

Chapter 1:

Introduction

This report represents Statistics New Zealand's initial consideration of the outputs and content of the 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings. It is based on an understanding of public policy issues and the information needs of the community and individuals. This understanding has been developed through our knowledge of the uses of census data and through preliminary discussions with key users.

The report is intended to provide a guide for the discussion and consultation necessary to help make the final decisions as to which topics will be included in the 2001 Census. In releasing this report, Statistics New Zealand acknowledges that the information needs of government and the community should largely determine the outputs and content of the population census, and it affirms its commitment to the widest possible consultation.

As with recent censuses, there will be widely-publicised public meetings and the chance for the public to make written submissions, to ensure that all those interested have an opportunity to comment on the outputs and content of New Zealand's largest survey.

The census is a very important source of information on society. It is, however, only one source. There are many requirements for social and population information which can be effectively met from sources other than the census.

The consultation process has been a significant influence on census content since 1986, when more widespread consultation beyond public agencies was initiated.

The submission process

While welcoming comment on any aspect of the 2001 Census, the public submissions programme seeks comment primarily on the following:

- the information that users require from the 2001 Census;
- whether the topics reviewed in this report cover those information requirements.

Guidelines have been provided at the end of this report to help you make a submission. Submissions should be completed and returned by **30 June 1998** in order to receive full consideration.

Additional submission forms are available from the offices of Statistics New Zealand listed at the front of this report. The report is also available on the department's internet: <http://www.stats.govt.nz>. Reference copies of the report are available at major public libraries.

The deadline is necessary to ensure that all submissions can be assessed thoroughly before a final decision is made on census content. This assessment may involve follow-up discussions with organisations or individuals making submissions, or those affected by the submissions of others.

To ensure that your submission receives full consideration it should:

- include a full justification for any action recommended;
- provide specific uses for the data collected on any topic.

All topics considered for inclusion in the 2001 Census will be evaluated against the content constraints and the criteria for inclusion detailed in Chapter 4.

To provide an opportunity for public discussion of census content, a series of public forums will be held during June in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Census content will also be canvassed in a wider programme of consultation with iwi and Pacific Island groups, also in June, on statistical needs.

Where to from here?

When the topic content of the 2001 Census has been settled, Statistics New Zealand will develop relevant questions and begin a testing programme to ensure the satisfactory performance of the census questions and questionnaires. It is possible that this process will result in some re-evaluation of census content. This may occur where, given the constraints of the census forms and requirement for their completion with little or no assistance, it is not possible to devise a question on a topic which will provide the information sought, or where a question is found to inappropriately affect responses to other census questions.

It is intended to hold a full dress rehearsal for the 2001 Census during 2000, using final census questionnaires and fully tested enumeration and processing procedures. The census questionnaire will not be finalised until the completion of this testing phase in mid-2000.