

Response ID [REDACTED]

Submitted to 2026 Census topic consultation - Phase two
Submitted on 2023-08-25 09:44:17

Consent to publish submissions following the consultation period

Do you give permission for the ABS to publish your submission after the consultation closes? (Select one)

Yes, publish without my name, contributors' names and email addresses

Contact details

Contact name

Name:
Eilean Haley

Organisation name (if applicable)

Organisation (if applicable):
Women's Declaration International - Australian chapter

Email address

Email address:

[REDACTED]

Confirm email address:

[REDACTED]

Do you wish to receive email updates on the outcome of this consultation and at key points in the 2026 Census topic review process?

Yes

Select the category that best describes you or the organisation you represent:

Organisation categories:
Community organisation

Other organisation:

Has this submission been prepared in collaboration with any other individual(s) or organisation(s)?

No (select the Continue button at the bottom of the page)

Additional individual(s) or organisation(s).

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Select the category that best describes the individual or organisation:

Other:

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Select the category that best describes the individual or organisation:

Other:

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Select the category that best describes the individual or organisation:

Other:

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Select the category that best describes the individual or organisation:

Community organisation

Other:

Potential removal - Number of children ever born

Background information

Do you currently use Number of children ever born data from the Census? (Select one)

No

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if this topic was not collected in the 2026 Census and next collected in the 2031 Census.

Text box provided for the expected impact if Number of children ever born was not collected in the 2026 Census:

N/A

Do you have any further information on the Number of children ever born topic to inform our assessment?

Text box provided for further information on Number of children ever born:

We have no issue with decennial collection. Our concern is with the ABS's stated intentions to redesign the question to be 'more inclusive' and to 'work really closely with LGBTQ+ organisations on that redesign' (ABS Census 2026 webinar held on 3 August 2023).

LGBTIQ+ organisations are not the only stakeholders here, or even the main stakeholders. Any redesign of this question should be widely consulted with women's organisations. We note your advice by email dated 16 August 2023 that the ABS will consult a broad range of individuals and groups when formulating questions for the 2026 Census. We are, however, concerned by the obsequious Public Statement of Regret released on 14 August by the ABS in which a promise was made to consult specifically with the LGBTQ+ community and set up a LGBTQ+ Expert Advisory Committee ahead of the 2026 Census. Are there any plans to offer similar special consultative status to women's groups?

In our experience, commitment to promoting LGBTQ+ interests in this particular instance is code for erasing the terms 'mother' and 'woman'. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) – to which Australia is a signatory – emphasises maternal rights and the social significance of maternity - <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>.

Erasing the terms 'mother' and 'woman' is a disservice not just to women but to the whole of society.

We draw to your attention the following incident involving Services Australia which took place last year:

<https://honey.nine.com.au/parenting/new-mum-sall-grover-birthing-parent-not-mother-official-form/2d661806-53f5-484a-92dd-b65297333529>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jul/21/bill-shorten-intervenes-to-remove-birthing-parent-from-medical-forms-amid-criticism-in-daily-telegraph>

We advise against the ABS embroiling itself in a similar debacle.

Additional feedback

Would you like to provide any feedback on the other proposed new topics for the 2026 Census? (Select all that apply)

Gender

You do not need to provide information that has already been included in a submission during phase one. :

We urge the ABS to fully consider the labyrinthine chaos it would generate by attempting to categorise and document 'gender'. As the saying goes, with dozens of recognised genders and more being added on a regular basis, it will be like herding the proverbial clutter of cats.

Gender is nothing but a set of sexist stereotypes. The ABS would not be collecting data on anything real but would instead be reinforcing sexism.

If the 'gender' question were mandatory, which appears to be the intention (ABS Census webinar – 3 August 2023), it would force many people who do not adhere to gender-identity ideology – and accordingly don't consider themselves to have a gender – to contravene either section 14 of the Act (provide information) or section 15 (not provide false or misleading information).

We draw attention to what the ABS has in mind for the religion topic, as stated by Census Director Georgia Chapman at the ABS Census webinar on 3 August 2023)

'We heard that the current wording suggests someone has a religion and a lot of feedback that it would be nice to reframe the question to start with understanding if a person does have a religion and then ask them what that religion is. What we're thinking is a two-part question to address that need.'

In our view, the situation with gender is comparable.

A household representative would presumably be obliged to 'assign' a gender to every member of his/her household, even newborns. This prospect most clearly reveals the incoherence of gender-identity ideology and its unsuitability as a category of data collection. We submit that it would be quite inappropriate for household representatives to be expected to evaluate how a child 'feels themselves to be' or experiences their 'alignment' with their sex.

We envisage scenarios in which a household representative, endeavouring in good faith to comply with census requirements, lists his/her two-year-old daughter's gender as 'male' because she likes to play with toy trucks. We also envisage scenarios in which a household representative, in order to produce answers for the census, subjects a child or adolescent to questioning on issues such as how they feel about their bodies. Such an experience might well arouse, in a vulnerable young person, doubts and anxieties which did not exist prior to this questioning.

The announced intention (ABS Census webinar – 3 August 2023) is to take the terminology of the ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables (the Standard) as a 'start' for the design of the census question. That is, the intention is to persist with the Standard's conflation of sex and gender (where, for example, 'female' and 'male' are regarded as terms that apply to both sex and gender). This will inevitably confuse and mislead, or alternatively induce outright objection. In either case, the results produced will be unreliable. We consider both the Standard, and the 2015 Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender on which it is based, as manifestly unfit for purpose. We urge the ABS to ignore them.

We note that the Standard was produced in 'close consultation with the LGBTIQ+ community' (ABS Census webinar – 3 August 2023).

We do not accept the existence of such a 'community'. It is increasingly clear that LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual), TQ (Transgender, Queer), and I (Intersex) constitute different social groups (not to mention the vague +), with disparate interests and challenges. LGB Alliance Australia states:

'We are a distinct and unique cohort whose needs differ from what mainstream LGBTIQ+ organisations now advocate for, as we need to have some single-sex public spaces to meet the specific needs of same-sex attracted people, for our mental health and social wellbeing. LGBTIQ+ organisations are now entirely identity-focused, advocating for individuals who are gender identity-attracted and those who choose to identify however they wish – e.g., as the opposite sex, as same-gender attracted lesbians and gays, or both-gender attracted bisexuals – regardless of their actual sex or sexual orientation.'

See <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/634a133cb44231570b60062d/t/64d21bd957a9a745029d3a11/1691491290854/LGB-Alliance-Australia-Submission-Inquiry+I>

ACON, in particular, is not a suitable organisation to be providing expert advice to the ABS. It runs the employment program, the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI), which is at variance with women's interests as it promotes the abolition of women's toilets in the workplace; the cessation of collection of sex-disaggregated data; and the erasure of the term 'mother' - see <https://aconexposed.org/wp/>.

More importantly, we reject the notion that these so-called LGBTIQ+ groups are the only stakeholders who should be consulted on the issue of gender. Women, in particular, have a deep interest in upholding our sex-based rights, and in ensuring that gender – a hierarchy that relegates us to a subordinate position in society – does not become entrenched as a set of societal norms - see <https://www.womensdeclaration.com/en/>.

We call for wide-ranging, detailed consultation with women before any decision is made to recommend the inclusion of 'Gender' as a topic in the census. We call for the involvement of a broad cross-section of the Australian community, with strong participation by women, in all and any focus groups, cognitive interviews, and large-scale public tests conducted by the ABS on the topic of gender.

Would you like to provide any feedback on the other proposed changes to existing topics for the 2026 Census? (Select all that apply)

Sex

You do not need to provide information that has already been included in a submission during phase one. :

We are relieved to see that 'Sex' has been retained as a topic. Our concerns with the addition of the phrase 'recorded at birth' were stated in our Phase One submission. These concerns remain. The ABS notes that the 'majority of feedback' received on the topic requested the addition of this phrase. We consider it inappropriate that the ABS should be making determinations on such a basis, as it lays it open to manipulation by powerful groups with the resources to spend time preparing and delivering submissions. Women's groups and individual women, in particular, often lack the resources and time to engage in such activities and are at a distinct disadvantage in this regard.

If a phrase is to be added to the 'Sex' topic, we would prefer the wording to be 'Sex as recorded at birth' rather than 'Sex recorded at birth', in order to more clearly reflect the immutability of biological sex.

Would you like to tell us anything else as part of your submission?

Text box provided for further information on anything else:

Upload attachment:

No file uploaded