

Podcast 140 - The Census - Every Australian Counts

by Rob McCormack - Monday, July 25, 2022

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Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 140 – The Census – Every Australian Counts

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(This podcast is 12 minutes and 6 seconds long.)

Hi,

Every 5 years in Australia, everybody is counted. This process is called the census. The census collects particular information about everybody in Australia, including their jobs and where they live. Our last census was held on the evening of Tuesday the 10th of August, 2021. This last census was done mostly online. I can remember on that evening in August of last year, sitting down with my wife at our computer and logging in to the census website. We answered all the questions required of us. Sometimes we had to look up the help information provided to understand exactly what particular words meant, but we were always able to complete each question as required. It is requirement under the law that each person participate in the census, and we were of course keen to do it correctly and on time. It was our contribution to the creation of the planning information used for our country going forward.

This information is collected and summarized in ways which guarantee that people's personal details can never be identified. This guarantees privacy for every person and for every organisation. For full information about the census in Australia, you should go to www.abs.gov.au/census, where all the details about the census can be found. In this podcast, I would like to give you just a brief introduction.

The census is planned and managed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, or ABS for short. The ABS is owned by the Australian Government and is required by law to carry out the role of collecting and providing information about Australia's people and our economy. Obviously, such information is most useful to those involved in planning for the future, including federal, state and local government planners. But it is also useful for private companies who are trying to plan their business activities for the future. Academic researchers also make use of the data as they carry out their research projects and studies. It's even used by the average citizen (like me) who just wants to find out more about the demographics of Australia's people. For example; how old are we, what jobs do we do, how much do we earn, how well educated are we, where were we born, where do we live, what is our family situation, how many of us are disabled, how many of us are of aboriginal descent, how many are visitors to Australia, and so on.

Importantly, carrying out the census every 5 years allows planners to see how our people and society are changing over time. This is critical if we are going to build community facilities such as schools,

hospitals, roads, bridges, etcetera – everything which our community needs in order to live safely and for our economy to grow. Without this type of information, our planning would be just guesswork and would be very poor indeed.

Our first census was in 1911, just 10 years after Australia was created as a nation. Of course, everything was done manually back then, with no computers to help in summarizing and calculating information. In 1911, they used around 7,300 census collectors who travelled across the country on horses, carts and bicycles in order to deliver and then collect the completed census forms. Sometimes they were held up by floods and it was difficult to collect all the forms on time. I can remember as a child when our local census collector came to our house to give us the forms and to check that we were ready to fill them out on census night. She came back later to pick them up following census night. It was a big deal in the family and it was interesting to see my parents filling out the form and giving all the details required. That was when I realized that the census was something important for us all.

Once the census is completed, it takes a while for all the information to be collated and summarized. For the first census, it took years to produce useful summaries. The population of Australia in 1911 was reported as 4,455,005. For the next census in 1921, they were able to use mechanical equipment to count and make calculations from the census data, which helped speed things up. The census was held again in 1933, 1947, 1954, 1961 and every 5 years since then. For the 10th August 2021 census, the information was released in June 2022.

<https://youtu.be/eG82yu0nTAI>

Anyone can access the high level data produced by this latest census, and earlier ones. More than 96% of people participated in the latest census, ensuring that the quality of our information is very good. It found our population on that day was 25,422,788 people, excluding overseas visitors. This was an increase of 8.6 % compared to the last census in 2016. Of those, 49.3 % were male with a median age of 37 years, while 50.7 % were female with a median age of 39 years. Other interesting information relates to where people live. For example, 66.9% of Australians live in the big capital cities. Another interesting fact is that 27.6% of Australians were born overseas. We really are a multi-cultural nation.

The ABS website at www.abs.gov.au makes it very easy to view and download lots of interesting census information about the Australian population. One page I find very interesting is the page showing grouping of census data by topic.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/census-data-topic>.

Topics include (amongst others) Cultural Diversity, Disability and Carers, Education and Training, Household and Families, Housing, Income and Work, Location, just to name a few.

Here you can find information of interest. For example, over 8 million people reported having a long term health condition, and 1,490,344 people reported having 2 long term health conditions. This surely highlights the need for continued investment in our health system going forward. You can see how this type of information would be so useful in planning for the future needs of our society.

I think the Australian Bureau of Statistics does very valuable work for Australia. The census is a great

example.

If you have a question or comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

[WpProQuiz 144]

Vocabulary

= university experts who study things, people and society

= to go into, to be able to get to something

= a normal person, not someone special and not an expert

= an overview, a summary, without all the detail

= (here) the activities done by people in companies and firms

= adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing numbers

= in this case Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Canberra, Hobart

= people who look after sick, old or disabled people

= to find out

= put into groups

= to bring things together

= people who collect things or information

= private organisations with people working together for a common purpose

= when you decide if something is worse or better than something else

= your input, when you do something which is good for others

= find out how many there are

= the making of something,

l = very, very important

= when you have people from many lands who live together

= to bring something to another person and give it to them

= the characteristics of a population of people

= when some part of your body or mind is not working properly

= describes all the goods, services and jobs in a country, including the money paid

= making sure something will happen

= the time from about 6pm until midnight

= precisely, without any misunderstanding

= when something is left out, not included

= putting information into a form

= (here) paper forms with headings, which you must fill in with information

= in the future

= to promise 100% that something will happen

= when you have no facts and you just guess what the truth is

= a sickness, injury or disability

= the place in a computer program where you get help on how to use the program

= found, seen

= when you spend money to improve something

= (here) when you doing an activity with others

= enthusiastic, when you really want to do something

- = place
- = to look after, to operate, to run
- = what was the meaning
- = machines which are used to do some work
- = the middle number in a range of numbers
- = groups of people who work together for a common purpose
- = to do something along with other people, to be involved, to take part
- = when you are talking about something important or special
- = whether or not your information will be known or seen by others
- = the steps you take to do an activity
- = when you have a job or activity to do which has a start and finish
- = when you have learned about something for the first time
- = there is a relationship, refers to
- = when you have told somebody else some information
- = needed, things which must be done
- = you must do this, you have no choice but to do it
- = it is the law and you must do this
- = all the people in a country and how they live
- = where researchers look at a problem or question and try to find an answer
- = to simplify a collection into the main points
- = something people want

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