



Census: Traditional Census - a misnomer or an oxymoron

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Australian Bureau of Statistics conducts what is often described as a ‘traditional Census’ with a point-in-time, complete enumeration of the nation’s population and housing. However, the ‘traditional Census’ of today would be unrecognisable to those that commenced the ‘tradition’ one hundred years ago in Australia but many centuries ago in some nations. The Census method and processes have significantly changed from the perspectives of the organisation, the employee and the citizen, but even more importantly there has been a change in the value proposition and utility of the Census as part of a broader, more integrated statistical system.

This paper will explore that the notion of a traditional Census is not just a misnomer, but an oxymoron. As the Census must maintain currency with both national capability and social change, the continuation and generally accepted acceleration of these changes means a traditional approach will never meet expectation.

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