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DIVERSITY
COUNCIL
AUSTRALIA

Division Head
Macroeconomic Modelling and Policy Division
Treasury
Langton Cres
Parkes ACT 2600

By email: 2021CensusRegulations@treasury.gov.au

Census and Statistics Amendment (Statistical Information) Regulations 2019

Dear Division Head

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the exposure draft of the *Census and Statistics Amendment (Statistical Information) Regulations 2019*.

Diversity Council Australia is the only independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity and inclusion advisor to business in Australia. We have a wealth of experience providing advice to our members on the business benefits of diversity.

DCA strongly supports the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in the 2021 Census.

Asking appropriate questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in the 2021 Census is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for policy, program and service planning. What's more, having a better understanding of the diverse make up of Australia is critical in fostering a more inclusive society for everyone.

LGBTIQ+ people are part of the Australian population, and everyone deserves to be counted. Australian organisations have been asking questions about the sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status of their employees for some time.

We strongly urge the government to take the lead from Australian businesses and ensure that appropriately worded questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status are included in the 2021 census.

Please feel free to contact myself or DCA's Manager Government Relations, Cathy Brown, cathy@dca.org.au should you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Officer

I. ABOUT DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

Who we are

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We provide unique research, inspiring events and programs, curated resources and expert advice across all diversity dimensions to a community of member organisations.

Our mission

In partnership with our members, our mission is to:

- Lead debate on diversity in the public arena;
- Develop and promote the latest diversity research, thinking and practice; and
- Deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to enable our members to drive business improvement.

What we do

600 Australian based organisations are members of DCA, many of whom are Australia's business diversity leaders and biggest employers. Some of our founding members include ANZ Bank, AMP, Boral, Coles, IBM Australia, Myer, Orica, Rio Tinto and Westpac.

DCA is not government funded - its income is generated from membership fees, sponsorships and services to business/employers.

DCA works in partnership with members to generate ground breaking evidence-based diversity and inclusion resources that enables Australian organisations to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

- **DCA resources are ahead of the curve.** They establish leading diversity thinking and practice, enabling Australian organisations to re-imagine and reconfigure the way they manage talent in today's dynamic operating environments.
- **DCA resources drive business improvement.** They are high impact, driving business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.
- **DCA resources are practice focused.** They respond to the information needs of industry leaders and the people they employ.
- **DCA resources speak to the Australian context.** DCA projects generate leading diversity thinking and practice that speaks to Australia's unique and distinctive institutional, cultural and legal frameworks.
- **DCA resources considers all diversity dimensions.** The full spectrum of diversity dimensions are investigated including age, caring responsibilities, cultural background and identity, disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, and work organisation.

II. BACKGROUND

Diversity surveys

One of the most common questions that we are asked by Australian organisations is how to conduct a diversity survey.

Diversity surveys are a powerful tool for understanding the mix of employees in an organisation, and help Australian businesses make informed decisions about the future direction and aspirations of their diversity and inclusion and overall business strategies.

Australian organisations conduct diversity surveys to support a range of business needs:

- To map the demographic diversity profile of their workforce.
- To assess how well their workforce reflects the diversity of your client base, Australia's labour market, and/or the Australian community.
- To assist with meeting reporting requirements.
- To monitor their talent pipeline to identify organisational levels and areas where various demographic groups are notably over or under represented.
- To assess over time the impact of D&I initiatives on individuals, teams and your organisation.
- And where inclusion survey questions are also asked, to compare the inclusion experiences of employees from various demographic groups (e.g. compare female and male employee inclusion experiences).

Like a workplace diversity survey, the census is powerful tool for providing information on a standard basis for the country as a whole, as well as for small geographic areas and small population groups. This information is essential to support the planning, administration and policy development activities of governments, business and other users.

Without capturing appropriate information on all groups there will be program gaps, health inequities, and a failure to grasp fully the diversity of Australia.

Developing appropriately worded questions.

For some people, responding to a survey about their demographic background may feel personal or perhaps even intrusive. It is vital then that demographic survey questions, response options, and reporting should be respectful, sensitive, and not make people feel uncomfortable or inadvertently cause offence.

For self-determination reasons, DCA supports the use of appropriately worded questions that have been developed by peak organisations in consultation with the community.

For questions about gender identity and sexual orientation, we refer our members to ACON's **Recommended Sexuality and Gender Indicators** available at:

<https://www.acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/policy-research/>.

When asking about intersex status, we advocate the approach promoted by Intersex Human Rights Australia to remove intersex from questions about sex or gender, and ask a separate question about intersex status. See: <https://ihra.org.au/forms/>

III. RECOMMENDATION

That the Australian government ensures that appropriately worded questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status are included in the 2021 census.