



Response to consultation Census and Statistics (Census) Regulation 2015

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On behalf of: Freelance Australia, a membership organisation established further the interests of Australia's growing freelance workforce

Submission:

[Recent research](#) shows that freelancing is on the rise in Australia, with an estimated 4 million Australians doing some type of freelancing work. The same research shows that an additional 370,000 people started freelancing in the last year. It would be invaluable to have such evidence at the level of the census as well. By ensuring the census asks appropriate questions, it will be possible to have much richer evidence at national level about moves to non-traditional work structures, evidence which will be invaluable for future policy-making in terms of pensions, superannuation, workplace relations and many other areas of federal policy.

Upwork has identified 5 types of freelancers:

- independent contractors
- moonlighters
- diversified workers
- freelance business owners
- temporary workers

Our concerns around the proposed census regulation relate particularly to Section X, setting out the collection of information relating to the previous week's work.

(a) status in employment during that week;

Is this a question with directed answers or will respondents be free to outline their own understanding of their status? If the former, will the options available recognise that a growing section of the Australian workforce does not easily sit in the category of either employed or self-employed? While independent contractors may be self-employed, a diversified worker may have a part-time job and be undertaking freelance work for the rest of the week.

(b) occupation during that week;

Research around freelancing, such as Upwork's recent survey, shows that the freelance workforce is increasingly diversified. A single freelancer may identify with several different occupations. For example, an individual may design personal websites, manage social media, provide strategic communications advice and work in a cafe, all in the same week. There should therefore be flexibility to allow an individual to indicate more than one occupation in a given week.

(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;

Again, there should be flexibility here to allow multiple answers to this question. There should also be clarification as to the exact nature of the question being asked. If a sole trader is working for company X during the census week, should the answer to this question be the sole trader's undertaking or company X?

(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;

If multiple undertakings are indicated in c) then the individual should be able to indicate the hours worked next to each one.

(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;

Again, this question can be constricting for freelancers and sole traders who may exercise numerous different functions during a week.

Our main concern is that the census questions are designed to be able to capture the extent of freelance work in all its forms in Australia. The indications from existing surveys are that freelancing and "gig-work" are on the rise. The right questions in the census can give a much clearer picture of this type of work and so ensure that the needs of freelancers of all types are recognised in policy-making in the future.

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