

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The main aims of this newsletter are to facilitate your involvement in the development and review of ABS social and economic statistics, to provide information on current developments, and to promote discussion on emerging statistical issues.

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Issue No. 17

May 2006

Census 2006

Tuesday 8 August



His Excellency Dr. Ken Michael AC, the Governor of Western Australia, pictured above with Dave Roarty, WA Census Director and Alan Hubbard, Government Statistician and ABS Regional Director for Western Australia, launched the **Census 2006** recruitment campaign on Wednesday 15 February. This was a successful event attended by representatives of local organisations from the private, public and academic sectors.

Recruitment

The program to recruit approximately 350 Area Supervisors is underway and the next stage of recruiting 3000 Census Collectors commenced on 8 April. Anyone interested in these roles can apply by phoning 1300 236 787 or logging on to:

<www.abs.gov.au/recruitment>

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View from the Top



Alan Hubbard
Government Statistician and
ABS Regional Director, Western Australia.

Access to Statistics

As advised in the last issue of Stats Talk, access to all statistics on the ABS web site became free of charge on 12 December 2005. To further improve access for users, the ABS web site was redesigned and has been available in its new format since 27 January this year. These initiatives support the ABS corporate objective of informed and increased use of statistics.

At the same time as access to ABS statistics has been improved, development continues with the National Data Network (NDN) initiative which potentially covers statistics from all sources. The NDN is a platform for acquiring, sharing and integrating data relevant to policy and research in Australia. A new and improved web site now provides all the information stakeholders require to participate in this data networking initiative and the number of data sources on the network continues to grow.

Preparations for the 2006 Census

The Census is the largest statistical collection undertaken in Australia and provides a unique and immensely valuable source of information on our people and their housing.

Preparations for the Census to be conducted on 8 August are gathering momentum in the WA Office and in ABS Offices all around Australia. A team of 35 people have been assembled in the WA Office to oversee the recruitment of census collectors, the operation of information and administrative systems to manage this workforce and the implementation of procedures and strategies to ensure that all people in the State are counted on Census night. An important milestone was the official launch of the Census Recruitment Campaign in WA by His Excellency the Governor, Dr Ken Michael AC on 15 February.

Statistical Leadership

The ABS aims to play a leadership role in the national statistical system by improving the range and quality of statistics available from all sources. To support this objective the ABS has made changes in its organisational structure. A new Deputy Australian Statistician, Jonathan Palmer, has been appointed to lead the strategy and a new branch created in central office to support the work. The WA Office will continue to work with state government agencies promoting improvements in statistics through various means including advocating the use of frameworks and standards, developing skills in the production and analysis of statistics and advising on statistical methods and the management of statistical data.

Alan Hubbard

The Australian Bureau of Statistics and Census 2006, Present Census Analysis Conference 2006 18/19 July 2006

Call of Interest for Research Papers and Attendees

The conference is designed to raise awareness of the analytical and research capabilities of Census data and inform users about Census 2006. It will also influence our Census output program, particularly those components which support research use. The topics for this year's conference are Demographic, Social, Labour, and Economic statistics.

- Monday 17 July, Cocktail party and Registration - 7:00pm–9:00pm
- Tuesday 18 - Wednesday 19 July, Conference - 9:00am–5:00pm
- Tuesday 18 July, Conference dinner - 7:00pm
...at the Rydges Lakeside Hotel, Canberra City.

There is no cost to attend the conference. Morning tea, afternoon tea and lunch are provided, however, dinner on Tuesday night is at a cost of \$50 per person (does not include drinks).

The conference is still in the planning stage but if you are interested in presenting a paper or attending the conference please register your interest with **Victoria Allen on 02 6252 5200 or <victoria.allen@abs.gov.au>**

Tuesday 8 August

Census Update

Australia's 15th Census will be held this year. Census night is Tuesday, 8 August. This massive project is underway with ABS Census staff recruiting and training field staff as well as contacting organisations that will assist with the Census. These include places such as hospitals, mines, and military bases whose help is needed to count residents as well as organisations who can provide general support such as councils, the police service and visitor centres.

New questions

Most of the questions are the same as those contained in the 2001 Census but there are questions about three new issues in this Census: disability assistance, unpaid work and volunteer activities. They comprise four questions relating to the amount of assistance a person needs in day to day activities, two questions about unpaid work and one question about participation in volunteer activities. These questions were included after feedback and discussions following the 2001 Census and will provide extensive information about the need for support and carers across Australia with the ability to drill down to small groups and areas.

Communications Manager



WA Communication Manager for **Census 2006** is Kim Harrison, pictured left with special guest of honour Lynn Fisher, CEO Volunteering WA, and Carol Buckley, the Governor's aide at the **Census 2006** launch. Kim is a veteran of three Censuses. He was a Collector when he was a university student, delivering Census forms to 300 Perth homes and collecting the completed forms. In the 2001 Census Kim worked part-time as an Area Supervisor in charge of a dozen Collectors in a Perth suburb. Now he rounds off his experience as the full-time Communication Manager in the Perth office, where he has been based since December. "I really enjoy the challenge of a project like this, working towards the absolutely fixed deadline of 8 August," said Kim.

"The ABS realises the importance of communication to the success of the Census and has developed a national Census communication strategy. A communication manager has been appointed in every State and Territory to ensure the ABS communicates as effectively as possible around Australia. I'm impressed with the Bureau's professional approach to communication."

Before joining the Census team, Kim was a contract PR consultant and author of a book, *Strategic Public Relations*, used in PR courses at several Australian universities. After the Census he will concentrate on developing his e-marketing business, selling a series of e-books on public relations from his web site. "The Internet offers a whole new world of opportunities. My web site attracts 200 visitors a day, mainly from North America, and I'm looking forward to resuming the e-marketing when the Census is over."



Pictured above at the **Census 2006** launch are Alistair Hutchison of the Department of Education and Training, Andrew Jones, Assistant Director, Special Strategies, Census WA, Mark Bloomfield, Assistant Director Field Operations Census WA, and Alan Dodson, also representing the Department of Education and Training.

Western Australian Statistical Indicators (cat. no. 1367.5)

Skills Shortages in WA under the spotlight

With the growing concern over the state's skills shortage, the ABS has released a two part special analysis of the matter in the December 2005 and March 2006 editions of Western Australian Statistical Indicators (**WASI**).

Part one in the December 2005 **WASI** lists indicators of skills shortage in the state showing:

- The skilled vacancy index for Western Australia rose by 88.0% over the last three years, compared to a fall of 3.5% in the Australian index.
- Western Australia's unemployment rate has dropped since July 2001 to its lowest level on record in November 2005 (3.9%), providing evidence of an economy that has continued to exhaust its available supply of labour, including skilled labour.
- Recent wages growth in Western Australia has been strong and has outpaced the growth in prices generally.



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Part two of the analysis in the March 2006 **WASI** showed that the skills shortage in Western Australia was a significant contributor to the fall in the state's economic growth from 8% in 2003-04, to 3% in 2004-05 at the height of the shortage.

The article explains there are three key reasons for the skills shortage:

- There were less skilled workers available because of the rapid expansion of the state's resources sector.
- With Western Australia's exports to China doubling over the past three years, employment in the mining industry rose by close to a third (9,942 people or 31%) over the period.
- In conjunction with resources sector growth, strong property market activity also triggered the demand for skilled workers in the industries of property and business services and construction.
- Fewer skilled workers were available because of reduced participation in education and training (course enrollments fell by 8,900 people from May 2002 to May 2005).

Also included in the March 2006 issue of **WASI** is a feature article on recent expenditure patterns of Western Australian households. **WASI** also contains a range of other information on the state's economy and social conditions and is available free of charge from the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>

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Outpostings

Welcome to Darryl Malam, recently appointed NSS Coordinator, WA

ABS outposted officers are currently located within the Institute for Child Health Research, Department of the Attorney General and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) of WA.

Recent reviews by the Western Australian government recommended that the Department of Justice be split into two. The new departments were formed on 1 February 2006 – the Department of the Attorney General (DotAG) and the Department of Corrective Services (DCS). The ABS outposting will operate under DotAG. A key feature of the outposting is to identify the information requirements for the Court Services division and to assist in the development of a statistical framework which adopts the use of standards and promotes best practice.

The FESA outposting involves a review of FESA's reporting requirements, an assessment of existing data quality and a review of data collection systems and processes. ABS outposted officers play an important role with regard to transferring knowledge and statistical skills to state government staff and improving the amount of relevant data available to users for informed decision making.

ABS partnership with the Western Australian Land Information System

The ABS has been working in partnership with the Western Australian Land Information System (WALIS) to promote strategic initiatives such as the NSS, NDN and the Shared Land Information Capture Program (SLICP). This partnership involves planning and coordinating presentations in regional areas and providing cooperation and support on strategic projects.

The ABS and WALIS delivered presentations in Kununurra on 30 November 2005 which followed an information session held in Geraldton in October. The ABS provided an overview of products and services including the availability of free statistics on the web site, statistical information available for the Kimberley region such as the national regional profile, an overview of mesh blocks, and details of the upcoming 2006 Census. The WALIS session covered SLICP, Department of Land Information (DLI) spatial data and map products, aerial and satellite imagery, pasture growth rates, vegetation monitoring and fire detection.

There were approximately 25 attendees at the forum which included staff from DLI, WALIS, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Conservation and Land Management (CALM), and the Department of Agriculture. Further regional information sessions are scheduled for this year and will cover the ABS library extension program, initiatives associated with regional statistics and the 2006 census.



For further information contact
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New and Improved NDN web site

The NDN team have released a new and improved NDN web site. The NDN web site is the gateway to the National Data Network.

What can you find on the web site ?

The web site contains all information needed for you to participate in the demonstration NDN. As the NDN grows, the web site will continue to add information and resources. Key sections of the NDN web site include:

- Custodians and Service Providers
- Policy Makers and Researchers
- The NDN Rich Client
- Developers
- News and Information
- Software - Support and Downloads
- Discussion Forum

For more information, log onto the NDN web site at
<www.nationaldatanetwork.org>

Mesh Blocks, AddressCoder@ABS and the G-NAF... laying new foundations

It is often the case that the combination of simple technologies produces large gains in functionality, and this can lead to tremendous change. Mesh Blocks, AddressCoder@ABS and the Geocoded National Address File (G-NAF) are three new technologies that will, over the next few years, change how statistics are collected, maintained and published by the ABS. But more importantly, they will make these statistics far more useful.

The G-NAF is an authoritative and well maintained list of Australian addresses published by the Public Service Mapping Agency (PSMA). It includes an accurate location for most addresses and this allows the population of small areas to be estimated. This is crucial for the initial design of Mesh Blocks. This locational information also allows statistics associated with address information to be coded to a Mesh Block using a new ABS web service called AddressCoder@ABS.

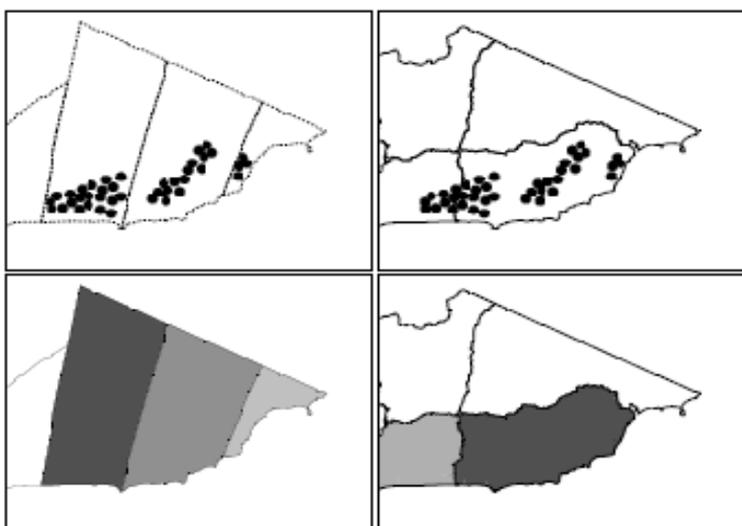
The AddressCoder@ABS web service will be freely provided by the ABS through the National Data Network (NDN). It will allow users to geocode addresses to Mesh Blocks, Collector Districts and Statistical Local Areas. Members of the NDN will be able to use this service to code both a single address, or many thousands of addresses. An information paper describing AddressCoder@ABS is due to be released by the end of 2006.

For the 2006 census, and beyond, the ABS has developed a new micro level geographical unit, the Mesh Block. It is hoped that Mesh Blocks will allow many of the statistics produced by the ABS to be published for new sets of areas that are more relevant to users and more meaningful for analysis. Because of their small size (between 30 and 60 dwellings in residential areas), Mesh Blocks will enable the ready comparison of statistics between geographical areas by aggregating the data from mesh blocks to build commonly used geographic regions, such as Australia Post postcodes, Local Government Areas or even historical boundaries.

Previously, a group of 200 to 300 dwellings, called a Collection District, has been the smallest level of geographic detail produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and Surveys. Because of their size and design, Collection Districts cannot support the flexible mapping to larger geographic regions that can be obtained by using Mesh Blocks as a base.

To protect privacy of individual information, only very basic Census data will be released at the Mesh Block level. Aggregates of Mesh Blocks can however contain a very rich and detailed range of statistical information mapped very accurately to user specified regions.

Census 2006, on 8 August this year, will be the first to use G-NAF, AddressCoder@ABS and Mesh Blocks, enabling users to access data that best fits the political, administrative or physical geography required.

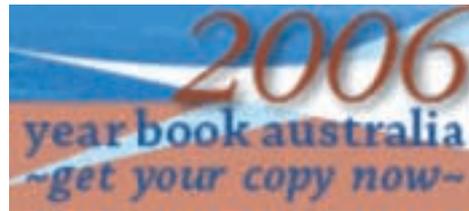


The first two maps in the diagram show two different boundary systems overlaid on the same distribution of points, (e.g. households). The second two maps show population density within each area and illustrate how the apparent population distribution can be dramatically shifted by a change of boundaries. The diagram illustrates how smaller geographic units known as Mesh blocks will allow data analysts to have greater flexibility over the level of aggregation and the size and shape of the geographic areas they use for analysis.

New and Recent Releases

January 2006

Year Book, Australia, 2006 (cat. no. 1301.0). The first official year book was published in 1908 and nearly a century later Year Book Australia is still the principal reference work produced by the ABS. This year's issue features a special article on deserts and desertification covering desert climates, archaeology, environmental history and flora and fauna.



February 2006

Demography, Western Australia, 2004

(cat. no. 3311.5.55.001) shows that the state's estimated resident population increased 1.4% to 1,978,000 in 2003-04. Summary tables and commentary on trends in the components of population change including births, deaths and migration are presented along with information on marriages, divorces, estimated resident population and various demographic rates.

The special article **Fertility Trends in Western Australia** (cat. no. 3311.5.55.001) provides an insight into the recent variability in births and fertility in Western Australia. While the state recorded the strongest growth in registered births and fertility in Australia in 2004, this followed three years where the number of births were relatively low and the fertility rate had fallen below that recorded nationally. Important longer term trends are also presented to provide context and where relevant similarities and differences between state and national level are discussed.

While **Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2005** (cat. no. 3218.0) is a national level publication it includes a section highlighting the most notable regional changes in population in Western Australia. This shows that Perth (C), Capel (S), Wanneroo (C) and Irwin (S) were among the fastest growing Local Government Areas in the state in 2004-05. The publication also contains links to spreadsheet tables which provide estimated resident population counts for Western Australian Statistical Local Areas (SLAs).

April 2006



Housing Motivations and Intentions, Western Australia,

(cat. no. 8710.5) contains results from the State Supplementary Survey conducted in Western Australia in October 2005. It presents information on the motivators that affect Western Australian householders in their choice and location of their current home and their intentions regarding their future choice of housing. Other information collected included the householders dwelling type and tenure, period of residence, whether modifications have been carried out for the elderly, or people with a disability, and household income. Some characteristics regarding their previous dwelling were also collected when the householder had resided at their current dwelling for less than 10 years. Future dwelling characteristics were collected from those householders who were planning to move in the next 3 years.

Improving the Educational Experiences of Aboriginal Children and Young People

This is the third volume of results from the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS). This large scale investigation into the health, well-being and education of over 5000 Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-17 years was undertaken by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in conjunction with the Kulunga Research Network. A PDF version of the main publication, as well as a PDF version of the summary booklet, can be downloaded free from the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research web site.

www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/waachs



About ABS Training Courses

New course coming soon...

✓ Making Quality Informed Decisions

Understanding quality issues associated with using data sources is important for effective policy-based decision making. This one-day course uses a combination of theoretical instruction and group exercises to illustrate the fundamentals of data quality assessment and focuses on making informed policy-based decisions. It is suitable for people who analyse and use data from a wide range of sources or wish to improve the quality of their organisation's data collections. It covers:

- using a quality framework to determine data needs in the context of policy decision making;
- evaluating the quality and limitations of data sources; and
- applying risk management concepts to making informed decisions.



✓ Turning Data Into Information

This two-day course develops skills in transforming data into meaningful written information, including:

- understanding how the collection and compilation of data affects its usefulness, quality and relevance;
- understanding various statistical techniques for use in data analysis;
- communicating results and writing effective reports; and
- constructing meaningful tables and graphs.

The course is best suited to people involved in using data to produce reports or social commentary, or with analysing and describing data that has been collected in surveys or through administrative processes.



✓ Using SuperTABLE

This half-day computer-based workshop aims to provide participants with the skills to use this powerful software for manipulating multi-dimensional ABS datasets (data cubes). SuperTABLE software is used to create tables that can be easily converted to Excel format. As the ABS is progressively releasing more data in SuperTABLE format, users of data cubes will need to be familiar with SuperTABLE. This workshop will equip participants with the skills to:

- access SuperTABLE;
- create basic tables; and
- manipulate data.

This course would be useful for ABS data cube users, especially WA Government employees with access to ABS@, who have little or no experience with SuperTABLE.

For further information about any of these courses, or ABS Statistical Training in general, please contact Jenny Gaudie on (08) 9360 5848 or email: <jennifer.gaudie@abs.gov.au>