



# Building trust in statistics through communications

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[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

# Public value of the ABS



## Census of Population and Housing



**40,000**  
employees enumerating

**24 million**  
people

**10 million**  
dwellings

The Census is Australia's largest logistical exercise; it takes seven years from commencement to final data release.

Up to  
**6 months**  
to print  
paper  
forms



**3,500 kg**  
of ink



**13,500**  
litres of glue



**20 million**  
items mailed



**2 million+**  
phone calls



**200+**  
different  
countries  
of origin



**300+**  
different  
languages  
spoken



**40,000** employees, including  
**100** Remote Area Mobile  
Teams visiting remote  
communities, **1,000** staff  
interviewing the homeless,  
**1,000** Address Canvassers,  
**30,000** door-to-door Census  
Field Officers,  
**1,000** staff  
scanning &  
processing the data



### SPECIAL STRATEGIES FOR:

- Seniors
- Homeless
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- Urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Snowfields and Holiday Areas
- School Camps
- Hospitals and Care Facilities
- Defence
- Shipping, Migratory and Offshore
- Mining
- Prisons and Detention Centres
- Intersex
- Youth
- Transient Workers
- Domestic and International Travellers, including remote travellers
- International Students



Thousands vent their anger over website meltdown

# ABS LOSES ITS CENSUS

# CENSUS FARCE

Turmoil as website  
fails its biggest test

The Bureau of Statistics endangers the census by asking  
for names

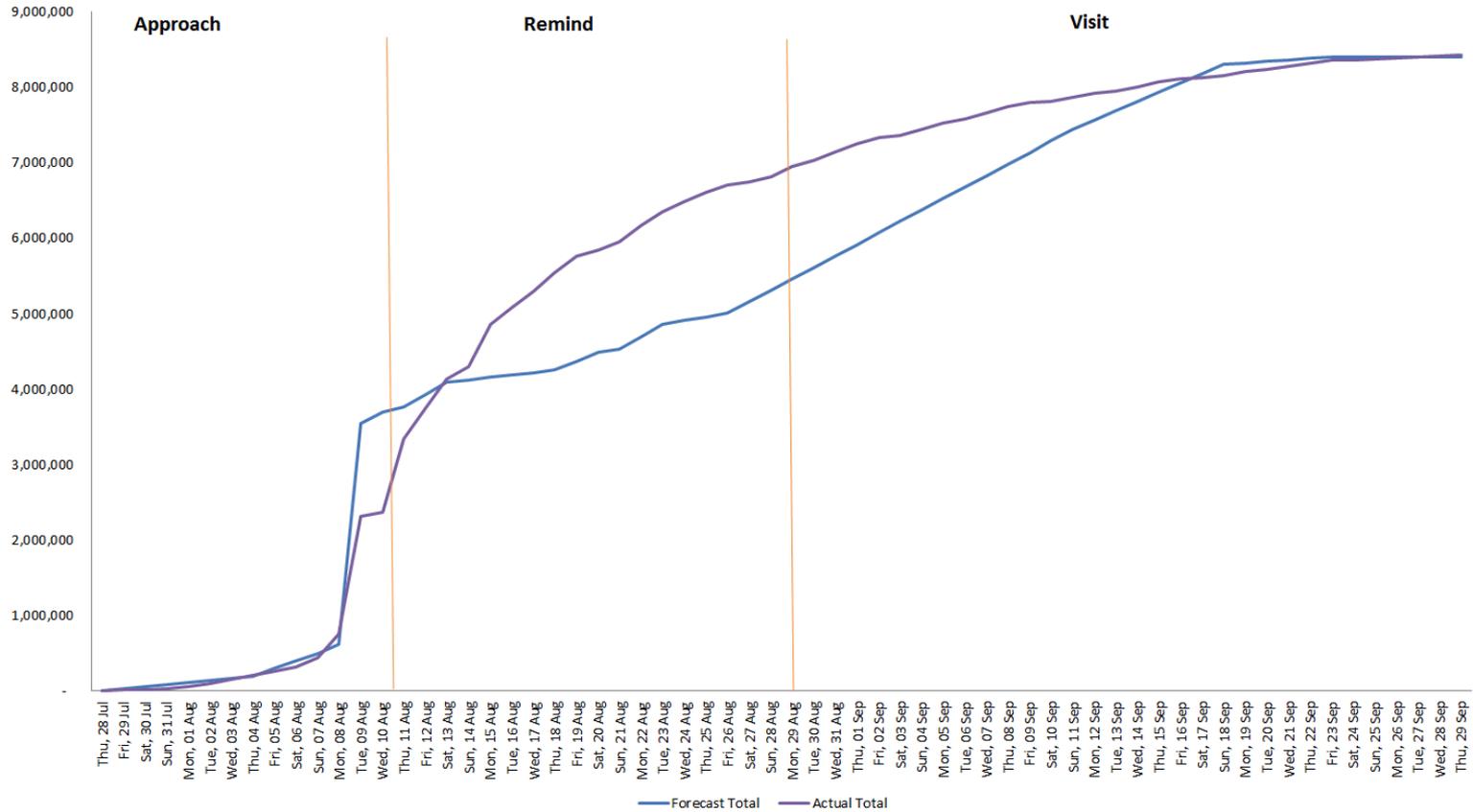
**MELTDOWN**

Anger as  
fail makes  
no census

Down for the count: census thrown into chaos

# Growing census boycott risks quality

# Census Response – Forecast and Actual



# Did the Census fail?...No



95.1%

**Overall response rate**

63.3%

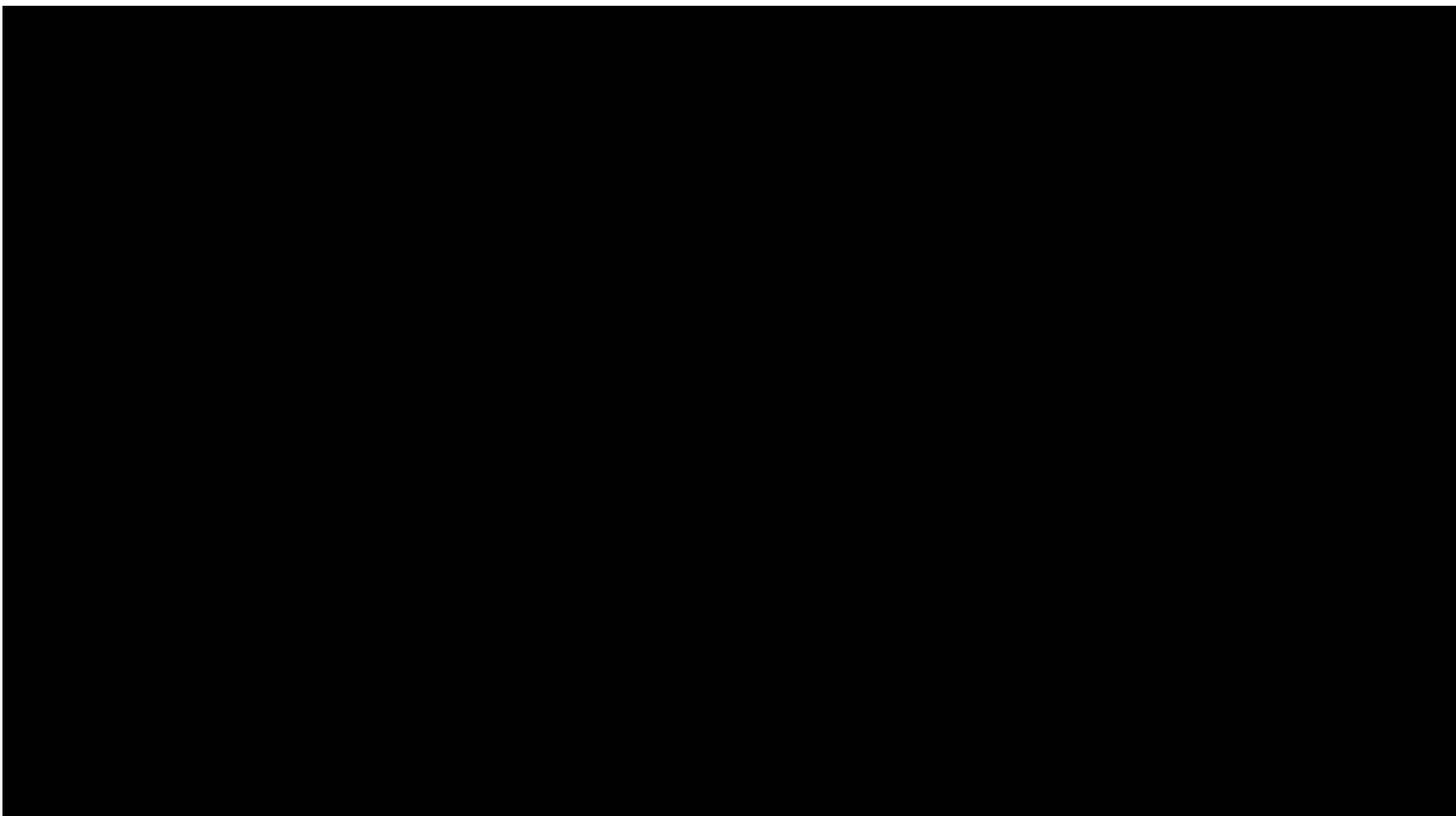
**Online response rate**

1.0%

**Net undercount**



# Marriage Law Postal Survey



# Unique challenge



## Census

Six years to prepare and conduct



## Marriage Law Postal Survey

Fewer than 100 days from Government direction to completion

23.4 million people in a mandatory process



12.7 million Australians participated out of 16 million eligible voters in voluntary survey (participation rate of 79.5 per cent)

Census 2016 cost \$500 million



Cost \$80.5 million – well under the \$122 million budget



**Be prepared**



**Be transparent**



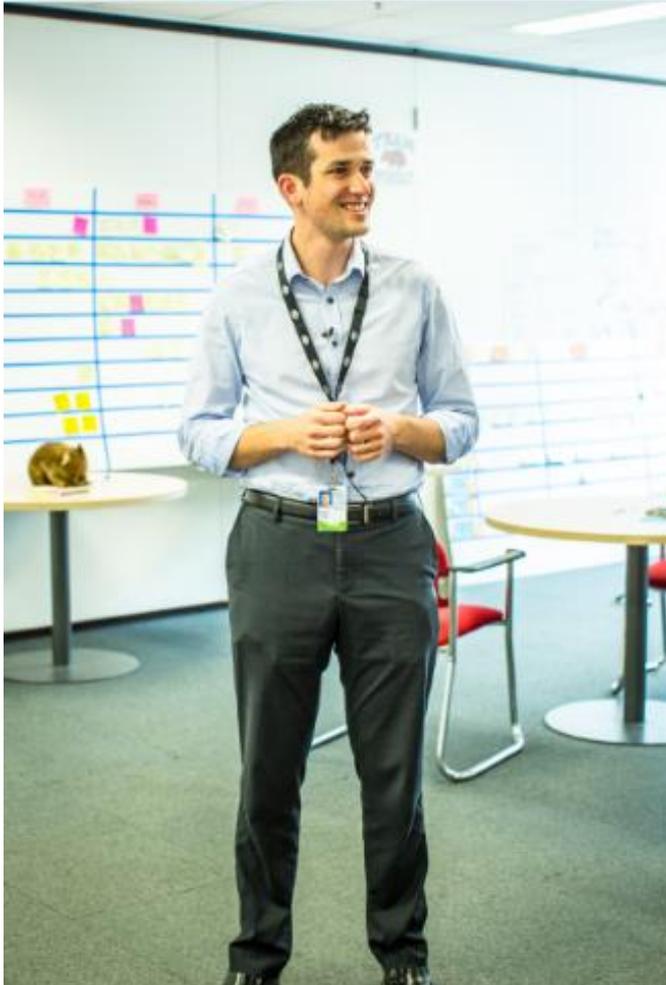
**Act quickly when things go wrong**



**Carefully consider use of social media**



# How did we do it – agile and responsive



# How did we do it – design of forms





 **Don't Delay! Mail it back today.** Forms must be received by 6pm (local time)  
7 November to be included in the count.



### Your postal survey

How the survey will be conducted and what you can expect.



### Key dates

Key dates for the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey.

# How did we do it – communication focus on participation



## How did we do it – privacy



*'The ABS has taken a strong 'privacy by design' approach to protecting the privacy of Australians in designing the Survey. I am satisfied with the range of privacy measures that the ABS has embedded into the design of the Survey and supporting functions. I am also satisfied that the mitigation strategies and response plans are effective and appropriate in the context of the Survey.'*

Malcolm Compton AM, Managing Director, Information Integrity Solutions Pty Ltd; Privacy Commissioner of Australia 1999-2004



# Partnerships and third party endorsement



blindness and low vision services



bhpbilliton



LEADING AGE SERVICES AUSTRALIA



Blind Citizens Australia



woodside

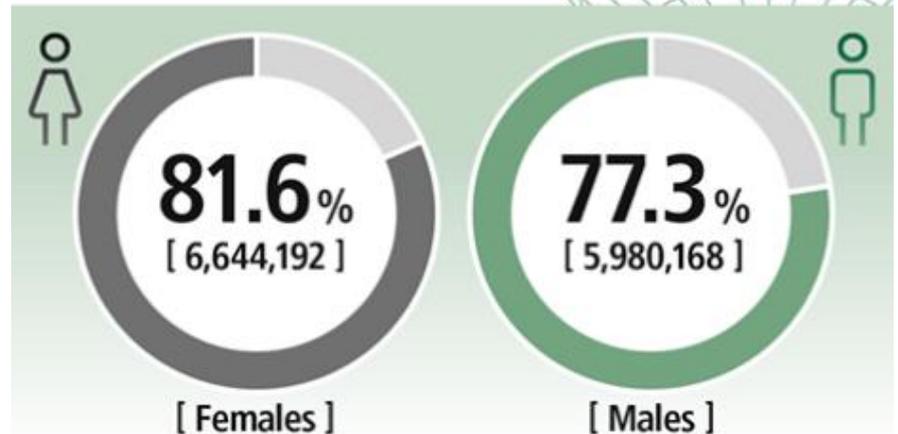


# The results

Should the law be changed to allow  
same-sex couples to marry?



Overall participation



# Neutral stance in emotionally-charged environment





# Conclusion



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