for identifying written complaints included with survey forms.
(b) Information is not available due to separate recording processes in regional offices, making it difficult to compile accurate total figures for years prior to 2007–08.

85

(c) The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every five years.

Census(c)

The ABS occasionally provides general exemptions from surveys to small businesses who have both a good history of providing information and where the small business' contribution to the key estimates is not significant. Additionally, temporary exemptions on compassionate grounds can be provided where exceptional circumstances exist, such as those directly impacted by the February 2009 bushfire disaster in Victoria. For the 12 months to 30 June 2009, the ABS received 532 requests for exemption. Of these, 81 general exemptions and 119 compassionate exemptions were granted.

As outlined in the ABS Business Surveys Charter, every complaint is responded to either in writing, or by telephone contact. Our performance against these standards is reported in Table 11.4.

Table 11.4 Performance against Business Surveys Charter complaint resolutionstandards for 2008–09: targets and actual performance

Performance standard— responding to correspondence from businesses	Target (Calendar days)	Actual performance (Average calendar days)	Actual performance (% of total where target achieved)
Send written acknowledgment	7	1.04	97.03
Send written advice of outcome	28	20.06	75.57

Notices of Direction and prosecution actions

Under sections 10(4) and 11(2) of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, the Australian Statistician may, by notice in writing, direct a person/business to complete a survey form or answer a question that is necessary to obtain statistical information.

Under section 14 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, a person/business commits an offence if they fail to comply with a Notice of Direction. The penalty for this is set at one penalty unit (\$110 in 2008–09) in respect of each day after the Notice of Direction is served until the person/business complies with the direction. The application of this penalty is at the discretion of the Court.

Section 15 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides that, if a person/business knowingly gives the Australian Bureau of Statistics false or misleading statements or information as a result of the Direction, they can be fined an amount of \$1,100 (10 penalty units).

These provisions are used sparingly, as the ABS prefers to seek the willing cooperation of respondents. However, it is sometimes necessary to use the legislative provisions, in order to maintain the integrity of ABS statistics.

The number of Notices of Direction issued and the number of prosecution actions approved in recent years are shown in Table 11.5. The number of Notices of Direction and prosecution actions approved is higher every five years, when the Census of Population and Housing is conducted as noted for 2006–07.

	2003-04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Notices of direction issued						
Census of Population and Housing	-	-	-	4,955	-	-
Household surveys	-	1	8	86	66	83
Business censuses and surveys	1	-	4	19	2	4
Total	1	1	12	5,060	70	87

Table 11.5: Notices of Direction issued and prosecution actions approved

Prosecution actions approved (a)						
Census of Population and Housing	-	-	-	253	25	0
Household surveys	-	-	-	-	5	0
Business censuses and surveys	-	-	1	5	-	0
Total	-	-	1	258	30	0

(a) Approved by the Australian Statistician for referral to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. Any particular prosecution approval may relate to a number of Notices of Direction. Each prosecution action approval is counted in the year in which the corresponding Notices of Direction are issued. Not every prosecution action approved proceeds to court.

chapter 12

QUALITY AND TIMELINESS



Introduction

The quality of the statistics produced by the ABS is critical to achieving its mission of assisting and encouraging informed decision-making. The ABS strives to optimise the quality of the information it produces, taking account of budgetary constraints and the load placed on survey respondents.

Aspects of quality

To ensure the production of high quality statistics, monitoring quality is an integral part of the process. Quality is evaluated according to the *ABS Data Quality Framework* (ABS cat. no.1520.0), which was recently released on the ABS website. The following aspects of quality make up the ABS Data Quality Framework:

- institutional environment—the institutional and organisational factors which may impact on the effectiveness and credibility of the agency producing the statistics
- relevance—the degree to which information meets the needs of users
- accuracy—the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena being measured
- ▶ timeliness—the delay between the reference period and the release of the information
- ▶ accessibility—the ease with which the information can be referenced
- interpretability—the availability of supplementary information necessary to interpret the statistical information, and
- coherence—the degree to which the information can be brought together with other information, and over time.

Addressing the quality of a statistical product will always involve balancing these aspects. For example, initiatives that could improve the accuracy of the statistics may reduce the timeliness. Cost is also a factor—the ABS must work within its budget, and find the right balance between achieving high quality statistical information and collecting an appropriate range of statistics. The ABS aims to produce a large and diverse range of statistics, with a quality designed to meet the key needs of policy makers, researchers and other users within the Australian community.

The ABS also strives to ensure that the users of its information are provided with readily accessible information on quality, so they can make informed decisions on the suitability of the statistics for their intended use. This information is available electronically on the ABS website at http://www.abs.gov.au, through explanatory and technical notes, and more

recently through Quality Declarations. Quality Declarations describe the quality of a statistical release using the dimensions of the ABS Data Quality Framework, to assist users in determining the 'fitness for purpose' of the product being viewed. Quality Declarations were introduced to the ABS website from 25 October 2007, with the 2006 Census of Population and Housing being the first released. In 2008–09, the production of Quality Declarations was expanded to include declarations for confidentialised unit record files (CURFs) and compendia publications, such as *Measures of Australia's Progress* (ABS cat. no.1370.0) and *Australian Social Trends* (ABS cat. no.4102.0).

ABS Data Quality Framework

In May 2009, the ABS released the *ABS Data Quality Framework* on its website (ABS cat. no.1520.0). The framework provides the standards for assessing and reporting on the quality of statistical information. It is a tool which aims to improve user's ability to:

- decide whether a dataset or statistical product is fit for purpose (which in turn helps to identify data gaps)
- assess the data quality of seemingly similar collections, and

interpret data.

It can also assist those developing statistical collections to produce high quality outputs.

The ABS Data Quality Framework is designed for use by a range of data users and providers in different settings, including government agencies, statistical agencies and independent research agencies. For example, the framework will be used to assess the quality of performance indicator data linked to a number of National Agreements in key policy areas signed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in late 2008.

In recent years, the ABS has established a more formal 'end-to-end' framework for its survey design, data collection, data processing and dissemination activities. The focus is on 'total quality management', including quality assurance, as well as quality inspection processes (for example, 'Quality Gates') being strategically positioned and designed within end-to-end workflow processes. This 'end-to-end' focus allows effort on quality assurance and inspection to be targeted in a manner that provides the greatest overall benefits to the quality of the final outputs. For example, the ABS focuses most attention on the aspects of the quality of that 'input' data which will have maximum impact on the final outputs.

Improved facilities for capturing and analysing management information about how various steps in the process have contributed to the quality of the final data are an important aid in this regard, allowing the cost and benefit of each current step to be better understood, along with the likely cost and benefit of various process tuning options. Common, well managed data stores, and integrated systems working on a common basis, have reduced the risk of human error during processing as well as the risk of many different stand-alone

systems holding inconsistent data and/or processing it inconsistently. Finally, improved facilities within the ABS for analysing and reporting allow possible quality issues to be identified and investigated in a timely manner prior to publication, including:

- how data have changed during the current processing cycle
- how data for this cycle compare with data from a previous cycle of the same statistical activity (where applicable), and
- how data for this cycle compare with other, related, sources of data.

The changing environment, in particular the increased importance of the ABS website as the main dissemination source of its statistics, has introduced new challenges and opportunities for improvement on ways the ABS can better ensure that end users have relevant and accessible quality information to guide their use of the statistics. The ABS endorses the principle that 'the quality of the data should be described clearly and understandably'.

Institutional environment

The ABS aims to produce high quality statistics that can be used with confidence. It also aims to exercise the highest professional standards in all aspects of its statistical operations, and recognises that a quality culture is fundamental to maintaining the trust of the Australian community.

The ABS goes to considerable lengths to ensure its data, analysis, and interpretations are objective, and always publishes its statistics in ways that explain and inform, without advocating a particular position.

The ABS strives to maintain transparency in its operations and performance. Some of the ways in which this is achieved include:

- advertisement of all scheduled release dates for publications up to 12 months in advance
- use of daily press and media releases, to inform users of publications being released each day
- strict embargo policy, which is known to the public, that ensures impartiality for the release of all publications
- publication of the ABS four-year Forward Work Program, which describes the ABS work program, including the resources to be used, the outputs, and the proposed developments over the next four years
- release of information about statistical standards, frameworks, concepts, sources and methods in a range of information papers and other publications, and
- inclusion of details of major revisions to published data in the explanatory notes of the relevant publication.

The ABS regularly reviews the methodologies used to produce statistics, providing the opportunity to make improvements and incorporate new approaches, where appropriate.

The ABS statistical system is open to outside scrutiny. Its methodologies are based on sound statistical principles and practices, and are disseminated widely. The Methodological Advisory Committee meets twice a year, and consists of professional statisticians external to the ABS, who provide peer review of methodological developments in the ABS. In addition, a range of research papers are published to explain statistical developments and research. Topics covered in 2008–09 include:

- undertaking analysis of linked datasets
- > application of operations research to improving business collection efficiency, and
- sample design issues for national surveys of the Indigenous population.

Relevance

The relevance of statistical information reflects the degree to which it meets the needs of the users of the information, and of concern is whether the available information addresses the issues that are most important to policy-makers, researchers, and to the broader Australian community. The outputs produced, the concepts and classifications used, and the scope of the collection can all affect the relevance of the data.

A detailed understanding of the users of statistical information and their requirements is an important part of the statistical process, and the ABS has a range of mechanisms in place to achieve this, including its peak advisory group, the Australian Statistics Advisory Council. A range of other advisory groups and mechanisms, which the ABS uses to communicate with the users of statistics, are described in Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

For particular surveys, key stakeholders are identified and consulted before and during the survey development. Further, each survey is regularly evaluated to assess the degree to which it meets user requirements. Information Development Plans (IDPs) are reviewed regularly for each area of statistics, bridging the gaps between user requirements and statistical outputs.

Information development plans

Information development plans involve a review of the needs of users in a particular area of statistics, a review of the available sources of data, an assessment of the gaps and overlaps in information available, and recommendations on a future work program.

More information on IDPs can be found in Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

The ABS continues to review and refine its products, to ensure they remain relevant. During 2008–09, the ABS has continued to roll out a revised classification of industry, *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006* (ABS cat. no.1292.0), to a number of ABS annual collections. The revised classification enables ABS statistics to better reflect the economy in the real world. Further information on implementation of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006 can be found in Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

Accuracy

The accuracy of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure. Most statistics produced by the ABS are obtained from a sample of households or businesses. The estimate from the sample may not be the same as would have been obtained if information had been collected from the whole population—this is known as sampling error. There are also many other sources of error that potentially cause inaccuracy, including the level of non-response, the magnitude of revisions made as additional information is received, and errors from other parts of the collection process (non-sampling error). The ABS aims to inform users about the accuracy of statistics, so they can assess whether the accuracy of the data will be sufficient to meet their needs.

Information about accuracy

As users will want to use statistical information for different purposes, it is important to make information available to enable them to make their own assessment of the quality. Descriptions of accuracy, as well as extensive information on the statistical methods used in collections, are routinely provided in concepts, sources and methods publications, the explanatory notes in publications, quality declarations attached to publications, and at the Statistical Clearing House (see the ABS website, http://www.abs.gov.au and/or the National Statistical Service website, http://www.nss.gov.au).

In addition, major changes to methodology are explained in feature articles or information papers, such as *Changes to Weights of the Price Indexes for the Output of the General Construction Industry, 2008* (ABS cat. no.6406.0) about changes to producer price indexes, and *Experimental Estimates of Industry Multifactor Productivity, 2007* (ABS cat. no.5260.55.001) about new methods for industry-level multifactor productivity estimation.

The ABS has made few significant errors in the statistics it has released. On the infrequent occasions when processing errors are found, it is ABS policy to publish corrected data as soon as possible.

To ensure the continued high level of accuracy of ABS statistics, the ABS continues to implement reviews and risk mitigation strategies, including quality gates, to ensure that processes are examined and any weaknesses identified are addressed.

Under the ABS risk management framework, statistical risks are addressed both directly and indirectly. Activities include the conduct of operational risk workshops for key programs to help these programs identify and mitigate key risks, including risks to the quality of statistical output and products delivered by these programs. Major reviews of selected statistical projects are conducted to audit efficiency and effectiveness, including the statistical quality of these projects. Since 2007–08, the ABS has introduced a systematic process for assuring the quality of business surveys and household surveys. The strategy, which is known as 'quality gates', involves explicit assessment of statistical risks at strategic points of the survey process.

Non-sampling error

Non-sampling error is a general term that describes all sources of error other than the error introduced by the sampling process. Sampling error can be measured mathematically using the properties of the selected sample. Non-sampling error is much harder to measure.

Some sources of non-sampling error that are most relevant to statistical surveys include: non-response bias; errors in identifying and contacting the population of interest for a survey; errors introduced by the questionnaire design, such as misunderstanding or inadvertently missing questions, or phrasing questions that predispose a respondent to answer in a particular way; and data capture, processing and coding errors.

The ABS minimises the impact of non-sampling errors by use of best practice procedures in questionnaire design, interview procedures, data validation and repair, and processing. Any significant changes to questionnaire wording or data collection methods are carefully trialled and evaluated before they are implemented.

The ABS continues to work to reduce the impact of non-sampling errors.

Sampling error

The relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the sampling error associated with an estimate. The magnitude of standard errors varies between collections and between data items within a collection due to factors such as the responding sample size and the nature of the data item. The RSE is a useful indicator for comparing the accuracy of estimates between surveys. Table 12.1 presents a summary view of the estimated RSEs for key statistics from a number of major ABS surveys. Further detailed information is included with each ABS publication, as well as in the concepts, sources and methods publications released by the ABS.

RSEs are affected by the size of the sample used, the sample design used for the survey, and by the underlying variability of the indicator in the population.

Sample size influences the level of accuracy that can be attained. For example, the accuracy of estimates from the Labour Force Survey varies between states and territories. To have the same level of accuracy, identical sample sizes would be required for all states and territories. The sample sizes between states vary, for example, the sample size for the New South Wales estimates is greater than the sample size for Northern Territory estimates. The estimated RSEs for total employed persons in Australia is lower than any of the individual state estimates, and the estimated RSE for total employed persons in New South Wales is lower than the estimated RSE for total employed persons in the Northern Territory.

ABS sample designs for business surveys use groups of similar businesses (strata) as the basis for sample selection to improve the efficiency of estimation. Information such as employment size or annual sales can be used in this grouping. Many indicators, such as annual turnover or value of building work done, are closely related to the variables used in stratification, allowing these indicators to be estimated with relatively high accuracy. Other variables, such as capital expenditure or job vacancies, are not as closely related, and so cannot be estimated with the same accuracy.

As well as differences between surveys, the RSE can also change with time for any given survey. These differences over time may be due to changes in the way the survey is conducted, for example, changes in the sample size or the method of producing estimates, or changes in the population being studied, such as a change in the prevalence of a particular characteristic.

Publication	Indicator	RSE (%)
Economic indicators		
Retail Trade, Australia (ABS cat. no.8501.0)	Total turnover for the retail industry, Australia	0.7%
Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure, Australia (ABS cat. no.5625.0)	Actual private new capital expenditure, Australia	0.9%
Business Indicators, Australia (ABS cat. no.5676.0)	Company gross operating profit, Australia	1.6%
Building Activity, Australia (ABS cat. no.8752.0)	Value of building work done, Australia	0.7%
Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (ABS cat. no.6302.0)	Full-time adult ordinary time earnings, Australia	0.7%
Job Vacancies, Australia (ABS cat. no.6354.0)	Job vacancies, Australia	4.6%
Social indicators		

Table 12.1: Relative standard errors (RSEs) for selected indicators (a)

Social indicators		
Labour Force Australia (ABS cat. no.6202.0)	Total number of persons employed (aged 15 and over), Australia	0.4%
Household Use of Information Technology (ABS cat. no.8146.0)	Number of persons accessing the Internet at home	0.7%

(a) RSEs are presented for surveys conducted in respect of the 2008–09 reference period.

Table 12.2: Relative standard errors (RSEs) for selected indicators, with selected international comparisons

	Indicator	RSE (%)	RSE (%) for comparable indicator in selected country		
Publication		Australia	New Zealand	United States of America	Canada
Retail Trade, Australia (ABS cat. no.8501.0)	Total turnover for the retail industry, Australia	0.7%	1.9% (a)	0.7% (c)	0.7% (e)
Labour Force Survey (ABS cat. no.6202.0)	Total number of persons employed (aged 15 and over), Australia	0.4%	0.9% (b)	0.2% (d)	0.2% (f)

(a) Source: Statistics New Zealand: Retail Trade Survey, ISSN 1178-0355 (http://www.stats.govt.nz)

(b) Source: Statistics New Zealand: Labour Market Statistics: 2007, ISSN 1177-8040 (http://www.stats.govt.nz)

(c) Source: US Bureau of Census Monthly Retail Trade Survey (http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/data/text/nrelys.txt)

(d) Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey (http://www.bls.gov/bls/empsitquickguide.htm)

(e) Source: Statistics Canada Retail Trade cat.no.63-005-X (http://www.statcan.ca)

(f) Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Information, cat. no.71-001-X (http://www.statcan.ca)

Revisions to data

One measurable component of statistical accuracy is the extent of revision to data made after initial publication, resulting from additional information becoming available. Revisions are generally measured by their size and frequency over time.

Revisions are applied to statistical series to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between accuracy and timeliness in the release of the statistics. Revisions could be avoided, but this would mean that either the release of statistics would be substantially delayed, or that the statistics could not be improved by making use of any new or better sources of data that become available. The ABS aims to maximise the overall quality of the released statistics, by publishing accurate statistics in a timely manner, while subsequently improving the accuracy through revisions as new data become available. It is also ABS policy to inform users of any significant revisions and, where appropriate, to revise past time series and advise users accordingly.

One of the causes of revisions to time series data in the past has been the application of filters to decompose the original series into its trend, seasonal and irregular components. These filters use data from both past and future time points, and so different filters must be used at the end of a series as the future time points are not available, leading to revisions as this information becomes available. Most ABS time series now use autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) modelling methods, which improve the revision properties of seasonally adjusted and trend estimates. ARIMA modelling relies on the characteristics of the series being analysed to project future period data. The projected values are temporary, intermediate values, that are only used internally to improve the estimation of the seasonal factors. The projected data do not affect the original estimates and are discarded at the end of the seasonal adjustment process.

The tables below provide, for two key series, the mean revision and the mean absolute revision for the past eight years. The mean revision shows the percentage difference

between the first estimate published, and that estimate one year later, averaged over the four quarters for the year. The mean absolute revision shows the average absolute values of the mean revision.

Table 12.3 describes the revisions to quarterly gross domestic product (GDP). In particular, it shows the difference between the first estimate of GDP and that estimate one year later, in terms of the mean revision and the mean absolute revision expressed as percentage points. The figures continue to show that revisions to quarterly GDP in recent years remain relatively small (mean absolute revision). Zero mean revision figures indicate that the revisions to quarterly GDP over the year have been offsetting. Despite the revisions to quarterly GDP being quite small, efforts to further improve the estimates are ongoing.

	Difference between first estimate and estimate one year late				
Reference year	Mean absolute revision (% points)	Mean revision (% points)			
1999-00	0.1	-			
2000-01	0.2	-			
2001-02	0.2	-			
2002-03	0.1	-			
2003-04	0.2	0.2			
2004–05	0.1	-			
2005-06	0.1	0.1			
2006-07	0.2	-0.1			
2007–08 (b)	0.2	0.2			

Table 12.3: Revisions to quarterly gross domestic product, percentage change (a)

(a) Seasonally adjusted chain volume measure.

(b) First three quarters of 2007-08 only.

Mean absolute revisions to the quarterly current account transactions since 1999–2000 are shown in Table 12.4. The revisions to the current account deficit are expressed in percentage terms, rather than percentage points, as is the case with the revisions to GDP.

	Difference between first estimate and estimate one year later				
Reference year	Mean absolute revision (%)	Mean revision (%)			
1999-00	2.3	0.3			
2000-01	3.4	-0.3			
2001-02	2.7	-0.1			
2002-03	1.8	-0.5			
2003-04	1.2	0.3			
2004-05	1.7	0.3			
2005-06	1.1	-0.6			
2006-07	1.6	0.6			
2007–08 (b)	2.6	2.0			

Table 12.4: Revisions to quarterly current account transactions (a)

(a) Seasonally adjusted data.

(b) First three quarters of 2007–08 only.

Timeliness

The timeliness of statistical information can be measured by the gap between the reference period (the period the data relate to) and the date of release of results. The ABS continues to adhere to pre-announced release dates and make improvements, where possible, to the timeliness achieved. Tables 12.5 and 12.6 present information on the timeliness for ABS monthly and quarterly tabular data for main economic indicator statistics, and other general releases. Table 12.7 reports on the timeliness of confidentialised unit record files.

The high standard of timely release of statistical tables was maintained in 2008–09, with similar time periods between the end of the reference period and publication release.

	Main economic indicator tabular statistics Other general tabular indicator stat		lar indicator statistics	
Year of Release	Monthly	Quarterly	Monthly	Quarterly
2001-02	29	51	34	78
2002-03	28	49	33	74
2003-04	29	51	26	85
2004-05	29	51	25	75
2005-06	30	52	24	87
2006-07	31	51	22	83
2007–08	31	50	23	84
2008-09	31	48	24	81

Table 12.5: Time between end of reference period and release of tabular data (average number of elapsed days) (a)

(a) Where a publication or spreadsheet has been reissued, the reissue date is used in the calculation of average.

Table 12.6: Time between end of reference period and release of tabular data forselected publications

Publication	Frequency	Average number of elapsed days (a)
Retail Trade, Australia (ABS cat. no.8501.0)	Monthly	34
Building Approvals, Australia (ABS cat. no.8731.0)	Monthly	33
Labour Force, Australia (ABS cat. no.6202.0)	Monthly	10
Consumer Price Index, Australia (ABS cat. no.6401.0)	Quarterly	24
Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product (ABS cat. no.5206.0)	Quarterly	64
Australian Demographic Statistics (ABS cat. no.3101.0)	Quarterly	160

(a) Average is taken over the most recent year's releases.

The timeliness of release of information depends on a number of factors, including the amount and complexity of information being collected, the source of the data (for example, whether directly collected or sourced from administrative records), and the amount of processing or validation of the information required before release. The timeliness can also vary over the year, particularly in March/April and December/January due to the concentration of public holidays at this time.

For example, labour force statistics are released very quickly after the end of the reference month. Interviews are generally conducted in the second and third week of a given month. Respondents are asked to report for a set 'reference week', i.e. the previous week. This means that the data collection is completed before the end of the reference month, and labour force statistics can be released in a timely manner.

In contrast, for demographic statistics on Australia's population, the quarterly changes to population statistics are based on a variety of administrative sources, such as registrations of births and deaths, passenger cards completed at Australia's borders, and modelled estimates of interstate migration (using information from Medicare card registration address changes, delayed by three months as registration often takes place after the actual move). It takes around five months before estimates can be published due to the time needed to acquire and process the administrative data, particularly with the delay of three months for the Medicare card data.

The elapsed time between the end of the reference period and the supply of the CURF has improved over time as can be seen by the average number of elapsed days in Table 12.7. CURF releases in the past two years have been less timely, as a result of some cyclical products taking longer to process. More information on CURFs can be found in Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

Reference year	Number of CURFs released	Average number of elapsed days
2002-03	5	724
2003-04	2	548
2004–05	7	375
2005-06	7	353
2006-07	9	313
2007-08	7	476
2008-09	8	581

Table 12.7: Time between end of reference period and release of CURFs

Accessibility

The accessibility of statistical information refers to the ease with which it can be referenced. This includes the ease with which the existence of information can be ascertained, as well as the suitability of the form or medium through which the information can be accessed. The cost of the information may also be an aspect of accessibility for some users. More information on the accessibility of statistical information can be found in Chapter 13, Communication of statistics.

In recent years ABS' philosophy has changed from user-pays to free access to information. Since 2005 all statistics on the ABS website can be accessed free of charge. Publications, spreadsheets and census data on the website are available without cost to any member of the public through Internet access. Accessibility and visibility of statistical information on the ABS website has further improved since December 2008, following the introduction of open licensing under Creative Commons, which allows users to readily understand and abide by ABS copyright conditions without the need to negotiate a licence with the ABS.

CURFs are a product that allow approved researchers with a valid statistical purpose to access individual survey responses. The data files are confidentialised and access is carefully controlled to ensure that no individual or organisation can be identified. The ABS has worked to improve the accessibility of information available by increasing the number of CURFs released, with more than 118 CURFs released by the ABS (inclusive of both basic and expanded CURFs). The ABS has also continued work on improving the accessibility of CURFs through the ABS Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL[™]).

The ABS has made a version of SEASABS (seasonal adjustment software) available for release, enabling users to undertake their own seasonal adjustment.

Interpretability

The interpretability of statistical information reflects the availability of the supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and utilise it appropriately. This information normally covers the availability and clarity of metadata, including concepts, classifications and measures of accuracy. In addition, interpretability includes the appropriate presentation of the data, to aid correct interpretation of the data.

ABS releases are accompanied by extensive explanatory notes, to aid the interpretation of statistical information. A range of material is also available on the ABS website detailing the methods, classifications, concepts and standards used by the ABS. Since 2007–08, releases have also been accompanied by quality declarations to assist users in determining whether the information is suitable for their needs.

A number of ABS publications combine, compare and contrast statistics from different sources, to help users interpret how changes in one aspect of the economy or society can impact on other aspects. Examples include *Measures of Australia's Progress, 2009* (ABS cat. no.1383.0.55.001), *Australian Economic Indicators, May 2008* (ABS cat. no.1350.0) and *Australian Social Trends, 2009* (ABS cat. no.4102.0). For more information on these publications and other analytical work undertaken by the ABS to assist in the interpretation of statistics, see Chapter 14, Extended analysis of statistics.

Coherence

The coherence of statistical information reflects the degree to which it can be successfully brought together with other statistical information, within a broad analytical framework and over time. Coherence encompasses the internal consistency of a collection as well as its comparability, both over time and with other data sources. The use of standard concepts, classifications and target populations promotes coherence, as does the use of common methodology across surveys. For example, estimates of interstate trade published in *Qld Stats* (ABS cat. no.1318.3) are moving to the same frame of businesses used by other economic surveys, leading to improved comparability with other ABS statistics.

Coherence of ABS outputs requires the use of nationally and internationally agreed concepts and classifications. Standard concepts and classifications are used extensively within the ABS, and also promoted to other producers of statistical information within Australia. Information on statistical standards, concepts, classifications and methodologies are readily accessible through the ABS website. For more information, see Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

The Statistical Clearing House (SCH) provides approval to conduct surveys that are directed to 50 or more businesses and that are conducted by, or on behalf of, any Australian Government agency, to ensure that surveys are necessary, well designed, and place minimal burden on business respondents. One of the criteria used by the SCH is the coherence of the statistical information that will be produced. In particular, surveys are assessed on their use of standard methodologies, concepts and classifications, their consistency with past or future surveys, and the extent to which outputs can be compared, or jointly used, with

other sources of data. For more information about the SCH see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

The implementation of the updated *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification 2006* (ABS cat. no.1292.0) to ABS economic surveys poses some risk to the time series coherence of data while improving the coherence between the data and the 'real world' structure of the Australian economy. Change measurement strategies are in place to assess the impact of the new methodology and classification (*Information Paper: Update on ANZSIC 2006 Implementation, 2008*, ABS cat. no.1295.0.55.001) and where appropriate adjust the estimates to ensure comparability of the data over time. A range of ABS collections have been released or are due to be released on the new basis. The remaining ABS collections will migrate progressively to the new classification over the next two years. Communicating with users remains a priority for the ABS. This includes a series of information sessions before most statistical series will switch over to ANZSIC 2006, publishing additional information papers and meeting with relevant stakeholders.

chapter 13



Introduction

During 2008–09, the ABS continued to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion by increasing accessibility to the outputs of its statistical activities, usually released through publications, spreadsheets and datacubes. All publications back to 1994 can be accessed free of charge on the ABS website, while a small selection of current hard copy publications are available for purchase. A complete collection of ABS hard copy publications, including historical publications and microfiche, is held with the National Library of Australia and each state/territory library. Some public and university libraries also keep selected holdings.

To further extend access to historical publications on the ABS website, an ongoing project is underway to add key titles released earlier than 1994, which in most cases extends coverage back to the first issue of publication.

In addition, confidentialised unit record files (CURFs) are available for some statistical collections and can be accessed, under defined conditions, by authorised users.

Dissemination methods are underpinned by the ABS' core value of independence and impartiality. The ABS complies with this value by:

- ensuring that all potential users have equal opportunity to access ABS statistics
- assigning product release dates and times in advance, which are publicised on the website in the ABS Release Advice, and
- placing all releases, and the information they contain, under an embargo until the scheduled release time.

The ABS also seeks to ensure that the processes used to compile statistics are open and transparent, and that users of statistics have access to all the information that they need to be able to interpret the statistics accurately. As such, information about the methods used in producing statistics is provided through statistical publications, such as manuals of concepts, sources and methods, and information papers. Ongoing ABS research is often published in professional papers (a full list of those presented in 2008–09 is included in Appendix 7). ABS data is increasingly being presented with attendant metadata that helps customers interpret and assess the 'fitness for use' of the data.

The following sections cover some of the methods for accessing ABS statistics, new releases in 2008–09, and uses of ABS statistics.

Accessing ABS statistics

ABS website

The ABS website is the primary access point for the majority of users of ABS information, with website users accessing ABS web pages 193,519,053 million times in 2008–09. This is an increase of 27% from 2007–08 and 47% from 2006–07.

During 2008–09, a number of improvements were made to the ABS website. These included:

Time Series Index	A 'time series index' prototype was implemented to enable customers with a simplified process to access multiple time series spreadsheets from one point of entry.
Filtering	A beta version of a 'filtering' method introduced to assist customers in navigating to catalogued products was provided on the ABS website. This method allows website visitors to find statistics using one or more 'filters' (for example, keyword or catalogue number, date range, product type, topics, title).
Spotlight	A 'Spotlight on' section was implemented on the ABS website home page. This section will be utilised to draw home page visitors' attention to high profile releases, explaining more complex products or highlighting current issues.
Web Analytics	The ABS website moved to new software to compile visitor activity and usage information. This information will allow the ABS to further identify visitor personas and to gather greater understanding of who uses and how they use our website.
BetaWorks-website development blog	An environment within which new designs, future tools and enhancements can be tested with external clients and customers. Regular users and visitors to the ABS website now have the opportunity to actively participate in the development of the ABS website.
Release Calendar	A tool added to the website allowing regular users and visitors to see upcoming product releases in a calendar format.



ABS introduces open access licensing— Creative Commons

The ABS has introduced open access licensing to the bulk of the content on the ABS website. For this initiative ABS selected the Creative Commons (CC) 'Attribution 2.5 Australia' licence.

The aim of introducing CC was to reduce the restrictions on the use of data from the ABS website considerably by changing the copyright from 'all rights reserved' to 'some rights reserved'. In effect, what the ABS asks is only that it be acknowledged as the source of the data. People are free to re-use, build upon and distribute the ABS CC-licensed data, even commercially. This has made a wealth of data more readily available to the community, researchers and business, facilitating innovative research and development projects based on quality statistics, and promoting the wider use of statistics in the community.

The change was achieved through the release of a new website copyright statement and the addition of CC metadata to the footer of each page of the website in December 2008.

However, the CC licences do not apply to customised data which are covered by the ABS Conditions of Sale.

Access to data under embargo

In order to ensure impartiality of access of ABS statistics, it is standard ABS policy and practice to make all statistical releases available on the website simultaneously from 11.30 am (Canberra time) on the day of their release. Prior to 11.30 am, all ABS statistics are treated as confidential and regarded as 'under embargo'.

However, very limited access is granted to selected statistical products under embargo on the day of release when:

- there is high public interest in an issue of direct and substantial relevance to the statistics being released
- a relevant government minister is highly likely to be asked to provide public comment on the statistics shortly after their official release, and/or
- the release is sufficiently complex that some advanced analysis of the statistics and preparation of a ministerial brief by officials is considered essential. This is to ensure that initial comments made by relevant ministers regarding the headline features are well informed, thereby minimising the risk of misleading the public or, particularly, the financial markets, on an issue of national importance.

Access to statistical products under embargo is facilitated through a secure lock-up or, in the case of the quarterly release of the *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product* (ABS cat. no.5206.0), by means of a restrictive pre-release arrangement with the Australian Government Treasury.

Attendees at the lock-ups are required to sign security undertakings which include provision for prosecution under the *Crimes Act, 1914* for anyone who breaches the conditions for attending the lock-up.

Promotion of releases

The ABS seeks to encourage informed and increased use of statistics by promoting key releases such as *Measures of Australia's Progress* (ABS cat. no.1370.0) and *Australian Social Trends* (ABS cat. no.4102.0), as well as generally promoting the wider range of ABS products and services.

Seminars and training

The ABS also provides seminars and training courses for government and others, to promote available statistics and assist users in accessing the data. During 2008–09, sessions focused on the broad capability of the ABS, including

- statistics freely available on the ABS website
- responsible use of ABS microdata, and
- ▶ availability of customised data through information consultancies.

CDATA Online

In November 2008, CDATA Online was released onto the ABS website. It is a free online tool which combines information on Australian society from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, with web graphing and mapping capability. CDATA Online allows clients to create their own tables of Census data on a range of different topics including age, education, housing, income, transport, religion, ethnicity, occupation and more. This online product allows clients to create tables, maps and graphs of Census characteristics for all ABS geographic areas.

CDATA Online is designed to allow a high degree of freedom in selecting and combining the geographical areas most suited to the client's needs. Data may be accessed for areas as small as a Collection District (approximately 225 households), as large as an entire state or territory or for all of Australia. Users can also create their own customised geographic areas.

With CDATA Online users are able to cross-tabulate chosen Census data variables to produce a table which can also be viewed as a graph or a thematic map. Predetermined basic tables are available for selection based on broad topics via a topic list. Once a table has been created it can be further customised by adding and removing data items and geographic areas, and by creating custom data groups. Tables, graphs and maps created in CDATA Online can be downloaded in a variety of formats, while registered users can also save created tables, within CDATA Online, for future retrieval.

Registered users of CDATA Online can save their custom geographies, data items and tables. However, users logged in as a guest will not have the ability to save custom geographies, data items and tables. The CDATA Online product will replace selected census products which were available in 2001, such as CLIB, CDATA Quickbuild and Census for Schools.

CDATA Online was jointly developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Space-Time Research.

There are currently 8,400 users. This product won the ESRI Web GIS Challenge and received a Highly Commended award in the Australian Government Information Management Office's Excellence in E-Government Award in 2009.

Statistics for schools

The ABS is keen to influence the teaching of statistics and has been actively involved in a range of curriculum initiatives, in particular the first wave of consultation conducted by the National Curriculum Board. ABS involvement will continue to be a priority throughout 2009–10 while the detailed national curriculum development phase is underway.

One of the key aims of the Education Services Unit is to improve the statistical literacy of teachers and students. CensusAtSchool is an internet based educational project in which students respond to questions of interest about themselves by completing an online voluntary questionnaire. CensusAtSchool was run in 2008 and efforts are now underway to run it in 2010, and to make it an annual project from then on. An important feature of the project is the set of common questions which allow Australian students to compare themselves with students from other countries participating in CensusAtSchool.

Indigenous Statistics for Schools (ISS) is a new Indigenous education resource released during the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration Week 2009. It provides easy-to-use data for teachers and students on topics such as Indigenous population, education, health, housing, and work. The ISS web pages also cover general issues such as Indigenous identification, how Indigenous statistics are collected, and the importance of accurate Indigenous statistics.

Statistical literacy

The ABS seeks to increase statistical literacy in the government and community through a nationally coordinated program. This program uses innovative approaches to improve the statistical capabilities of targeted customer segments. For example,

- the Information Skills Program delivers sessions to a broad range of client groups across all states and territories and is designed to raise awareness and understanding of ABS statistics among key customer groups. Activities include:
 - speaking at a number of high-profile national conferences, such as the Australian Library and Information Association Biennial Conference 2008, Public Libraries Conference and Teacher Librarians Conference
 - providing numerous information sessions on using CDATA and socio-economic index for areas (SEIFA) to local government, community groups, universities and the small business sector
 - coordinating training sessions across multiple states for organisations such as the Australian Taxation Office and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government
- undertaking strategic projects for improving statistical literacy including the development of online learning materials and tutorials
- developing web pages to assist client groups access information, publications and online training to enhance statistical literacy, and
- encouraging the development of relationships with external stakeholders which will advance statistical literacy including working with academic institutions to develop resources for journalism students to better understand and use statistical evidence.

Tiwi college sports statistical literacy project

A Sports Statistical Literacy Project is currently being piloted with students from the Tiwi Islands (NT). The project involves students collecting and analysing data relating to their local football competition thus enabling them to gain basic statistical literacy skills and being able to tell a story with the data. Students will be introduced to a range of basic statistical concepts and procedures including data collection, data quality assurance, data analysis and reporting. Once fully developed, the aim is to promote this project more widely as part of a national Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy training course.



Senior girls working in the classroom



National Information and Referral Service

The National Information and Referral Service (NIRS) is a free service that provides the main entry point for those seeking basic information and statistical information from the ABS. The number of emails received by the NIRS was slightly (3%) higher in 2008–09 than in 2007–08, based on data for the eleven months to May for each year. The number of calls answered decreased by 12% based on the eleven months to May. The decrease in call volume for 2008–09 reflects the waning Census cycle, the reduction in opening hours for the telephone service, and possibly an increase in web literacy, and increasing reliance on the free data available on our website.

Information consultancy service

The ABS provides a cost-recovered information consultancy service, which delivers customised data to users whose needs are not met by data available free of charge on the ABS website.

Information consultancy customers consist of all levels of government, large and small businesses, not-for-profit organisations, the research sector and the general public. These customers use tailored ABS data for decision making, research, policy development, planning and marketing. The range of data available to these customers includes economic and demographic data such as overseas arrivals and departures, education and work, international trade, vitals and much more, as well as detailed data from the Census of Population and Housing.

Subscriptions to some data can be provided on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis, according to the customer's needs.

Access to confidentialised unit record files: specialist data for specialist researchers

Microdata, which is the most detailed statistical information available from the ABS, can be accessed in the form of confidentialised unit record files (CURFs). These are a valuable source of data for specialist researchers in government agencies, universities and other organisations.

CURFs provide records of individual responses to ABS surveys from persons, households or organisations which have been modified to protect respondent confidentiality. In all cases, information such as names and addresses have been removed, and a variety of statistical techniques have been applied to further ensure confidentiality is maintained.

CURFs are produced at different levels of detail:

- ► Basic CURFs are offered on CD-ROM and in the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADLTM). These are the most rigorously confidentialised CURFs available, and
- ► Expanded CURFs provide more detailed data than Basic CURFs—these are able to be less rigorously confidentialised because they are available only in the more secure environments of the RADL[™] and the ABS Data Laboratory (ABSDL).

The RADL[™], available on the ABS website, enables users to submit statistical queries to be run on CURFs. Users do not have access to the data directly, and there are checks and controls in the system to maintain the security of the data.

There are currently 118 CURFs available from 48 ABS surveys, 15 having been released in 2008–09. Of these, all but nine pre-2001 Basic CURFs are accessible in the RADL[™].

While the use of CURFs on CD-ROM remains very popular, with around half of all CURF use in this format, researchers are also increasingly using $RADL^{TM}$ to access both Basic and Expanded CURFs. At the end of June 2009, there were 1,099 researchers from 105 organisations registered to use the $RADL^{TM}$.

RADL[™] developments throughout 2008–09 have focused on improving the system's functionality, particularly through further automating a number of confidentiality protections. An enhanced RADL[™] will be released early in 2009–10.

A further means of accessing microdata is the ABSDL. This is a microdata processing environment established in a secure room or area on ABS premises. ABSDL provides a more interactive processing environment than the RADL[™], enabling the analysis of both standard and customised microdata files. To ensure respondents cannot be identified, any output removed by ABSDL customers is vetted by ABS staff.

The costs for providing access to CURFs is recovered through user charging, in line with Australian Government cost recovery guidelines.

The ABS website lists published results of research for which CURFs have been used. It includes academic papers published in journals and conference proceedings, higher degree theses, monographs and reports.

Informing decisions—ABS Service Delivery Charter

Revised and released in January 2008, the ABS Service Delivery Charter outlines the ABS' commitment to providing a quality customer service, and describes the products and services that users can expect when they approach the ABS for statistical or other information. The charter offers guidance to customers wishing to provide compliments, or register complaints, on any aspect of customer relationships or service. The charter also describes the service standards for which the ABS is accountable. Performance against service standards for 2008–09 can be found in Table 13.1. The charter, together with other relevant corporate information, is available from the ABS website, using the 'About Us' link on the homepage.

Table 13.1: Performance against service standards for 2008–09: targets and actualperformance

Performance standard	Target (%)	Actual performance (%)
General enquiries		
Answer 85% of calls to our telephone enquiry service within 30 seconds (between the hours of 8:30am and 5:00pm (EST), Monday to Friday)	85	87
Acknowledge the receipt of 99% of email enquiries within five working days	99	99
Respond to 90% of Enquiry Form correspondence within five working days	90	99
Consultancy services		
Provide 90% of quotes for information consultancy services within three working days of receiving the customer's final specifications	90	88
Provide 90% of information consultancy services within five working days, or to a timeframe negotiated between the customer and the consultant	90	72
Complaints		
Acknowledgment of a service delivery complaint within one working day of receipt	100	75
Response from the Director, Client Services in the relevant ABS office, within five working days	100	75
Website		
Commence publishing to website at 11:30am (EST) Monday to Friday	100	100
Ensure the website is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, subject to events out of our control	100	100
Advertise website unavailability for maintenance purposes one working day prior to the website being unavailable	100	100
Fix 99% of broken web page links within 3 working days of notification by a customer	99	99
Refer 99% of requests for translation of any web product which is not suitably accessible for visually impaired users to an appropriate translation service within three working days	99	n.a. no requests received
CURF Microdata		
Acknowledge the receipt of 99% of microdata enquiries within one working day	99	99
Provide a full response to 85% of microdata enquiries within five working days	85	84
Dispatch 90% of CURF microdata products within 20 working days of receipt of the completed application form	90	60
Provide 90% of new CURF users with access within five working days to a CURF already approved for use in that organisation	90	95

The ABS has charters for respondents in Business Surveys and Household Surveys, also available via the 'About Us' link from the homepage of the ABS website. Further information on the Charters can be found in Chapter 11, Provider/respondent relationships.

Releases in 2008–09

The ABS releases a wide range of information from its collections through publications (in electronic and, in some cases, paper formats), spreadsheets and datacubes. Most users of ABS statistics rely on releases in these forms, and the ABS is always seeking to expand and improve the range available. In particular, in 2008–09 the ABS has continued to expand the range of data available through spreadsheets and datacubes.

The number of datacubes and spreadsheets increased from 8,773 in 2007–08 to 10,000 in 2008–09. The increase in datacubes and spreadsheets on the ABS website since 2004–05 is shown in Table 13.2.

Year	Datacubes	Time Series Spreadsheets	Total
2004-05	447	258	705
2005-06	1,492	3,881	5,373
2006-07	2,280	5,266	7,546
2007-08	2,567	6,206	8,773
2008-09	2,854	7,146	10,000

Table 13.2: ABS datacubes and spreadsheets releases by year (number)

The number of publications decreased from 818 in 2007–08 to 807 in 2008–09. Table 13.3 shows the number of ABS releases by year.

Year Book Australia

Due to budget constraints a Year Book was not produced for 2009. It is intended that Year Book Australia 2010 will be released in mid 2010.

Use of ABS statistics

Statistics produced by the ABS are widely used to support decision making and research including:

- formulating and assessing government macro-economic policies
- assisting with allocation of Australian Government funds to state and territory governments
- formulating industry development policies
- supporting policy development, program delivery and evaluation of key government and non-government agencies involved in health, community and family services, and
- carrying out electoral distribution.

Table 13.3: ABS publication releases (a) classified by subject matter, year and frequency (number)

Subject Matter / Year	Annual	Quarterly	Monthly	Other	Total
Economic and finance releases					
2004-05	11	33	47	5	96
2005-06	12	33	73	13	131
2006-07	14	32	60	12	118
2007-08	8	32	60	16	116
2008-09	14	32	60	8	114
Industry releases					
2004-05	26	78	63	28	195
2005-06	19	84	48	24	175
2006-07	18	83	56	24	181
2007–08	11	76	36	16	139
2008-09	12	79	59	23	173
Population and migration releases					
2004-05	36	3	24	14	77
2005-06	38	4	24	8	74
2006-07	17	4	24	6	51
2007-08	58	4	24	18	104
2008-09	18	12	12	30	72
Labour releases					
2004–05	6	50	36	33	125
2005-06	9	57	36	40	142
2006–07	11	49	37	25	122
2007–08	13	47	36	32	128
2008–09	10	42	36	46	134
Social analysis releases					
2004–05	14	3	0	44	61
2005-06	16	4	0	43	63
2006-07	16	5	0	72	93
2007–08	16	7	0	68	91
2008–09	14	8	0	57	79
Other general releases					
2004–05	30	16	118(b)	15	179
2005-06	39	34	116	7	196
2006-07	26	33	51	36	146
2007-08	58	56	95	31	240
2008-09	34	55	76	68	233
Total					
2004-05	123	183	288	139	733
2005-06	133	298	215	135	781
2006-07	102	206	228	175	711
2007-08	164	222	251	181	818
2008-09	102	228	243	232	805

(a) Includes catalogued publications and other products, but excludes reprints and corrigenda.

(b) Catalogue numbers assigned to the Reserve Bank of Australia spreadsheets.

During 2008–09, ABS statistics were used in the following ways:

- informing government policies to assist and support individuals, families and businesses, during and after the February 2009 bushfires in Victoria
- using 2006 Census of Population and Housing data extensively throughout all levels of government for research, policy development and planning purposes
- providing background information for media stories on topics such as families, religion, birthplace, housing costs and labour force, and
- small businesses using data from a range of sources, including international trade and the Census to undertake market research and planning.

Type of Access	2004–05	2005-06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Website					
Pages viewed (a)	60,573,254	78,054,933	101, 693,436	140, 058, 970	193,519,053
Pages published	16,668	23,015	148,144	193,515	238,886
Products downloaded	962,872	1,868,280	4,501,530	7, 029, 854	3,150,630
National Information and Referral Service					
Emails	12,862	12,588	14,278	15,772	16,293
Calls completed	60,820	56,257	58,040	56,739	50,716
Information Consultancy Service					
Consultancies dispatched	4,937	3,464	3,380	3,751 (b)	3,968
Library Extension Program					
Libraries	518	518	515	517	517
Secondary providers					
Number	132	172	126	245(c)	33
Remote Access Data Laboratory (d)					
Organisations active on RADL™(e)	28	32	41	60	73
Individuals active on RADL™(f)	84	98	131	173	189
Statistical programs executed (g)	7,535	8,998	15,955	19,305	16,160

Table 13.4: Number of accesses, by type of access, 2003–04 to 2008–09

(a) Pages viewed accounts only for views of static web pages. Much of the content of the ABS website is generated dynamically and is difficult to report on using existing tools.

(b) The ABS' Annual Report 2007-08 (page 155) incorrectly stated that there were 4,677 consultancies dispatched in 2007-08.

(c) Includes 32 secondary distributors who incur a licence fee for on-selling purchased data.

(d) Re-calculation of the RADL usage figures has shown that slightly fewer organisations and individuals actively used RADL over the period 2003–04 to 2005–06 than was shown in previous issues of this Report. The number of statistical programs executed remains unchanged over the same period.

(e) Organisations active on RADL refers to organisations with users who executed statistical programs in RADL during the period shown.

(f) Individuals active on RADL refers to registered RADL users who executed statistical programs in RADL during the period shown.

(g) Statistical programs executed refers to jobs run in RADL during the period shown.

Media reporting

The ABS received widespread media coverage throughout the year. The ABS received approximately 15,000 mentions in major metropolitan print media during 2008–09. The ABS received 640 major metropolitan radio and televisions mentions during 2008–09.

As shown in Table 13.5, in 2008–09, the ABS issued approximately 101 media releases throughout the year, promoting ABS products, as well as flagship releases, such as Australian Social Trends, Year Book Australia and Measures of Australia's Progress.

Table 13.5: Number of ABS media releases issued, 2001–02 to 2008–09

Year	News releases issued (a)
2004-05	133
2005-06	169
2006-07	160
2007-08	132
2008-09	101

(a) Does not include media releases promoting the Census of Population and Housing.

chapter 14



EXTENDED ANALYSIS OF STATISTICS

Introduction

The information available from the ABS is an extraordinarily valuable national resource, and the ABS seeks to ensure maximum benefit for users from this information. The ABS releases data through standard products (for example, publications and confidentialised unit record files), and also produces customised data tables on a consultancy basis. However, as these outputs cannot meet all user needs or fully utilise the potential of ABS data, the ABS seeks to add value to its statistics and extend the range of statistical outputs produced. Specifically, the ABS undertakes the following activities to add value to ABS statistics:

- production of analytical and compendium publications, such as Australian Economic Indicators (AEI), Measuring Australia's Progress (MAP) Australian Social Trends (AST) and A Picture of the Nation—The Statistician's Report on the 2006 Census
- research and development into the production of complex statistical measures such as measures of human capital, price indexes and seasonal or calendar series adjustment
- conducting and publishing the results of policy-relevant analyses of unit record data, which, due to confidentiality constraints, cannot be made available for analysis outside the ABS
- bringing data together to produce modelled, synthesised or enhanced statistics, and
- exploring relationships in statistics to ensure the ongoing quality of ABS outputs, and to understand movements and trends in various series.

ABS releases

The ABS produces a number of analytical reports that provide information on social and economic conditions and progress in Australia to governments and the community. The reports draw together data and analysis from within the ABS, and from a range of sources. They include analysis of current circumstances, changes to circumstances over time, ways that different groups of people have been affected by change, and the various factors that may have accounted for observed trends. In addition, analyses explore the interrelationships between the economic, social and environmental aspects of life.

The following flagship publications were released during 2008–09:

Productivity estimates

Experimental Estimates of Industry Multifactor Productivity (MFP) (ABS cat. no.5260.0.55.002) is an annual publication containing estimates of MFP for the 12 industries that comprise the market sector. The estimates

Progress of ABS' Analytical Community

As noted in the 2007–08 Annual Report, the ABS restructured and refocused its analytical resources to build a stronger capacity for analysis across social, economic and environmental issues. Since that time, the ABS Analytical Community has been active in producing a range of publicly available analytical outputs, undertaking policy-relevant microdata analysis, and undertaking ongoing work to improve the quality of ABS statistics. The core of the Analytical Community is comprised of the three ABS analysis branches: Analytical Services Branch, Economic Analysis and Reporting Branch, and Social Analysis and Reporting Branch.

The Analytical Community is working to build strong relationships with key stakeholders and data users, including other government agencies, other research institutions, and academic areas. It also actively seeks the engagement of external stakeholders to inform its ongoing analysis forward work program, and convenes annual meetings of its key external user group each May.

of industry MFP use the same basic data that underlie the estimates of market sector productivity. These estimates provide additional value to the already established market sector productivity estimates released annually through the *Australian System of National Accounts* (ABS cat. no.5204.0).

Feature article: A spotlight on quarterly labour productivity

A feature article on quarterly labour productivity was released in *Australian Economic Indicators* (ABS cat. no.1350.0) in November 2008 and was designed to assist users in understanding and interpreting published estimates of quarterly GDP per hour worked, commonly referred to as quarterly labour productivity. The article provides an outline of the conceptual framework used in estimating quarterly labour productivity and how best to interpret these estimates.

Australian Economic Indicators

Australian Economic Indicators (ABS cat. no.1350.0) is a monthly publication, drawing together ABS and economic data from international and other organisations, to provide a compendium of key national, state and international economic time series. It also contains feature articles on various topics of interest. This monthly flagship publication was first released in 1991 and has remained consistently popular with users. Over past months, AEI has included longer time series datacubes, an e-magazine version of the printed publication has been produced, and table spreadsheets have been developed.

Australian Social Trends

Australian Social Trends (ABS cat. no.4102.0) contains articles on contemporary social issues in an easily digestible format to meet the needs of a wide range of users. These articles draw together ABS and non-ABS data to present interesting articles that introduce
readers to new analyses of new and existing data. AST also presents information in the form of key social indicators in various areas of social concern (such as health, work, education, and family and community). These are often presented in the form of comparisons over time or geographical distributions. The 2008 issue was the last of an annual publication hard copy release format, with the 2009 version being produced as quarterly web-based releases. AST articles in the 2008 and first quarter 2009 releases included a focus on: population projections, housework, retirement intentions and superannuation, mineral boom towns, volunteerism, unionism, industrial disputes, and first home buyers.

A snapshot of our society

Did you know that more young Australians are living with their parents than ever before? Or that they are more likely to move towns than older people? Australian Social Trends paints a picture of Australian society, *Australian Social Trends* (ABS cat. no.4102.0).



Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators

Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP): Summary Indicators (ABS cat. no.1383.0.55.001) is a product that draws together data across economic, social and environmental areas and examines the inter-relationship between them. By examining trends in progress across these dimensions, this product seeks to highlight changes to the community that can inform debate and inform policy decisions that affect these areas. MAP has been updated in its web-based format twice during 2008 and 2009, introducing new state- and territory-based data, articles and commentary on the trends, and providing a new user interface. Further work on the development of MAP is planned for 2009–10 examining the conceptual base, the presentation of information, web interface and introduction of lower level supportive data for the current headline indicators of progress:

- health
- education and training
- work
- national income
- economic hardship

- national wealth
- housing
- productivity
- the natural landscape
- the air and atmosphere
- oceans and estuaries
- family, community and social cohesion
- crime, and
- democracy, governance and citizenship

Exploring Measures of Low Social Capital

The ABS released an analytical research paper in March 2009, *Research Paper: Exploring Measures of Low Social Capital* (ABS cat. no.1351.0.55.024), which explored measures of social capital using the 2006 General Social Survey. This work explored the incidence of, and associations between, various items which measure social capital, and the variation in social capital measures across demographic groups. This paper forms part of an ongoing program of analysis exploring measures and correlates of social capital using ABS data.

Data enhancement

The ABS Census Data Enhancement project aims to enhance the value of Census of Population and Housing data, by creating from it a 5% sample of the Australian population that can be linked between the 2006 Census and subsequent Censuses. The resulting Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset will have potential to provide information on changing patterns of population and housing patterns over time. Analysing these data in a confidential environment provides an opportunity for the ABS to inform government on areas of need, deliver evidence to underpin the development of policy and programs, and assist in their evaluation.

As noted in the 2007–08 Annual Report, work on the Census Data Enhancement project has continued in accordance with the Statement of Intention published on the ABS website in August 2005. Work in 2008–09 focused on undertaking and finalising a number of quality studies to assess the feasibility of linkage options to assist with planning of future linkage across Census data sets and other data sets. The quality studies undertaken to date have focused primarily on Indigenous mortality data, migration, census management and under-coverage in the labour force survey. Work is also continuing to explore a number of methodological aspects of data linkage, such as statistical methods to account for linkage error. Some preliminary results of this work have already been made available publicly: see, for example, *Generalised Linear Models with Probabilistically Linked Data* (ABS cat. no.1352.0.55.098).

Other analytical work in 2008–09

In 2008–09, the ABS released a number of other analytical outputs aimed at improving the understanding of Australian society and Australia's economic performance. In addition, the ABS Analytical Community promoted and facilitated wider community engagement in these areas of analysis to assist informed decision making within government and the broader community.

The ABS also regularly reviews the methodology used to produce statistics, to enhance the usefulness of data and to encourage and inform decision making amongst governments and the community. Analytical work undertaken by the ABS provides opportunities to incorporate improvements and new approaches, where appropriate.

In 2008–09, the ABS undertook a range of analytical work, including:

Exploring temporal aggregation and seasonal adjustment of time series

This paper explored the impact of temporal aggregation in time series, where quarterly seasonally adjusted estimates are desired from a quarterly original time series which is the temporal aggregate of a monthly original time series. Specifically, the paper compared estimates obtained by either seasonally adjusting a quarterly time series directly, or by seasonally adjusting the component monthly original time series and then temporally aggregating to the quarterly frequency. This work was released in August 2008 following the June 2008 meeting of the Methodology Advisory Committee.

Reviewing the ABS' hedonic regression model for desktop computers

The ABS continues to explore innovative ways to ensure it accurately captures the price of rapidly evolving goods. An hedonic approach is currently used in the Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Indexes to measure the price change of desktop computers. Improvements to this methodology for desktop computers were developed during 2008–09 along with proposals to extend the approach to laptop computers.

Australian Bureau of Statistics submission to the Review of the National Innovation System

The ABS submission entitled 'Key aspects of innovation in Australian businesses, microdata analysis of the 2003 and 2005 innovation surveys' presents the core results of recent ABS analyses of the main unit record files of the 2003 and 2005 Australian innovation surveys. Specifically, the submission identifies business characteristics associated with:

- i. innovation by Australian businesses
- ii. different types of innovation by Australian businesses
- iii. the incidence of skill shortages that have hampered the innovation performance of Australian businesses, and
- iv. the degree of novelty of innovations of Australian businesses.

The submission concentrates on the information that can be extracted from modelling the association between key business characteristics and various aspects of innovation behaviour in Australian businesses.

An analysis of developments in skills shortages hampering innovation using the 2003 and 2005 Australian innovation surveys

The ABS presented this conference paper at the 2008 Australasian Meeting of the Econometrics Society, Wellington, New Zealand. The analysis uses microdata collected from the 2003 and 2005 innovation surveys to investigate the nature and extent of changes in association among key business characteristics and the incidence of skill shortages hampering innovation. The paper presents a model that estimates the strength and direction of association among selected business characteristics and the probability of a business experiencing skill shortages that hamper innovation.

Measuring economic returns to post-school education in Australia

At the 2008 Australian Conference of Economists, the ABS presented a paper entitled 'Measuring economic returns to post-school education in Australia'. Using data from six waves of the full Australian Population Census (1981–2006) the study estimates the rates of return to post-school education in Australia over a 25-year period, with a focus on bachelor degrees. Both the internal rate of return method and Mincer's human capital earnings function method are applied. Given the importance of university education in human capital formation, this study focuses on expected rates of returns on four-year bachelor degrees in Australia.

chapter 15



STATISTICAL STANDARDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction

The ABS has a lead role in avoiding duplication in the collection of statistics, attaining comparability between collections undertaken by different agencies, and maximising the utilisation of statistics.

Australia has a world class statistical environment, where data from a range of sources can be compared and evaluated. The coherence of the statistical environment underpins democratic processes. Coherent data gives all citizens and governments the ability to compare different aspects of Australia's society and economy, and to assess Australia's progress. The ABS produces a range of widely-adopted statistical standards that enable a meaningful statistical picture of society and the economy.

Increasing global complexity places pressure on statistical standards. As the real world changes, statistics can lose their relevance, leading to a reduction in the quality and usefulness of the statistical information. In maintaining standards, the ABS must balance the potential for decreasing relevance of statistics against the significant cost of introducing new standards and the desire for comparability over time.

Various aspects of statistical standards and infrastructure are needed for the effective collection and release of data, including:

- classification schemes that categorise concepts (for example, industry, occupation)
- definitions of the concepts underpinning data elements (for example, dependency, usual residence)
- ▶ definitions of statistical units (for example, business, family, income unit)
- ▶ tools to enable coding of data to standard classifications, and
- metadata repositories to store the information about data.

The ABS is at the forefront of national statistical offices in adopting international standards, either by adopting the published standards or by developing Australian derivatives which facilitate international comparability. All national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies can be aligned with international equivalents. The ABS assists in the development of many key international statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies.

The ABS also develops national statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies which are applied, as appropriate, to all ABS statistical collections, including business and

household surveys. The ABS takes a leading role by encouraging other Australian, state and territory government agencies to adopt these standards, frameworks and methodologies in their statistical activities. Extensive information about ABS standards is available on the ABS website (http://www.abs.gov.au-Methods, Classifications, Concepts and Standards).

The ABS also works closely with other agencies involved in the development of standards and frameworks. For more information see Chapter 10, Engagement with users and producers of statistics.

The following sections summarise the ABS activities in developing and implementing statistical standards during 2008–09.

Progress on developing and implementing international standards and classifications

Development and implementation of enhanced international statistical standards

ABS staff have continued to be active participants in the review of key international macro-economic standards, which began in 2003. The review focused on maintaining the relevance of economic statistics in a changing environment and on ensuring the various economic standards are appropriately aligned. The System of National Accounts 2008 was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2009. The revised Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual was adopted by the IMF Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics in November 2008. Both standards incorporate significant ABS input.

The ABS intends to implement the revised macro-economic standards, in conjunction with the implementation of *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification*, 2006, for the 2008–09 release of the annual national accounts in November 2009. The various quarterly releases (including the national accounts, balance of payments and financial accounts) will be released on the basis of the new standards, beginning with the September quarter 2009 releases. Changes required to the monthly balance of payments and international trade series will be introduced with the August 2009 release.

The ABS will comply as fully as possible with the new standards. Non-compliance affects international comparability and will only be considered in the relatively few cases where the ABS strongly disagrees with the theoretical position taken on a particular issue or where the costs of compliance (for example, provider burden and problems of data availability) exceed the materiality of the issue in the Australian context. In the cases where non-compliance is significant, the ABS will endeavour to provide sufficient supplementary information to enable a reconciliation back to the international standard, and therefore assist in international comparability.

Balance of Payments Manual

The *Balance of Payments Manual* is published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and is the international statistical standard for balance of payments and international investment position statistics. The fifth edition was released in 1993 and adopted by the ABS in its publications in 1998.

The IMF commenced the process of revising the *Balance of Payments Manual* in 2003 and the sixth edition was released in December 2008. The ABS was involved in all stages of the revision process through involvement in technical expert groups, contributing technical papers, commenting on drafts, and membership of the IMF's Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics. The revised standard is consistent with other international macro-economic statistical standards.

The ABS will adopt the sixth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* (BPM6) in the August 2009 issue of *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia* (ABS cat. no.5368.0) and the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no.5302.0). An information paper was released on 17 June 2009 describing, in respect of *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia*, the main changes to the international standards, the timing for implementing the changes in Australian statistics, the impact on time series and the impact on the presentation of statistics. An information paper providing similar information in respect of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* was released on 22 July 2009.

Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment

The *Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment* is published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is the international standard for foreign direct investment statistics. The third edition was released in 1996 and adopted by the ABS, along with the *Balance of Payments Manual*, in 1998.

Revision of the Benchmark Definition was undertaken by the OECD as a joint process with the IMF's revision of the *Balance of Payments Manual*, to ensure consistency of the two standards on direct investment. The technical expert groups formed for the revision of the *Balance of Payments Manual* also provided direction to the revision of the Benchmark Definition. The ABS has also been involved in the revision process, by contributing technical papers, assisting in the drafting of the manual and chairing the Working Group on International Investment Statistics. The revised standard is consistent with the *Balance of Payments Manual*, as well as providing guidance on other analytical presentations of direct investment statistics.

The fourth edition of the Benchmark Definition was published by the OECD in April 2008. The ABS will implement those components of the Benchmark Definition contained in the standard BPM6 presentation in the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no.5302.0) and in the 2009 calendar year reporting to the OECD, subsequently published in the 2009 issue of *International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics* (ABS cat. no.5352.0).

Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services

The Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services is published by a consortium of international agencies consisting of the United Nations, the European Commission, the IMF, the OECD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It provides guidance on the collection and compilation of statistics on international trade in services beyond that provided by the IMF's *Balance of Payments Manual*. In particular, focus is given to providing definitions of more detailed service categories and to the relationship between trade in services as defined by the *Balance of Payments Manual*, and trade in services as defined by the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services.

A task force supported by the OECD has been working on revising the Manual to ensure continued consistency with the *Balance of Payments Manual*. The ABS has contributed to the revision process by providing comments on drafts of the revised Manual.

The ABS currently publishes information according to the more detailed service categories defined in the Manual, and will adopt the revised classification in the August 2009 issue of *International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia* (ABS cat. no.5368.0) and the September quarter 2009 issue of *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position, Australia* (ABS cat. no.5302.0).

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006

The ABS continues to work on implementing the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification, 2006 (ANZSIC 2006). The classification is used as a basis for the collection and dissemination of both economic and social statistics. During 2008–09, the following publications were released based on the new classification:

- Not-for-profit Organisations, Australia (ABS cat. no.8106.0) in July 2008
- ▶ Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services, Australia (ABS cat. no.8226.0) in July 2008
- Mining Operations, Australia (ABS cat. no.8415.0) in July 2008
- Television, Film and Video Production and Post-Production Services, Australia (ABS cat. no.8679.0) in July 2008
- ▶ Innovation in Australian Business (ABS cat. no.8158.0) in August 2008
- Manufacturing Industry, Australia (ABS cat. no.8221.0) in August 2008
- Selected Characteristics of Australian Business (ABS cat. no.8167.0) in September 2008
- Research and Experimental Development, Businesses, Australia (ABS cat. no.8104.0) in October 2008
- Research and Experimental Development, All Sector Summary, Australia (ABS cat. no.8112.0) in October 2008
- Information and Communication Technology, Australia (ABS cat. no.8126.0) in October 2008

- Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia (ABS cat. no.6248.0.55.002) in Feb 2009
- Museums, Australia (ABS cat. no.8560.0) in March 2009
- Australian Industry (ABS cat. no.8155.0) in May 2009
- Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (ABS cat. no.6306.0) in June 2009
- ▶ Industrial Disputes, Australia (ABS cat. no.6321.0.55.001) in June 2009, and
- Legal Services, Australia (ABS cat. no.8667.0) in June 2009.

Further information on the impact of ANZSIC 2006 on ABS statistics can be found in *Information Paper: Update on ANZSIC 2006 Implementation, Australia* (ABS cat. no.1295.0.55.001).

System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting

Environmental-economic accounting brings together economic and environmental information in a common framework to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. The revised System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) will be the statistical standard for environmental-economic accounting just as the System of National Accounts is the statistical standard for economic accounts. SEEA will provide an internationally agreed set of recommendations expressed in terms of concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and standard tables in order to obtain international comparability of environmental-economic accounts.

The UN London Group on Environmental Accounting is contributing to the revision of the SEEA by addressing a range of technical issues which need to be resolved in order to elevate the SEEA to an international statistical standard. In 2008–09 the ABS continued to contribute to the London Group, including attending the 13th meeting of the group in October 2008 and hosting the 14th meeting in Canberra in April 2009. SEEA is due for release as an internationally recognised statistical standard in 2012.

Energy statistics standard

In 2008–09 the ABS maintained its contribution to the UN Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, including attending the 4th annual meeting of the Group. The Oslo Group is mandated to develop the International Recommendations on Energy Statistics which will set the standard for the scope, classifications, definitions, collection, compilation and dissemination of energy statistics. This international standard is planned to be adopted in February 2011.

Progress on developing Australian standards and classifications

Standard Economic Sector Classifications of Australia, 2008

The new edition of the *Standard Economic Sector Classifications of Australia* (SESCA 2008) was released in June 2009. This publication describes the suite of economic sector classifications which group businesses based on their economic behaviour and legal structure. It is also used in the compilation of the National Accounts, Government Finance and International Accounts statistics as well as other component economic indicators.

The revised SESCA classification reflects the changes in the System of National Accounts (SNA) institutional sector classification as described in SNA 2008. The revised SESCA classifications will begin to be implemented with the *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006* (ANZSIC 2006) in the sub-annual collections and in the Australian National Accounts.

Australian Culture and Leisure Classification

The second edition of the *Australian Culture and Leisure Classification* was released in July 2008. This edition includes updates of the concordances with other standard ABS classifications, which were also recently revised, such as ANZSIC 2006 and the *Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations* 2006.

The classification focuses on the economic side of culture and leisure activities: the way culture and leisure activities are linked to the economy through direct expenditure and employment. It does this through three classifications: the Industry Classification, the Product Classification, and the Occupation Classification. The Industry Classification defines the business units that either directly produce or provide culture and leisure goods and services for the use of the end consumer, or otherwise enable people to make use of these goods and services. The Product Classification lists occupations that can be considered to be part of the culture and leisure sector. These occupations may be undertaken on a paid or unpaid basis.

Conceptual framework for family and domestic violence

One priority of the National Information Development Plan for Crime and Justice Statistics was to develop an evidence base that would assist the criminal justice system to respond more effectively to family and domestic violence and also inform prevention and intervention strategies to decrease its incidence and prevalence. The development and release of the conceptual framework for family and domestic violence will provide a basic starting point for discussion of this important topic, and statistical development work will stem from this initial view of the concepts.

Revised Australian Standard Offence Classification and National Offence Index

Crime and justice statistics are primarily compiled from administrative sources based in each of Australia's states and territories. A barrier to the compilation of high quality statistics is the variation in systems and processes across jurisdictions. Hence the development and implementation of these national classifications is central to improving the comparability of Australian crime and justice statistics.

Local Government Purpose Classification

The ABS developed the Local Government Purpose Classification (LGPC) for use in the collection, analysis and dissemination of Australian statistical and administrative data relating to local government finance transactions by purpose. The classification was finalised last financial year and released in August 2008. There has been extensive consultation with external users during the development, to ensure that the classification reflects the functions of local government in Australia and meets the data requirements of clients.

In developing the LGPC, a principle aim has been the alignment with international standards developed by the United Nations, namely the Classification of Functions of Government and the Classification of Environmental Protection Expenditure and Activities. The approach improves the international comparability of local government finance statistics.

Emphasis has also been placed on aligning the classification with the existing national standard for all levels of government, the Government Purpose Classification, which lacks detail on some key local government functions. This ensures comparability between levels of government and will be reinforced by pursuit of further harmonisation in the future.

Australian Standard Geographical Classification

Since 1984, the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC), updated annually, has provided a basis for collecting, disseminating and analysing statistics that have a spatial component. It is used throughout the ABS and is widely accepted in the statistical community. During 2008–09, *Australian Standard Geographical Classification 2008* (ABS cat. no.1216.0) was released, along with the its accompanying publications:

- ▶ ASGC Electronic Structures (ABS cat. no.1216.0.15.00)
- ▶ ASGC Concordances (ABS cat. no.1216.0.15.002), and
- ► ASGC Digital Boundaries (ABS cat. no.1259.0.30.002).

In order to complete the suite of publications for ASGC, the following publications were also released:

- ▶ Urban Centres and Localities Digital Boundaries (ABS cat. no.1259.0.30.003), and
- Remoteness Structure Digital Boundaries (ABS cat. no.1259.0.30.004).

Mesh blocks

Mesh blocks are the new building block for statistical geography. They are much smaller than collection districts, with approximately 30 to 60 dwellings. Australia has been divided into approximately 340,000 mesh blocks, compared to about 39,000 census collection districts. The advantage of mesh blocks is they can be aggregated to, or used to accurately approximate, any medium or large sized geographical region. Therefore, data geographically coded to mesh blocks can be accurately recast to other geographical regions.

Mesh blocks will result in more accurate geographical based statistics, which should ultimately lead to improved government policy formulation and service delivery.

Limited statistics at mesh block level were released for the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, as experimental data. Limited statistics at mesh block level will be released for the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. In the lead up to the 2016 Census, the ABS anticipates that users will be able to request statistics for customised geographical regions, aggregated from mesh blocks.

Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification

The ABS recently carried out a review of the ASGC, to incorporate mesh blocks into the classification and ensure its continuing relevance to contemporary requirements. The review began in late 2006 and continued through 2008. An information paper *Outcome from the Review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification* (ABS cat. no.1216.0.55.002) was released in July 2008 and work has commenced on developing the new boundaries.

The new standard, to be known as the Australian Statistical Geography Standard, will be published by July 2011.

Emerging pressure on infrastructure needed to manage the ABS' standards and classifications

Metadata is fundamental to the ability of any organisation to manage its valuable information asset, in a responsible manner. Metadata is information used to find data, or to assist a user to understand that data (definitions and descriptions) or to guide a user in the appropriate use of that data (quality). For example, metadata is used to help locate specific web pages from the vast amount information available on the web. The ABS is a large producer of information, and metadata is essential in fulfilling our stewardship role in managing this resource on behalf of all Australians.

The ABS has a metadata management infrastructure, which is ageing and increasingly lacking integration. Much of the metadata about ABS' data is stored in local facilities, which are associated with a collection, and is difficult to reuse between processes or to access as a corporate resource across collections.

In recent years, the ABS has been developing an end-to-end Metadata Management Strategy, to establish a metadata environment that:

- supports ABS statistical business objectives
- enables better dissemination outcomes
- ▶ is efficient, effective and user-friendly
- > promotes accountability over the life-cycle of metadata, and
- > provides a metadata resource as an information system in its own right.

As it continues to evolve, this strategy will have increasing benefits for users of ABS statistics, making it easier for them to find, understand and use ABS statistics effectively. It will also align the ABS metadata environment with the associated international standards for metadata, such as the standard for data element definitions (ISO/IEC-11179).

chapter 16

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT



Introduction

As established in the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, one of the ABS' functions is '(providing) liaison between Australia, on the one hand, and other countries and international organisations, on the other hand, in relation to statistical matters' (section 6(f)). During 2008–09 the ABS continued to meet its international responsibilities by:

- > active and high level involvement in the international statistical community, and
- targeted and tailored technical assistance to national statistical agencies in the Asia-Pacific region

Involvement in the international statistical community

The ABS' involvement in the international statistical community takes a number of forms, including:

- participating in international meetings, including those that develop international statistical standards, frameworks and methodologies
- visiting the statistical offices of other national statistical organisations and international inter-governmental organisations, and
- hosting visits from staff of these organisations at the ABS.

International meetings and conferences

The ABS participated in a number of important international meetings and conferences in 2008–09, including:

- ▶ 40th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, New York, USA
- OECD Committee on Statistics (CSTAT), Geneva, Switzerland
- 57th Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians, Geneva, Switzerland
- Statistics New Zealand/ABS Bilateral Meetings in Wellington, New Zealand
- Statistics Canada/ABS Bilateral Meetings in Ottawa, Canada
- > 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Geneva, Switzerland
- United Nations (UNSD) Expert Group Meeting on the Scope & Content of Social Statistics, New York, USA
- United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting, New York, USA
- OECD Working Party on National Accounts and Working Party on Financial Statistics, Paris, France
- ▶ Inaugural meeting of UNESCAP Committee on Statistics, Bangkok, Thailand
- ASHOM 9, ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting, Singapore
- 12th East Asian Statistical Conference in Tokyo, Japan
- Seventh Management Seminar, Heads of National Statistics Offices in Asia and the Pacific, Shanghai, China
- Fourth Session of the Governing Council, SIAP, Chiba, Japan
- UNESCAP Meeting on Health Vitals, Bangkok, Thailand
- 24th International Methodology Symposium: Challenges, Achievements and New Directions in Data Collection, Ottawa, Canada
- Conference on Climate Change Development and Official Statistics, Seoul, South Korea

Manual on victimisation surveys

The ABS chaired a taskforce on crime victims surveys which was established jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The main work of the taskforce was to develop a manual on crime victimisation surveys. The manual is the first attempt to develop methodological guidelines at the international level for the design of crime victimisation surveys. The manual provides a comprehensive source of information for developing national crime victimisation surveys and will be particularly useful for those countries that may be embarking on a survey of this type for the first time. The ultimate goal of the manual is to improve the comparability of victimisation survey results internationally. The manual was endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2009.

Measuring the Progress of Societies' project

The 'Measuring the Progress of Societies' project is an initiative hosted by the OECD. The OECD collaborates with a range of international and regional partners, including the ABS, in the development of sub-national, national and international indicators of societal progress. The project emerged due to an increasing need to more effectively measure and assess societal progress, in relation to social, environmental and economic issues.

During 2008–09, the ABS senior executives held the following positions on international bodies:

Mr Brian Pink, the Australian Statistician, is:

- Australia's Head of Delegation to the United Nations Statistical Commission
- Chairperson of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Committee on Statistics
- Vice Chairperson, Committee on Statistics, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- a member of the Executive Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians
- Technical Adviser to the OECD Global Project Advisory Board on 'Measuring the Progress of Societies'.

Mr Peter Harper, Deputy Australian Statistician, Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Statistics Group, is:

- a member of the Advisory Expert Group for the 1993 System of National Accounts Update, and
- Chair of United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

Ms Susan Linacre, Deputy Australian Statistician, Social Statistics Group, is:

- a council member of the International Statistical Institute, and
- President Elect of the International Association of Survey Statisticians (2007–2009).

The ABS continues to be involved in the development of international standards, including key international macro-economic standards, such as the revised System of National Accounts, the *Balance of Payments Manual* and *International Investment Position Manual*, 2008 and key international environmental and energy standards, notably the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounts. More information on the ABS' international work in these areas can be found in Chapter 15, Statistical standards and infrastructure.

The ABS hosted the 14th meeting of the United Nations 'city' group on integrated environmental-economic accounting in April 2009. The meeting progressed a number of key issues relating to the elevation of environmental-economic accounting to an international statistical standard in 2012.

The ABS was invited by the United Nations Statistical Commission to review how official statistics can better contribute to the climate change debate. The report, which was presented at the Commission's 2009 meeting, explored areas where official statistics can provide input and add value to the analysis of the environmental, social and economic aspects of climate change and the related adaptation and mitigation measures. The paper made specific recommendations to mainstream climate change in official statistics both at the national and international levels.

Visits to the ABS

The ABS received a number of visits from other national statistics offices, statistical agencies and international statistical organisations during the year, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Brazil, Canada, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Vanuatu and Vietnam.



The duration and purpose of these visits vary, but all act to build stronger relationships and share knowledge with like organisations. For example, the discussions held with Mongolia, Indonesia and Vietnam to improve their technical abilities to conduct their next population censuses in 2010, will ensure that the benefits extend beyond the participants to the National Statistical Office as a whole; and discussions with the Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics on economic and environmental-economic accounts enabled best practices to be shared and built upon in the respective agencies.

International Comparison Program

The International Comparison Program (ICP) is a statistical initiative to produce internationally comparable expenditure values, purchasing power parity (PPP) estimates and comparative price levels. All major international development agencies, including the World Bank, the IMF, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Development Fund use ICP results to analyse economic and social conditions within their areas of concern. The ICP offers a powerful tool for comparative research on economic and social development.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Eurostat PPP program is currently underway with the ABS contributing to the program via the collection of data, as well as through meetings of the reference group.

Statistical training and technical assistance

The ABS continues to contribute to international statistical training, through organisations such as the United Nations, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Communities (SPC) and the IMF.

The ABS provides international statistical assistance to countries in the Asia-Pacific region seeking ABS advice and support and that are high priority for the Australian Government. The ABS currently has three major long term programs of technical assistance in place:

- Indonesia: Government Partnership Fund
- Pacific Region: Pacific Governance Support Program, and
- Vanuatu: Vanuatu Statistical Institutional Strengthening Program.

Indonesia

The ABS has had a long association with Badan Pusat Statistik—Statistics Indonesia (BPS—Statistics Indonesia) and the two agencies have signed a number of memoranda of understanding on cooperation in statistics.

AusAID is managing a Government Partnership Fund (GPF) to assist Indonesia as part of the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development. The Government Partnership Fund is a flagship of Australia's enhanced partnership with Indonesia and provides a vehicle for supporting the further development of Indonesia's economic governance and public sector management capabilities.

Specifically, the goal of ABS involvement in the GPF is to improve the Indonesian statistical system and to establish greater coordination and a stronger relationship between Australia and BPS, with a mutually agreed identification of skill and capability gaps.

In 2008–2009, three missions were undertaken under the program. In the first mission, two staff from ABS visited BPS in Jakarta to review information technology management and administrative systems. The second mission, held in Canberra, focused on the automatic processing systems used for population census data. The third and final mission, also held in Canberra, focused on improving and developing BPS—Statistics capability in relation to data dissemination media, especially web dissemination.

Further missions under the program are planned for 2009–2010.

Pacific Region

The ABS has been involved in three main programs of assistance in the AusAlD-funded Pacific Governance Support Program. The first program covered the years 2005–2007, with the second 2007–2008 and the third 2008–2009. The aim of the programs is to strengthen the national statistical systems of Pacific Island countries.

During the financial year 2008–09, the ABS in collaboration with the SPC have delivered project management training to Samoa and Kiribati, and strategic planning training to the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Nauru, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. It is anticipated that this program of activities will continue for another two years.

Vanuatu

During 2008–2009, the ABS continued its assistance to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO), under the AusAID-funded Vanuatu Statistical Institutional Strengthening Program. The program continues to develop capacity and capability of the VNSO through improved corporate governance.

The mentoring program for the Acting Government Statistician in leadership, management, budgeting and planning, which started early in 2007, continued during the year as well as the delivery of technical assistance for rebasing of the Consumer Price Index. The program will conclude on 31 December 2009.

Other statistical training and technical assistance

In addition to planned programs of assistance, the ABS provided statistical advice and capacity building to many countries in the region, including:

- Vietnam, on data warehouse development and census data processing
- Mongolia, on 2010 Census planning and collection of poverty statistics
- Korea, on the organisation and operation of Regional Offices, and
- Malaysia, on capital stocks.

The ABS also hosted a number of delegations from countries to exchange ideas and experiences, including:

- > Japan, for the Labour Force Survey, including sample design and estimation method
- New Zealand, for many areas including National Statistical Service and technology infrastructure, metadata frameworks, census and productivity measurement
- Canada, for Government Finance Statistics
- Sweden, for policies and practices in relation to the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of income, wealth, expenditure, taxation and time use statistics; also imputation and editing methodology
- USA, for national accounts, international accounts, public finance, prices and economic analysis, and
- Singapore, for labour force statistics.

chapter 17 EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVITIES



Introduction

During 2008–09, the ABS has continued to look for ways to operate more efficiently and effectively, in both statistical and non-statistical areas of its business. A number of processes, systems and controls have been implemented to assist the ABS meet its goals of greater efficiency and effectiveness. These include the strategic audit and review program, operational and statistical reviews, as well as special initiatives such as the operations research initiative (see below for more information).

Many of the reviews and audits conducted seek to ensure that the ABS achieves costeffective outputs, either as a primary or secondary objective. The ABS also uses external providers for a range of functions, including information technology training, leadership and management training, staff counselling services, legal advice, building maintenance, the supply of stationery, and internal audit. This enables the ABS to minimise its costs, whilst maximising its service.

Work of the Data Collection Methodology section

As part of the organisational restructure of the ABS in July 2007, the Data Collection Methodology (DCM) section was formed. The section's role is to support the design and evaluation of questionnaires, letters and data collection procedures for all ABS surveys.

During 2008–09, DCM has provided methodological leadership to the development of electronic data collection with the aim of improving response rates and data quality.

The ABS is committed to improving its capability for testing survey instruments by using well targeted and cost-effective methodology. In 2008–09, DCM released new chapters in the ABS' Forms Development and Evaluation Manual on 'Usability testing', 'Response and Error analyses' and 'Behaviour coding'. Other projects underway include work on improving recruitment of test respondents and supporting re-use of tested questions in other surveys to reduce testing costs.

During 2008–09, DCM has assisted in improving cost efficiency for a range of ABS surveys, including the simplification of survey forms, and improving respondent communication strategies for surveys.

In addition to supporting statistical collections, DCM provides a single centre of expertise for assisting with the ABS' staff surveys and user feedback forms, leading to better informed decision making in human resource and dissemination planning.

Intensive follow-up of providers

The ABS' Operations Research Unit examined the efficacy of the intensive follow-up (IFU) of providers who have not returned their completed survey forms to the ABS, and identified a number of areas where efficiency gains can be made and provider load reduced, while maintaining data quality. This work has led to the establishment of the 'gold star' provider strategy, whereby businesses having a good track record of providing information to the ABS are not followed up through the ABS' Provider Contact Unit until later in the follow-up process. During 2008–09, the strategy has been introduced to a number of quarterly surveys, enabling resources to be targeted to the providers who did not previously provide a return without intensive follow-up activities.

During 2008–09, the Operations Research Unit also investigated other innovations for efficiency improvement in the business survey intensive follow-up process, including identification of cost-efficient calling patterns and optimal interviewer allocation. In addition, research relating to provider engagement has led to new practice being tested for improving response from previous late or non-respondents.

Workforce planning

The ABS Workforce Plan was designed to guide the ABS' workforce attraction, engagement and retention policy and planning over the next four years. The centrepiece of the framework is a direction setting vision for people management within the ABS that culminates into a number of key workforce goals. The goals set out the direction in which the ABS workforce effort will be focused. They are drawn from our workforce planning analysis and incorporate a number of HR initiatives that have emerged through senior management consultation.

The three priority goals provide the ABS with a plan for developing its future people management capability. The strategies that sit under each of the workforce planning goals will guide the ABS' action in achieving the vision.

Human resource indicators

To assist in human resource planning and management the ABS has developed key human resource indicators to inform senior managers about HR trends and to guide strategic decision making about our workforce. These HR indicators have been presented at regular senior management meetings. Where appropriate the indicators reflect Australian Public Service-wide indicators, to enable comparison with other government agencies. These indicators are being integrated into the ABS' wider governance and performance monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Business continuity management

Although the ABS did not have any significant disruptions to its business operations during 2008–09, its Business Continuity Plan (BCP) has been activated and is currently being used

to monitor developments related to swine flu and the potential impacts on the ABS ability to deliver its program.

In late 2008, the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) scrutinized aspects of the Business Continuity Plan as part of their whole-of-government project to identify and map agency-based critical and supporting e-services and to identify any single points of failure. The ABS was compliant in all categories assessed by AGIMO.

Annual testing of the ABS Business Continuity Plans used loss of key staff as the scenario. In addition, plan owners were asked to undertake a business impact assessment to assess the level of resourcing required if an event was to occur. This information will be used in the coming year to strength the BCP and to ensure integration across plans.

Integrated planning and budgeting cycle

During 2008–09, the ABS implemented a revised planning and budgeting cycle to ensure that it is well placed to carry out its legislated role and can anticipate and respond effectively to future opportunities and risks. The cycle is designed to ensure that the formulation of the ABS Forward Work Program takes into account developments in the external environment and risks facing the organisation and that re-prioritisation of the work program can occur to align with the ABS strategic directions.

Communities of practice

As part of the ABS' approach to fostering knowledge and better practice management, Technology Services Division has implemented a number of Communities of Practice (CoP). Each CoP is tasked with fostering an area of professional practice, such as project management, service delivery and software development processes. CoPs are usually assigned to a manager with particular interest or knowledge in that area. CoPs have resulted in the ABS improving its agility to meet an ever-changing business environment.

Risk management

The ABS's Risk Management Framework provides the basis for identifying, assessing and mitigating risks at all levels within the organisation. The framework is set out in the ABS's Risk Management Strategy. The strategy and framework undergo continuous review. In 2008–09, a major risk management initiative was the stronger integration of risk identification and prioritisation within the ABS business planning cycle.

In the last 12 months, two internal risk-specific audits have been conducted. The first was an audit of general risk management practice across the ABS which recommended some minor enhancements to the Risk Management Framework, particularly relating to the communication of information about risk to staff and the use of common approaches to managing risk. The second audit, relating to the success of enterprise risk mitigation, was still in progress at June 2009.

Section 6

HOW THE ABS OPERATES



chapter 18



ABS CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The ABS' corporate governance framework ensures transparency in decision making, operation and accountability, by promoting strong leadership, sound management and effective planning and review processes.

The key features of the ABS' corporate governance framework are:

- a planning cycle to ensure that the ABS work program reflects current and emerging statistical priorities of users, and is consistent with the ABS mission and overall strategic directions
- senior management committees involved in developing policies and strategies, identifying priorities and monitoring the ABS' performance
- advisory bodies and user groups, which enable the ABS to consult widely with the user community about the ABS work program
- an audit and review program covering the different facets of ABS operations, overseen by the ABS Audit Committee
- a risk management framework to assist in identifying and managing risks at organisational, operational and project level, and
- ▶ instructions and manuals to ensure staff have access to ABS policies and practices.

ABS values

Underlying the corporate governance framework are the Australian Public Service (APS) and ABS values, which are the basis for the ethical standards for ABS employees.

As an APS agency, ABS employees are required to abide by the APS Values and the Code of Conduct. In addition, the ABS Corporate Plan sets out values specific to the ABS, which are essential to the ABS' role as an independent provider of information for Australia.

These values are promoted through training courses and awareness raising. They are used as a reference for the actions and decisions of ABS staff, from senior management down.

The ABS values are:

- integrity
- service

- professionalism
- relevance
- trust of providers, and
- access for all.

For more information on ABS values, see Chapter 19, Management of human resources.

Senior management committees

An important feature of ABS corporate governance is the role played by senior management committees, which are active in developing policies and strategies, identifying ABS priorities, assessing and responding to risks and opportunities, and monitoring ABS performance.

Following the implementation of the strategic alignment project in 2008 to align executive roles and responsibilities to best meet ABS objectives, a review of the strategic alignment project has been commissioned. This will have a short timeframe and internal and external stakeholders will be contacted as part of the review process.

The major senior management committees in place during 2008–09 are outlined below:

Executive Leadership Group meetings	The Executive Leadership Group (ELG) meetings are held fortnightly to provide strategic oversight of the ABS and determine ABS policy. The meetings ensure that ongoing attention is given to strategic issues that affect the future of the organisation, including giving high-level focus to the National Statistical Service and strategic client engagement. The ELG Meetings are chaired by the Australian Statistician and the other members are the three Deputy Australian Statisticans.
Senior Management Group meetings	Senior Management Group (SMG) meetings are held weekly to provide tactical management oversight of ABS operations and to advise the ELG on strategic and policy issues. The meetings ensure the ABS is a well-run organisation with well formulated work programs that are reviewed appropriately and with proper consideration of cross-cutting issues. It also addresses other issues, including information resource management, publishing and dissemination, human resources and accountability. SMG meetings are attended by the First Assistant Statisticians, two Regional Directors (on a rotating basis), the Chief Financial Officer and the Assistant Statistician of the Office of the Statistician, with other attendees as required for particular items. Approximately nine times a year the ELG and the SMG meet jointly to discuss strategic and policy issues.

ABS Management Meetings	The Management Meetings play a major role in determining ABS strategic directions, priorities and resource allocations. The Management Meeting is held twice a year, and supports the development of ABS strategic directions, considers planning and budgeting issues, and discusses issues of corporate importance.
Capital Strategy Committee	The purpose of the Capital Strategy Committee (CSC) is to develop and monitor an ABS capital plan aligned with strategic directions, for consideration by the ABS Management Meeting . The CSC ensures the ABS has robust internal mechanisms for planning and managing capital assets and technology applications funding.
	CSCs are attended by SMG members, and a Deputy Australian Statistician chairs the meeting on a rotating basis. Meetings are held at least three times a year, with additional meetings scheduled as required for the planning and budgeting cycle.
Audit Committee	The Australian Statistician has established an Audit Committee in accordance with section 46 of the <i>Financial Management and</i> <i>Accountability Act 1997</i> (FMA Act).
	The Audit Committee provides assurance to the Australian Statistician that: the ABS has in place a comprehensive control framework for all its business systems, including those used to support statistical activities; the ABS complies with all its legislative and other obligations; and that this framework is working effectively.
	The Committee meets four times a year. It consists of seven members, and is chaired by a Deputy Australian Statistician. Including the chair, it contains five members appointed internally from within the ABS. Their appointment is based on their personal qualities, experience and skills, including their ability to demonstrate independence on matters before the Committee. Two external members also sit on the Committee, providing expertise and experience in accounting, risk management and financial management. All appointments to the Committee are made directly by the Australian Statistician.
Protective Security Management Committee	The ABS maintains a comprehensive security framework, overseen by a Protective Security Management Committee chaired by a Deputy Australian Statistician. This security framework ensures that both physical and computer security are maintained. The committee is a key means of ensuring that the ABS meets its legal requirement not to divulge identifiable information and to make sure that there is policy to meet the security and privacy related requirements of legislation including the <i>Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, Census and Statistics Act 1905, Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975, Privacy Act 1988</i> and <i>Crimes Act 1914</i> .

Planning

The ABS mission statement and the corporate plan provide the context for decision making on the forward work program.

Review of planning and budgeting cycle

During 2008–09, the ABS implemented a revised planning and budgeting cycle to ensure that it is well placed to carry out its legislated role and can anticipate and respond effectively to future opportunities and risks.

Resource centre business plans were developed for the first time, with both a strategic and operational focus covering four years. The new process also embeds the risk management strategy into the planning and budgeting processes.

Work has also commenced on the creation of a set of corporate key performance indicators to measure the organisation's progress against key aspects of the ABS strategic directions.

While much of the ABS work program remains constant from year to year, as part of the planning process the ABS examines the environment in which it is working and identifies statistical needs for the next four years. Through the process, the ABS considers how it can best meet emerging needs within its finite human and financial resources.

Within this framework, the annual ABS planning cycle comprises a series of high level meetings and forums, where senior managers consider the relative priorities and competing resource requirements of program components. In doing this, particular attention is given to:

- input from user consultations
- strategic directions the ABS has set for the next four years
- ▶ the cost imposed on respondents to collections, in terms of time and effort
- consideration of enterprise opportunities and risks
- > prospective total resources available to the ABS within the next four years
- productivity gains that have been achieved, or which may be possible to achieve in the future
- the contribution statistical activities make to meeting National Statistical Service objectives, and
- the extent to which particular statistical activities, with user demand, continue to be justified in relation to other work.

Aspects of the proposed forward work program and resource estimates that emerge are considered by the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC). The statistical work program is then finalised, taking into consideration the advice provided by ASAC.

The Forward Work Program is published every year in hard copy, and is also available on the ABS website at http://www.abs.gov.au.

Audit and risk management

The ABS has a robust Risk Management Framework, which provides the basis for identifying, assessing and mitigating risks at all levels within the organisation. The framework is set out in the ABS' Risk Management Strategy. The strategy and framework undergo continuous review, based on feedback from many sources including internal audits, external risk reviews, best practice guides, and the outcomes of the annual Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking exercise.

A major initiative for 2008–09, was the stronger integration of risk identification and prioritisation within the ABS business planning cycle. In developing their business plans, managers at all levels were expected to identify key risks to work programs. Significant risks identified at section level were elevated or integrated into business plans at Branch and Division level to provide a more comprehensive and consistent picture of the ABS risk profile. In 2009–10, further emphasis will be placed on ensuring that this hierarchy is used to support the consistent reporting on risk mitigation and risk acceptance across the ABS.

On an annual basis, the ABS identifies strategic risks that have the potential to make a significant impact on the organisation. These are known as enterprise risks. In 2007–08, a major revision of the Risk Management Framework resulted in the ABS updating its approach to managing these risks, with 2008–09 being the first year this new approach was in place. The key benefit has been a strengthening of risk identification and analysis through a more coordinated examination of organisational threats by the ABS Executive. The updated approach has also provided for clearer ownership of risk mitigation responsibilities and an increased opportunity for the Executive to review the success of risk mitigation.

The ABS conducts operational risk workshops to assist program managers to identify and manage risks that have the potential to impact on program objectives.

The ABS runs an annual Internal Review Program as a complement to the ABS Internal Audit Program. Internal reviews primarily focus on statistical programs to address issues including program effectiveness, efficiency and statistical quality.

Each year, a work program of internal audits is developed to address performance and compliance risks to the ABS. These internal audits are undertaken by an external audit provider. Some of the significant audits in the 2008–09 program included:

- The conduct of two audits relating to risk management. The first was an audit of general risk management practice across the ABS, which identified some minor changes to strengthen the risk management framework, particularly relating to the communication of information about risk to staff and the use of common approaches to managing risk. The second audit, relating to the success of enterprise risk management practice, was still in progress at June 2009.
- An audit reviewing compliance with various clauses of the Statistics Determination, which recommended that resources supporting the compliance process, including policy documentation and training, be reviewed and updated to reduce risks of non-compliance.
- An audit of the system for paying ABS interviewers, which found that the ABS needed to clarify business ownership of the payment system and improve system documentation.

In general, the audit program found few significant issues, with ABS continuing to demonstrate robust processes and controls, particularly in regards to legislative compliance.

Business continuity in the ABS

The ABS Business Continuity Plan (BCP) provides the framework to assist the ABS to plan for and manage any significant business disruption. Supported by several key sub-plans, the BCP is designed to assist the ABS, prior to, during, and following a business disruption, to return to 'business as usual' as soon as possible.

The ABS BCP is a living document that is amended annually, or as incidences occur or issues are identified. The BCP has been improved throughout 2008–09 to incorporate all aspects of business continuity including emergency management, crisis management and business resumption.

Whilst the ABS has not had any significant disruptions to its business operations during 2008–09, over the last few years the ABS Business Continuity Plan has been tested on several occasions by real events for which the plans have held up well. In late 2008, the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), scrutinized aspects of the Business Continuity Plan as part of their whole-of-government project to identify and map agency-based critical and supporting e-services and to identify any single points of failure. The ABS was compliant in all categories assessed by AGIMO.

All of the ABS business continuity plans are reviewed annually and are tested against a given scenario. In 2008–09 the loss of key staff was used as the desktop test. In addition, plan owners were asked to undertake a business impact assessment to assess the level of resourcing required if an event was to occur. This information will be used in the coming year to strength the BCP and to ensure integration across plans.

Communication has been a focus over the last year and the ABS continues to develop its communication strategy. To keep staff informed during a crisis, the ABS has at its disposal email, a 1800 toll free message bank, SMS messaging services to all official ABS mobile phone holders, and can publish on its website a message for staff only. Large scale remote testing of the message bank and website was undertaken in December 2008 to ensure its capacity to deal with large scale usage.

Education of staff within the organisation is an ongoing activity with refresher training provided to key staff involved in business continuity as well as general information sessions provided to staff and special interest groups including the ABS Emergency Control Organisation.

Recently the ABS activated its Business Continuity Plan to deal with the emerging H1N1 Swine Flu situation. In line with our BCP, the ABS Crisis Management Team has met on several occasions to determine the most appropriate strategy for the organisation, to minimise the impact on ABS operations and ensure the health and safety of its employees. The Human Influenza Pandemic Plan will remain in force until the threat to the ABS has ceased.

Fraud control

As required by the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines, the Australian Statistician has certified that the ABS has prepared appropriate fraud risk assessments and fraud control plans, and has in place appropriate fraud prevention, detection, investigation, reporting and data collection procedures and processes that meet the specific needs of the ABS and comply with the guidelines.

The ABS Fraud Control Plan is due to be reviewed in the first half of 2010. It is expected that a major focus of this review will be the impact that changes in the external environment have on the risk of fraud. Previous fraud control plans have identified that the ABS has a relatively low exposure to fraud. This is partly due to the nature of ABS business, but importantly, it reflects the strong ethical values held by ABS staff.

Security of premises

The ABS relies on the trust and confidence of data providers to operate effectively and to fulfil the ABS mission statement.

The security of ABS premises and information technology environment is one aspect of maintaining that trust and confidence and is key to minimising risks in a number of areas, including fraud.

All ABS premises are physically secured against unauthorised access. Entry is through electronically controlled access systems activated by individually coded access cards, and monitored by closed circuit television. Areas of the ABS producing particularly sensitive data, such as main economic indicators, are subject to further physical security measures.

The ABS computer network has a secure gateway, which allows connection to some Internet services only. The secure gateway has been established in accordance with Australian Government guidelines and is subject to annual accreditation by the National Communications and Computer Security Advisory Authority, Defence Signals Directorate.

Internal access to ABS computing systems is based on personal identifiers that are password protected. Databases are accessible only by approved users. The computer systems are regularly monitored and usage audited. There were no unauthorised access incidents into the ABS computing systems during 2008–09.

Additional access control systems are used to protect any data designated 'sensitive'. Access to sensitive data is only granted under the authority of area line management (the 'owners' of the data), on the basis that access is required by the staff member to carry out their duties.

Included in the ABS strategic audit plan is an ongoing program of security audits and reviews of computer systems and the physical environment.

External scrutiny

The ABS is subject to external scrutiny from a range of bodies. These include the Australian Statistics Advisory Council (ASAC), and other advisory groups, which comment on the ABS work program. For more information on ASAC, please refer to Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS.

There is a range of bodies established by the Australian Government that can examine the operations of the ABS. The ABS assisted in providing information to the Commonwealth Auditor General and the Commonwealth Ombudsman during 2008–09.

ABS assistance with the Australian National Audit Office studies is detailed below, and ABS obligations under Freedom of Information are examined in Appendix 5. Information on submissions made to Parliamentary Committees, and documents tabled in Parliament by the ABS are available in Appendix 8 and 9 respectively.

There were no adverse comments relating to the ABS from the Commonwealth Auditor General, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees, or courts or tribunals during 2008–09.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission issued orders in May 2009 which put on hold the ABS process to address its excess staffing situation and required ABS to consult with the Commonwealth Public Sector Union (CPSU) on a revised process, which included the opportunity for affected staff to make input to assessments of them. In July 2009, the ABS and CPSU formalised settlement documentation in respect of the dispute, to be signed and lodged with the Fair Work Australia tribunal.

Privacy

As an Australian Government agency, the ABS must comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the associated Information Privacy Principles, which govern the way personal information should be collected, stored, used and disclosed. These obligations cover information on staff, clients and respondents. They are in addition to the protection of confidentiality of data provided by respondents from the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. For more information see Chapter 11, Provider/respondent relationships.

The ABS has a privacy officer who, providing the perspective of a privacy advocate, advises on privacy issues internally, and monitors the external environment to keep up-to-date on privacy issues that could impact upon ABS operations.

The ABS maintains a close relationship with the Australian Government's Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC), advising the Commissioner regularly of the ABS forward work program, attending OPC quarterly privacy officer network meetings, and seeking advice on any new ABS initiatives about which privacy advocates may have concerns. Every year the ABS contributes to the Commissioner's Personal Information Digest, which is published to inform the general public of the types of personal information that Government departments hold.

chapter 19

MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES



Human resource management is a critical function within the ABS: the agency depends on capable and motivated employees to achieve its objectives. The ABS needs employees who understand Australia's evolving information needs, and can assist the ABS to satisfy those needs; employees who understand the changes to the environment in which the ABS operates, and can help the ABS to adapt to those changes; and employees with both professional competence and a commitment to both Australian Public Service and ABS values. Proficient management of human resources is the key to ensuring the attraction and retention of a workforce that is skilled to deliver the work program into the future.

As at 30 June 2009, there were 2,878 staff employed at the ABS under the *Public Service Act 1999*—1,379 males and 1,499 females. This includes operative, paid inoperative and unpaid inoperative staff. The ABS had 2,740 operative and paid inoperative staff, as at 30 June 2009. There were also 583 staff employed under the Regulation 3 of the Statistics Regulations, and appointed as authorised officers for the purpose of the Census and Statistics Act under Section 16 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, to assist with data collection—mostly household survey interviewers.

Graph 19.1 and Tables 19.1 and 19.2 present the profile of ABS staff by employment classification and sex, and by location and type of employment for operative and paid inoperative staff. Staff employed under the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* (interviewers), and 138 unpaid inoperative staff are excluded from the tables.



Graph 19.1: Employment classification by sex, 30 June 2009 (a)

Table 19.1: Number of ABS staff by location and status, at 30 June 2009 (a)

	Ong	oing	Non-ongoing		Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
Central office (ACT)	1247	231	17	79	1574
NSW	218	43		42	303
Vic	192	33	1	3	229
Qld	111	27			138
WA	142	26	13	2	183
SA	127	41	2	4	174
Tas	76	22	2		100
NT	22	7			29
ACT	7	3			10
Total	2142	433	35	130	2740

(a) Includes operative and paid inoperative staff

There are now 10 women in the Senior Executive Service (SES), representing 28% of the SES.

Table 19.2: Number of ABS Senior Executive Staff (SES) by level, sex and year (a)

	SES Level			Se		
Year (at 30 June)	1	2	3	Male	Female	Total
2006	25	6	2	22	11	33
2007	28	5	2	22	13	35
2008	33	6	3	27	15	42
2009	26	7	3	26	10	36

(a) Includes only operative, substantive SES officers as at 30 June, but excludes the Australian Statistician, who is a statutory office holder appointed under the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975. Excludes SES at another department.

Australian Public Service values in the ABS

The Australian Public Service (APS) values are actively promoted and strongly adhered to throughout the ABS. At the highest level, the ABS Mission Statement reflects the apolitical nature of the APS, as well as its commitment to the provision of comprehensive, accurate and timely advice.

The ABS also has agency values that are fundamental to the ABS performing its role as an independent provider of statistical information. The ABS values directly relate to, and are congruent with, APS values. These values are long established and strongly upheld by employees and include:

- integrity—data, analysis and interpretation are always apolitical with the highest standards of integrity applied
- service—the ABS understands its service role and seeks to understand and assist its clients' statistical needs
- professionalism—the professionalism of employees is actively developed to ensure the ABS has the technical and leadership skills required for the future
- relevance—all information provided by the ABS is relevant in terms of timeliness and content
- trust of providers—the ABS maintains provider trust by adhering to the highest level of data protection and privacy standards, and
- access for all—the ABS ensures its statistics can be easily accessed and used by the community, business and governments.

The importance of the APS values is reflected and integrated into the management and operations of the ABS. For example, the obligations of employees to uphold the APS and ABS values and abide by the APS Code of Conduct are:

- promoted in training courses across all levels from the induction of new recruits through to senior management development programs
- actively applied through human resource processes
- supported by guidelines, policies and procedures, which themselves acknowledge the APS values

- reflected throughout ABS corporate material, which is readily accessible to employees through the ABS Intranet, and
- promoted via posters and the distribution of bookmarks to all employees and new recruits.

All employees are expected to include key deliverables in their performance agreements, which articulate the expectation that they will adhere to and promote the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and consistently behave in an ethical and professional way.

Recruitment

The ABS has continued to look for improvements in people management functions, including recruitment.

Projects in 2008-09 included:

- the implementation of an e-Recruitment tool that has allowed a better recruitment experience for applicants, provides timely management information and improves the efficiency of ABS recruitment processes
- the co-location of transactional recruitment activities with payroll functions in South Australia, resulting in productivity gains and improved service delivery
- further increasing efficiency with commitment by the ABS to a set of Recruitment Guiding Principles that support clear roles and responsibilities
- integration of the Senior Executive Leadership Capability framework and Integrated Leadership System into the recruitment process
- continued focus on Indigenous recruitment, with a redesign of employment material and participation in the APSC Indigenous recruitment processes, and
- strengthening partnerships with business areas across the ABS to enable improvements in recruitment services.

Graduate recruitment

The ABS Graduate Development Program is extremely valuable to the agency in identifying new talent and helping to secure our future. Graduate recruitment forms a significant part of the ABS' succession planning and entry level recruitment strategy.

In 2009, the ABS welcomed 65 graduates into the ABS Graduate Program.

Focus areas to enhance the Graduate Program in 2009 were the introduction of personalised Learning Agreements and facilitation of 'engagement' sessions:

- Learning Agreements: Individual learning agreements are being developed with graduates to identify and address personal learning needs and to recognise the skills and competencies our graduates bring to the program.
- Engagement Sessions: These sessions have brought together our Regional and Central Office graduates in the spirit of collaboration, focusing on effective communication, networking and linking their goals and expectations to ABS corporate values.


The 2009 graduate recruitment campaign is well underway, with successful applicants expected to commence with the ABS in January 2010. Attracting recruits to the ABS Graduate Development Program has become progressively more challenging, as competition increases. The ABS has implemented a collaborative approach to graduate recruitment through a collaborative single recruitment panel for graduates.

ABS leaders at EL2 and SES Band 1 levels, who have both excellent business knowledge and acknowledged judgement in relation to people, are on the panel.

Additional initiatives to improve the 2009 graduate recruitment campaign are:

- continued use of the ABS graduate employment brand which depicts a vibrant, youthful and contemporary workplace. This branding was used in online advertising, and resulted in over 1600 completed applications for the 2010 ABS Graduate Development Program
- increased presence at university career fairs, which has also contributed to the volume of applications for 2010 intake
- improved ABS Information Packs for university career centres which included 'live in Canberra' information and marketing emails to university students
- new advertising material consisting of updated web content and new look graduate brochure with a focus on graduate testimonials, and
- continued use of and improvements to the usability of the e-recruitment system.

This included a successful 'Meet and Greet' session at all ABS offices in May 2009, aimed at engaging applicants with the ABS early in the recruitment process. During these sessions, applicants were addressed by former ABS graduates and participated in a group testing session.



Graduate partnering event, June 2009

Here is what the 2009 ABS graduates have to say:

The combination of targeted training and ongoing support from my colleagues has ensured that my transition into the ABS has been smooth. I am pleased that I have been able to directly apply my university studies to my work, and have enjoyed the opportunity to be involved with a range of projects dealing with topical and interesting economic issues.—Tara, Macroeconomics and Integration Group Graduate.

Since joining the ABS as a graduate I have encountered a wide variety of work which has allowed me to utilise my abilities whilst developing a new range of skills. I have found that contributing to work which informs the Australian public and policies to be a very rewarding experience.—Kate, Integrated Collection and Dissemination Services Graduate.

The experience of working at the ABS is different each day. The breadth of the learning, the frameworks, and the training opportunities provided for all ABS staff has been second to none from what I have experienced. The ABS stood out as the firm that valued individuals from a diverse range of educational, racial and social economic backgrounds with a common belief that statistics can improve society and after having worked here, my initial impression was more than justified.—Stephen, Macroeconomics and Integration Group Graduate.

As an ABS graduate I have been responsible for tasks that contribute meaningfully to the work program of the ABS. I have been constantly challenged by the work and have received valuable support and guidance from my work team and the wider office. The training I have received, especially on-the-job training, has been well structured and my colleagues' willingness to share their knowledge has been most impressive. —Brenton, Population, Labour, Industry and Environment Graduate.

Workforce planning

Continued emphasis was given to the strategic development of the ABS' workforce. The ABS Workforce Plan, a four year plan which was developed during 2007–08, continues to be implemented. The ABS focus is to maintain and develop a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce, by putting in place strategies to better attract, develop and retain the workforce we need now and in the future. The plan has three key workforce goals.

Goal 1	Ensure the ABS workforce remains skilled and competent
	Deploying a highly skilled workforce plays an essential role in ensuring the ABS has the capability to meet current and future demands. In order to employ the right number of people in the right places at the right time, the ABS must firstly understand, and secondly become responsive to, changes in its staffing profile.
Goal 2	Align workforce planning with other ABS planning activities
	Linking workforce planning with the agency's financial and business planning activities (at different levels within the ABS) to ensure it has the capacity to more effectively understand and project its business requirements.
Goal 3	Realign ABS systems and processes
	Support for the repositioning of some operational human resource functions will require considerable investment by the ABS. Going forward, the ABS will focus on bringing its current systems into closer alignment with its business priorities, and continue to look for efficiencies in its operations.

Consultation in the ABS

The ABS is committed to communication, cooperation and effective consultation with employees and, where they choose, their representatives, about matters that affect their workplace.

The ABS consultative framework includes:

- line managers, who are important conduits for communication and consultation in the workplace
- 15 consultative forums, which provide employees with a mechanism to participate in deliberations and decision making processes on issues affecting their jobs and workplace
- employee representatives meeting with management as necessary, and
- an annual ABS National Forum, which includes participants from each consultative forum, management and employee organisations.

The 2009 National Forum was held in March. The discussion covered the challenges facing the ABS including the ABS budget situation, what the ABS of the future might look like, the collective agreement processes and finding productivity savings, and reducing levels of unscheduled leave.

Agreement making

The ABS has two certified agreements (CAs) in place, which cover the majority of employees—the ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009 (ABS CA) and the ABS Interviewers Certified Agreement 2005–2008 (Interviewers CA). At the end of June 2009 the ABS was in the process of bargaining to put new agreements in place.

In addition, the ABS is in the early stages of establishing employment arrangements for the non-ongoing employees for the 2011 Census Data Processing Centre.

As required by Australian Government policy, Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) are no longer offered to employees, and current agreements are being progressively replaced by section 24(1) determinations.

Details of the number of employees covered by a Certified Agreement, an AWA, or a section 24(1) determination as at 30 June 2009 are as follows:

- ▶ ABS employees covered by an AWA/Section 24(1) determination:
 - Senior Executive Service (SES): 40 (includes all SES, not just substantive, operative SES employees referred to in Table 18.2)
 - Non-SES employees: 22
- ▶ ABS employees covered by the ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009: 2,816
- ▶ ABS employees covered by the ABS Interviewers Certified Agreement 2005–2008: 583.

Table 19.3: Salary ranges by classification as at 30 June 2009 (a)

Classification	Minimum (\$)	Maximum (\$)
Australian Public Service (APS) Level		
APS1 (Adult)	35,186	38,706
APS2	39,823	43,804
APS3	45,355	49,889
APS4	51,058	56,162
APS5	56,949	62,643
APS6	64,777	71,254
Executive Officer Level (EL)		
EL1	79,277	87,204
EL2	100,228	110,250
Senior Executive Service (SES) Level		
SES Band 1	125,891	154,279
SES Band 2	154,279	186,486
SES Band 3	186,486	na (b)

(a) The APS1 to EL2 salary ranges took effect from 26 June 2008. SES Band 1 to SES Band 3 salary ranges took effect from 1 January 2009. (b) na—not applicable (as there is not a maximum level for this classification).

Performance management in the ABS

The ABS understands that without access to the ideas and knowledge of its employees, capacity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, or to pursue innovative ideas, is limited.

To assist the ABS to meet the challenges of the future, a more proactive approach to performance management was introduced in 2008. Performance Agreements are designed to identify and measure the value-added personal contribution employees bring to their roles beyond their responsibilities for delivering their section's forward work program. They facilitate discussions that focus on 'how' we achieve, not just 'what' we achieve, and assist employees to identify personal and professional development opportunities.

This approach provides an opportunity for all employees to think about the way they do things, as well as challenging them to demonstrate insight and thinking beyond current practice. This has never been more important, as the ABS looks for ways to reduce expenditure, increase business performance and identify productivity savings.

The ABS salary system

The ABS Certified Agreement 2006–2009 outlines the salary arrangements for ABS employees.

In 2008–09, salary increases for APS1 to EL2 employees were effective from 26 June 2008, with two components to the salary increases:

- i. a general salary increase of 3.5% for all employees rated as Effective or better, where the minimum and maximum amounts of the salary ranges were increased by 3.5%, and
- ii. a performance based increase:
- equivalent to a one pay point movement (2% of the minimum of the relevant salary range) for all employees rated as Effective or better, subject to the maximum of the salary range not being exceeded, and
- for employees rated as Outstanding, a one-off lump sum payment of 2% of the minimum of the relevant salary range after the general salary increase was applied.

During 2008–09, the total amount paid as one-off lump sum bonus payments was \$341,768. It was paid to 257 employees.

Table 19.4 shows the performance pay component of the salary increases paid in 2008–09, including pay point movements and bonus payments.

Classification	Number (a)	Aggregate (\$)	Average (\$)
Australian Public Service (APS) level			
APS1	8	3,942	493
APS2	22	3,405	155
APS3	270	194,344	720
APS4	515	433,174	841
APS5	528	482,930	915
APS6	724	700,643	968
Executive Officer Level (EL)			
EL1	502	548,676	1,093
EL2	170	233,771	1,375
Senior Executive Service (SES) level			
SES1, SES2, SES3	44	118,586	2,695
Total	2,783	2,719,471	977

Table 19.4: Annual performance pay by level, 2008–09

(a) The number of staff represents all staff who received performance pay during 2008–09. As a result, the total number of staff in this table is different to the total number of staff as at 30 June 2009, shown in Table 19.1.

Reward and recognition

The ABS operates a Recognition and Reward Scheme, which recognises exceptional one-off achievements by individuals and work groups. Rewards may be made in the form of certificates, hospitality (such as work group lunches), prepaid vouchers and cash bonuses. Total ABS expenditure for the scheme in 2008–09 was \$71,375.

Learning and development

Statistical, personal leadership and management and information technology training activities across the ABS are designed to enhance organisational capabilities, ensuring the ABS can respond to business challenges. Staff training activities and attendance over the past 12 months decreased due to a significantly reduced budget for 2008–09.

The ABS has continued to refine the development of management programs by introducing modules programs which have included Introduction to Policy Departments, Leading Teams, and Emotional Intelligence for Managers. The ABS has also undertaken work on raising awareness of line manager responsibilities and resources available through workshops covering areas of performance management, budget and also different ways to engage employees within the workplace.

ABS learning and development includes responsibility for the delivery of the Workplace Diversity program and associated network of support staff throughout the ABS. During 2008, the Workplace Diversity Plan has been reviewed and changes made to incorporate overall people management strategies which have included Indigenous programs and mature age workers strategy. Guidelines for reasonable workplace adjustment and induction have also been reviewed and improvements made to existing processes and programs.

Table 19.5: ABS staff training (a)

	Total ABS Operative Staff (b)	Attendance Days	Average Training Days
2003-04	2,800	10,431	3.7
2004-05	2,630	12,562	4.8
2005-06	2,865	16,163 (c)	5.6
2006-07	3,065	13,491 (c) (d)	4.4
2007-08	2,733	9,907	3.6
2008-09	2,489	6,179	2.5

(a) Excludes on-the-job training

(b) Comprises full time and part time staff at their full time equivalent

(c) Figures revised down since first published, as more accurate information has since become available

(d) Excludes Census Data Processing Centre Training

The Organisational, People and Learning System (OPALS) is now well established, with about 60% of ABS employees having completed their capability profile. The information collated in this system is now being used by divisions and regions to determine training needs and develop staff utilisation strategies. A review of OPALS was conducted in 2007–08 to assess the impact of limitations in reporting capability within the system. This review involved discussions with focus groups in central and regional offices, as well as a questionnaire available to all employees. Progress was made during 2008–09 and the results of this review will be finalised in 2009.

The ABS is committed to providing opportunities for all employees to develop and enhance their skills and qualifications, to meet current and future skill requirements in line with corporate goals and individual career development. As part of this commitment, the Study Support Program offers paid study leave and financial assistance to approved students. An internal review of the program is currently underway.

Statistical skills continue to be further developed through the National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI), established to provide a cohesive, statistical skills development program for ABS employees, as well as a program of external training for key clients and partners. The NSTI program covers three key learning streams:

a) **General statistical skills**, which focus on developing overview knowledge of ABS systems and processes (for example, as part of induction training or professional development); general statistical principles such as data quality and confidentiality; and other generalist skills such as project management and statistical writing that support statistical work.

b) **Collection cycle training**, which aims to cover training across the data collection cycle and forms the basis of the NSTI curriculum. It is ultimately intended that NSTI will develop and run a complete series of courses across this cycle. The delivery schedule for collection cycle training is largely determined by the priorities of, and resourcing from, the business Divisions, although NSTI retains a number of staff with key business skills to develop this program.

c) **Concepts sources and methods training**, which relates to the conceptual and client engagement infrastructure that supports collection cycle work. Unlike the collection cycle courses, delivery of this training is fully determined by the priorities of, and resourcing from, the Divisional client areas.

Occupational health and safety

The ABS is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and meeting its responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991*(OH&S Act) and the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act). The ABS continues to meet its commitments under the ABS Health and Safety Management Arrangements (HSMA). This provides a framework for OH&S in the ABS and, under a statement of commitment with Comcare, aims to significantly improve OH&S outcomes by 2012.

A dedicated section in the ABS central office, complemented by representatives in all regional offices, ensures the requirements of the OH&S Act and SRC Act are met. A network of OH&S committees is the vehicle for consultation on OH&S issues affecting employees. Following recent changes to the OH&S Act, the ABS has developed, and commenced implementation of, revised Health and Safety Management Arrangements, which are scheduled for completion in late 2009.

During 2008–09, 47 employees were selected or elected as Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) under the OH&S Act, with 49 staff receiving initial or refresher training during the year.

There were 17 notifiable incidents reported by the ABS to Comcare in 2008–09.

Investigations

During 2008–09, no Comcare OH&S investigations were undertaken in the ABS and no Provisional Improvement Notices, Improvement Notices or Prohibition Notices were issued.

Workplace injuries and illness

The ABS continued to invest in a risk management approach to the prevention of work-related illness and injuries. Key features of this approach included:

- an annual national hazards inspection program, which involves OH&S inspections of all ABS workplaces
- ▶ increased employee awareness and compliance reporting of hazards in the workplace
- ▶ investigations of accident, incidents and near misses in the workplace, and
- immediate preventative interventions to address pain, discomfort or other signs of potential injury reported by employees.

A comparison of workers' compensation claims for the periods 2004–05 to 2008–09 is detailed in Table 19.6.

Table 19.6: ABS Premium Group claims incidence (number)

Financial Year	Number of Accepted Claims
2004-05	100
2005-06	94
2006–07(a)	220
2007-08	29
2008-09	34

Data Source: Comcare Customer Information Service

(a) The increased incidence of claims in 2006–07 is largely due to 113 claims resulting from the 2006 Census enumeration.

Rehabilitation

The ABS implements early intervention and rehabilitation in both compensable and noncompensable cases. Training for eight ABS rehabilitation case managers and OH&S Coordinators was provided during the year, to enhance ABS rehabilitation performance.

Comcare premium

Comcare provided notification that the ABS' premium rate for 2009–10 has been set at 1.25% of total salary (including GST). The details of the ABS and the agency pool average premium rates are presented in Table 19.7.

Table 19.7: Comcare workers' compensation premium rate(% of wage and salary expenditure)

	2004–05	2005-06	2006-07	2007–08	2008-09	2009–10
ABS	1.78	1.43	1.30	1.69	1.42	1.50
All agencies combined average	1.67	1.77	1.77	1.55	1.36	1.25

Achievements

Measures taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees during 2008–09 included:

- ongoing review and development of the ABS' OH&S policy framework based on risk management principles
- education and awareness of employees and managers on their OH&S responsibilities, preventing injuries and OH&S risk management
- the conduct of the fourth annual National Hazard Inspection Program resulted in greater awareness by employees and managers of their OH&S roles and responsibilities, identified workplace hazards and enabled risk mitigation strategies to be effectively implemented
- the use and continual improvement of systems to promote early intervention and improve the management of rehabilitation in the ABS, and

- the ongoing implementation of the ABS National Health Promotion Program, which is aimed at reinforcing broader community health messages targeted at the National Health Priority area risk factors of:
 - asthma
 - cardiovascular health
 - mental health
 - arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions
 - obesity, and
 - diabetes.

ABS National Health Promotion Program

During 2008–09, the ABS developed and implemented a National Health Promotion Calendar, with 679 employees participating in various workplace health seminars, activities and events.

Events during the year included seminars on resilience and coping with change, healthy sleep, work life balance, men's health issues and information on osteoporosis. A national flu vaccination program was conducted in April 2009, with 636 employees participating.

Attendance management

In 2007–08, the rate of workplace absence (unscheduled leave) in the ABS amounted to 13 days per full time equivalent employee. This figure is approximately 9% above the APS median rate for large agencies, and has been clearly identified as an organisational productivity issue. In an attempt to systematically reduce the amount of unscheduled absence, the ABS has developed and implemented a more proactive approach to the management of unscheduled leave. Measures implemented during 2008–09 included:

- increased senior management accountability for performance through inclusion of unscheduled leave data in the ABS Quarterly Human Resources Indicators Report
- devolved accountability at middle manager/supervisor level via quarterly unscheduled leave performance reports for all (15) ABS resource centres. These reports provide detailed information on the amount and type of unscheduled leave taken within each resource centre, and help to identify 'hotspots' of incidence for further consideration and action
- increased awareness of managers at all levels on their roles and responsibilities in the effective management of leave. These responsibilities were articulated in the ABS Managers' Handbook, and were actively promoted through information workshops for managers and staff in all resource centres, and
- ongoing advice and support to managers and staff provided by Human Resources staff in Central Office and Regional Offices.

chapter 20



MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

Information technology is fundamental to the ABS achieving its mission of leading a high quality and responsive national statistical service. Effective management of information technology allows the ABS to continually improve the access to and capability of statistical data and services, while maintaining security and integrity standards.

The Technology Services Division (TSD) supports all areas of the ABS in the delivery of business outcomes through the effective and innovative application of information technology solutions. In 2008–09, TSD continued to support existing ABS programs, while strategically supporting the ABS to meet its future direction and business requirements. TSD provides these services nationally, to staff in the ABS' central and regional offices, to ABS' interviewers who work from home and to ABS providers and clients.

The ABS also works closely with other Australian government agencies, statistical organisations and key stakeholders to identify and develop information technology better practice approaches. The ABS is able to utilise these collaborative efforts to support the ABS' objectives and those of the Australian Government. The ABS has continued to be actively engaged in whole-of-government information technology work programs and implementation of the 2008 Review of the Australian Government's Use of Information and Communications Technology.

Under the guidance of the ABS' Senior Management Group, TSD has contributed to the delivery of ABS outcomes through:

- building information technology in a strategic manner to support the ABS mission
- ▶ supporting an effective statistical work program with the appropriate technology
- evolving the ABS technology environment and related services to enhance productivity, innovation, collaboration and job satisfaction
- assisting the ABS to align with broader government practice, and assisting with project management, enterprise architecture, business process improvement and capital planning
- working with business areas to ensure that the ABS and the National Statistical Service (NSS) have the technology required for the future
- collaborating with other organisations to support the NSS

- ensuring the ABS has effective security policy and practices, and
- representing the ABS in building strategic alliances in the broader information technology, government and National Statistical Office communities both nationally and overseas.

Examples of TSD assistance in advancing ABS' statistical work during 2008–09 include:

- improving technology support for survey management and design
- increasing the automation of statistical techniques such as editing, estimation and imputation
- improving the availability and responsiveness to changing business demands through a fully virtualised server environment
- enhancing the household survey amendment processing system
- introducing a new processing system for quarterly National Crime and Justice Statistics
- integrating the field interviewers' technical environment with the internal office environment
- enhancing the processes and systems for acquiring people, including implementation of e-Recruitment, and
- reducing the publishing time and improving the flexibility to handle peak loads of the ABS website.

Specific projects worked on by TSD during 2008–09 include:

- release of the net overseas migration application
- development of a geospatial infrastructure strategy
- research into and piloting of Internet data capture from businesses
- implementation of a guided search interface to improve content discovery on the ABS website
- streamlining the processing of faxed-in surveys, and
- delivery of support systems for the March 2009 Census field test.

Key developments and achievements

The ABS was recognised for the development and implementation of the CDATA Online initiative at the May 2009 Excellence in e-Government Awards. Launched in October 2008, CDATA Online is a free online tool that combines data from the 2006 Census with web mapping and graphing capability. CData Online allows users to create custom tables, thematic maps and graphs, which can be based upon their own custom geographical areas.

TableBuilder—to be released August 2009

Building on the success of CDATA Online, later in 2009 the ABS will release the final, much anticipated, product from the 2006 Census, TableBuilder. TableBuilder represents a fundamental shift in the way statistics are communicated with data users and offers unlimited freedom in the range of tables data users can create.

TableBuilder is a product designed for experienced data users who are familiar with statistical concepts. The users of TableBuilder are expected to come from the research, policy, and academic sectors. TableBuilder will be available to Australian and international users on a subscription basis. Initially, the scope of TableBuilder will be limited to data from the 2006 Census but additional statistical data may be made available in the future.

The Working@ABS program delivered and promoted a number of new desktop services, primarily aimed at improving personal productivity. The program has further developed the collaboration, knowledge management, and enterprise searching capabilities of ABS staff. This was achieved through an upgrade to the desktop environment and was supported by enhanced on-demand multimedia presentations and tools. Additionally, TSD has continued to develop and promote the ABS' existing video conferencing, telephony and Internet services.

The ABS Technology Research Portfolio ensures the organisation is well placed to understand technology opportunities and challenges, and is able to recognise the potential impacts and issues arising from rapid adoption of technology by businesses and the community.

The ABS continues to collaborate with statistical organisations, government organisations and the community in relation to information technology. For example, the ABS has worked with its partners to develop an automated open source tool to assist organisations manage their Creative Commons licences within their own workflows. The ABS is also working with the transport community to build a 'discovery metadata demonstrator' as part of the National Statistical Service. This work will promote the sharing and use of data across the transport community and, in the longer term, allow the ABS to better understand the business community's requirements for a metadata repository.

In November 2008, the Australian Government endorsed in full the recommendations of the Review of the Australian Government's Use of Information and Communications Technology (the Gershon Review). The ABS supports the recommendations of the Gershon Review and has provided a wide range of support to the Department of Finance and Deregulation, through the Australian Government Information Management Office, in developing and implementing its recommendations.

The ABS also hosted visits from a number of statistical organisations in other countries to share approaches in managing information technology, including Statistics New Zealand and Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia).

chapter 21

MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS

The ABS' assets are integral to the cost-effective conduct of its business, and are part of the combination of resources required to enable delivery of services. This chapter outlines the asset management principles, including the approach to purchasing, used by the ABS during 2008–09.

The ABS directly manages its non-financial assets in accordance with Chief Executive Instructions and Australian Accounting Standards. The total value of these assets are \$136.9 million. Most of these assets are intangible (internally generated software), valued at \$84.3 million in 2008–09, with tangible assets (property plant and equipment) valued at \$45.7 million and other (prepayments and accrued revenue) at \$6.9 million. Tangible asset values are maintained with the assistance of an independent valuer.

Asset management in the ABS

Principles

Overall, the ABS asset management principles are designed to ensure that asset management practices and decisions support the service delivery requirements and business demands of the organisation, and that capital expenditure decisions address the full life-cycle costs, benefits and risks of the assets.

The ABS' approach to asset management encompasses the following principles:

- asset management activities are undertaken within an integrated government asset management framework
- service delivery needs to guide asset management practices and decisions
- asset planning and management are integrated with corporate and business plans, as well as budgetary and reporting processes
- capital expenditure decisions are based on evaluations of alternatives that take into account full life-cycle costs, benefits and risks of assets, and
- ownership, control, accountability and reporting requirements for assets are established, clearly communicated and implemented.

Strategic issues

The major strategic issue currently being addressed with respect to ABS assets is the effective management of its information and technology assets. Information and technology assets in the ABS are supported by strong governance arrangements.

These arrangements define how the overall direction, goals, investments and outcomes of information technology in supporting ABS outcomes will be achieved. The current strategies implemented to manage these investments are:

- using strategic direction and oversight by the Senior Management Group, and Capital Strategy Committee, comprising heads of all business areas (see Chapter 18, ABS Corporate governance)
- developing a corporate information technology budget and work program every year, and carrying out regular monitoring
- enhancing and/or replacing existing software and hardware, on a rolling program, where
 justified by business demands and where investments can be afforded
- continuing an active internal auditing program, and
- ensuring that full costs are attributed and balanced against benefits by using internal cost recovery.

Planning and managing information and technology assets

Information technology asset plans are developed each financial year and inform the development of the annual asset plan. During 2008–09, the ABS commenced development of a revised strategic plan for internally generated software assets. The plan will be used to inform how the ABS will strategically invest in information technology to support its mission over the next decade.

Work also commenced in 2008–09 on a review of the health of statistical and business applications in the ABS. The results of this review are expected in 2009–10, and will contribute to long-term planning for investment in and replacement of information and communications technology intangible assets over the next decade.

Asset measurement

The ABS maintains an asset register to address management, statutory reporting and user requirements.

The ABS' assets are integral to the conduct of its business, and are part of the combination of resources required to enable cost effective service delivery.

The asset register underpins planning policies, analysis of financial programs, capitalisation, and reviews of performance against defined objectives.

For recognition as an asset, the ABS has an expenditure capitalisation threshold of \$2,000 for general assets and \$1,000 for information and technology assets, including software. Asset expenditure greater than, or equal to, these amounts are capitalised and recorded on the assets register.

Purchasing

Purchasing and competitive tendering and contracting

The ABS undertakes a wide variety of procurement and contracting activities, with the majority of purchases being classed as low value and low complexity.

The ABS conducts its procurement and contracting activities in accordance with Chief Executive Instructions and the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines. The ABS advertises an annual procurement plan on AusTender, and the plan is reviewed and updated as required throughout the year. The ABS has a centralised area of expertise, which provides procurement and contracting support to operational areas, and provides direct support for more complex procurement projects. Information on procurement policy and practices is disseminated to staff through an internal procurement portal.

Through the use of efficient processes and effective application of the ABS and Australian Government policies and principles, the ABS is satisfied that its approach to market testing and contracting is highly effective, resulting in value-for-money outcomes for the ABS. The ABS continues to invest in developing procurement skills and reviewing processes, to ensure that efficiency and value-for-money outcomes are achieved.

The ABS has not undertaken any competitive tendering and contracting activities during the year that have resulted in the contracting out of government activities previously performed by the ABS.

Information relating to expenditure on contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website: http://www.tenders.gov.au.

Exempt contracts

During the 2008–09 financial year, the ABS did not exempt any contracts from publication by AusTender, under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

chapter 22





The ABS has undertaken a review of the Disability Action Plan and is incorporating these findings into a broader strategy under the Workplace Diversity Plan.

Reporting requirements under the Employer Role have been transferred from the ABS to the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). The ABS has reported on its activities for disability through the APSC's State of the Service survey for 2008–09.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The ABS has under its current Disability Action Plan the following public statement of commitment to provide:

- 1. access to ABS products and services for clients with disabilities, and
- 2. equal employment opportunity for employees with disabilities.

The ABS Disability Action Plan incorporates the principles of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy and consolidates the ABS policies and programs, and is a mechanism to assist in the prevention of discrimination on the basis of disability. The plan includes a checklist to assist all ABS employees in the prevention of disability discrimination.

The ABS has conducted a review of the effectiveness of the current plan and seeks to ensure that business areas are able to assist clients and employees with disabilities through a variety of mechanisms ranging from existing policies through to work practices.

This section assesses the ABS' performance against the indicators set out in the Commonwealth Disability Strategy.

Table 22.1: Commonwealth Disability Strategy-Provider Role

Performance Indicator	Assessment
 Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance. 	The ABS has conducted a review of the current Disability Action Plan and identified improvements through updating of policies and procedures across business areas. These are currently being implemented.
	The ABS operates in accordance with the Australian Government Information Management Office guidelines relating to accessibility for visually impaired users and is working to ensure that the ABS website meets the requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
	The ABS is committed to the development of a website that is accessible to people with vision impairment. However, due to technological limitations, it is not possible to make the website entirely accessible in a cost effective manner. This limitation means that some tables, products, or parts of the website, may be less accessible to some visually impaired users.
	If any of the web products are not suitably accessible, the ABS will make arrangements for translation of the product into a more appropriate format. This service is provided on request and at no additional cost to the user.
2. Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer and service standards, which address accessibility for people with disabilities.	The <i>ABS Service Delivery Charter</i> describes the relationship between the ABS and users of its products and services.
3. Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, are in place to address concerns raised about performance.	The <i>ABS Service Delivery Charter</i> outlines the complaints and grievance mechanisms in place to address concerns about the ABS' performance in providing services.

Measuring disability

The ABS has three measures relating to disability. These are the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), the ABS Short Disability Module and the Census of Population and Housing. The collection of disability related measures from each of these sources differ in methodology, but are conceptually related to each other.

Of the three measures, the SDAC, with a 75 question set, provides the largest and most comprehensive collection of disability data on the Australian population. Information is collected on three population groups—people with a disability, older people (aged 60 years and over) and people who provide assistance to others because of a disability or the effects of old age. The current iteration of the SDAC is being conducted during 2009, with results due for release in late 2010.

The Short Disability Module comprises a limited number of questions based on the SDAC. The module was developed to be incorporated into social surveys, so that disability can be investigated alongside other socioeconomic factors.

For the first time, the 2006 Census of Population and Housing included four questions related to disability. The variable 'core activity need for assistance' was derived from these questions and provides information on people who needed assistance with the core activities of self care, mobility and communication because of a disability, long-term health problem (lasting six months or more) or the effects of old age. The population of interest relates most closely to those defined as being severely or profoundly disabled in the SDAC. The findings of the 2006 Census of Population and Housing were released during the 2007–08 financial year (for more information see http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/census).

chapter 23

ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

During 2008–09 the ABS has remained committed to the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development as outlined in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999.* In accordance with the EPBC Act, which requires agencies to report on aspects of their performance relating to ecologically sustainable development, the ABS has two key roles. The first of these relates to the ABS' responsibility for providing statistics on the environment and environmental issues, to enable informed decision making. The second role relates to the impact of the ABS' operations on the environment and the action being taken by the ABS to minimise that impact.

The ABS' response to the five components of sub-section 516A(6), as required by the EPBC Act, is described below.

How do the activities of the organisation, and the administration of legislation by the organisation, accord with the principles of ecologically sustainable development?

The ABS Environmental Management Statement (EMS) provides evidence of the ABS commitment to ecological sustainable development. The ABS operates primarily in an office-based environment and is increasingly moving from paper to electronic products. This is being achieved by:

- the availability of free publications on the ABS website and increasing the number of publications available electronically, which continues to reduce demand for hard copies of publications
- the introduction of duplex printing and copying
- a knowledge framework, incorporating digital recordkeeping rather than paper records and automatic recordkeeping facilities for ABS workgroup databases, and
- computer assisted interviewing to replace paper forms.

Other matters relating to ecologically sustainable development at the ABS include:

- the introduction of Wake on LAN and virtualisation of services to allow for more efficient use of resources and energy savings
- consideration of environmental issues in the market testing process for new office accommodation, and
- ▶ inclusion of the Green Lease Schedules in new tenancy leases.

How do the outcomes specified in a relevant Appropriations Act contribute to ecologically sustainable development?

The ABS receives appropriation for the purpose of producing social and economic statistics.

The ABS' environment statistics are produced as part of both the social and economic statistics programs.

The economic statistics program includes the collection and publishing of environment and energy statistics, including environment accounts. The coordination of data collection, research and analysis, and the development and implementation of international environmental accounting and energy standards, are also a part of the economic statistics program.

The social statistics program includes the collection and publishing of household environment and energy statistics.

During 2008–09, the ABS continued to release a range of outputs relevant to environmental issues. These included:

- ► Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices (ABS cat. no.4602.0.55.001)
- Environmental Views and Behaviour (ABS cat. no.4626.0.55.001)
- Energy supply data cubes as a part of Australian Industry (ABS cat. no.8155.0)
- ▶ Water Use on Australian Farms, 2007–08 (ABS cat. no.4618.0)
- Australian Social Trends (ABS cat. no.4102.0)
- Land Management and Farming in Australia, 2007–08 (ABS cat. no.4627.0)
- Environment and Energy News (ABS cat. no.4653.0).
- Water and the Murray—Darling Basin—A Statistical Profile, 2000–01 to 2005–06 (ABS cat. no.4610.0.55.007)
- Information Paper: Methods of Estimating the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production, 2008 (ABS cat. no.4610.0.55.006)
- Experimental Estimates of the Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production, 2000–01 to 2006–07 (ABS cat. no.4610.0.55.008)
- Information Paper: What are Environmental Accounts?, 2008 (ABS cat. no.4655.0.55.001)
- ▶ Farm Management and Climate, 2006–07 (ABS cat. no.4625.0)
- ► Energy Account, Australia, 2006–07 (ABS cat. no.4604.0)

What is the effect of the organisation's activities on the environment?

The effects on the environment of the ABS operations in the nine offices fall into five main categories:

- energy consumption and greenhouse gas pollution
- paper use
- waste generation
- water use, and
- transportation.

What measures are taken by the organisation to minimise the impact of its activities on the environment?

The ABS has sought to minimise its impact by:

- duplex printing and copying throughout the organisation as the default. This has resulted in a 40% decrease in A4 paper printing and copying in 2008–09
- using re-manufactured and recycled cartridges for photocopiers, faxes and printers, and recycling used printer cartridges wherever possible
- recycling paper, bottles, cans, paper and cardboard products in all offices
- using paper with an 80% recycled content
- introducing digital recordkeeping, and where possible, computer assisted interviewing to replace paper forms
- increasing the number of publications available electronically
- establishing a communications strategy which promotes good practices amongst all staff at all levels and supports the work of the Green Teams throughout the ABS
- promoting and participating in Earth Hour in all ABS tenancies
- celebrating World Environment Day and presenting Environment Awards to recognise the commitment of staff or teams who have been actively working on environmental solutions and contributed to improving ABS environmental sustainability
- heavily weighting energy ratings, when making purchasing decisions for whitegoods, and
- considering the Greenhouse Vehicle Guide (GVG) when leasing government vehicles.
 Over 81% of ABS vehicles achieved a GVG rating of 10.5 or higher rating by the end of 2008–09.

The ABS is one of the leading organisations in relation to their Green IT policy. In 2008–09:

- Wake on LAN was introduced across the ABS, allowing for the shutdown of PCs overnight and the PC being automatically turned on each morning
- ▶ virtualisation of servers was introduced and 'thin client' technology is being trialled, and
- video conferencing upgrades were undertaken as well as the introduction of new software and hardware to support virtual teams.

ABS is committed to working collaboratively with its landlords to address environmental concerns. In South Australia, the ABS regional office is located in the City Central Tower, a 5-star Australian Greenhouse Building Rating (AGBR) rated building.

In addition, the ABS is:

- reviewing 'green energy' consumption in all tenancies and wherever possible introducing or increasing green energy purchase. ABS House is part of the whole-of-government energy contract and procures 10% approved green energy
- reviewing energy usage and management to ensure the ABS will be well positioned to meet the Energy Efficiency in Government Operations targets. A consultancy evaluating energy performance in central office and recommending initiatives for improvement was undertaken in early 2009 and ABS is considering the findings in conjunction with building owners
- addressing environmental efficiency measures in ABS lease negotiations and incorporating amenities during fitout that encourage staff to save water, cycle to work, and to recycle
- > reviewing business support contracts to include environmental criteria, and
- considering whole-of-life purchasing in relation to furniture and fittings.

What are the mechanisms for reviewing and increasing the effectiveness of these measures?

The ABS has implemented an EMS and has completed benchmarking the principal aspects and impacts of environmental concern and set the objectives and targets for 2009–10. Regular status reports to management and staff on continuous improvement will be presented quarterly and a Sustainability Report will be prepared at the completion of each financial year.

The application of the EMS and the environmental performance of the ABS is overseen by the Environment and Energy Board.

Section 7

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS







INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Assistant Treasurer

Scope 5 -

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the year ended 30 June 2009, which comprise: a Statement by the Australian Statistician and Acting Chief Financial Officer; Income Statement; Balance Sheet; Statement of Changes in Equity; Cash Flow Statement; Schedule of Commitments; Schedule of Contingencies; Schedule of Administered Items and Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements, including a Summary of Significant Accounting Policies.

The Responsibility of the Australian Statistician for the Financial Statements

The Australian Statistician is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the Finance Minister's Orders made under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, including the Australian Accounting Standards (which include the Australian Accounting Interpretations). This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on my audit. I have conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. These auditing standards require that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

GPO Box 707 CANBERRA ACT 2601 19 National Circuit BARTON ACT Phone (02) 6203 7300 Fax (02) 6203 7777 An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Australian Statistician, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting the audit, I have followed the independence requirements of the Australian National Audit Office, which incorporate the requirements of the Australian accounting profession.

Auditor's Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements of the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

- (a) have been prepared in accordance with the Finance Minister's Orders made under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, including the Australian Accounting Standards; and
- (b) give a true and fair view of the matters required by the Finance Minister's Orders including the Australian Bureau of Statistics' financial position as at 30 June 2009 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended.

Australian National Audit Office

John Jone

Executive Director

Canberra

6 August 2009

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN STATISTICIAN AND ACTING CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

In our opinion, the attached financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2009 are based on properly maintained financial records and give a true and fair view of the matters required by the Finance Minister's Orders made under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, as amended.

Signed ...

Brian Pink Australian Statistician

5 August 2009

Signed.

Debra Foggin Acting Chief Financial Officer

5 August 2009

INCOME STATEMENT

for the year ended 30 June 2009

INCOME Revenue	Notes	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Revenue from Government	3A	282,568	302,260
Sale of Goods and rendering of services	3B	28,009	25,599
Other revenue		1,180	197
Total Revenue		311,757	328,056
Gains			
Net gain from sale of assets	3C	53	43
Other gains	3D	410	433
Total Gains		463	476
Total Income		312,220	328,532
EXPENSES			
Employee benefits	4A	219,450	220.471
Suppliers	4B	67,009	,
Depreciation and amortisation	4C	30,826	,
Finance costs	4D	261	,
Write-down and impairment of assets	4E	8,282	5,167
Other expenses		142	186
Total Expenses		325,970	330,019
(Deficit) (Deficit) attributable to the Australian		(13,750)	(1,487)
Government		(13,750)	(1,487)

BALANCE SHEET

as at 30 June 2009

as at 50 June 2009			
		2009	2008
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000
ASSETS			
Financial Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5A	1,285	6,806
Trade and other receivables	5B _	32,596	21,951
Total Financial Assets	_	33,881	28,757
Non-Financial Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	6A,6B	45,658	50,415
Intangibles	6C,6D	84,278	95,576
Inventories	6E	29	38
Other non-financial assets	6F	6,945	7,273
Total Non-Financial Assets	-	136,910	153,302
Total Assets	-		
Total Assets	-	170,791	182,059
LIABILITIES			
Payables			
Suppliers	7A	23,234	23,522
Unearned revenue	7B	9,753	5,243
Other payables	7C	4,906	3,440
Total Payables	_	37,893	32,205
Interest Bearing Liabilities			
Loans	8	3,308	4,821
Total Interest Bearing Liabilities		3,308	4,821
	-	0,000	1,021
Lease Incentives			
Lease incentives	9	8,293	9,474
Total Lease Incentives		8,293	9,474
Provisions			
Employee provisions	10A	71,590	68,806
Other provisions	10B		
Total Provisions	100 -	71,590	68,806
	-		
Total Liabilities	-	121,084	115,306
Net Assets		49,707	66,753
EQUITY			
Contributed equity		18,293	20,534
Reserves		17,188	18,243
Retained surpluses		14,226	27,976
Total Equity	_	49,707	66,753
Current Assets		38,743	33,630
Non-Current Assets		132,048	148,429
Current Liabilities		88,488	78,611
Non-Current Liabilities		32,596	36,695

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

as at 30 June 2009

	Retained Earnings		Asset Revaluation Reserves		Contributed Equity/Capital		Total Equity	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Opening Balance	27,976	29,463	18,243	16,370	20,534	14,033	66,753	59,866
Income and Expenses								
Revaluation (decrement) increment	-	-	(1,055)	1,873	-	-	(1,055)	1,873
Sub-total Income and Expenses								
Recognised Directly in Equity	-	-	(1,055)	1,873	-	-	(1,055)	1,873
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	(13,750)	(1,487)	-	-	-	-	(13,750)	(1,487)
Total Income and Expenses	(13,750)	(1, 487)	-	-	-	-	(13,750)	(1,487)
of which: attributable to the Australian Government	(13,750)	(1,487)	-	-	-	-	(13,750)	(1,487)
Transactions with owners								
Contributions by owners								
Appropriation (equity injection)	-	-	-	-	5,365	6,501	5,365	6,501
Return of Appropriation	-	-	-	-	(7,606)	-	(7,606)	-
Sub-total Transactions with Owners	_	-	_	-	(2,241)	6,501	(2,241)	6,501
Transfers between equity components	_	_	_	_	()		(-,)	
Closing Balance as at 30 June	14,226	27,976	17,188	18,243	18,293	20,534	49,707	66,753
Closing Balance Attributable to the Australian Government	14,226	27,976	17,188	18,243	18,293	20,534	49,707	66,753

Note ^{1:} The revaluation movement for 2009 includes a prior year decrement of \$118,000.

2000

2000

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

for the year ended 30 June 2009

		2009	2008
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Received			
Goods and services		37,707	30,995
Appropriations		269,539	289,918
Net GST received		4,634	5,359
Total Cash Received		311,880	326,272
		011,000	
Cash Used			
Employees		(215,200)	(215,918)
Suppliers		(75,675)	(81,425)
Borrowing costs		(261)	(351)
Total Cash Used			
		(291,136)	(297,694)
Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities	11	20,744	28,578
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Received			
Proceeds from sales of property, plant and equipment		100	239
Total Cash Received		100	239
Cash Used			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(10, 162)	(11,043)
Purchase of intangibles		(13, 934)	(22, 480)
Total Cash Used		(24,096)	(33,523)
		(_ 1,55 0)	
Net Cash Flows Used By Investing Activities		(23,996)	(33,284)
The choir from coord by incosing retricted		(23,550)	(55,201)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Received			
Appropriations – contributed equity		2 211	6,501
Total Cash Received		2,211	and the second se
101ai Cush Receivea		2,211	6,501
Cash Used			
Cash Used		(1.81.0)	(1.10.0)
Repayment of borrowings		(1,513)	(1,424)
Transfer to Official Public Account		(2,967)	
Total Cash Used		(4,480)	(1,424)
Net Cash Flows (Used By) From Financing Activities		(2,269)	5,077
Net (Decrease) Increase in Cash Held		(5,521)	371
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the			
reporting period		6,806	6,435
Cash and Cash Equivalents at the End of the			
Reporting Period	5A	1,285	6,806
			Real Property lies and the second second

SCHEDULE OF COMMITMENTS

as at 30 June 2009		
BY TYPE	2009	2008
	\$'000	\$'000
Capital Commitments		
Property, plant and equipment	1,773	733
Total Capital Commitments	1,773	733
Other Commitments		
Operating leases ¹	173,710	228,997
Other commitments	11,069	1,797
Total Other Commitments	184,779	230,794
	104,777	200,791
Commitments Receivable	(16,959)	(21,048)
Net Commitments by Type	169,593	210,479
BY MATURITY		
Capital Commitments		
One year or less	1,773	733
Total Capital Commitments	1,773	733
<i>I</i>		
Operating Lease Commitments		
One year or less	23,621	27,431
From one to five years	114,449	135,224
Over five years	35,640	66,342
Total Operating Lease Commitments	173,710	228,997
Other Commitments		
One year or less	11,069	1,797
Total Other Commitments	11,069	1,797
Commitments Receivable		
One year or less	(3,315)	(2,724)
From one to five years	(10, 404)	(12,293)
Over five years	(3,240)	(6,031)
Total Commitments Receivable	(16,959)	(21,048)
Net Commitments by Maturity	169,593	210,479
	10,070	

NB: Commitments are GST inclusive where relevant. Commitments receivable relate to GST.

¹ Operating leases included are effectively non-cancellable and comprise:

Nature of Lease	General Description of Leasing Arrangement
Leases for office accommodation	Lease payments are subject to annual increases which are either fixed as outlined in the rental agreement or in accordance with
	upwards movements in the Consumer Price Index. The initial periods of office accommodation leases are still current and each may be renewed for up to five years at the Australian Bureau of
	Statistics (ABS) option, following a one-off adjustment of rentals to current market levels.
Agreements for the provision of motor vehicles to senior executive officers	No contingent rentals exist. There are no renewal or purchase options available to the ABS.

SCHEDULE OF CONTINGENCIES

as at 30 June 2009

Contingent Assets	Claims for Costs		Total	
	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Balance from previous period	669	-	669	-
New	-	669	-	669
Re-measurement	(104)	-	(104)	-
Assets recognised	(270)	-	(270)	-
Expired	(50)		(50)	-
Total Contingent Assets	245	669	245	669
Contingent Liabilities	Claims for Da	mages/Costs	Tota	al
	Claims for Day 2009	mages/Costs		
		8	Tot: 2009 \$'000	al 2008 \$'000
Contingent Liabilities	2009	2008	2009	2008
Contingent Liabilities Balance from previous period	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Contingent Liabilities Balance from previous period New	2009 \$'000 4,944	2008 \$'000 4,714	2009 \$'000 4,944	2008 \$'000 4,714
Contingent Liabilities Balance from previous period New Re-measurement	2009 \$'000 4,944 40	2008 \$'000 4,714 114	2009 \$'000 4,944 40	2008 \$'000 4,714 114
	2009 \$'000 4,944 40 (1,323)	2008 \$'000 4,714 114 116	2009 \$'000 4,944 40 (1,323)	2008 \$'000 4,714 114
Contingent Liabilities Balance from previous period New Re-measurement Liabilities recognised	2009 \$'000 4,944 40 (1,323) (50)	2008 \$'000 4,714 114 116	2009 \$'000 4,944 40 (1,323) (50)	2008 \$'000 4,714 114

The above schedule should be read in conjunction with Note 12.

SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTERED ITEMS

		2009	2008
	Notes	\$'000	\$'000
Income Administered on Behalf of			
Government			
for the period ended 30 June 2009			
Revenue			
Non-taxation revenue			
Fines	16	1	-
Total Non-Taxation Revenue		1	-
Total Revenue Administered on			
Behalf of Government		1	· · · -
Total Income Administered on behalf			
of Government		1	· · · · · · · ·
Administered Cash Flows			
for the period ended 30 June 2009			
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Received			
Fines		1	
Total Cash Received		1	2
Net Cash Flows From (Used) By			
Operating Activities		. 1	
Net Increase (Decrease) In Cash Held		1	-
Cash at the beginning of the reporting			
period		-	
Cash to Official Public Account for:			
- Fines		1	-
Cash At The End Of The Reporting			
Period	16	-	· · · ·

The Census and Statistics Act 1905 provides the Australian Statistician with the authority to conduct statistical collections and, when necessary, to direct a person or an organisation to provide statistical information. Where information is not provided the ABS can impose a fine on the person or organisation. Such fines are reported in the Financial Statements as Administered Revenue.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Index to the Notes to the Financial Statements

- Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies
- Note 2: Events After the Balance Sheet Date
- Note 3: Income
- Note 4: Expenses
- Note 5: Financial Assets
- Note 6: Non-Financial Assets
- Note 7: Payables
- Note 8: Interest Bearing Liabilities
- Note 9: Lease Incentives
- Note 10: Provisions
- Note 11: Cash Flow Reconciliation
- Note 12: Contingent Liabilities and Assets
- Note 13: Senior Executive Remuneration
- Note 14: Remuneration of Auditors
- Note 15: Financial Instruments
- Note 16: Administered Reconciliation Table
- Note 17: Appropriations
- Note 18: Special Accounts
- Note 19: Compensation and Debt Relief
- Note 20: Assets Held In Trust
- Note 21: Reporting of Outcomes

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

1.1 Objectives of the Australian Bureau of Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is an Australian Government controlled entity. The mission and outcome of the ABS is to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within Governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS is structured to produce the aforementioned outcome through its economic statistics, and population and social statistics groups. Indirect costs for support services have been allocated to the economic, population and social statistical areas in Note 21 Reporting of Outcomes in the Financial Statements.

ABS activities contributing to this outcome are classified as either departmental or administered. Departmental activities involve the use of assets, liabilities, income and expenses controlled or incurred by the ABS in its own right. Administered activities involve the management or oversight by the ABS, on behalf of Government, of items controlled or incurred by the Government.

Departmental activities are identified under two outputs. Output 1.1.1 Economic Statistics and Output 1.1.2 Population and Social Statistics.

Further information on ABS outcomes and outputs can be found in this Annual Report.

The continued existence of the ABS in its present form and with its present programs is dependent on Government policy and on continuing appropriations by Parliament for the ABS' programs and administration.

1.2 Basis of Preparation of Financial Statements

The Financial Statements and notes are required by section 49 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and are a general purpose financial report.

The Financial Statements and notes have been prepared in accordance with:

- Finance Minister's Orders (FMO) for reporting periods ending on or after 1 July 2008; and
- Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that apply for the reporting period.
Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

The Financial Statements have been prepared on an accrual basis and are in accordance with historical cost convention, except for certain assets and liabilities at fair value. Except where stated, no allowance is made for the effect of changing prices on the results or the financial position.

The Financial Statements are presented in Australian dollars and values and are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified.

Unless an alternative treatment is specifically required by an accounting standard or the FMO, assets and liabilities are recognised in the balance sheet when and only when it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the entity or a future sacrifice of economic benefits will be required and the amounts of the assets or liabilities can be reliably measured. However, assets and liabilities arising under Agreements Equally Proportionately Unperformed are not recognised unless required by an accounting standard. Liabilities and assets that are unrecognised are reported in the Schedule of Commitments and the Schedule of Contingencies.

Unless alternative treatment is specifically required by an accounting standard, income and expenses are recognised in the Income Statement when and only when the flow, consumption or loss of economic benefits has occurred and can be reliably measured.

1.3 Significant Accounting Judgements and Estimates

In the process of applying the accounting policies listed in this note, the ABS has made the following judgements that have the most significant impact on the amounts recorded in the financial statements:

In calculating the cost of Internally Generated Software (IGSW), actual costs are measured for programmers and an estimate is added to reflect non-programming staff costs directly attributable to IGSW. In prior years, an estimate of 49.58% of programmer costs was used to reflect the non-programming staff costs directly attributable to IGSW. In 2008-2009, despite significant effort through sampling of IGSW activity, a reliable estimate of the non-programming staff costs could not be determined and hence the estimate was 0%. (Refer Note 1.18).

The change in accounting estimates has been accounted for prospectively in accordance with AASB 108 – Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors. The impact of the change in estimates in 2008-09 is an increase of \$5.4m in employee benefits expenditure in the income statement and a reduction to IGSW capitalised as reported in the balance sheet.

It is impracticable to estimate the amount of the effect in future periods.

No other accounting assumptions or estimates have been identified that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next accounting period.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.4 Changes in Australian Accounting Standards

Adoption of New Australian Accounting Standard Requirements

No accounting standard has been adopted earlier than the application date as stated in the standard. The following new standards or amendments to standards or interpretations are generally applicable to the current reporting period, but there was no impact on the ABS.

Standard	Nature of Change	Impact
AASB 1	First time adoption of Australian Equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards	No impact
AASB 3	Business combinations	No impact
AASB 5	Non-current assets held for sale and discontinued operations	No impact
AASB 7	Revises the disclosure requirements for financial instruments	No impact
AASB 114	Segment reporting	No impact
AASB 116	Property, plant and equipment	No impact
AASB 137	Provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets	No impact
AASB 139	Financial instruments: recognition and measurement	No impact
AASB 1004	Contributions	No impact
AASB 1048	Interpretation and application of standards	No impact
AASB 1049	Whole of Government and general Government sector financial reporting	No impact
AASB 1050	Administered items	No impact
AASB 1051	Land under roads	No impact
AASB 1052	Disaggregated disclosures	No impact
AASB 101	Presentation of financial statements	No impact
AASB 127	Consolidated and separate financial statements	No impact
AASB 2007-9	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards AASB 3, 5, 8, 101, 114, 116, 127 and 137	No impact

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Standard	Nature of Change	Impact
AASB 2008-4	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standard – key management personnel disclosures by disclosing entities	No impact
AASB 2008-10	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – reclassification of financial assets	No impact
AASB 2009-3	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – Embedded Derivatives	No impact
Interpretation 4	Determining whether an arrangement contains a lease	No impact
Interpretation 13	Customer loyalty programmes	No impact
Interpretation 14	The limit on a defined benefit asset, minimum funding requirements and their interaction	No impact
Interpretation 129	Service Concession Arrangements: Disclosures	No impact
Interpretation 1038	Contributions by Owners Made to Wholly-Owned Public Sector Entities	No impact

Future Australian Accounting Standard Requirements

The following new standards, amendments to standards, or interpretations have been issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board, but are effective for future reporting periods. It is estimated that the impact of adopting these pronouncements when effective will have no material financial impact on future reporting periods.

Standard Nature of Change		Impact	
AASB 8	Operating segments	No impact	
AASB 123	Borrowing costs	No impact	
AASB 1039	Concise financial reports	No impact	
AASB 2007-3	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 8, 5, 6, 102, 107, 119, 127, 134, 136, 1023 and 1038	No impact	
AASB 2007-6	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 123, 1, 101, 107, 111, 116 and 138	No impact	
AASB 2007-8	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 101	No impact	
AASB 2007-10	Further amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 101	No impact	

Notes to and	l forming part	of the	Financial Statements	
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Standard	Nature of Change	Impact
AASB 2008-1	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standard – share-based payments: vesting conditions and cancellations	No impact
AASB 2008-2	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – puttable financial instruments and obligations arising on liquidation	No impact
AASB 2008-3	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB 3, 127, 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 101, 107, 112, 114, 116, 121, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138 and 139	No impact
AASB 2008-5	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from the annual improvements project AASB 5, 7, 101, 102,107, 108, 110, 116, 118, 119, 120, 123, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 134, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 1023 and 1038	No impact
AASB 2008-6	Further amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from the annual improvements project AASB 1 and 5	No impact
AASB 2008-7	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards – cost of an investment in a subsidiary, jointly controlled entity or associate AASB 1, 118, 121, 127 and 136	No impact
AASB 2008-8	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards - eligible hedged items AASB 139	No impact
AASB 2008-9	Amendments to AASB 1049 for consistency with AASB 101	No impact
AASB 2008-11	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standard – business combinations among not-for-profit entities AASB 3	No impact
AASB 2008-13	Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards arising from AASB Interpretation 17 – distributions of non-cash assets to owners AASB 5 and 110	No impact
Interpretation 12	Service concession arrangements	No impac
Interpretation 15	Agreements for the construction of real estate	No impact
Interpretation 17	Distribution of non-cash assets to owners	No impact

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.5 Revenue

Revenue from Government

Amounts appropriated for departmental output appropriations for the year (adjusted for any formal additions and reductions) are recognised as revenue when the agency gains control of the appropriation, except for certain amounts that relate to activities that are reciprocal in nature, in which case revenue is recognised only when it has been earned.

Appropriations receivable are recognised at their nominal amounts.

Other Types of Revenue

Sales of goods and services includes revenue from the sale of publications, other products, and the provision of statistical services. Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when:

- The risks and rewards of ownership have been transferred to the buyer;
- The seller retains no managerial involvement nor effective control over the goods;
- · The revenue and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- It is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the entity.

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised by reference to the stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date. The revenue is recognised when:

- The amount of revenue, stage of completion and transaction costs incurred can be reliably measured; and
- The probable economic benefits with the transaction will flow to the entity.

The stage of completion of contracts at the reporting date is determined by reference to the proportion of work completed.

Other revenue includes all miscellaneous revenue such as NatStats conference fees and Comcover recoveries.

Receivables for goods and services, which have 30 day terms, are recognised at the nominal amounts due less any impairment allowance account. Collectability of debts is reviewed at balance date. Allowances are made when collectability of the debt is no longer probable.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.6 Gains

Resources Received Free of Charge

Resources received free of charge are recognised as gains when, and only when, a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would have been purchased if they had not been donated. Use of those resources is recognised as an expense.

Contributions of assets at no cost of acquisition or for nominal consideration are recognised as gains at their fair value when the asset qualifies for recognition, unless received from another Government agency or authority as a consequence of a restructuring of administrative arrangements. Resources received free of charge are recorded as either revenue or gains depending on their nature.

Sale of Assets

Gains from disposal of non-current assets are recognised when control of the asset has passed to the buyer.

1.7 Unearned Revenue

Unearned revenue includes revenue from subscriptions to statistical publications, provision of statistical consultancies, and revenue from other agencies for statistical surveys. The unearned revenue is recognised on a stage of completion basis over the period of subscriptions or the provision of services as provided (Note 7B).

1.8 Transactions with the Government as Owner

Equity Injections

Amounts appropriated which are designated as 'equity injections' for a year (less any formal reductions) are recognised directly in contributed equity in that year.

Return of Appropriation

In 2008-09 the ABS returned appropriation funding to Government in relation to the reallocation of Departmental resourcing for the Standard Business Reporting Program (SBR). This included the return of unspent SBR funding for 2007-08 and 2008-09.

1.9 Employee Benefits

Liabilities for services rendered by employees are recognised at the reporting date to the extent that they have not been settled.

Liabilities for 'short term employee benefits' (as defined in AASB 119 Employee Benefits) and termination benefits due within twelve months of balance date are measured at their nominal amounts.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

The nominal amount is calculated with regard to the rates expected to be paid on settlement of the liability.

All other employee benefit liabilities are measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date.

Leave

The liability for employee benefits includes provision for annual leave and long service leave. No provision has been made for sick leave as all sick leave is non-vesting and the average sick leave taken in future years by employees of the ABS is estimated to be less than the annual entitlement for sick leave.

The leave liabilities are calculated on the basis of employees' remuneration at the estimated salary rates that applied at the time the leave is taken, including the ABS' employer superannuation contribution rates, to the extent that the leave is likely to be taken during service rather than paid out on termination.

The liability for long service leave has been determined by reference to the work of an actuary as at 30 June 2009. The ABS obtains an actuarial assessment every three years. The estimate of the present value of the liability takes into account attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation.

The employee entitlement provision includes superannuation on-costs payable to those employees who take their annual and long service leave prior to resignation or retirement. No superannuation is payable by the ABS when leave is cashed out on resignation or retirement.

Separation and Redundancy

A provision is made for separation and redundancy benefit payments. The ABS recognises a provision for termination when it has developed a detailed formal plan for the terminations and has informed those employees affected that it will carry out the terminations.

Superannuation

The majority of staff of the ABS are members of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS), the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSS) or the PSS accumulation plan (PSSap).

In 2008-09 the ABS also made employer contributions to commercial accumulation superannuation funds as directed by its employees.

The CSS and PSS are defined benefit schemes for the Australian Government. The PSSap is a defined contribution scheme.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

The liability for defined benefits is recognised in the financial statements of the Australian Government, and is settled by the Australian Government in due course. This liability is reported by the Department of Finance and Deregulation as an administered item.

The ABS makes employer contributions to the employee superannuation scheme at rates determined by an actuary to be sufficient to meet the current cost to the Government of the superannuation entitlements of the ABS' employees. The ABS accounts for the contributions as if they were contributions to defined contribution plans.

The liability for superannuation recognised as at 30 June represents outstanding contributions for the final fortnight of the year.

1.10 Provision for 'Make good'

Provisions for make good obligations are recognised when the ABS has a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of past event, it is probable that an outflow of resources will be required to settle the obligation and the amount has been reliably estimated. The ABS makes an assessment as to whether a make good provision is required at the commencement of each new lease and at reporting date, in accordance with the aforementioned recognition criteria contained within AASB 137 Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the present obligation at the reporting date. Provisions are reviewed at each reporting date and adjusted to reflect the current best estimate. In 2008-09 the balance of the make good provision is nil. (Refer Note 10B) (2007-08: nil).

1.11 Leases

A distinction is made between finance leases and operating leases. Finance leases effectively transfer from the lessor to the lessee substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership of leased non-current assets. An operating lease is a lease that is not a finance lease. In operating leases, the lessor effectively retains substantially all such risks and benefits.

The ABS has entered into a number of accommodation leases, which include lease incentives taking the form of 'free' leasehold improvements. Under Interpretation 115 Operating Lease Incentives), all incentives in relation to operating leases are required to be classified as an integral part of the net consideration of the lease for the leased asset, irrespective of the incentive's nature, form or timing of payments.

Where a non-current asset is acquired by means of an incentive under an operating lease, the asset is capitalised at the fair value of the lease incentive at the inception of the contract, and a liability is recognised at the same time, for the same amount.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Operating lease payments are expensed on a straight line basis, which is representative of the pattern of benefits derived from the leased assets. The straight line basis takes into account fixed escalation clauses (with the exception of escalation in accordance with the CPI).

During 2008-09 the ABS has reclassified lease incentives (Note 9) to separately disclose the operating lease rentals to suppliers (Note 7A). The prior year comparative for operating lease rentals that has been restated is \$16,783,000.

1.12 Borrowing Costs

All borrowing costs are expensed as incurred.

1.13 Financial assets

The ABS classifies its financial assets in the following categories:

- · Cash and cash equivalents, and
- Trade and other receivables.

The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. Financial assets are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

Cash

Cash and cash equivalents includes notes and coins held and any deposits in bank accounts with an original maturity of 3 months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and subject to insignificant risk of changes in value. Cash is recognised at its nominal amount.

Trade and Other Receivables

Trade receivables, loans and other receivables that have fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market are classified as 'trade and other receivables'. They are included in current assets, except for maturities greater than 12 months after the balance sheet date, which are classified as non-current assets. Trade and other receivables are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment. Interest is recognised by applying the effective interest rate.

Impairment of Financial Assets

Financial assets are assessed for impairment at each balance date. Financial assets held at amortised cost - if there is objective evidence that an impairment loss has been incurred for loans and receivables or held to maturity investments held at amortised cost, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate. The carrying amount is reduced by way of an allowance account. The loss is recognised in the Income Statement.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.14 Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities are classified as either financial liabilities 'at fair value through profit or loss' or other financial liabilities. Financial liabilities are recognised and derecognised upon 'trade date'.

The ABS classifies its financial liabilities in the following categories:

- · Supplier and other payables, and
- Other financial liabilities.

Supplier and Other Payables

Supplier and other payables are recognised at their nominal amounts, being the amounts at which the liabilities will be settled. Liabilities are recognised to the extent that the goods or services have been received (and irrespective of having been invoiced).

Other Financial Liabilities

Other financial liabilities, including borrowings, are initially measured at fair value, net of transaction costs.

Other financial liabilities are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, with interest expense recognised on an effective yield basis. The effective interest method is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial liability and of allocating interest expense over the relevant period. The effective interest rate is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash payments through the expected life of the financial liability, or, where appropriate, a shorter period.

1.15 Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets

Contingent liabilities and contingent assets are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but are reported in the relevant schedules and notes. They may arise from uncertainty as to the existence of a liability or asset, or represent an asset or liability in respect of which the amount cannot be reliably measured. Contingent assets are disclosed when settlement is probable but not virtually certain and contingent liabilities are recognised when settlement is greater than remote.

1.16 Acquisition of Assets

Assets are recorded at cost, except as stated below. The costs include the fair value of assets transferred in exchange and liabilities undertaken. Financial assets are initially measured at their fair value plus transaction costs where appropriate.

Assets acquired at no cost, or for nominal consideration, are initially recognised as assets and revenues at their fair value at the date of acquisition.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.17 Property, Plant and Equipment

Asset Recognition Threshold

Purchases of property, plant and equipment are recognised initially at cost in the Balance Sheet, except for purchases costing less than \$2,000 (\$1,000 for IT assets and purchased software, and all Internally Generated Software assets), which are expensed in the year of acquisition (other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are significant in total).

The initial cost of an asset includes an estimate of the cost of dismantling and removing the item, and restoring the site on which it is located. This is particularly relevant to 'make good' provisions in property leases taken up by ABS where there exists an obligation to restore the property to its original condition. These costs are included in the value of ABS' leasehold improvements with a corresponding provision for the 'make good' recognised.

Revaluations

Fair values for each class of asset are determined as shown below:

Asset Class	Fair Value Measured at:	
Property, plant and equipment	Market selling price	

Following initial recognition at cost, property, plant and equipment are carried at fair value less subsequent accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses. Valuations are conducted with sufficient frequency to ensure that the carrying amounts of assets do not differ materially from the assets' fair values as at the reporting date. The regularity of independent valuations depends upon the volatility of movements in market values for the relevant assets.

Revaluation adjustments are made on a class basis. Any revaluation increment is credited to equity under the heading of asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that it reverses a previous revaluation decrement of the same asset class that was previously recognised through operating result. Revaluation decrements for a class of assets are recognised directly through operating result, except to the extent that they reverse a previous revaluation increment for that class.

Any accumulated depreciation as at the revaluation date is eliminated against the gross carrying amount of the asset and the asset restated to the revalued amount.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Depreciation

Depreciable property, plant and equipment assets are written-off to their estimated residual values over their estimated useful lives to the ABS using, in all cases, the straight-line method of depreciation. Leasehold improvements are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the lesser of the estimated useful life of the improvements, or the unexpired period of the lease.

Depreciation rates, useful lives, residual values and methods are reviewed at each reporting date and necessary adjustments are recognised in the current, or current and future reporting periods, as appropriate.

Depreciation rates applying to each class of depreciable assets are based on the following useful lives:

	2009	2008
Property, plant and equipment	5-10*	5-10*

* Within this class, Artwork and Curios has a useful life between 10-100 years.

The aggregate amount of depreciation allocated for each class of asset during the reporting period is disclosed in Note 4C.

Impairment

All assets were assessed for impairment at 30 June 2009. Where indications of impairment exist, the asset's recoverable amount is estimated and an impairment adjustment made if the asset's recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount.

The recoverable amount of an asset is the higher of its fair value less costs to sell and its value in use. Value in use for ABS assets is taken to be its depreciated replacement cost (where the ABS would replace the asset if it was deprived of it) as future economic benefit is not primarily dependent on the asset's ability to generate future cash flows.

All property, plant and equipment were assessed for indications of impairment as at 30 June 2009. No indications of impairment were found.

1.18 Intangibles

The ABS' intangibles comprise internally generated software and purchased software. These assets are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and accumulated impairment losses.

Software is amortised on a straight-line basis over its anticipated useful life.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

In 2008-09 it was identified that prior year impairment losses needed to be reclassified, and comparative information has been adjusted. The amount of the reclassification of Impairment losses of \$3,817,000 in 2007-08 should have been reported as Asset write offs. The Notes to the Financial Statements for 2007-08 affected by the reclassification are:

Note 4E Write down and impairment of assets. The "Impairment on intangible assets" in 2007-08 included asset write-offs of \$3,817,000. "Asset Write Offs" have been increased by \$3,817,000 to \$3,913,000, with the "Impairment on intangible assets" adjusted down by \$3,817,000 to \$1,252,000.

Note 6C Intangibles. "Computer software at cost" was reduced by \$2,712,000, "Accumulated amortisation" was increased by \$1,105,000 and "Accumulated impairment losses" was reduced by \$3,817,000. These changes have also been reflected in Note 6D Reconciliation of opening and closing balances of intangibles.

Internally Generated Software

In its role as Australia's national statistical agency, the ABS builds and maintains a significant set of internally generated software (IGSW) assets. These assets are added to over time, in line with the increasing range of statistical information sought by Government, business and the general community, and the increasing use of technology, particularly in relation to collection, analysis and dissemination activities.

All software developed in-house since 1 July 1994 has been capitalised (Note 6C). The costing methodology capitalises direct salary and on costs for programmers and non-programmers, applicable information technology costs and some direct external costs. General administration, and overhead costs relating to software development have not been capitalised. The data capture systems in place to collect data for programmers are in line with the requirements of the FMO. Non-programmer staff costs relating to IGSW are capitalised based on an estimate of captured programmer cost. In 2008-09 the estimate was 0% (Refer Note 1.3).

In accordance with the requirements of AASB 138 Intangible Assets, IGSW is stated at cost. All IGSW assets were assessed for indications of impairment as at 30 June 2009. Impairment on intangibles is recognised in Note 4E.

Purchased Software

Purchased software assets are stated at cost where the asset costs more than \$1,000. Purchased software below this threshold is expensed at the time of purchase. The cost of purchased software includes the purchase price and any directly attributable costs.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Amortisation

The ABS has long term commitments to survey and data collection programs. These are supported by software packages that are required to be maintained for the same time period as the data collection and analysis programs, to ensure consistency in approach and of data treatment.

The estimated useful lives of the major asset classes are as follows:

	2009	2008
	Life in Years	Life in Years
Computer software – proprietary	5	5
Computer software - internally generated	1 to 15	2 to 28

The above table outlines the range of life in years for computer software, however, the average life in years is currently 7.

The aggregate amount of amortisation allocated for each class of asset during the reporting period is disclosed in Note 4C.

1.19 Capital Work in Progress

Capital work in progress represents two main asset types: software assets under development, and office refurbishments. Work in progress is disclosed in the property, plant and equipment, and intangibles balances.

Software assets are not depreciated until the year in which the development phase is completed and the asset is operational. Where use of the asset commences after substantial completion of the development phase, but some improvements or enhancements to the system continue to be made, the date of substantial completion is treated as the date of completion and depreciation commences from that date.

1.20 Inventories

Inventories comprise items held for sale that are considered significant and are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value (Note 6E). As part of the rationalisation of product delivery services, physical inventory items held were reduced significantly in previous financial years. Most products are now available electronically or printed on request.

Consumable stores and supplies are considered to be immaterial and have been expensed at the time of purchase.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

1.21 Historical Statistical Data

Statistical data accumulated over many years is stored for reference purposes. This historical time series data plays an important part in the operations of the ABS as Australia's official statistical provider. The cost of storing and maintaining this data is treated as an operating expense.

1.22 Other Non-Financial Assets

The ABS classifies its non-financial assets in the following categories:

- Prepayments and
- Accrued revenue.

Prepayments

Prepayments primarily relate to maintenance contracts, office rent and subscriptions.

Accrued Revenue

The ABS accrues revenue at the time when goods are provided and/or the services are performed.

1.23 Taxation

The ABS is exempt from all forms of taxation except Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of GST except for:

- where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office; and
- receivables and payables.

1.24 Reporting Of Administered Activities

Administered revenues, assets, and cashflows are disclosed in the Schedule of Administered Items and related Notes. There are no administered expenses, liabilities, contingencies or commitments in 2008-09, nor were there any in 2007-08.

Except where otherwise stated below, administered items are accounted for on the same basis and using the same policies as for departmental items, including the application of Australian Accounting Standards.

Administered Cash Transfers to Official Public Account

Revenue collected by the ABS for use by the Government rather than the ABS is Administered Revenue. Collections are transferred to the Official Public Account (OPA) maintained by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. These transfers to the OPA are adjustments to the administered cash held by the ABS on behalf of the Government and reported as such in the Statement of Cash Flows in the Schedule of Administered Items and in the Administered Reconciliation Table in Note 16.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

The Schedule of Administered Items largely reflects the Government's transactions, through the ABS, with parties outside the Government.

Revenue

All administered revenues are revenues relating to the core operating activities performed by the ABS on behalf of the Australian Government.

Revenue is generated from fines applied by the courts, which is recognised upon payment. Court costs awarded against the ABS, as opposed to fines, are recorded as a departmental expense.

Note 2: Events after the Balance Sheet Date

There have been no events occurring subsequent to balance date that would affect the ABS Financial Statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2009.

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 3: Income		
Revenues		
Note 3A: Revenue from Government		
Appropriations: Departmental outputs	282,568	302,260
Total Revenue from Government	282,568	302,260
Note 3B: Sale of Goods and Rendering of Services		
Provision of goods - related entities	1,050	1,211
Provision of goods - external parties	72	356
Rendering of services - related entities	25,166	18,580
Rendering of services - external parties	1,721	5,452
Total Sale of Goods and Rendering of Services	28,009	25,599
Gains		
Note 3C: Net Gain from Sale of Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment		
Proceeds from sale	100	153
Carrying value of assets sold	(17)	(125)
Selling expense	(30)	(16)
Intangible Assets		
Proceeds from sale	-	86
Carrying value of assets sold	-	(55)
Total Net Gain from Sale of Assets	53	43
Note 3D: Other Gains		
Resources received free of charge	125	117
Other gains	285	316
Total Other Gains	410	433

		2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 4:	Expenses		
Note 4A: Er	nployee Benefits		
Wages and sa		177,435	186,648
Superannuati		111,100	100,010
	ed contribution plans	5,739	4,849
	ed benefit plans	30,128	27,479
	her entitlements	4,582	7,731
Interviewers	wages	8,838	10,932
	superannuation:		,
Defin	ed contribution plans	823	975
Defin	ed benefit plans	621	503
Census field	staff wages and superannuation	60	(14)
Census field	staff superannuation:		
Defin	ed contribution plans	5	-
Separation an	d redundancies	1,349	
Other employ	/ee expenses	730	1,889
Total Employ	vee Benefits	230,310	240,992
Less amounts	capitalised for IGSW (refer Note 6D)	(10,860)	(20,521)
Total Employ	vee Benefits	219,450	220,471
Note 4B: Su			
	goods - related entities	569	653
	goods - external parties	10,980	12,294
U	services - related entities	3,970	7,701
	services - external parties	26,164	21,598
Operating lea		22.005	27.025
IVIIIIII	num lease payments	23,095	27,927 2,908
Workers		2,231	/ 905
Workers com	pensation premiums		2,700

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$`000
Note 4C: Depreciation and Amortisation		
Depreciation		
Property, plant and equipment	13,093	13,604
Total Depreciation	13,093	13,604
Amortisation		
Computer Software	17,733	17,159
Total Amortisation	17,733	17,159
Total Depreciation and Amortisation	30,826	30,763
Note 4D: Finance Costs		
Loan from Government	261	351
Total Finance Costs	261	351
Note 4E: Write-Down and Impairment of Assets		
Asset write-downs and impairments from:		
Impairment on intangible assets - write downs	94	1,252
Impairment on financial instruments - bad debts	29	2
Asset Write-offs	7,838	3,913
Revaluation decrement - plant	321	
		5,167

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 5: Financial Assets	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 5A: Cash and Cash Equivalents		
Special Account 1	138	109
Departmental (other than special accounts)	1,147	6,697
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,285	6,806
¹ Refer also Note 18		
Note 5B: Trade and Other Receivables		
Goods and services - related entities	2,008	3,011
Goods and services - external parties	1,316	214
Total Receivables for Goods and Services	3,324	3,225
Appropriations receivable:		
for existing outputs	29,036	17,492
Total Appropriations Receivable	29,036	17,492
GST receivable from the Australian Taxation		
Office	-	465
Other:		
Sundry receivables	236	769
Total Other Receivables	236	1,234
Total Trade and Other Receivables (net)	32,596	21,951

All trade receivables are current assets. Credit terms are net 30 days (2007-08: 30 days). The ABS has no provision for doubtful debts and all receivables are expected to be recovered.

Receivables (gross) are aged as follows:

Not overdue Aging of receivables that are past due but not impaired Overdue by:	31,939	20,506
Less than 30 days	226	1,200
30 to 60 days	240	116
61 to 90 days	10	105
More than 90 days	181	24
Total Receivables (Gross)	32,596	21,951

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

_	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 6: Non-Financial Assets		
Note 6A: Property, Plant and Equipment		
Property, Plant and Equipment		
Work in progress	1,388	1,212
Gross carrying value (at fair value)	51,162	61,568
Accumulated depreciation	(6,892)	(12,365)
Total Property, Plant and Equipment (Non- current)	45,658	50,415

All revaluations are independent and are conducted in accordance with the revaluation policy stated at Note 1.17. On 30 June 2009, the Australian Valuation Office conducted a revaluation on the furniture and fittings, plant, office equipment, artwork and curios, leasehold improvements and lease incentives classes of assets.

A revaluation decrement of \$13,317 for office equipment (2008: nil), a decrement of \$153,966 for furniture and fittings including artwork and curios (2008: nil), an increment of \$356,860 for lease incentives (2008: nil), and a decrement of \$1,362,251 for leasehold improvements (2008: nil) was adjusted to the asset revaluation reserve by asset class and included in the equity section of the balance sheet.

A revaluation decrement of \$202,795 for plant was expensed (2008: nil) and a prior year decrement of \$118,243 for plant was discharged from the asset revaluation reserve and expensed.

A revaluation increment of \$1,873,000 was credited to the asset revaluation reserve for computer hardware in 2007-08. The Australian Valuation Office has subsequently issued a certificate of fair value for this asset class as at 30 June 2009.

No indicators of impairment were found for property, plant and equipment.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 6B: Analysis of Property, Plant and Equipment

TABLE A – Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment (2008 – 2009)

Item	Property, Plant and Equipment	Total
	\$2000	\$2000
As at 1 July 2008		
Gross book value	62,780	62,780
Accumulated depreciation	(12,365)	(12, 365)
Net book value 1 July 2008	50,415	50,415
Additions:		
By purchase	10,162	10,162
Revaluations through equity	(1,173)	(1, 173)
Revaluations recognised in the operating result	(203)	(203)
Reclassification	(124)	(124)
Depreciation expense	(13,093)	(13,093)
Disposals:		
Write-offs	(309)	(309)
Other disposals	(11)	(17)
Net book value 30 June 2009	45,658	45,658
Net book value as of 30 June 2009 represented by:		
Gross book value	52,550	52,550
Accumulated depreciation	(6,892)	(6, 892)
	45,658	45,658

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

TABLE A – Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of property, plant and equipment (2007 – 2008) Note 6B: Analysis of Property, Plant and Equipment

50,415 \$'000 77,249 11,043 (113) 62.780 12,365) (96) (13.604) (25,937 1.873 51,31 50.41 Total 77,249 (12, 365)50,415 \$'000 51,312 11,043 1,873 50,415 62,780 (96) (113) (25, 937)(13,604) Property, Plant and Equipment Vet book value as of 30 June 2008 represented by: Item Vet book value 30 June 2008 let book value 1 July 2007 evaluations through equity Accumulated depreciation Accumulated depreciation Depreciation expense As at 1 July 2007 Gross book value iross book value Other disposals Reclassifications By purchase Write-offs Additions: Disposals:

232

Note 6C: Intangibles	2009 \$'000	2008 \$`000
Computer software at cost:		
Internally developed - in progress	6,878	10,849
Internally developed - in use	151,836	160,987
Purchased software	12,358	9,406
Total Computer Software	171,072	181,242
Accumulated amortisation	(86,256)	(84,414)
Accumulated impairment losses	(538)	(1,252)
Total Intangibles (Non-current)	84,278	95,576

Note 6D: Analys	is of Intangible	5	
TABLE B - Reconciliation of opening and closing balances of intangibles (2008-09)			
Item	Computer software internally developed	Computer software purchased	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
As at 1 July 2008			
Gross book value	171,836	9,406	181,242
Accumulated amortisation & impairment	(81,018)	(4,648)	(85,666)
Net book value 1 July 2008	90,818	4,758	95,576
Additions:			
By purchase or internally developed	10,860	3,074	13,934
Impairments recognised in the operating result	(94)	-	(94)
Reclassification	-	124	124
Amortisation	(15,703)	(2,030)	(17,733)
Disposals:			
Write-offs	(7,346)	(183)	(7,529)
Other disposals	-	-	-
Net book value as at 30 June 2009	78,535	5,743	84,278
Net book value as of 30 June 2009			
represented by:			
Gross Book Value	158,714	12,358	171,072
Accumulated amortisation and	(00.150)	16.61	(0/ =0.0
impairment	(80,179)	(6,615)	(86,794)
	78,535	5,743	84,278

Note 6D: Analysis of Intangibles				
TABLE B - Reconciliation of opening and closing balances of intangibles (2007-08)				
Item	Computer software internally developed	Computer software purchased	Total	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
As at 1 July 2007				
Gross book value	169,293	17,136	186,429	
Accumulated amortisation & impairment	(78,562)	(12,487)	(91,049)	
Net book value 1 July 2007	90,731	4,649	95,380	
Additions:				
By purchase or internally developed	20,521	1,959	22,480	
Impairments recognised in the operating result	(1,252)	-	(1,252)	
Reclassifications	-	-	-	
Amortisation	(15,401)	(1,759)	(17,160)	
Disposals:				
Asset write -offs	(3,781)	(36)	(3,817)	
Other disposals	-	(55)	(55)	
Net book value as at 30 June 2008	90,818	4,758	95,576	
Net book value as of 30 June 2008		20		
represented by: Gross Book Value	171,836	9,406	181,242	
Accumulated amortisation and	111,000	5,.50		
impairment	(81,018)	(4,648)	(85,666)	
	90,818	4,758	95,576	

· Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 6E: Inventories		
Inventories held for sale:		
Finished goods	29	38
Total Inventories (Current)	29	38
All inventories are current assets.		

Note 6F: Other Non-Financial Assets Accrued revenue 273 368 Prepayments 6,672 6,905 Total Other Non-Financial Assets 6,945 7,273 Other non-financial assets are represented by: 4,833 4.836 Current 2,437 2,112 Non-Current Total Other Non-Financial Assets 6,945 7,273

No indicators of impairment were found for other non-financial assets.

Note 7A: SuppliersTrade creditors7,361Sundry creditors5330	
,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	
Sundry creditors 53 30)9
Operating lease rentals 15,713 16,78	3
GST Payable to the ATO	-
Total Supplier Payables 23,234 23,52	22
Supplier - related entities are represented by: Current25469Supplier - external parties are represented by:69Current8,2106,75Non-current14,77016,08Total Security and the particular se	51 <u>31</u>
Total Supplier Payables 23,234 23,52	22
Settlement is usually made net 30 days.	
Note 7B: Unearned Revenue	
Unearned revenue 5,24	13
Total Unearned Revenue 9,753 5,24	13
All unearned revenue is a current liability.	
Salaries and wages 3,929 2,86	56
Superannuation 632 36	53
Separations and redundancies34521	11
Total Other Payables 4,906 3,44	10

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

		2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 8:	Interest Bearing Liabilities		
Note 8: Lo	oans		
Loans from	Government	3,308	4,821
Total Loan	\$	3,308	4,821
Maturity sc	hedule for loans payable:		
Within or	ne year	1,608	1,513
In one to	five years	1,700	3,308
Total Loan	\$	3,308	4,821

The loan was issued in 2001-02 and is repayable in quarterly instalments beginning in 2001-02 and ending in 2010-11. The interest rate on the loan is 6.12%.

Note 9: Lease Incentives		
Note 9: Lease Incentives Lease incentives	8,293	9,474
Lease incentives are represented by		
Current	1,181	1,181
Non-Current	7,112	8,293
Total Lease Incentives	8,293	9,474

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 10: Provisions		
Note 10A: Employee Provisions		
Leave	71,590	68,806
Total Employee Provisions	71,590	68,806
Employee provisions are represented by:		
Current	62,576	60,016
Non-current	9,014	8,790
Total Employee Provisions	71,590	68,806

The classification of current employee provisions includes amounts for which there is not an unconditional right to defer settlement by one year, hence in the case of employee provisions the above classification does not represent the amount expected to be settled within one year of reporting date. Employee provisions expected to be settled in twelve months from the reporting date is \$18,279,000 (2007-08: \$21,437,000), in excess of one year \$53,311,000 (2007-08: \$47,369,000).

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 10B: Other Provisions		
Provision for 'Make good'		
Total Other Provisions		-
Other provisions are represented by:		
Current	-	-
Non-current		-
Total Other Provisions		
Carrying amount 1 July 2008	-	1,000
Amounts used	-	(736)
Amounts reversed	-	(264)
Unwinding of discount		-
Closing Balance 2009		

The ABS currently has three agreements for the leasing of premises which have provisions within the lease agreements which may require the ABS to restore the premises to their original condition at the conclusion of the lease. All three agreements are disclosed as contingent liabilities in the Schedule of Contingencies.

Note 11: Cash Flow Reconciliation	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Reconciliation of cash and cash equivalents as per Balance Sheet to Cash Flow Statement		
Report Cash and Cash Equivalents as per:		
Cash Flow Statement	1,285	6,806
Balance Sheet	1,285	6,806
Reconciliation of Operating Result to Net Cash from Operating Activities:		
Operating result	(13,750)	(1,487)
Depreciation /amortisation	30,826	30,763
Net write down of non-financial assets	8,135	5,167
Revaluation decrement	118	-
Reduction in appropriation	(1,485)	-
(Gain)/Loss on disposal of assets	(83)	(43)
Assets first recognised	-	(52)
Other gain	-	(264)
(Increase) / decrease in net receivables	(10,645)	(13,442)
(Increase) / decrease in inventories	9	(12)
(Increase) / decrease in other non financial assets	328	455
Increase / (decrease) in employee provisions	2,784	3,005
Increase / (decrease) in supplier payables	(288)	863
Increase / (decrease) in unearned revenue	4,510	3,289
Increase / (decrease) in other payables	1,466	1,521
Increase / (decrease) in lease incentives	(1,181)	(1,185)
Net cash from operating activities	20,744	28,578

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 12 Contingent Liabilities and Assets

Quantifiable Contingencies

The Schedule of Contingencies reports a contingent asset as at 30 June 2009 in respect of claims for costs of \$245,000 (2008: \$669,000).

The Schedule of Contingencies reports contingent liability as at 30 June 2009 in respect of a number of leases with make good clauses in them of \$3,400,000 (2007-08:\$4,886,000) and in relation to claims for damages/costs of \$65,000 (2007-08: \$58,000).

Unquantifiable and Remote Contingencies

A redundancy/incentive to retire process commenced in 2008-09. As at 30 June 2009, it is not possible to estimate the amounts of any eventual payments that may be required in relation to these claims.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 13	Senior Executive Remuneration	2009	2008
	er of senior executives who received or o receive total remuneration of \$130,000		
\$130 000 to	o \$144 999	2	1
\$145 000 to		1	1
\$160 000 to	o \$174 999	1	10
\$175 000 to	o \$189 999	8	9
\$190 000 to	o \$204 999	10	11
\$205 000 to	o \$219 999	4	1
\$220 000 to	o \$234 999	5	2
\$235 000 to	o \$249 999	2	2
\$250 000 to	0 \$264 999	1	2
\$265 000 to	o \$279 999	2	-
\$280 000 t	o \$294 999	2	1
\$295 000 t	o \$309 999	- 1	1
\$310,000 to	o \$324,999	1.	-
\$355,000 to	0 \$369,999	2	-
\$475,000 to	o \$489,000	-	1
\$520,000 to	0 \$534,999	1	-
Total		43	42
	gate amount of total remuneration of cutives shown above.	\$9,707,381	\$8,539,851
redundancy	regate amount of separation and //termination benefit payments during the cutives shown above.	-	

The Senior Executive Remuneration 2008 comparative required adjusting for an under accrual of \$43,707.

		2009 \$	2008 \$
Note 14	Remuneration of Auditors		
charge to th	tatement audit services are provided free of ne ABS. lue of the services provided by the		
Australian	National Audit Office was:	125,000	117,000

No other services were provided by the Auditor-General.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 15 Financial Instruments	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 15A: Categories of Financial Instruments		
Financial Assets		
Loans and Receivables		
Cash at bank	1,285	6,806
Trade and other receivables*	3,560	3,994
Carrying Amount of Financial Assets	4,845	10,800
Financial Liabilities at Amortised Cost		
Government Loans	3,308	4,821
Trade and sundry creditors	7,414	6,739
Carrying Amount of Financial Liabilities	10,722	11,560
Note 15B: Net Income and Expense From Financial Assets		
Financial Assets		
Bad debts written off	29	2
Net Loss from Financial Assets	29	2
Note 15C: Net Income and Expense From Financial	Liabilities	
Financial Liabilities		
Interest expense	261	351
Net Loss from Financial Liabilities	261	351

Note 15D: Fair Value of Financial Instruments

The carrying value of the financial instruments of the ABS is a reasonable approximation of the fair value of those financial instruments.

*For the purposes of Note 15 Financial Instruments, trade and other receivables excludes appropriation receivable and GST receivable from the Australian Tax Office.
Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 15E: Credit Risk

The ABS is a 100% owned Australian Government entity, which is primarily funded for its activities through the budget process.

The majority of services provided by the ABS are delivered to other Government entities and therefore represent minimal credit exposure for the agency.

The maximum exposure to credit risk is the risk that arises from potential default of a debtor. This amount is equal to the total amount of trade and other receivables (2009: \$3,559,719 and 2008: \$3,994,000).

The ABS has policies and procedures in relation to debt recovery techniques, that are applied as appropriate. The ABS holds no collateral to mitigate against credit risk.

	Not past due nor impaired 2009 \$'000	Not past due nor impaired 2008 \$'000	Past Due or impaired 2009 \$'000	Past Due or impaired 2008 \$'000
Loans and Receivables				
Cash and cash equivalents	1,285	6,806	-	-
Trade receivables	2,667	1,780	657	1,445
Total	3,952	8,586	657	1,445

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 15E: Credit Risk

Ageing of financial assets that are past due but not impaired for 2009

	0 to 30 days \$'000	31 to 60 days \$'000	61 to 90 days \$'000	90 + days \$'000	Total \$'000
Loans and					
Receivables					
Trade receivables	226	240	10	181	657
Total	226	240	10	181	657

Ageing of financial assets that are past due but not impaired for 2008

	0 to 30 days \$'000	31 to 60 days \$'000	61 to 90 days \$'000	90 + days \$'000	Total \$'000
Loans and Receivables					
Trade receivables	1,200	116	105	24	1,445
Total	1,200	116	105	24	1,445

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 15F: Liquidity Risk

The ABS receives appropriation funding from the Australian Government. The ABS manages its cash to ensure it is able to make payments as they fall due. In addition, the ABS undertakes cash forecasting to ensure it can meet future liabilities as they fall due. The ABS has policies in place to ensure payments are made on time.

The exposure to liquidity risk is based on the notion that the ABS will encounter difficulty in meeting its obligations associated with financial liabilities. This is highly unlikely due to appropriation funding and mechanisms available to the ABS (e.g. Advance to the Finance Minister) and internal policies and procedures put in place to ensure there are appropriate resources to meet its financial obligations.

Maturities for Financial Liabilities 2009

	On demand 2009 \$'000	within 1 year 2009 \$'000	1 to 5 years 2009 \$'000	> 5 years 2009 \$'000	Total 2009 \$'000
Other Liabilities					
Government loans	-	1,608	1,700	-	3,308
Trade and sundry creditors	-	7,414	-	-	7,414
Total	-	9,022	1,700	-	10,722

Maturities for Financial Liabilities 2008

	On	within 1	1 to 5		
	demand	year	years	> 5 years	Total
	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Other Liabilities					
Government loans	-	1,513	3,308	-	4,821
Trade and sundry creditors	-	6,739	-	-	6,739
Total	-	8,252	3,308	-	11,560

Note 15G: Market Risk

The ABS holds basic financial instruments that do not expose the ABS to "currency risk" or "other price risk".

Interest Rate Risk

The only interest-bearing item on the balance sheet is the Government Loan. The Government Loan bears interest at a fixed interest rate and will not fluctuate due to changes in the market interest rate.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Notes to the Schedule of Administered Items

	2009 \$'000	2008 \$'000
Note 16: Administered Reconciliation Table		
Opening Administered Assets Less Administered Liabilities as at 1 July2008	-	-
Plus: Administered Income	1	-
Transfers to Official Public Account	1	-
Closing Administered Assets Less Administered Liabilities as at 30 June 2009		

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 17: Appropriations

Note 17A: Acquittal of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for Ordinary Annual Services	Revenue Fund (CF	KF) for Ordinary	/ Annual Service	
Appropriations				
Particulars	Department	al Outputs	Total	ıl
	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$2000	\$,000	\$2000	\$,000
Balance brought forward from previous period (Appropriation Acts)	21,796	10,580	21,796	10,580

	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$2000	\$,000	\$*000	\$,000
Balance brought forward from previous period (Appropriation Acts)	21,796	10,580	21,796	10,580
Appropriation Act:				
Appropriation Act (No.1) 2008-2009 as passed	282,775	302,260	282,775	302,260
Appropriation Act (No.3) 2008-2009 as passed	982	•	982	
Departmental appropriations reduced (Appropriation Act section 10)	(1,189)	,	(1, 189)	,
Departmental appropriations reduced (Appropriation Act section 10)	(1,485)	1	(1,485)	I
FMA Act:				
Repayments to the Commonwealth (FMA section 30)	1,811	1,374	1,811	1,374
Appropriations to take account of recoverable GST (FMA section				
30A)	10,407	11,308	10,407	11,308
Relevant agency receipts (FMA Act section 31)	34,299	28,203	34,299	28,203
Total appropriations available for payments	349,396	353,725	349,396	353,725
Cash payments made during the year (GST inclusive)	(319,075)	(331,929)	(319,075)	(331, 929)
Appropriations credited to special accounts (GST exclusive)		-	-	1
Balance of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund				
for Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations and as represented by:	30,321	21,796	30,321	21,796
Cash at bank and on hand	1,285	3,839	1,285	3,839
Departmental appropriations receivable	29,036	17,957	29,036	17,957
Total as at 30 June	30,321	21,796	30,321	21,796

determined a reduction in departmental outputs appropriations following a request by the Minister for Treasury. The amount of the reduction determined under Appropriation Act No.1 2008-09 was \$1,189,000, Act 3 of 2007-08 was \$1,485,000, Act 2 2008-09 was \$3,153,000 and Act 4 Departmental and non-operating appropriations do not lapse at financial year-end. However, the responsible Minister may decide that part or all of a departmental or non-operating appropriation is not required and request the Finance Minister to reduce that appropriation. The reduction in the appropriation is effected by the Finance Minister's determination and is disallowable by Parliament. During 2008-09, the Finance Minister 2007-08 was \$2,968,000.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 17B: Acquittal of Authority to Draw Cash from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for other than Ordinary Annual Services

Particulars	Non-operating	ating	. Total	-
	Equity	N		
	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$`000	\$'000	\$2000	\$,000
Balance carried from previous period (Appropriation Acts)	2,967	1,542	2,967	1,542
Appropriation Act:				
Appropriation Act (No.2) 2008 – 09 as passed	5,365	622	5,365	622
Appropriation Act (No.4) 2008 – 09 as passed	-	5,879	-	5,879
Departmental appropriations reduced (Appropriation Act section 13)	(6, 121)	1	(6, 121)	
Advance to the Finance Minister (Appropriation Act section 15)	-	1	,	
FMA Act:				
Repayments to the Commonwealth (FMA Act section 30)		1		
Appropriations to take account of recoverable GST (FMA Act section 30A)	1	1	,	-
Adjustment of appropriations on change of agency function (FMA Act section				
32)	1	1	1	
Total appropriations available for payments	2,211	8,043	2,211	8,043
Cash Payments made during the year (GST inclusive)	(2,211)	(5,076)	(2,211)	(5,076)
Appropriations credited to special Accounts (GST exclusive)	1	1	1	
Balance of Authority to Draw Cash from the consolidated revenue fund for Other				
Than Ordinary Annual Services Appropriations and as represented by:	1	2,967	1	2,967
Cash at bank and on hand	1	2,967	1	2,967
Appropriations receivable	1	1	T	
Total as at 30 June	- 1	2.967	1	2,967

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 18: Special Accounts

Note 18A: Trust Fund and Other Trust Moneys

Trust Fund and Other Trust Moneys	2009	2008
(Departmental)	\$'000	\$'000

Legal Authority: Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 Section 20.

This account is non-interest bearing.

Purpose: For the receipt of moneys temporarily held on trust or otherwise for the benefit of a person other than the Commonwealth. Any money held is thus special public money under section 16 of the *FMA Act 1997*.

Balance carried from previous period	109	107
Receipts during the year from customers	29	2
Available for payments	138	109
Payments made	-	-
Balance carried to the next period	138	109

Note 18B: Services for Other Governments and Non-Agency Bodies Account

Services for Other Governments and Non-	2009	2008
Agency Bodies Account (Departmental)	\$'000	\$'000

Legal Authority: Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 Section 20.

Purpose: For expenditure in connection with services performed on behalf of other Governments and bodies that are not FMA agencies. *

Balance carried from previous period		-
Receipts during the year from customers	-	-
Available for payments	-	-
Payments made		-
Balance carried to the next period	-	-

*The ABS does not incur any expenditure in connection with services performed on behalf of other Governments and bodies that are not FMA agencies. This Special Account has been abolished. The Minister for Finance and Deregulation signed the abolishing instrument, Determination 2009/06 on 23 February 2009. The Determination commenced on 3 March 2009 upon registration on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI).

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 19: Compensation and Debt Relief	2009 \$	2008 \$
No 'Act of Grace' payments were made during the reporting period, and there are no amounts owing as at year end.	Nil	Nil
No waivers of amounts owing to the Commonwealth were made pursuant to subsection 34(1) of <i>(the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997).</i>	Nil	Nil
No payments were made under the 'Defective Administration Scheme' during the reporting period.	Nil	Nil
No payments were made under s73 of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> during the reporting period.	Nil	Nil

Note 20: Assets Held in Trust	2009	2008
	\$'000	\$'000

Financial Assets

Financial assets held in trust were disclosed in Note 18: Special Accounts in the table titled Trust Funds and Other Trust Moneys.

Trust Fund Other Trust Moneys

Opening balance as at 1 July 2009	109	107
Additions	29	2
Disposed:		
Title passed to Australian Government	-	-
Returned to original owner		-
Closing balance as at 1 July 2009	138	109
Total	138	109

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements

Note 21: Reporting of Outcomes

	Outcome 1	me 1	Total	-
	2009	2008	2009	2008
	\$2000	\$'000	\$`000	\$,000
Expenses				
Departmental	325,970	330,019	325,970	330,019
Total Expenses	325,970	330,019	325,970	330,019
Costs recovered from provision of goods and services to the non government sector	ctor			
Departmental	1,793	5,808	1,793	5,808
Total Costs Recovered	1,793	5,808	1,793	5,808
Other External Income				
Administered	1		1	
Departmental	27,859	20,464	27,859	20,464
Total Other External Income	27,860	20,464	27,860	20,464
Net Cost/(Contribution) of Outcome	296,317	303,747	296,317	303,747

Note 21B: Major Classes of Departmental Income and Expenses by Output Groups and Outputs

		Output Group 1.1	up 1.1			
Outcome 1	Output Group 1.1.1	ip 1.1.1	Output Group 1.1.2	1.1.2 up	Outcome 1 Total	Total
	2009 \$*000	2008 \$'000	2009 \$2000	2008 \$'000	2009 \$1000	2008 \$`000
Departmental Expenses						
Employees	119,600	116,800	99,850	103,671	219,450	220,471
Suppliers	36,520	38,716	30,489	34,365	62,009	73,081
Depreciation and amortisation	16,800	16,297	14,026	14,466	30,826	30,763
Other expenses	4,733	3,022	3,952	2,682	8,685	5,704
Total Departmental Expenses	177,653	174,835	148,317	155,184	325,970	330,019
Departmental Income						
Revenues from Government	154,000	168,279	128,568	133,981	282,568	302,260
Sale of goods and services	15,265	7,606	12,744	17,993	28,009	25,599
Other non-taxation income	643	59	537	138	1,180	197
Total Departmental Income	169,908	175,944	141,849	152,112	311,757	328,056
Outcome 1 is described in Note 1.1. N	Note 1.1. Net costs shown include intra-government costs that are eliminated in calculating the actual Budget	ude intra-governm	ent costs that are ϵ	eliminated in calcu	lating the actual E	Sudget
Output Group 1.1 - National Statistical Service	ical Service					
Output Group 1.1.1 - Economic Statistics	stics					
Output Group 1.1.2 - Population and Social Statistics	Social Statistics					

Reporting of Outcomes Note 21:

Outcome 1 Total 2009 2008 2009 2008 S'000 S'000 S'000 S'000 S'000 Fines 1 - 1 - Total Administered Income 1 - 1 - Admistered Assets - - 1 - - Total Administered Assets - - - - - -	Outcome I Total 2009 2008 2009 Total e 1 - 1 1 1 1 ncome 1 - - 1 1 1 1 hcome 1 - - 1 <					
2009 2008 2009 \$.000 \$.000 \$.000 \$.000 \$.000 \$.000 e 1 - ncome 1 hosts - hosts - hosts -	2009 2008 2009 \$*000 \$*000 \$*000 \$*000 \$*000 1 - 1 - - 1		Oute	ome 1	To	tal
e \$7000 \$700	\$*000 \$*000 \$*000 1 1 1 - 1 - 1 - - - - - - - - -		2009	2008	2009	2008
Departmental Income 1 1 Fines 1 - 1 Total Administered Income 1 - 1 Administered Assets - - - Total Administered Assets - - - Total Administered Assets - - -	Departmental Income 1 1 Fines 1 - 1 Total Administered Income 1 - 1 Administered Assets - - 1 Cash - - - - Total Administered Assets - - - -		\$'000	\$'000	\$2000 S	\$,000
Fines 1 - 1 Total Administered Income 1 - 1 Administered Assets - - 1 Cash - - - Total Administered Assets - - -	Fines 1 1 Total Administered Income 1 - 1 Administered Assets - - - Cash - - - Total Administered Assets - - -	Departmental Income				
Total Administered Income 1 - 1 Administered Assets Cash	Total Administered Income 1 1 Administered Assets - - Cash - - Total Administered Assets - -	Fines		1	1	
Administered Assets Cash	Administered Assets Cash Total Administered Assets	Total Administered Income		1	1	
Administered Assets Cash Total Administered Assets	Administered Assets Cash Total Administered Assets					
Cash	Cash Total Administered Assets	Administered Assets				
Total Administered Assets	Total Administered Assets	Cash		-	1	
		Total Administered Assets		-		

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Section 8

APPENDICES



appendix 1 CONTACT DETAILS



For enquiries about the ABS Annual Report, please contact:

Director, Corporate Planning, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616. Telephone: 02 6252 6104 Email: paul.romanis@abs.gov.au

Access to ABS documents (including the ABS Annual Report) and statistics is available through the ABS web site: http://www.abs.gov.au.

For any queries about statistical information, contact the National Information and Referral Service from anywhere in Australia between 9.00am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday on:

1300 135 070 (Australian residents). International clients may call +61 2 9268 4909

Alternatively, you can email your query to client.services@abs.gov.au

For media requests, contact ABS Corporate Communications on 1300 175 070.

The ABS has offices in every state and territory, as listed below:

Office	Street Address	Postal Address
Central Office (Canberra)	ABS House 45 Benjamin Way Belconnen ACT 2617	Locked Bag 10 Belconnen ACT 2616
New South Wales	5th Floor St Andrews House Sydney Square Sydney NSW 2000	GPO Box 796 Sydney NSW 2001
Victoria	5th Floor Commercial Union Tower 485 La Trobe Street Melbourne VIC 3000	GPO Box 2796Y Melbourne VIC 3001
Queensland	Level 3 639 Wickham St Fortitude Valley QLD 4006	GPO Box 9817 Brisbane QLD 4001
South Australia	Level 9 ANZ House 11 Waymouth St Adelaide SA 5000	GPO Box 2272 Adelaide SA 5001
Western Australia	Level 15 Exchange Plaza Sherwood Court Perth WA 6001	GPO Box K881 Perth WA 6842
Tasmania	200 Collins Street Hobart TAS 7000	GPO Box 66A Hobart TAS 7001
Northern Territory	7th Floor AANT House 81 Smith Street Darwin NT 0800	GPO BOX 3796 Darwin NT 0801
Australian Capital Territory	Level 5 33–35 Ainslie Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601	Locked Bag 10 Belconnen ACT 2616



USER GROUPS ADVISING THE ABS

National groups

- Advisory Committee on Australian and International Disability Data
- Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
- Agriculture Statistics User Forum
- Analytical Community Reference Group
- Australia-New Zealand Population Workshop
- > Australian Bureau of Statistics—Australian Taxation Office High Level Liaison Committee
- Australian Bureau of Statistics—Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources High Level Liaison Committee
- Australian Government Statistical Forum
- Childcare and Early Years Learning Survey Reference Group
- Children and Youth Statistics Advisory Group
- Cultural Ministers' Council Statistics Working Group
- Data Mapping Pilot—Early Childhood Working Group and Project Board
- Demography Statistics Advisory Group
- Economic Statistics User Group
- Education and Training Statistics Advisory Group
- Energy Statistics Group
- Family Statistics Advisory Group
- General Social Survey Reference Group
- Health Statistics Advisory Group
- Household Income and Expenditure Statistics User Advisory Group
- Information and Communication Technology Statistics Reference Group
- Innovation (incl. R&D) Statistics Reference Group
- Input-Output Statistics User Group
- International Trade in Services User Group
- Labour Statistics Advisory Group
- Longitudinal Studies Advisory Group

- Methodology Advisory Committee
- Migrant Statistics Advisory Group
- Migrant Statistics Reference Group
- Mining User Advisory Group
- National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data
- National Ageing Statistics Advisory Group
- National Housing and Homelessness Information Management Group
- National Community Services Information Management Group
- National Corrective Services Statistics Advisory Group
- National Crime Statistics Advisory Group
- National Criminal Courts Statistics Advisory Group
- National Disability Information Management Group
- National Health Information Group Management Principal Committee
- National Health Information Group Statistical Information Committee
- National Health Information Standards and Statistics Committee
- Population Estimates Technical Workshop
- Population Health Information Development Group
- Private Hospital Statistics User Group
- Productivity Measurement Reference Group
- Rural and Regional Statistics Advisory Group
- Standard Business Reporting Taxonomy Approval Committee
- Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport Research Group
- State Accounts User Group
- Statistical Clearing House User Group
- Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision
- Structural Issues in the Workforce Sub-Committee, Workforce Profile Working Group (Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CDSMAC) sub-committee)
- Survey of Adult Competencies Reference Group
- Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers Advisory Group
- Survey of Education and Training Reference Group
- Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing Reference Group
- Time Use Survey Advisory Group
- Transport Statistics Network
- Water Statistics User Group

State Government groups

- State Statistical Forum (all states and territories)
- Statistical Coordination and User Forum (New South Wales)
- Victorian Statistical Advisory Forum
- Queensland Statistical Table
- Government Agencies Statistical Committee (South Australia)
- Statistical Policy Committee and Economic (Western Australia)
- Social Statistics Consultative Groups (Western Australia)
- Statistical Policy Committee (Tasmania)
- Tasmanian Statistical Advisory Committee
- Northern Territory Statistical Liaison Committee

appendix 3 CONSULTANCY SERVICES



Policy on selection and engagement of consultants

ABS policy on the selection and engagement of consultants is consistent with ABS Chief Executive Instructions, and the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines. The ABS selects and engages consultants in a way that provides value for money.

Total consultancies let in 2008–09

During 2008–09, 28 new consultants were engaged to carry out projects, or provide professional and technical advice that could not be provided by staff of the ABS. The total expenditure on the 28 new consultancies during 2008–09 was \$688,791. Expenditure on 15 consultancies which had been let in previous years, and continued into 2008–09, was \$664,214 during 2008–09. Figures for 2008–09 include expenditure for internal audit services and costs associated with Standard Business Reporting.

Appendix Table 3.1 shows the total expenditure on all consultancies, covering both payments made on new contracts let in 2008–09, and payments made on contracts let in previous years. The larger consultancy contracts (those to the value of \$10,000 or more) are detailed in Appendix Table 3.2 along with brief notes on the procurement method used.

	Consultancies (number)	Expenditure (\$) including GST
2005-06	37	941,861
2006-07	23	794,618
2007-08	30	677,999
2008-09	43	1,353,005

Appendix Table 3.1: Consultancy services contracts engaged by the ABS

Appendix Table 3.2: Consultancy services contracts let in 2008–09 to the value of \$10,000 or more

Vendor name	Description	Amount (\$) (including GST)	Type of tender and justification
Access Testing Pty Ltd	Performance testing of the 2006 website	20,317	Public tender (a)
Axiom Properties & ISPT No3 (Spencer st) Pty Ltd	Building Services Review 21/3-17/4/09	10,725	Direct negotiation (a)
Cordelta Pty Ltd	Review of end of month processing	15,000	Direct negotiation (a)
Corefiling Pty Ltd	XBRL Taxonomy Development Environment	84,732	Request for quote (a)
Dimension Data Aust Pty Ltd	Voice data security communications design consultancy	7,953	Direct negotiation (a)
Excelerated Consulting Pty Ltd	Amend naming conventions within the TM1 chart of accounts from a named to a numerical basis	20,295	Direct negotiation (b)
Forrester Research Australia	Consultancy to review ABS website effectiveness	17,347	Direct negotiation (d)
HBA Consulting	Review of Census field staff employment arrangements	85,800	Direct negotiation (a)
KPMG	Financial management review	29,150	Direct negotiation (a)
William P McLennan	Reviewing ABS statistical legislation	38,512	Direct negotiation (a)
Peter Collins and Associates Pty Ltd	Strategic alignment program	48,991	Direct negotiation (a)
Predicate Partners Pty Ltd	Standard business reporting	170,917	Direct negotiation (a)
Presence of IT	Oracle Financial Management Information System implementation advice	23,100	Request for quote (d)
Robert W Edwards	Provide assistance with the preparation of funding proposals for the ABS	67,200	Direct negotiation (a)
RPM Solutions Pty Ltd	Setup, configuration of Business Availability Centre (BAC) software	24,750	Direct negotiation (a)
RPM Solutions Pty Ltd	Setup, configuration of Business Availability Centre (BAC) software	33,000	Direct negotiation (a)
Space Time Research Pty Ltd	Review the database structures	10,233	Direct negotiation (a)

Vendor name	Description	Amount (\$) (including GST)	Type of tender and justification
Swinburne University of Technology	Integrated intelligent decision support for field design and management of census operations in Australia	120,000	Direct negotiation (a)
Team Systems Pty Ltd	Advice on the future provisions of corporate services within the ABS	11,951	Direct negotiation (a)
Terry Offner	Technical assistance and expertise with the rebasing of the Vanuatu Consumer Price Index	57,921	Direct negotiation (a, c)
University of New South Wales	ARC SPIRT project on household income, living standards and economic inequality in Australia and its regions	30,250	Direct negotiation (a)
University of Wollongong	Undertake research on measuring interviewer effects for household surveys	33,000	Direct negotiation (a)

Key

Justification for recourse to consultancy arrangements:

(a) Need for specialised skills.

(b) Need for access to the latest technology and experience in its application.

(c) Lack of available in-house resources.

(d) Need for an independent study.

appendix 4 Advertising and market Research



The ABS paid \$15,887.04 (GST exclusive) for advertising in 2008–09. There was no expenditure for market research, marketing or public relations consultancies for the year. The reduction in expenditure from 2007–08 was due to reduced spending on some of the magazines produced in previous years.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

Introduction

Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* requires the ABS to provide detail on the structure of the ABS, and how members of the public can gain access to information held by the ABS.

Detail on the structure of the ABS can be found in Chapter 2, Overview of the ABS.

Information held by the ABS

Appendix Table 5.1: Categories of documents in the possession of the ABS

Documents open to public access upon payment of a fee	The ABS does not hold any of these types of documents.
Documents available for purchase or customarily available free of charge	The ABS has a wide range of statistical publications available free of charge on its website: http://www.abs.gov.au, and through major public libraries. Charged publications can purchased via the ABS National Information Referral Service (Ph: 1300 135 070).
Government and Parliament	The ABS holds policy-related documents, ministerial briefings, ministerial correspondence, replies to parliamentary questions, and tabling documents.
Meetings and conferences	The ABS holds agenda papers, submissions, and records of proceedings of internal and external conferences, management meetings and workshops.
Statistical and statistical services projects	The ABS holds research, development and evaluation papers; records of consultations with suppliers and users of data; statistical classifications; lists of businesses; maps; data collection, processing and publication manuals and instructions; and mailing lists.
Administration and management	The ABS holds work program and planning documents; finance, staff and establishment papers and manuals; personnel files; recruitment files; files on selection and promotion of staff; staff development and training papers; officer services documents; and tenders.
Privacy	The ABS holds a record of the extent and nature of ABS holdings of personal information, as contained in the Personal Information Digest published by the Privacy Commissioner.
General	The ABS holds correspondence, manuals on general subjects, internal reports and administrative circulars.

ABS freedom of information activities

Matters relating to the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* within the ABS are the responsibility of the Office of the Statistician, which is located in Central Office. Authority for decision making under this Act has been delegated to the Deputy Australian Statisticians, the First Assistant Statistician, Corporate Services Division, and the Assistant Statistician.

A significant part of ABS information holdings is information collected under the *Census* and *Statistics Act 1905*. This information is exempt from the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

The following table provides details of freedom of information (FOI) activities during the years 2004–05 to 2008–09 inclusive. Two requests were made to the ABS under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* during 2008–09.

	2004–05	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Requests received	3	1	3	3
Decisions made				
Access granted in full	3	-	0*	-
Access granted in part	-	1	0*	1
Access not granted				2

Appendix Table 5.2: Freedom of information activities, 2004–05 to 2008–09 (number)

*No information was released to the requestors under the FOI Act during 2007–08. However, the ABS released some information to the requestors separately to the FOI Act, where the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* allows for such a release.

Where to get information

Freedom of information inquiries

All inquiries concerning access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* may be directed to the Freedom of Information Contact Officer, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Locked Bag 10, Belconnen, ACT, 2616; Ph: 02 6252 5559; Email: freedomofinformation@abs.gov.au.

General information

The ABS offers an initial contact point for all information requests:

Telephone: 1300 135 070 Email: client.services@abs.gov.au Facsimile: 1300 135 211 Mail: Client Services, ABS, GPO Box 796, Sydney, NSW, 2001.

DISCLOSURE OF UNIDENTIFIED INFORMATION

The Statistics Determination (Statutory Rules 1983 No. 19) made by the Minister under section 13 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides for the disclosure, with the approval in writing of the Australian Statistician, of specified classes of information. Clause 7 of the Determination provides for the disclosure of unidentified individual statistical records in a manner that is not likely to enable the identification of the person or organisation to which they relate.

In accordance with Clause 7, the ABS provides access to Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) under strict conditions. More information on CURFs can be found in Chapter 12, Quality and timeliness, and Chapter 13, Communication of statistics. The ABS website also contains information about CURFs (see http://www.abs.gov.au – Services – CURF microdata).

In terms of Clause 7, a disclosure of unidentified information occurs when the Statistician or delegate gives approval for an organisation to access a CURF. Individual users in that organisation can then apply to the ABS for access to that CURF.

The first table below lists the CURFs for which organisations were given approval to access in 2008–09. The second table provides the number of approvals given for organisations over the last three financial years.

	Survey date
Adult literacy and life skills survey	2006
Census 1% sample file	1981
Census 1% sample file	1986
Census 1% sample file	1996
Census 1% sample file	2001
Census 1% sample file	2006
Census 5% sample file	2006
Child care survey	1993
Child care survey	1999
Child care survey	2005
Disability, ageing and carers survey	1993
Disability, ageing and carers survey	2003

Appendix Table 6.1: Statistical collections for which approval was given to disclose unidentified information in 2008–09.

	Survey date
Education and training experience survey	1989
Education and training survey	1997
Education and training survey	2005
Education and work survey	2001
Education and work survey	2003
Education and work survey	2005
Education and work survey	2007
Education, training and information technology survey	2001
Employee earnings and hours survey	May 2006
Employment arrangements and superannuation survey	2000
Employment arrangements, retirement and superannuation survey	2007
Family characteristics and transitions survey	2006-07
Family characteristics survey	2003
General social survey	2002
General social survey	2006
Household expenditure survey	1975-76
Household expenditure survey	1984
Household expenditure survey	1988-89
Household expenditure survey	1993-94
Household expenditure survey	1998-99
Household expenditure survey and income and housing survey	2003-04
Income and housing costs and amenities survey	1990
Income and housing costs survey	1994-95
Income and housing costs survey	1995-96
Income and housing costs survey	1996-97
Income and housing costs survey	1999-2000
Income and housing costs survey	2000-01
Income and housing survey	1982
Income and housing survey	2002-03
Income and housing survey	2003-04
Income and housing survey	2005-06
Income distribution survey	1986
Innovation in Australian business survey	2003
Labour force status and other characteristics of recent migrants survey	2007
Labour force survey and employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership survey	August 2004
Labour force survey and employee earnings, benefits and trade union membership survey	August 2006
Labour force survey and labour mobility survey	February 2006
Labour force survey and labour mobility survey	February 2008
Labour mobility survey	1991

	Survey date
Labour mobility survey	1994
Multi-purpose household survey	2006-07
Multi-purpose household survey—household use of information technology and environmental views and behaviour topics	2007-08
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey	2004-05
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social survey	2002
National health survey	1977–78
National health survey	1983
National health survey	1989-90
National health survey	2001
National health survey	2004-05
National nutrition survey	1995
National survey of mental health and wellbeing	2007
National survey of mental health and wellbeing of adults	1997
National survey of mental health and wellbeing (WA)	1997
Personal safety survey	2005
Time use survey	1992
Time use survey	1997
Time use survey	2006
Training and education survey	1993
Voluntary work in Australia survey	2000
Women's safety survey	1996

The total number of disclosures of unidentified information, under clause 7 of the Statistics Determination, are shown in the following table.

Appendix Table 6.2: Disclosure of unidentified information—number of approvals given

Clause 7—number of approvals (a)	2006-07	2007–08	2008–09
Universities (b)	132	133	177
Other	198	136	127
Total	330	269	304

(a) Does not include renewals of previously approved CURFs.

(b) Under the agreement with Universities Australia to provide access for research and teaching purposes.





Officers of the ABS prepared the following professional papers which were presented or published between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2009.

Andrew Howe, 'Assessing the accuracy of Australia's regional population estimates, 2006', presented to the Fourteenth national conference of the Australian Population Association, Alice Springs, 30 June–3 July 2008.

Dr. Donald Brunker and Dr Ewa Orzechowska-Fischer, 'An analysis of developments in skills shortages that hampered innovation using the 2003 and 2005 Australian Innovation Surveys', conference paper submitted to the 2008 Australasian Meeting of Econometrics Society (ESAM08), Wellington, New Zealand, 9–11 July 2008.

Paul Sullivan and Patrick Corr, 'Strategic directions in local demography statistics', presented to the Australian Population Association 14th Biennial Conference, Alice Springs, 30 June–3 July 2008.

Andrew Webster, Garth Bode and Horst Posselt, 'Measuring wellbeing—the Australian Bureau of Statistics' framework for social statistics', presented to the Expert group meeting on the scope and content of social statistics, United Nations Statistics Division, New York, 9–12 September 2008.

Bernard Williams, 'Australia's experience (so far) in implementing BPM 6', presented to the 1st Meeting of the Working party on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Conference Centre, Paris, 22–24 September 2008.

Peter Comisari, "Time passing" and the measurement of depletion', presented to the 13th meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, Brussels, Belgium, 29 September–3 October 2008.

Dr. Hui Wei, 'Measuring rates of return to post-school education in Australia', presented to the 2008 Australian Conference of Economists, Gold Coast, 29 September–3 October 2008.

Dr. Susan Kluth, 'Trends in the use of centralised pricing data sources for price indexes', presented to the International Association of Official Statistics Conference on Reshaping Official Statistics, Shanghai, 14–16 October 2008.

Dr. Susan Kluth, 'Use of complementary administrative data sets for Australian house price indexes', presented to the International Association of Official Statistics Conference on Reshaping Official Statistics, Shanghai, 14–16 October 2008.

Xichuan (Mark) Zhang and Nick von Sanden, 'Using administrative data for seasonal adjustment of survey time series', presented to the International Association of Official Statistics Conference on Reshaping Official Statistics, Shanghai, 14–16 October 2008.

Dr. Hui Wei, 'Developments in the estimation of human capital for official statistical agencies', presented to the International Association of Official Statistics Conference on Reshaping Official Statistics, Shanghai, 14–16 October 2008; presented to the OECD Workshop on the Measurement of Human Capital, Turin, 2–3 November 2008.

Peter Harper, 'Climate change and official statistics—the way forward', presented to the International Conference on Climate Change, Development and Official Statistics in the Asia-Pacific in the Asia-Pacific Region, Seoul, December 2008

Nick Nicolopoulos and Emily Hansen, 'How well prepared are Australian communities for natural disasters and fire emergencies?' *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, vol. 24, no. 1, February 2009.

Siu-Ming Tam, 'Informing the nation—open access to statistical information in Australia', presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission and Economic Commission for Europe, Conference of European Statisticians, UNECE Work Session on the Communication and Dissemination of Statistics, Warsaw, Poland, 13–15 May 2009.

Christopher Hinchcliffe and Rob Burnside, 'Update on the ABS Input-Output Program', presented to the 6th Biennial Regional CGE Modelling Workshop, NSW Parliament House Sydney, 21–22 October 2008.

Denis Farrell, Eden Brinkley and Annette Scott, 'Economic censuses and surveys Australia', presented to the 12th East Asian Statistical Conference, Tokyo, Japan, 13–15 November 2008.

Denis Farrell and Roslyn Harvie, 'Population census and household surveys Australia', presented to the 12th East Asian Statistical Conference, Tokyo, Japan, 13–15 November 2008.

Tracey Chester, 'Developments in ABS measures of labour underutilisation', presented to the 10th Path to Full Employment Conference/15th National Unemployment Conference (CofFEE), Newcastle, 4–5 December, 2008.

David Bain, 'Creating environmental accounts for diffuse-source environmental problems', presented to the London Group on Environmental Accounting Workshop, Canberra, 1 May 2009.

Kim Farley-Larmour and Siu-Ming Tam, 'ABS microdata access for research: current strategies and options', presented to the OECD/ABS Workshop on Remote Access to Microdata, Paris, France, 5–7 May 2009.

Jenine Borowik, 'Collaboration and sharing statistical software, components, processes and capability—experiences and aspirations at the Australian Bureau of Statistics', presented to the Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS), Oslo Norway, 18–20 May 2009. **Brian Pink**, 'Are the boundaries of official statistics being challenged?', Conference of European Statisticians (CES), Geneva, 8–10 June 2009.

Brian Pink, 'The Australian Bureau of Statistics—does it operate independently from government and successfully maintain public confidence?', Conference of European Statisticians (CES), Geneva, 8–10 June 2009.

Brian Pink, 'Towards the development of an integrated global statistical information system', OECD Meeting of the Committee on Statistics, Geneva, 10–11 June 2009.

Ian Ewing, 'The production approach to measuring GDP', presented to the International Workshop from Data to Accounts: Measuring Production in National Accounting, Beijing, China, 8–10 June 2009.

SECTION 8 APPENDICES APPENDIX 8 SUBMISSIONS TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

appendix 8

SUBMISSIONS TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Committee/Inquiry	Description of submission/information provided
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into Pay Equity and Associated Issues Related to Increasing Female Participation in the Workforce	In November 2008, the ABS provided a submission on the wide range of relevant information available, including data on employee earnings, which enable the analysis of pay equity.
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources Inquiry into the role of government in assisting Australian farmers to adapt to the impacts of climate change	In April 2009, the ABS provided a submission on the data sources that are available relating to farming practices undertaken by agricultural businesses. The submission also examined the ABS' ability to enhance these statistics, and ways in which it might assist in filling information gaps.
Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy	In April 2009, the ABS provided a submission on climate change and the implications for statistics, including ensuring the robustness of existing statistics.



DOCUMENTS TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

In accordance with section 6 of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the ABS tabled, in both Houses of Parliament, 12 proposals for the collection of information for statistical purposes. Details of the proposals are shown in the following table.

Appendix Table 9.1: Tabling—proposals for the collection of information for statistical purposes, 2008–09

Date tabled (a)	Statistical collection (b)
26 August 2008	New Topics in the Monthly Population Survey
	- Household and Workplace Mobility, and Implications for Travel (NSW and VIC)
	– Labour Mobility and Intentions (WA)
26 August 2008	Goods and Services Produced and Used Survey
26 August 2008	Vegetables Survey
24 September 2008	Wheat Use Survey, Grain Handlers Stocks Survey, Wheat Export Sales Survey
24 November 2008	Survey of Cultural Funding by Government
3 February 2009	2009 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
17 March 2009	Vineyards Survey
17 June 2009	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
17 June 2009	Community Services Survey
17 June 2009	Energy, Water and Environment Survey
17 June 2009	Survey of Financial Information
17 June 2009	Queensland Agricultural Land Management Survey

(a) If the proposal was tabled on different dates in the two Houses of Parliament, the earlier of the dates is shown.

(b) Unless otherwise indicated by the title, the statistical collection is a national project.

Disclosure of lists of names and addresses

In accordance with clause 6 of the Statistics Determination (Statutory Rules 1983 No. 19) made under section 13 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, the ABS tables, in both Houses of Parliament, details of the disclosure of lists of names, addresses and other information, provided to a specified department or authority. The information released is shown in the following table.

Appendix Table 9.2: Tabling—disclosure of lists of names and addresses, 2008–09

Date tabled (a)	Information released
16 September 2008	List of Businesses for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
17 March 2009	Lists of Agricultural Farm Businesses for the Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics

(a) If the proposal was tabled on different dates in the two Houses of Parliament, the earlier of the dates is shown.



SPECIAL ARTICLES IN PREVIOUS ANNUAL REPORTS

Special articles have been included in most ABS annual reports to present information and views on important longer-term or broad issues affecting the national statistical service. A list of the articles in previous annual reports is presented below. The year of the annual report in which the article appeared and the relevant section of the report, are shown in brackets.

What the ABS Does (1975-76, Section 2)

The Collection of Information (1976-77, Section 2)

Forward Planning in the ABS (1977-78, Section 2)

Preparations for the 1981 Census of Population and Housing (1978-79, Section 2)

The Accuracy and Reliability of Estimates of National Income and Expenditure (1979–80, Section 2)

Minimising Reporting Burden (1980-81, Section 2)

A Decade's Work Program (1981–82, Section 2)

The ABS Program of Population Surveys (1983–84, pages 7 to 11, supplemented by Appendix 5)

The ABS Program of Industry Collections (1984–85, pages 8 to 13, supplemented by Appendix 5)

Dissemination of Statistics by the ABS (1985-86, pages 9 to 14)

ABS Corporate Plan (1986-87, Chapter 2)

Health Statistics and the Report of the Better Health Commission (1986–87, Chapter 3)

The Role of a National Statistical Office (1986-87, Appendix 10)

Statistics and Privacy (1987-88, Chapter 3)

Media Liaison for ABS Health Survey (1987–88, Appendix 12)

A Quart out of a Pint Pot (1988–89, Chapter 2). This article examines how the ABS increased significantly the range, timeliness and quality of its statistical products and services over the preceding 13 years, with a static level of resources.

Household Expenditure Surveys in Australia: A Chronology (1988–89, Appendix 15)

Complaints to the Australian Press Council (1988-89, Appendix 16)

The ABS in the Marketplace (1989–90, Chapter 2)

The 1991 Census of Population and Housing (1990–91, Chapter 2, Population Census)

Security of ABS Data Holdings (1992–93, Chapter 3) Reducing Respondent Load (1992–93, Chapter 2) The 1996 Census of Population and Housing (1993–94, Chapter 2) Retirement of Mr Ian Castles, AO, Australian Statistician, 1986–1994 (1994–95, Chapter 1) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (1994–95, Chapter 2) Developments in the Australian National Accounts (1995–96, Chapter 2) The Destruction of Census Forms (1995–96, Chapter 3) The Pint Pot Revisited (1996–97, Chapter 2) The 1996 Census of Population and Housing (1996–97, Chapter 3) The Destruction of Census Forms (1997–98, Chapter 2) Recent Developments in Price and Labour Cost Indexes (1997–98, Chapter 3) *Review of the ABS Household Survey Program* (1998–99, Chapter 2) ABS Experience in Workplace Relations (1998–99, Chapter 3) Retirement of Mr Bill McLennan CBE, AM, Australian Statistician, 1995–2000 (1999–2000, Chapter 2) Servicing Regional Data Requirements (1999–2000, Chapter 3) Statistical Benchmarking as a Means of Improving Performance (1999–2000, Chapter 4) Research and Analysis in the ABS (2000–01, Chapter 3) The 2001 Census of Population and Housing (2000–01, Chapter 4) Measuring Australia's Progress (2001–02, Chapter 3) The International Comparison Program (2001–02, Chapter 4) Access to ABS Microdata: Issues and Developments (2002–03, Chapter 3) Population Estimates: Importance, Complexity and Controversy (2002–03, Chapter 4) Progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (2003–04, Chapter 3) Developments in Regional Statistics (2003–04, Chapter 4) International engagement (2004–05, Chapter 3) History of Australian Censuses of Population and Housing (2004–05, Chapter 4) *Communicating statistics to the nation* (2005–06, Chapter 6) Development and implementation of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification 2006 (ANZSIC 2006) (2005–06, Chapter 7) Retirement of the Australian Statistician (2006–07, Chapter 6) 2006 Census of Population and Housing (2006–07, Chapter 7) Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (2006-07, Chapter 8) Australia's National Statistical Service in the 21st Century (2007–08, Chapter 3) 100 Years of International Trade Statistics (2007–08, Chapter 4)



Paragraph 11.1 (ba) of the Legal Services Directions 2005 (issued by the Attorney-General under section 55ZF of the *Judiciary Act 1903*) requires the ABS to make available to the public records of its legal services expenditure for the previous financial year.

For the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009, legal services expenditure by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is shown in the following table.

Appendix Table 11.1: Summary of legal services expenditure 2008–09, inclusive of GST(a)

Total External Legal Services Expenditure	\$491,692.17
Total number of Counsel briefed	2
Total number of Counsel direct briefed	0
Total value of Counsel briefs	\$14,525.96
Total of disbursements (excl. Counsel)	\$9,904.53
Total of professional fees paid	\$467,261.68
Total Internal Legal Services Expenditure	\$0.00
Total Costs Recovered	\$0.00

(a) Expenditure figures are based on new reporting requirements from the Office of Legal Services and Coordination under the Legal Services Directions and are not directly comparable to previous years.

Appendix Table 11.2: External legal services expenditure 2008–09, inclusive of GST(a)

Counsel	
Total number of counsel briefed	2
Male Counsel briefed	2
Female Counsel briefed	0
Total number of Counsel direct briefed	0
Male Counsel direct briefed	0
Female Counsel direct briefed	0
Total value of Counsel briefs	\$14,525.96
Male Counsel briefs	\$14,525.96
Female Counsel briefs	0
Disbursements (excluding Counsel)	\$9,904.53
Professional Fees	
Total professional fees paid	\$467,261.68
Breakdown of Professional Fees paid	
Australian Government Solicitor	\$400,863.65
Blake Dawson	\$27,613.13
Minter Ellison	\$30,998.00
Sparke Helmore, Solicitors	\$5,432.90
Trinity Property Trust	\$2,354.00

(a) Expenditure figures are based on new reporting requirements from the Office of Legal Services and Coordination under the Legal Services Directions and are not directly comparable to previous years.
appendix 12





Organisational commitment

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
 Provide employment pathways in the ABS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by: greater participation in APSC initiatives such as Indigenous Entry Level Pilot Program for trainees, the Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Program, and the National Indigenous Cadetship Project promotion of ABS employment opportunities in Indigenous media, and monitoring and reviewing the ABS' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan. 	2010 Review annually	ABS increases representation of Indigenous employees by 30% on that reported in the State of the Service Report 2005–06.* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers included in HR accountability reporting, branch reports and the annual report.	The ABS has increased the representation of Indigenous employees through its ongoing participation in the APSC program.	The ABS recognises that a range of different Indigenous media will need to be trialled as part of its recruitment processes. These recruitment and retention measures are interlinked and a specific measure just for recruitment should be developed. ABS internal processes to anticipate future staff requirements will need to be refined with Indigenous employees in mind.	0

* The State of the Service 2005–2006 report showed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2% of the APS workforce (compared to the broader Australian workforce, in which 1.4% of the Australian labour force identified themselves as Indigenous). Of the 21 agencies recorded as having over 1,000 ongoing employees, the ABS is ranked 15th as an employer of Indigenous people (with less than 1% of staff identifying as Indigenous). Large agencies with above average Indigenous representation are DEST (9.4%), DEEWR (4.5%), Centrelink (3.6%), DEH (3.0%) and DOHA(2.7%)

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
 2. Encourage the retention of existing and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ABS, through mechanisms such as: Indigenous staff network, and mentors for Indigenous staff. 	2010	Retention of ABS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees that is comparable to, or higher than, the APS average.	The ABS is working in accordance with the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan 2007–2010' to ensure that retention of staff is comparable to, or higher than, the APS average.	The ABS recognises there is a need to develop and maintain an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network with support from a range of officers both internal and external to the ABS.	0
	Review annually	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are supported to participate in ABS and APSC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network meetings and events.	The ABS has encouraged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in relevant APSC conferences held during 2008–09.	ABS' tight budget situation has impacted on development of specific retention strategies.	

Status Key:

E = Exceeded Expectations, A = Achieves Objectives, O = On Target, N = No Progress

Cultural recognition and awareness

Outcome: All staff work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, communities and organisations.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
3. Promote and support the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events.	Ongoing (review annually)	Regular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander feature in ABSeNews.	A range of stories have been featured in ABSeNews during 2008–09 covering topics from reconciliation to Indigenous engagement in the Northern Territory. A review of ABSeNews stories will be completed by the end of 2009.	Ongoing participation in events will need to be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.	Ο
	Ongoing, May and July each year	All ABS staff encouraged to participate in internal Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities, through internal promotion of these events.	To coincide with NAIDOC Week 2009 a documentary on the artwork displayed in the ABS foyer, 'Possum Dreaming', was launched.		
	2010	ABS participation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events increases beyond levels in 2007.	A range of activities were developed by all ABS offices and promoted to staff to coincide with Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week during 2008–09. A popular activity was the screening of Indigenous films.		
 Enhance ABS staff understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and issues. 	2010	ABS staff induction training modified to include a cultural awareness component.	ABS induction training has been modified to include a cultural awareness component for all new starters.		0

SECTION 8 APPENDICES APPENDIX 12 RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN-REVIEW 2009

Cultural recognition and awareness

Outcome: All staff work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, communities and organisations.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
	2009	ABS managers have tools available to support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their workplace.	Indigenous Engagement Managers (IEMs) are available in all state offices to assist managers in supporting Indigenous staff. The 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Retention Plan 2007–2010' is a valuable tool for managers to utilise in supporting and developing their staff.		
	Ongoing (review annually)	All ABS staff conducting business in Indigenous communities attend cultural awareness training.	All ABS staff that conduct business within an Indigenous community are required to complete the 'Cross Cultural Awareness Training' that is available on the ABS Indigenous Assistant database.		
	Ongoing (review annually)	ABS cultural protocols and procedures are applied by ABS staff undertaking work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	ABS cultural protocols and procedures have been developed, implemented and are available on the ABS Indigenous Assistant database. See also Action 9 in regards to cultural awareness tools and training for conducting business in Indigenous communities.		

Cultural recognition and awareness

Outcome: All staff work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, communities and organisations.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
5. ABS acknowledges traditional owners.	2008	Traditional owners are acknowledged in the foyers of ABS offices and all large ABS meetings rooms through appropriate displays.	Display signage has been placed in foyers of ABS offices and large meeting rooms as appropriate and in conjunction with fit-out or refurbishment works.		Ο
	Ongoing (review annually)	Acknowledge traditional owners and/ or include welcome to country ceremonies at official ABS events.	The ABS has developed a policy to acknowledge traditional owners of the land at official ABS events.		

Status Key:

E = Exceeded Expectations, A = Achieves Objectives, O = On Target, N = No Progress

Community action

 Statistical literacy, access and capacity building

 Outcome: Facilitate, encourage and assist informed and increased use of statistics among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

 Action
 Timeling

 Management
 Researce

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
6. Maintain and expand the Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy (ICES).	Ongoing (review annually)	Seven Indigenous Engagement Managers (IEMs) are employed to implement the ICES, one in each state and the Northern Territory.	Six of the IEM positions are currently filled and recruitment action for the final position is underway.		A

Statistical literacy, access and capacity building

Outcome: Facilitate, encourage and assist informed and increased use of statistics among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons	Status
		medsere		learned	
7. ABS outputs will be produced in a manner that is accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Ongoing (review annually)	Tailored products and output developed with the input of our network of IEMs and made accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	In 2008–09, the ICES Community Profiles project was implemented and it is currently being used by IEMs and other ABS staff to extract, compile and return Census information at the Community level. The Profiles project enables Community level data to be compared with other geographies (i.e. state) and across the 2001 & 2006 Censuses.		A
	Ongoing (review annually)	ABS will continue production of material in formats accessible by those in low technology environments.	ABS continues to refine and develop products for use by people in low technology environments. In 2008–09 the ICES product set included single page colour fliers on the incidence of diabetes among Indigenous people.		
 8. Promote statistical literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through initiatives such as: CensusAtSchool* 	Ongoing (review annually)	CensusAtSchool* materials are available to, and used by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools and communities.	In 2008–09, the ABS has reviewed and redeveloped the web based Indigenous materials. Retitled <i>Indigenous Statistics for</i> <i>Schools</i> , the updated materials were launched on the ABS website during NAIDOC week 2009.		A
 development and delivery of statistical training packages for Indigenous communities, and continued roll out of the Information Skills Program. 	Ongoing (review annually)	IEMs to provide statistical training to 30 or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations throughout Australia each year.	In 2008–09, IEMs have provided statistical training to more than 35 communities and organisations from Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council to Curtin University Community Development Program.		

* see http://www.abs.gov.au – Education – CensusAtSchool for more information.

Statistical literacy, access and capacity building

Outcome: Facilitate, encourage and assist informed and increased use of statistics among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
9. Develop and implement standard protocols for ABS contact with discrete Indigenous communities.	Protocols were finalised in 2008	Standard procedures and protocols are available to, and used by, ABS staff in contact with Indigenous communities. Training on the use of protocols is delivered to relevant ABS staff.	ABS guidelines on cultural protocols and standard procedures for community engagement activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were released to ABS staff in late 2008. In 2008–09, training based on these protocols was developed and delivered to all ABS interviewers for the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS).		0

Status Key:

E = Exceeded Expectations, A = Achieves Objectives, O = On Target, N = No Progress

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Statu
l 0.Extend and improve the collection and accuracy of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Work program produced 5-yearly	Strategic directions for ABS Indigenous statistics are determined in consultation with key Indigenous stakeholders, in addition to relevant government and non-government agencies.	Advice on the ABS Indigenous statistics work program is sought regularly from members of the ABS Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (AGATSIS). AGATSIS last met in June 2009 and membership includes key Indigenous stakeholders and organisations as well as relevant government and non-government representation. See also Action 12. Through 2008–09 the ABS has met or progressed work across a number of priority areas as identified in the <i>ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</i> <i>Statistics</i> (4700.0), including: 1. Engagement—sees Action 10.		Ο

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
			2. Indigenous wellbeing—work		
			has commenced to develop an		
			ABS framework for measuring		
			Indigenous wellbeing.		
			3. Indigenous children and		
			youth—the 2008 NATSISS was		
			expanded to collect information		
			about Aboriginal and Torres		
			Strait Islander children, young		
			people and their families.		
			4. Indigenous engagement in		
			economic activity—a discussion		
			paper on 'Measuring Indigenous		
			Economic Development'		
			has been developed for		
			release in August 2009.		
			5. Improved reporting and		
			analysis of comparisons over		
			time—development of an expanded		
			Indigenous engagement strategy		
			for the 2011 Census to improve		
			reporting of Indigenous Census		
			data; production and distribution		
			of over 40,000 brochures aimed		
			at improving identification of		
			Indigenous people in administrative		
			data; and a new and improved		
			method for calculating Indigenous		
			life expectancy was released.		
			The ABS is also working		
			on addressing deficiencies		
			in Indigenous data that is		
			required to meet the Council of		
			Australian Governments (COAG)		
			performance indicators in the		
			National Indigenous Reform		
			Agreement. It is expected that		
			this project will: improve the		
			Indigenous enumeration in		
			the 2011 Census; expand the		
			2011 Census Post-enumeration		
			Survey; assist the linkage of		
			mortality data and 2011 Census		
			data required for estimating		
			Indigenous life expectancy; and		
			assist work aimed at improving		
			Indigenous identification in key		

administrative data sets.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Program

Outcome: Continuous improvements in the range, quality and availability of statistics on Indigenous Australians, in conjunction with other relevant agencies.

Action	Timeline	Measure	Progress	Lessons learned	Status
11.Provide leadership in Indigenous data collection and analysis.	Review annually	Annual reports on the ABS Indigenous work program provided to AGATSIS.	A report on the ABS Indigenous statistics work program was provided at the June 2009 AGATSIS meeting.		Ο
	Review annually	Implement and report measures to reduce respondent burden among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and report measures to AGATSIS.	The ABS continues to explore and develop approaches to reduce respondent burden among Indigenous people. For example, the sample design for the 2008 NATSISS included a sample and content expansion in Victoria, in order to improve Indigenous children estimates collected in the survey, and to avoid the requirement for a planned State Government Victorian Indigenous Child Survey, which would have otherwise been enumerated at the same time as NATSISS. The ABS is also active in promoting issues of respondent burden experienced by Indigenous people and communities, recently highlighting this issue to the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities which held public hearings in June 2009.		
12. Indigenous representation on consultative and advisory bodies.	Review annually	All ABS consultative bodies with significant implications for Indigenous Australians ensure the opportunity for Indigenous representation.	In addition to AGATSIS (see Action 10), consultative groups for a number of key ABS statistical collections and activities have included Indigenous representation. In 2008–09 these have included consultative groups for the 2011 Census, 2008 NATSISS, and ABS Indigenous mortality data including development of new and improved methods for calculating Indigenous life expectancy data.		0

Status Key:

E = Exceeded Expectations, A = Achieves Objectives, O = On Target, N = No Progress

Reference: ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, June 2007 (ABS cat. no.4700.0)

Section 9

GLOSSARY AND INDEX



glossary



ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABN	Australian Business Number
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABSDL	Australian Bureau of Statistics Data Laboratory
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
AEI	Australian Economic Indicators
AGBR	Australian Greenhouse Building Rating
AGIMO	Australian Government Information Management Office
AGSF	Australian Government Statistical Forum
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ANZSIC	Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification
APRA	Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ARIMA	Auto Regressive Integrated Moving Average
ASAC	Australian Statistics Advisory Council
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ΑΤΟ	Australian Taxation Office
ATSN	Australian Transport Statistics Network
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BLD	Business Longitudinal Database
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
BoP	Balance of Payments
BPM	Balance of Payments Manual
BPS	Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia)
CA	Certified Agreement
CAI	Computer Assisted Interviewing

cat. no.	ABS catalogue number	
CDE	Census Data Enhancement	
CDS	Commonwealth Disability Strategy	
СО	Central Office	
COAG	Council of Australian Governments	
СРІ	Consumer Price Index	
CPRS	Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme	
CPSU	Commonwealth Public Sector Union	
CRC	COAG Reform Council	
CSC	Capital Strategy Committee	
CURF	Confidentialised Unit Record File	
DAFF	Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry	
DCM	Data Collection Methodology	
DEEWR	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations	
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training	
DIISR	Department of Innovation Industry Science and Research	
DOFD	Department of Finance and Deregulation	
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing	
EEH	Employee Earnings and Hours	
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity	
ELG	Executive Leadership Group	
EMS	Environmental Management Statement	
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999	
ESG	Economic Statistics Group	
ESUG	Economic Statistics User Group	
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	
FOES	Forms of Employment Survey	
FOI	Freedom of Information	
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	
GFC	Global Financial Crisis	
GPF	Government Partnership Fund	
GST	Goods and Services Tax	
GVIAP	Gross Value of Irrigated Agricultural Production	
HILDA	Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia	
HSUAG	Housing Statistics User Advisory Group	
ICP	International Comparison Program	
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	
IDP	Information Development Plan	

IDSC	Information Development Steering Committee
IDWG	Information Development Working Group
IGA	Inter-Governmental Agreement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISS	Indigenous Statistics for Schools
п	Information Technology
ITSUG	International Trade in Services User Group
LEP	Library Extension Program
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGPC	Local Government Purpose Classification
LSAC	Longitudinal Study of Australian Children
MAP	Measure of Australia's Progress
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
МРР	Multifactor Productivity
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCATSIS	National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
NCCRS	National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics
NDN	National Data Network
NEIS	National Environmental Information System
NETSU	National Education and Training Statistics Unit
NIRS	National Information and Referral Service
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSS	National Statistical Service
NSTI	National Statistical Training Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OHS Act	Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991
OIPC	Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
OPALS	Organisational, People and Learning Systems
PBLCI	Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RADL	Remote Access Data Laboratory
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
RSE	Relative Standard Error
SCH	Statistical Clearing House
SDAC	Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers
SEASABS	SEASonal analysis, ABS Standards (seasonal adjustment software)
SEEA	System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting

SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas
SMG	Senior Management Group
SNA	System of National Accounts
SNZ	Statistics New Zealand
SOP	Stages of Production
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Communities
SPP	Specific Purpose Payments
SSF	State Statistical Forum
SSG	Social Statistics Group
STSS	State and Territory Statistical Services
TSD	Technology Services Division
VSAF	Victorian Statistics Advisory Forum
WTO	World Trade Organisation
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
ХСР	Expanded Community Profile

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