Drivers of culture change at the ABS
Making the most of a 'fantastic failure'

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ABS Transformation

Past ABS

- **Strategy**
  - Collection-centric
  - Limited use of non-survey data

- **Governance**
  - Prescriptive rigid policies
  - Siloed
  - Insufficient delegation
  - Risk averse

- **Environment**
  - Independent agency disconnected from stakeholders
  - Lacking in political nous
  - Limited external communication

- **People**
  - Process oriented skills
  - Disconnected from wider APS
  - Lack of diversity, especially in SES

- **Culture**
  - Perfectionist
  - Specialist & technical
  - "That's just how we do it here"

- **Infrastructure**
  - Outdated
  - Fragile
  - Bespoke
  - Expensive to maintain

Future ABS

- **Strategy**
  - Increased public value & impact
  - Survey consolidation
  - Using more data & making more linkages

- **Governance**
  - Principles based policies & delegation
  - Actively engaged with risk
  - Simplified governance

- **Environment**
  - Strong partnerships & collaborations
  - Politically astute
  - Connected agency producing independent statistics

- **People**
  - Greater skills in analysis, interpretation & engagement
  - Diverse at all levels
  - Wider range of specialist skills
  - APS connected

- **Culture**
  - We are high performing, aligned, engaged, innovative and accountable

- **Infrastructure**
  - Future proof statistical infrastructure
  - Common systems & processes
  - Enabling flexible work
IT’S AUGUST 9 SO GET ONLINE!
TONIGHT IS CENSUS NIGHT.

OUR MOMENT TO PAUSE
Australia and Europe Area size comparison

Darwin to Perth 4396km  •  Perth to Adelaide 2707km  •  Adelaide to Melbourne 726km
Melbourne to Sydney 887km  •  Sydney to Brisbane 972km  •  Brisbane to Cairns 1748km
How empty is Australia?

66 million people live in France, but...

In Australia, 41,000 people live here

- 550 field interviewers
- 38,000 Census field staff
- 200 km between dwellings
August 9 2016 ...about 7.10 pm
2016 Census
Our ‘Fantastic Failure’!

Log in to your 2016 Census

Thank you for participating in the Census. The system is very busy at the moment. Please wait for 15 minutes before trying again. Your patience and cooperation are appreciated. [code 9]
2016 Census
Our ‘Fantastic Failure’!
Thousands vent their anger over website meltdown

ABS LOSES ITS CENSUS

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

Australian Bureau of Statistics Informing Australia’s important decisions
2016 Census
Census outcomes

- **Overall response rate**: 95.1%
- **Online response rate**: 63.3%
- **Net undercount**: 1.0%
Learnings – public trust, stakeholders, risk

- Recognise the context & adjust
- Use experts to assure
- Real risk management & contingency plans
- Communication & service delivery:
  - Open the ‘black box’ & map the journey
- Engage effectively with Government
- Demonstrate Privacy & Public Benefit
And then...
AUSTRALIANS will have their say on same-sex marriage by the end of November in a $122 million postal vote, if the Senate again rejects a compulsory plebiscite.

Liberal and Nationals MPs yesterday endorsed a plan to have the Australian Bureau of Statistics—which is still reeling from last year's bungled census—conduct a postal ballot should, as expected, the parliament fail to pass a legislation to give ayes and noes to the Whitlam Labor government to choose a new national song.

If the plebiscite Bill is unexpectedly passed, a $170 million compulsory vote would be held on November 25. A postal vote would see ballot papers in mailboxes from September 12 and a result declared on November 15. But there would be no publicly funded "yes" and "no" campaigns.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said if there was a 2016 election, with Labor arguing for parliament to decide rather than waste taxpayers' money.

"Strong leaders carry out their promises, weak leaders break them," Mr Turnbull said. "I'm a strong leader."

Labor Leader Bill Shorten asked the PM in Question Time if he endorsed the "vile rubbish" of anti-gay marriage campaigners such as former Tasmanian Liberal MP Chris Miles. Mr Miles circulated a pamphlet last year.
https://www.facebook.com/absstats/videos/1906760466051950/
A complex exercise with 27 partners

- 64 million letters and envelopes
- Australia’s largest ever mail out
- 200 remote and regional locations
- Three TV, radio, print and digital campaigns
- AMLPS special website
- Call centre
- Materials in 38 languages
- Online survey form
- Translation phone services
- Automated phone survey system
- Overseas elector mailout & IVR
- Stakeholder engagement
- Corrective services mailout
- Office shopfronts
- Automated online service requests
- 99 days to deliver..
Applying Census learnings to Marriage Law Survey

✓ Create a smooth user experience
✓ Support community participation
✓ Being agile and responsive
✓ Support our people
✓ Manage risk effectively; use experts
✓ Meet stakeholders expectations
✓ Keep data safe
AMLPS: Opportunity to practice our new ways of working

The postal survey's gone out, so there's just the voting, the ABS, the bill being passed in Parliament, the invitations, the wedding, the reception, the honeymoon, the suppression of all religious freedom and the complete dismantling of society as we know it. Have you decided on a cake yet?

All in favour of holding a postal survey on what our ruling should be just for a laugh...?
Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?

61.6% [Yes] 38.4% [No]

Overall participation

79.5%

81.6% [6,644,192] [Females]
77.3% [5,980,168] [Males]

AMLPS Video
youtube.com/watch?v=LNm0V5795d0
Results – success based on those learnings

Overall participation

- Overall participation: 79.5%
  - Females: 81.6% (6,644,192)
  - Males: 77.3% (5,980,168)

“Australians could be assured of the integrity of the survey.”
– Senator the Hon Matthew Canavan, Chair of the No Committee

$40m under budget

Australian Bureau of Statistics Informing Australia’s important decisions
Learnings for ABS from Census and AMLPS experiences

- Communication and user-centred design
- Agile
- Sense of community and positive workforce culture
- Collaboration
- Decision making
- Risk Management
Transparency and Learnings

✓ Search “conduct postal survey”
✓ www.abs.gov.au
✓ Publication 1800.0
ABS chief statistician David Kalisch makes nation wait for SSM answer
Thank you
Questions?