

1 May 2013

Alistair Thompson  
Editor, Scoop.co.nz  
Via email: fyi-request-783-af0dd853@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Thompson

**Re: Official Information Act Request: Census Questions**

You have requested under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) information covering four specific areas of the census process. Statistics New Zealand has identified and will be releasing to you a number of documents on this topic.

**1. I request all policy discussion documents and correspondence with the Office of the Minister of Statistics around the question of whether additional questions ought to have been asked in both the 2011 and 2013 Censuses.**

Under the Statistics Act 1975 content of all Statistics NZ survey questionnaires, including census forms, is determined by the Government Statistician, not the Minister of Statistics. Statistics NZ advises the Minister of Statistics of the Government Statistician's decisions.

That said, under section 15 of the Statistics Act, Cabinet can direct the Government Statistician to include questions. A Cabinet paper "War Service question in the 2013 Census" was provided for Cabinet consideration in September 2011, following a request from the Minister of Veterans' Affairs that a question be included. This paper is included along with the Cabinet minute of the decision, copies of the correspondence between the Minister of Statistics and Minister of Veterans' Affairs on the subject, and copies of briefings to the Minister of Statistics on this topic. Statistics NZ sought the approval of the Minister of Statistics for release these documents.

Correspondence between the Minister of Statistics and Minister of Veterans' Affairs on the addition of a War Service question or questions to the 2011 and 2013 Censuses
Report to the Minister of Statistics: Information Needs on War Veterans and Options for Meeting Needs (21 October 2009)
Report to the Minister of Statistics: Information needs on the war veteran population in New Zealand (26 March 2010)
Report to the Minister of Statistics: Information needs on the war veteran population in New Zealand (8 October 2010)
Report to the Minister of Statistics: Questionnaire content for the next census (20 May 2011)
Cabinet paper: War service question in the 2013 Census
Cabinet Economic Growth and Infrastructure Committee Minute of Decision – War service question in the 2013 Census

**2. I also request all file notes, correspondence with third parties and correspondence with other agencies on this question.**

Statistics NZ held meetings with government agencies and consulted publicly on proposed changes to census content. The documents produced from this consultation process are publicly available on the Statistics NZ website. Your request is wide ranging and I believe the documents provided will give you a summary of the process involved, as allowed for under section 16(1)(e) of the OIA.

<b>Publicly available information</b>
2011 Census Content: Consultation Guide Available from <a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-development.aspx">http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-development.aspx</a>
2011 Census Content: Supporting Information Available from <a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-development.aspx">http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-development.aspx</a>
2011 Census Content: Submissions Report <a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-submissions-report.aspx">http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-submissions-report.aspx</a>
2011 Census Content Report (includes final decisions by Government Statistician on the content of the 2011 Census forms) <a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-report.aspx">http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2011-census/2011-census-content-report.aspx</a>

**3. I am particularly interested in documents related to decisions being made and the reasons for those decisions. Also information related to the cost of adding additional questions and any cost benefit analysis of the pros and cons of changing the questionnaire.**

On 26 March 2008 I decided, as Government Statistician, that there would be "no new topics" in the 2011 Census. Below are the documents that relate to and record the decision. Also below are documents summarising the options considered for the inclusion of a question or questions on war service in the 2013 Census, and the impact assessment of the inclusion of such questions.

Census Programme Budget and Decision Criteria: Briefing to Statistics New Zealand Board March 2008 offsite
Decision relating to census content and public consultation, 28 March 2008
Programme Manager Report, 3 April 2008
2013 Census options to meet information needs of Veterans' Affairs
Summary of impact assessments for inclusion of questions on war service in 2013 Census

**4. Also information related to the cost of adding additional questions and any cost benefit analysis of the pros and cons of changing the questionnaire.**

The documents above summarise work done on costing additional questions or changes to questions. Statistics NZ has not conducted specific cost-benefit analysis on the pros and cons of changing the questionnaires. Any cost-benefit analysis conducted has focused on understanding the cost-benefit of the census more generally.

The CAB100 relating to the attached Cabinet paper has been withheld under sections 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA. An aide memoire prepared for the Minister of Statistics on 3 June 2011 in advance of a meeting with the Prime Minister has been withheld under section 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA.

Under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act 1982 you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any of the department's decisions above.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Bascand  
**Chief Executive and Government Statistician**