Building trust in statistics through communications

Conference of European Statisticians (CES), June 2018

David W. Kalisch, Australian Statistician
Public value of the ABS

Inform important decisions

Relevant, quality, timely statistics

Collect, integrate, process, analyse, disseminate

Integrated data assets

Engage and Collaborate

Corporate enables the business

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

- 40,000 employees enumerating
- 24 million people
- 10 million dwellings
- Up to 6 months to print paper forms
- 3,500 kg of ink
- 13,500 litres of glue
- 20 million items mailed
- 40,000 employees, including 100 Remote Area Mobile Teams visiting remote communities, 1,000 staff interviewing the homeless, 1,000 Address Carvassers, 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
What happened?

Thousands vent their anger over website meltdown

ABS LOSES ITS CENSUS

The Bureau of Statistics endangers the census by asking for names

CENSUS FARCE

Turmoil as website fails its biggest test

Down for the count: census thrown into chaos

Growing census boycott risks quality
Census Response – Forecast and Actual

[Graph showing forecast and actual totals over time]
Did the Census fail?...No

Overall response rate

95.1%

Online response rate

63.3%

Net undercount

1.0%
Trust and communications

integrity
sincerity
reliability
commitment
consistency
competence

Trust
Marriage Law Postal Survey

[AMLPS video to be inserted here]
**Unique challenge**

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<tr>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Marriage Law Postal Survey</th>
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<td>Six years to prepare and conduct</td>
<td>Fewer than 100 days from Government direction to completion</td>
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<td>23.4 million people in a mandatory process</td>
<td>12.7 million Australians participated out of 16 million eligible voters in voluntary survey (participation rate of 79.5 per cent)</td>
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<td>Census 2016 cost $500 million</td>
<td>Cost $80.5 million – well under the $122 million budget</td>
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How did we do it – communications lessons

- 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
Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey

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
'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
The results

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

- 61.6% [Yes]
- 38.4% [No]

Overall participation:
- 79.5%
  - 81.6% [Females: 6,644,192]
  - 77.3% [Males: 5,980,168]
Neutral stance in emotionally-charged environment

Honey... no happy socks for the SSM announcement... you have to look impartial.
Conclusion