

Annette Riley

Senate Standing Committees on Economics
Re: 2016 Census Inquiry
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thankyou for this opportunity to provide feedback on the issues with the recent Census. As my submission, I would like to share one poignant comment I read online from a mother who was chosen to participate in one of the Australian Bureau of Statistic's other household surveys, the health survey.

This one comment sums up so much of what is wrong with the current data collection powers held by the ABS, that they are so determined to collect data even to the point of compromising the health and safety of survey participants.

Comment taken from <http://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/australian-economy/the-outrageous-fines-you-face-if-you-dont-fill-out-census-properly/news-story/c0deab26de8ee81f44c37a9a5ab1d990?pg=1#comments>

mother of schizophrenic forced to breach trust

Posted at 8:55 PM

August 03, 2016

Comment 19 of 230

i was chosen for ABS survey and asked for exemption because i had paranoid schizophrenic child and if he saw me giving information about him this could exacerbate his illness and break down the trust i needed to keep with him alive! I was told it is important to include people with schizophrenia in the survey to help them get services. They came to door anyhow saying it would cost \$180 per day UNTIL i complied. Only option not to would be to get a medical letter proving the person is schizophrenic and that the risk of someone coming to the door and asking a whole heap of very personal questions on behalf of the government would be dangerous - of course this would not be possible as how could i explain to him that the government required him to get this! it was safer to answer the questions, which i did immediately, sitting on a garden wall outside the house and crying. if i left it one week, my fine would be far higher than people i know have paid in fines for drink driving or other serious crimes! and i would continue to be fined daily UNTIL i complied. No way out! Ironically the survey i was forced to risk a schizophrenic's safety for was supposed to gauge health and wellbeing!

Now imagine the effect that a linkage key linking mental health records to all government datasets would have on people in a fragile state of mind?

I can't vouch for the truth of the above comment, but it does sound genuine to me, and it does sound believable that this organisation would be so callous and so reckless in their pursuit of data at all costs that they would endanger the lives of patients who rely on a strong bond of trust with their doctors and carers.

I would ask that the committee please review the powers of the ABS to collect health information on a non-voluntary basis, and also to please recommend that plans for data-linking and creation of linkage keys not proceed without the consent of the participants.

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A. Riley.