

## Submission

9 August 2023

Australian Bureau of Statistics  
[census.content@abs.gov.au](mailto:census.content@abs.gov.au)

### Re: 2026 Census Topic Consultation: Phase Two

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) thanks the Australian Bureau of Statistics (**ABS**) for the opportunity to comment on phase two of the 2026 Census topic consultation.

ACCAN acknowledges and is disappointed by the ABS' decision not to proceed with the topic of 'Internet access and use, including digital literacy'.<sup>1</sup> ACCAN believes the collection of national data on household internet access, use and digital literacy is critical towards understanding how Australian households get and stay connected online. It is also critical for addressing barriers to digital inclusion for First Nations communities and people with disability. The absence of Census data on this topic limits the measurement of digital inclusion, a key aspect of Australia's future social and economic growth.

The July 2023 Australian Digital Inclusion Index reveals 14.2% of Australians are digitally excluded, many of whom lack the confidence and financial capacity to use and afford the internet.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the digital divide for First Nations communities increases with remoteness, with further work required to achieve equal levels of First Nations digital inclusion by 2026, under Target 17 of the Closing the Gap Strategy.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, 24.5% of people with disability are highly digitally excluded, and 55.1% experience affordability stress.<sup>4</sup> As such, the collection of Census data on internet access, use and digital literacy will support efforts to improve digital inclusion in these communities, and also generate new understandings on proposed ABS topic areas such as First Nations cultural identity, and additional measures of disability.

We thank the ABS for the opportunity to comment on phase two of the 2026 Census topic consultation. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [elie.antonios@accan.org.au](mailto:elie.antonios@accan.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

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Disability Policy Officer

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *2026 Census topic review: Phase one directions*, July 2023

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/research/2026-census-topic-review-phase-one-directions#detailed-topic-assessments>

<sup>2</sup> J Thomas, A McCosker, S Parkinson, K Hegarty, D Featherstone, J Kennedy, I Holcombe-James, L Ormond-Parker and L Ganley, *Measuring Australia's digital divide: Australian Digital Inclusion Index: 2023*, Melbourne: ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, and Telstra, July 2023, p. 10 DOI: 10.25916/528s-ny91 [https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ADII-2023-Summary\\_FINAL-Remediated.pdf](https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ADII-2023-Summary_FINAL-Remediated.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 14, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

*The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.*

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