Australian Bureau of Statistics

ABS SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE OF WORK AND WORKERS

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The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the invitation to provide a submission into the inquiry into the future of work and workers.

The ABS is Australia's official national statistical agency, with the purpose of informing Australia's important decisions by partnering and innovating to deliver relevant, trusted, and objective data, statistics and insights.

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1. THE ROLE OF THE ABS IN SUPPORT OF A CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF WORK AND WORKERS

As Australia's official national statistical agency, the ABS has published an extensive range of statistics on work and workers over the past 100 years. These data provide important insights into the current state of work and workers, and also information on important short, medium and long term trends. Using these data, Australia's governments, businesses, researchers, employee and employer associations, and the community can forecast into the future.

A list of current key statistical collections which inform on work and workers in Australia can be found in Appendix A of this submission. Most of these collections provide long standing time series of data, from which it is possible to draw fundamentally important inferences about our past, present and potential futures.

The ABS also has an important role in supporting contemporary definitions of work. This is achieved through regular engagement with key experts and users of labour statistics (including the ABS Labour Statistics Advisory Group), and also through important international fora, such as the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). By engaging with Australian and international experts, the ABS ensures that statistical measurement keeps pace with the information requirements of modern labour markets and economies.

In line with its role in defining and supporting statistical measurement standards, the ABS has a particularly important role as the Australian custodian of the standards and classifications around occupation and industry - the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) and the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC). Occupation and industry information is essential to an effective understanding of work and workers, and these standards and classifications are

periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the changing nature of work, job roles, business activity and the composition of the economy.

2. ENSURING THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK AND WORKERS IS EFFECTIVELY MEASURED BY OFFICIAL STATISTICS

The ABS is conscious of the importance of maintaining and enhancing the quality of official statistics covering work and workers – an important element being their relevance.

The ABS conducts regular reviews to ensure that its statistics keep pace with the priority requirements of a modern labour market, economy and society – reviews that are well supported by engagement with key experts and data users, including the annual meeting of the ABS Labour Statistics Advisory Group. These regular reviews also provide the opportunity to draw connections and contrasts between international discussions and the Australian context.

In addition, the ABS also periodically conducts major reviews. The most recent major review around the Labour Force Survey and other related population surveys, which are particularly important to informing some of the key elements of the inquiry, was conducted in 2012, with the outcomes implemented in 2014. For more information on this example, refer to *Information paper: Outcomes of the Labour Household Surveys Content Review, 2012* (ABS cat. no. 6107.0)

In the international arena the ABS is currently engaged in discussions with other international experts around the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) and the International Classification of Status at Work (ICSaW), which are being reviewed to reflect evolving changes in employment relationships, working arrangements and other labour market changes around the world.

The ABS is exploring the scope and timing of a review of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), which was last reviewed in 2013.

Lastly, the ABS is actively exploring how the information base can be extended and improved – in particular, through the potential opportunities from administrative data and data integration. Linked employer-employee data presents important potential benefits for undertaking detailed occupation analysis, and detailed geography analysis from personal income tax and business tax data – on a far more frequent and detailed basis than has previously been possible.

In addition to administrative data, the future directions also include making greater use of integrated data and modelling techniques, to further expand the base of statistics to inform on work and workers, into the future. In July 2017, the ABS released the first Australian Labour Account, which integrates data from a number of sources (including household survey, business survey, and administrative data). The Labour Account provides annual information on work and workers (including a complete estimate of the number of jobs worked in each industry over time, the total hours worked and the income earned by people employed) within a single framework. In particular, it is expected to support major improvements in Australia's productivity statistics. Work is currently underway on a quarterly Labour Account, due for release in 2018.

APPENDIX A – SELECTED CURRENT STATISTICS ON WORK AND WORKERS

Relevant ABS statistical collections based on the Census and population surveys
- *Census of Population and Housing* (ABS cat. no. 2011)
- *Labour Force, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6202.0)
- *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery* (ABS cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)
- *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly* (ABS cat. no. 6291.0.55.003)
- *Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families* (ABS cat. no. 6224.0.55.001)
- *Characteristics of Employment, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6333.0)
- *Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6226.0)
- *Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6250.0)
- *Education and Work, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6227.0)
- *Pregnancy and Employment Transitions* (ABS cat. no. 4913.0)
- *Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6239.0)
- *Qualifications and Work* (ABS cat. no. 4235.0)
- *Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6238.0)
- *Work-Related Injuries, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6324.0)
- *Household Income and Wealth, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6523.0)
- *Disability and Labour Force Participation* (ABS cat. no. 4433.0.55.006)
- *Voluntary Work, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 4441.0)

Relevant ABS statistical collections based on business surveys
- *Australian Industry* (ABS cat. no. 8155.0)
- *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6302.0)
- *Business Indicators, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 5676.0)
- *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6306.0)
- *Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6248.0.55.002)
- *Industrial Disputes, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6321.0.55.001)
- *Job Vacancies, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6354.0)
- *Labour Costs, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6348.0)
- *Wage Price Index, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6348.0)

Relevant ABS statistical collections based on administrative data

- Linked Employer-Employee Data: *Information Paper: Construction of Experimental Statistics on Employee Earnings and Jobs from Administrative Data, Australia, 2011-12* (ABS cat. no. 6311.0)

Relevant ABS statistical collections based on compilation methods

- *Labour Account, Australia* (ABS cat. no. 6150.0.55.001)