



23 July 2015

Attention Tom Lynskey  
Statistics New Zealand  
PO Box 2922  
Wellington 6140

Tēnā koe e Tom,

### **Submission on Census 2018 Consultation**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the proposed content of the 2018 Census. Please accept the following as a letter of support to the submission made by He Kainga Oranga, the Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago.

Regional Public Health serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHB): Capital and Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa, and is based at the Hutt Valley District Health Board.

We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population. We have a particular focus on children, Māori and Pacific populations. Our staff include a range of occupations comprising: medical officers of health/public health medicine specialists, public health advisors, public health analysts, health protection officers, vision and hearing technicians and public health nurses.

Regional Public Health uses census data to help inform our understanding of our community and how they live. This understanding informs identification of key priority areas for our work programmes and the ability to evaluate the impact of this work. The data plays an important role in understanding the extent of a problem and guides agencies around potential funding commitments for specific programmes to address these problems. The data is particularly relevant to our healthy housing programme that aims to improve the individual housing conditions of our vulnerable communities, at risk of infectious diseases or exacerbation of chronic health conditions. In addition, housing and housing quality data is an important determinant of health at a population level, for example, this data can inform our work on influencing healthy urban planning and work to improve indoor and outdoor air quality.

We value the research provided by He Kainga Oranga and support their recommendations on the content of the 2018 census. Data on dwelling and room types, tenure types and

landlord, heating and housing quality help provide a local and national picture of housing related matters (or issues).

**We would like to formally register our agreement with the recommendations made by He Kainga Oranga, the Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the 2018 Census discussions. The contact point for this letter of support is:

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Kind Regards

Dr Jill McKenzie  
Medical Officer of Health

Peter Gush  
Service Manager

**Statistics New Zealand**  
**Census 2018 Consultation**

**July 3 2015**

**Submission on behalf of He Kainga Oranga,  
the Housing and Health Research Programme,  
University of Otago.**

*Contact details:*

Helen Viggers

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**Census 2018 consultation - housing**

This submission focuses primarily on the items flagged as potential changes in the consultation document. The items we consider here relate to housing, although some appeared in non-housing sections of the consultation document

**Dwelling and room counts**

We support continued collection of dwelling counts, number of bedrooms, and number of rooms, and other basic information. These are essential for calculating household crowding, which is a critical risk factor for infectious diseases.

**Occupied dwelling type**

**Private dwellings**

In regard to private dwellings, we support including more categories of building heights, so that high-rises can be identified. This is an important measure of urban density.

In addition we would find a breakdown of whether lower storied buildings with multiple dwellings are apartment blocks or townhouses to be potentially useful. There is evidence that these dwelling types are held in different regard, and the ability to determine both the physical location of the different types, and the demographics of those inhabiting them would be useful.

**Non-private dwellings**

In regard to non-private dwellings, we support continued collection of information from people in these dwelling types, at least to the current level. As per our later comment about better use of administrative data to flag HNZC properties, greater effort should be made to identify non-private dwelling types such as boarding houses. Most non-private dwellings

types are reasonably easy to identify, but boarding houses are not, and they should be treated as a special case. Identifying boarding houses is a key part of measuring severe housing deprivation, but more generally this is an insecure type of housing, about which we know little. Residents of boarding houses, like other non-private dwellings, are excluded from almost all other surveys, so the census is the only chance to produce information about this population.

There would seem to be a relatively fine line between community-owned rental dwellings (private) and non-private categories such as welfare institution. The definitions of such categories need to be more clearly drawn before the next census. As per the discussion under 'Sector of landlord', many non-private dwellings could be usefully assigned a dwelling type status before collection begins.

The consultation document mentions the Australian Bureau of Statistics' use of a 'flag' to identify shelters for homeless people. In the main, accommodation services for homeless people were identified using administrative lists, which aligns with our recommendation above. Green stickers were used by services with confidential addresses that did not appear on these lists, such as women's refuges. Such dwellings have long been 'hidden' as private dwellings in New Zealand, and there is no need to change that, as the administrative data are reasonable, and the benefit would be unlikely to be worth the risk.

### **Retirement Villages/Complexes**

We also support changes that would make people and dwellings in retirement villages identifiable, much like the private and non-private categories for people living in different situations in camping grounds/motor camps. Companies that run retirement villages have been some of the biggest developers in New Zealand in recent years, and we suspect that the number of people living in them may increase in at least the short to medium term.

It would be useful if all people living in retirement villages could be identified, as well as the different dwelling and tenure types they occupy, as soon as is practical. It seems very plausible that people living in retirement villages differ in significant ways from other members of the retired population. We note that retirement villages may include a variety of tenure types, and dwelling types, therefore we do not believe that the addition of "licence to occupy" in the tenure category will be sufficient to capture the full range of people living in these situations.

### **Dwelling age/accessible housing**

Although we would be very pleased to have access to such data on a national level, the census is not the correct vehicle for collecting it. Many residents are unlikely to know when their dwelling was built, and cannot easily find it, particularly if they are renting or if the house has been modified or renovated. Similar issues exist for reporting of the accessibility of housing

## Tenure

### Tenure types

We support the addition of “license to occupy” as part of the tenure possibilities. It might be helpful to include “leasehold” as a tenure category (acknowledging that it typically applies to the land the dwelling is built on, rather than the dwelling that the occupant is living in).

### Second dwellings

We support collection of more information about home ownership, such as how many properties individuals own. We support changes to allow second (and subsequent) dwellings to be counted. In particular this would help advance our understanding the dynamics of crowding, as well as the under use of dwellings.

### Sector of landlord

We support the addition of community agency/iwi/hapu to the potential landlords. This will be particularly important to know as community providers take over from HNZC. Although it would be useful to separate out the agencies further, realistically (acknowledging the large undercount of HNZC properties in previous censuses), one combined option is probably the most practical.

We wonder if the new approach to the census data collection in 2018 could involve better use of administrative data to identify housing owned by social agencies such as HNZC, councils, community, iwi, and hapu. We know that many households are not able to accurately identify their sector of landlord, but the agencies involved know which properties they own. Why not identify households in HNZC properties based on HNZC’s information about the addresses they own, rather than relying on occupants’ sector of landlord answers? This could also usefully be applied to various non-private dwelling categories, such as night shelters and welfare institutions.

### Heating fuels

We strongly support retaining the heating fuel question in the census.

There is increasing concern about fuel poverty in New Zealand, and the census question is one of the few resources available for tracking heating use. Heating use is important to track, both as a risk factor for respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and to monitor the effectiveness of energy and carbon –reduction policies. Detailed information on types of heating was removed from the Household Economic Survey (between 2003 and 2006), with part of the stated rationale being that this information was collected in the census. If the heating fuel question is removed from the census, there will be no national level data about households’ heating habits. It should be retained in the census until such time that a better source of these data is available.

The current heating fuels question allow identification of households that do not heat their homes, as well those who only use one type of fuel (and are therefore likely to be adversely affected by supply problems). Beyond tracking these potentially fuel-poor households, the

question also allows tracking of patterns of heating, which vary considerably across New Zealand.

The consultation document notes that there is a strong interest in collecting additional information about heating that could not all fit into the census. We agree, but it is not a valid reason to stop collecting the current data.

We would recommend a change to the wording of the question to distinguish heat pumps from other heat sources which, to the user, appear to be primarily electric. This is due to the nature of heat pumps which:

- use electricity to work the device rather than directly as the fuel (heat pumps use energy in the outside air as their energy source, in contrast standard electrical heaters use the electricity as the fuel);
- give much greater heat output per unit of electricity than that from standard electric heaters.

Since the removal of the heating equipment question from the Household Economic Survey heat pumps have gained a much greater prominence in New Zealand, and a sizeable proportion of dwellings appear to now have them. Due to their capital cost their spread is likely to be strongly socially patterned. Additionally the use of heat pumps has implications for changing domestic electricity demand patterns across New Zealand as they can be used for cooling as well as heating. These are potentially important changes which should be understood.

### **Additional heating issues**

Although of lesser importance than the retention of the existing heating fuel question, and the distinction of heat pumps, we believe a secondary question asking how many rooms in the dwelling are heated would be useful. This would give further information for tracking fuel poverty and energy policy.

### **Housing quality.**

We support the development of a specialised housing quality survey, the lack of which we considered an important gap in our primary statistics. However, independent of that, we believe that information on the basic habitability of housing could be usefully collected in the census, using very simple questions.

We believe a strong candidate for a representative question on housing quality could be on the issue of dampness – possibly: “Is any room in this dwelling ever damp (do not include the bathroom)?” The reasons for choosing the focus of a housing quality question to be dampness are:

- New Zealand law (the Housing Improvement Regulations of 1947) specifically states that “Every house shall be free from dampness”. Thus it is an issue of importance; with a specific legislative mandate.

- Many housing quality questions are technical, and require in-depth knowledge or skills to be able to answer to a useful level of accuracy. (For instance in the 2010 BRANZ house condition survey 80% of occupants considered their dwelling to be in good condition, but only 22% of the dwellings were considered to be in good condition by knowledgeable assessors.) Dampness requires less knowledge than most other housing issues to evaluate.
- The New Zealand housing stock is sufficiently varied that the question should have a sufficiency of householders answering both ways for meaningful analysis to occur. (In the 2010 house condition survey, 66-76% of dwellings were reported to be “dry throughout” by the knowledgeable assessors).
- Dampness in dwellings is a precursor for mould growth (with potential health implications for the occupants), and subsequent building deterioration (with implied increased maintenance costs) and therefore is a useful sentinel condition to examine.