

Dear Glenda

Please find enclosed our response to the questions taken on notice during our appearance before the Standing Committee on Social Issues on 14 February 2008. We have also attached a copy of several regional maps of NSW showing Indigenous population data as requested by the Committee members.

We will bring a hardcopy of our letter (which contains a number of other useful resources) to our meeting on **Tuesday 8 April 2008 at 2:30pm.**

Kind regards

Charmaine Smith  
Indigenous Engagement Manager  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
Phone: (02) 9268 4206  
Mobile: 0402 838 943

### ***RESPONSE TO UNANSWERED QUESTIONS***

#### ***What difficulties do you face in collecting and producing meaningful data in relation to Indigenous people? Were the new approaches to the collection of data in relation to Indigenous people in response to these difficulties?***

The main issues in collecting and producing meaningful data in relation to Indigenous people relate to having the opportunity to indicate Indigenous status (in administrative collections) and issues surrounding sample sizes in statistical collections ie being able to provide statistically robust data without imposing undue survey burden on the Indigenous population. ABS undertakes continual improvement in its data collection processes and the knowledge and experience gained from each survey and census are incorporated into processes the next time around. Inclusion of the standard Indigenous identification question in administrative collections is assisting in developing data comparability between jurisdictions and through time and between data sources.

#### ***What is the new approach?***

The ABS continually reviews and refines the strategies used to collect data from Indigenous people. This includes:

- undertaking specific surveys of Indigenous people.
- Ensuring where appropriate the Indigenous identification question is included in surveys.
- Using special procedures such as Indigenous collectors or assistant collectors and advertising campaigns to improve the inclusion and identification of people in the census and surveys.
- Encouraging sources of administrative data to include and appropriately use the standard Indigenous identification questions.

#### ***The effect on Indigenous data and its reliability?***

The refinements to data collection mean that data is becoming more

reliable in the sense that it is a better reflection on the circumstances of Indigenous people. In some collections (ie deaths data) the data is not yet of sufficiently high coverage to give high quality results. It is thought that only about 35% of Indigenous deaths in NSW are correctly identified. In most areas though, the data reliability is high and is becoming more robust.

***The effect that these changes will have when tracking statistical change within the Indigenous population?***

Given the large Indigenous population in NSW, any changes observed in the data are more likely to be the result of changes in the average circumstances of the population rather than as a result of changes in the population being surveyed.

***The differences, if any, in meaningful data collection in rural and remote populations versus urban populations?***

In NSW there are few differences in the data collection processes between urban, rural and remote areas.

***Do you have a schedule for updating specific Indigenous data? For example, your website states that the NATSISS is carried out every 6 years. Given that this will occur in 2008, how long will it take before the data becomes available?***

The major Indigenous data collections are:

- The Census of Population and Housing which provides updated data every 5 years (2006 was the latest) with most data available within 12 months of the Census being undertaken. Census data provides information for small geographic areas.
- Final estimated Indigenous resident population (ERP) data which is available two years after the Census.
- Projections of the growth of the Indigenous population are available three years after the Census.
- Life expectancy data (based on Census and ERP data) is available about 27 months after each Census.
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Social Survey (NATSISS) is run every 6 years (2008) with data to be available by October 2009.
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) is run every 6 years (2011) with data expected to be available by October 2012.
- Each year the ABS produces data from various health (births, deaths and causes of death), education and justice administrative collections

***One of NATSISS aims is to measure selected items over time and monitor the changes. What are some of the difficulties in interpreting time-series data? Can we see the impact of policy changes in Indigenous disadvantage in statistics such as NATSISS?***

The main difficulty in interpreting time series data from NATSISS relates to the sample issues. Small changes observed in NATSISS

may be the result of sample issues. Generally the ABS will publish time series data and indicate whether any differences are statistically significant. Changes in Indigenous disadvantage may be observed in NATSISS output in various areas. In the report from the 2002 NATSISS, comparisons were made to data collected in 1994. Census data is also useful for measuring changes in disadvantage across areas such as qualification rates, home ownership and overcrowding.

***Do you have indicators of Indigenous well-being? What makes up these indicators?***

In 2007 the ABS released *ABS Directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics*. In this document the ABS indicated that the development of framework for the measurement of Indigenous wellbeing was proposed. Early work has started on this project and will continue over the next two years in consultation and collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders.

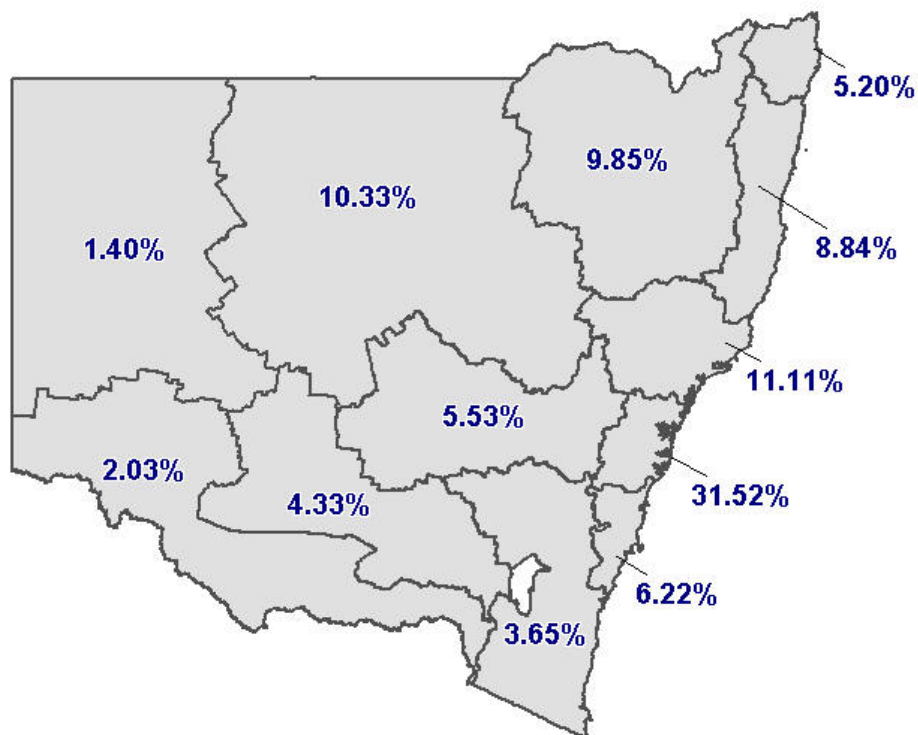
*(See attached file: Map of Indigenous NSW.doc)*

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population in New South Wales (2006) = 138,507



Statistical Division (SD)	Indigenous population count in each SD	Percentage of the total Indigenous population in NSW	Proportion of the population in the SD that is Indigenous
Sydney	43,518	31.52%	1.06%
Hunter	15,338	11.11%	2.60%
Illawarra	8,582	6.22%	2.18%
Richmond-Tweed	7,176	5.20%	3.27%
Mid-North Coast	12,200	8.84%	4.29%
Northern	13,600	9.85%	7.89%
North-Western	14,265	10.33%	12.82%
Central West	7,631	5.53%	4.47%
South Eastern	5,035	3.65%	2.54%
Murrumbidgee	5,984	4.33%	4.06%
Murray	2,804	2.03%	2.54%
Far West	1,935	1.40%	8.78%

**Map 1:** This map shows the distribution of the Indigenous population in NSW



**Map 2:** This map shows the proportion of the population within each Statistical Division that is Indigenous

