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FOI ref: 201617/35

Justin Warren
E-mail: foi+request-2166-16b5f000@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Mr Warren

RE: YOUR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

I refer to your application of 21 November 2016 (Attachment A), in which you requested an Internal Review of Charges under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) regarding the decision made by Ms Williams in relation to your FOI Request (FOI 201617/35). On 17 November 2016, the ABS provided you with an estimate of charges for your FOI request dated 8 August 2016, stating that the total cost of the request would be \$943, and that a deposit of \$235 was required before work can be commenced on your request.

Internal Review of the Decision

I am an authorised decision maker under section 23 of the FOI Act and, in compliance with section 54C of the FOI Act, am an appropriate person to review the decision made by Ms Williams to impose charges.

Findings of the Internal Review

After reviewing your request, I have decided to waive all charges associated with your request. It is my opinion that there is a high level of public interest in the content of your request, noting the comments of the Australian Senate Economics Reference Committee report into the 2016 Census and support your request to waive charges on this basis.

The ABS will now commence work on your request dated 8 November 2016, noting that we will provide a response to you by 23 January 2017 as per the extension of time granted by the OAIC under s15AB of the FOI Act.

Yours sincerely

Denise Carlton
Program Manager
Population Statistics
Australian Bureau of Statistics

16 December 2016

ATTACHMENT A

Dear Australian Bureau of Statistics,

Thank you for agreeing to release the information I have requested.

I contend that access to the documents requested is in the general public interest or in the interest of a substantial section of the public, and that the charges should not be imposed, for the following reasons:

- There is widespread public interest in the conduct of the 2016 Census, particularly the decision to retain names and addresses and the impact on personal privacy.
- The documents I have requested will help to provide much needed context around the decision to retain names and addresses, and the safeguards the ABS has in place to maintain individual privacy.
- The ABS has not, thus far, done a particularly good job of explaining how it manages data security and privacy. There is plenty of evidence for this fact, not least the comparisons the ABS itself has made with other jurisdictions (like New Zealand and the UK) where more substantial use of data linkage is made with greater public support.
- The ABS has an opportunity to here to help build up public support for use of Census data in linkage projects, and to correct a perception that it is secretive and arrogant by showing how transparent and open it can be.

Yours faithfully,

Justin Warren

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foi+request-2166-16b5f000@righttoknow.org.au

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