



**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN SERVICES (ENHANCED SERVICE DELIVERY)
BILL 2007**

8 March 2007

Introduction

1 The ABS was asked to provide statistical information on fraud, and specifically on taxation and personal fraud, to the Inquiry into the Human Services (Enhanced Service Delivery) Bill 2007. The ABS does not collect any information on fraud offences or fraud victimisation and is unable to provide the requested information to the Inquiry.

2 The ABS was also requested to provide information on any planned new collection work on fraud. The following paragraphs describe proposed new collection activity on personal fraud and provide information on other sources of data on fraud, which may be of use to the inquiry"

Proposed ABS Survey on Personal Fraud in Australia

3 The ABS is currently developing a survey to provide data on aspects of consumer/personal fraud. Details of the data to be collected are currently being negotiated with a group of users who will provide funding for the survey.

4 The primary aim of the survey is to provide a measure of the prevalence of personal fraud, which for the purposes of this survey includes some aspects of identity fraud and the victimisation of persons via scams, in Australia during the last 12 months. The survey is aimed at persons in households and is not intended to cover business or government fraud.

Identity fraud

5 Personal fraud will encompass only some aspects of identity fraud as identify fraud cannot be measured in its entirety through this survey. Identity fraud for this survey will measure the level of victimisation due to:

- use of credit card or card details to withdraw cash or make purchases without permission
- use of personal details through forged, stolen or fraudulent personal documents without permission
- use of identity in any other way without permission (including conduct business, open accounts, or take out loans in respondent's name)

6 Further information to be collected in relation to identity fraud includes: number of occasions of misuse of the above information; reporting rate to authorities; who they reported to and the amount of money lost, if any, through this fraudulent activity.

Personal victimisation through scams

7 Another aspect of personal/consumer fraud to be covered by this survey is the prevalence of personal victimisation through scams in Australia. This part of the

survey will identify the level of victimisation of persons due to various types of scam activity including: phishing; advance fee fraud; chain letters; lotteries; pyramid schemes; bank details; and transferring money. The amount of money lost via these fraudulent activities will also be measured. Other items to be covered include mode of the request and whether personal details were provided.

8 A wide range of demographics will also be collected for both types of frauds.

Timing

9 ABS plans to collect information from a representative sample of approximately 13,500 persons aged 15 years or more between 1 July 2007 and 31 December 2007. This is subject to the successful completion of a survey dress rehearsal in February and March 2007.

Expected release date of outputs

10 The first set of outputs from the survey is expected at the end of March 2008. These outputs will include very broad national headline indicators on:

- the victim prevalence rate and estimated number of victims of personal fraud in the last 12 months in Australia
- the dollar amount lost by victims to personal frauds in the last 12 months in Australia, and
- the most frequent three categories of personal frauds.

11 More detailed information, including state/territory data is expected to be released in May/June 2008. The level of detail available will be dependent on the level of prevalence of these types of fraud across Australia.

Other sources for information about Fraud

Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC)

12 The Australian Institute of Criminology is developing a survey of the business sector to examine the extent and impact of 'cyber crime' or 'attacks on the confidentiality, integrity or availability of network data'. The survey is expected to cover 16,000 businesses. The aim of the survey is to measure:

- prevalence and types of computer security incidents
- vulnerability of systems, and
- the costs and types of technologies used for protection.

13 The survey is expected to be enumerated in August 2007 with results expected at the end of 2007.

State and Territory Police Agencies

14 Australian state and territory police agencies record information relating to fraud. Information recorded by police can fall into the following categories: cheque and credit card fraud; fraudulent trade practices; social security fraud; forgery; counterfeiting; bribery and other deception offences; and fraud not elsewhere classified. The recording of fraud by police is subject to victims reporting this type of crime or detection by police. Data across jurisdictions is subject to different recording practices and legislation, therefore this information will not be comparable on a national basis. Some of this information may be available in state and territory police annual reports, while other information may be available direct from police agencies.
