



www.abs.gov.au
ABN: 26 331 428 522

CENTRAL OFFICE

ABS House
45 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617

Locked Bag 10
Belconnen ACT 2616

Telephone: (02) 6252 5000
Facsimile: (02) 6251 6009

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

**Inquiry into Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Legislation Amendment (Child Support Reform Consolidation and Other
Measures) Bill 2007**

On behalf of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), I provide this submission to the Committee in relation to the proposed introduction of registration of birth as a condition of eligibility for the baby bonus (Schedule 6, Part 2) and the likely impacts on selected statistics produced by the ABS.

State and Territory legislation requires that births be registered with the relevant State and Territory Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages within 60 days. Data provided by the Registrars to the ABS are used to compile population, demographic and health statistics. These statistics are critical for regular decision making on the distribution of Australian Government funds to State, Territory and Local Governments (including GST revenue and financial assistance grants) and the apportionment of House of Representative seats to the States and Territories. These statistics are also used for monitoring population, health and demographic trends and components of demographic change in Australia which are used for a wide range of public policy and program development and monitoring.

In many cases the requirement for these statistics are set out in legislation such as the *Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918*, the *Census and Statistics Act, 1905* and the *A New Tax Act (Commonwealth-State Financial Arrangements) Act 1999*. Maintaining and improving the quality and effectiveness of Australia's vital registration system and the extraction and compilation of statistical information from the registers is of critical interest to all levels of government in Australia.

There is an interval between the birth of each child and their registration with the relevant Registrar. While generally small, this can sometimes be several months or even years. The ABS has been aware of an increase in the average

interval over several years, although there was a large improvement in 2005 driven mostly by improvements in New South Wales. There are also large differences in the average length of delay in birth registration across Australia ranging from 1.1 months for Northern Territory to 3.3 months in Queensland in 2005. Delays by parents in submitting a completed Birth Registration Statement to the Registry, as well as processing delays and seasonal registration workload peaks can contribute to these delays. The attached article "Delayed birth registrations in Australia" in the ABS publication *Births, Australia, 2005* (ABS cat. no. 3301.0) illustrates the differential impact of delayed birth registration across states and territories over recent years, age of mother, Indigenous status of mother and marital status of the child's parents.

It is expected that the new requirement may result in a change in parents' behaviour, and improvements in the registration of births that would normally not be registered, or registered later than required by state and territory legislation. If this occurs, the ABS anticipates an improvement in the quality of birth and fertility statistics and population estimates for Australia and the States and Territories.

Should you have any questions, please contact Patrick Corr, Director, Demography on (02) 6252 6411 or patrick.corr@abs.gov.au

Yours faithfully



Susan Linacre
Deputy Australian Statistician
Population Statistics Group

20 April 2007