



## SUBMISSION TO 'PROPOSAL TO REMAKE THE STATISTICS DETERMINATION 1983'

### Comment from Swinburne University of Technology on the draft instrument

I wish to comment on: Proposed change and Clause d(ii) Access to an increased range of de-identified unit record level business information (Clause 7 (1)(b)).

**Summary of the first round of submissions:** Although there was general support for this change, two submissions recommended that consent should be required for release of information that has had direct identifiers removed but is reasonably identifiable or may enable indirect identification. The submissions further suggested that if the ABS is required to seek consent under Clause 5, then it should also seek consent under Clause 7.

**Swinburne's view:** Identification of de-identified businesses (via recognising unique values in the accounting data) would potentially be possible for companies whose data is already in the public domain. Recognising private companies would only be possible if a person already had detailed information about the company (such as its exact sales, assets etc).

There is generally no motive for economics researchers to make these data public, in part because much of this data is in the public domain already via company accounts and ASIC reports. In addition, there is never any reason for an economic research paper or report to list information about individual businesses. Economics is primarily about systematic forces and underlying trends. It is not concerned with examples or case studies. Results are presented as summary tabulations of data, graphs and regression outputs.

The five-safes is an internationally recognised method for protecting confidential data. There has never been an international breach of confidentiality of enterprise data to my knowledge. Such breaches would become a matter of international news and would become widely discussed. It would effectively end a person's academic career.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Webster'.

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