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**THE HON JIM CHALMERS MP
TREASURER**

**THE HON DR ANDREW LEIGH MP
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR COMPETITION, CHARITIES AND
TREASURY ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT**

Ref: MS24-900010

Saturday, 7 September 2024

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

The running of a five-yearly Census of Population and Housing (the Census) is required under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, with the next Census to be conducted in 2026. We write to seek your authority and approval for:

- the topics to be collected in the 2026 Census

The Census provides a snapshot of Australia and underpins critical decision making. It shows how our nation changes over time, helps estimate our population and informs critical decisions that guide our nation's future.

Topics to be collected in the 2026 Census

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* permits the Governor-General to prescribe, in regulations, the topics to be collected on the Census. The Australian Statistician is authorised to prepare questions that collect statistical information on those topics.

In June 2024, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provided recommendations to Government on topics for collection in the 2026 Census. The ABS has advised that most topics collected in the previous Census should remain unchanged.

Having considered the ABS advice, we recommend the following changes to the topics prescribed for the 2026 Census:

- Addition of one topic on 'sexual orientation and gender' (collected for all persons who are aged 16 years or older)

The addition of this topic would allow data on sexual orientation and gender to be collected in the Census for the first time. Understanding these population groups is vital to contribute to informed policy, planning, resource allocation and delivery of services at the national and local levels. It is critical to inform the monitoring and evaluation of actions under the

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Australian Government's 10-year National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People. Additionally, data collected on gender would support the Government's Working for Women Strategy to achieve gender equality in Australia.

The ABS has advised that they have confidence that data of sufficient quality can be collected on gender and sexual orientation.

In addition, we recommend the following minor amendments to existing topics, to ensure the 2026 Census meets current data collection standards. These minor amendments are:

- Minor amendments to the wording in the Regulation to better accommodate persons who use sign language:
 - 'Languages spoken at home': replace the word 'spoken' with 'used'
 - 'For a person who speaks a language other than English at home – his or her proficiency in spoken English': replace the word 'spoken' with 'used' and 'his or her' with 'the person's'.
- cease collection on the number of children ever born (currently collected from females who are aged 15 years or older), with the intent of moving to a decennial collection.

Prior to 2011, data on the topic of number of children ever born was collected every 10 years and the ABS has assessed that there is not a strong data need for collection every Census. Removing this topic of number of children ever born from the 2026 Census will help manage the burden on households completing the Census. The ABS intends to recommend its inclusion for the 2031 Census to meet data needs and align with international reporting requirements.

I seek your response at your earliest convenience, to allow sufficient time for changes to the Regulation to pass the disallowance period in both Houses in keeping with preparation timelines for the delivery of a successful 2026 Census.

Yours sincerely

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Hon Jim Chalmers MP

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Hon Andrew Leigh MP

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PRIME MINISTER
The Hon Anthony Albanese MP

Reference: MC24-000901

7 SEP 2024

The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP
Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer and Assistant Minister

Thank you for your letter received 7 September 2024 regarding proposed amendments to the 2026 Census topics. Based on your advice, I agree to the following amendments to topics to be included in the 2026 Census:

- the addition of one topic on 'sexual orientation and gender' to be included in the 2026 Census;
- minor amendments to the wording in the regulation for the 2026 Census to accommodate persons who use sign language; and
- cease collection on the number of children ever born in the 2026 Census (currently collected from females who are aged 15 years or older), with the intention to collect this every ten years instead.

Yours sincerely,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

ANTHONY ALBANESE

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