

Submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry: The Workplace Relations Framework

**By
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)**

Introduction

The purpose of this submission is to identify and outline current and potential sources of data and other evidence that provide assistance to the Productivity Commission (PC) in answering the questions raised in the Issues Papers for the inquiry into the performance of the Australian Workplace Relations Framework. The ABS collects, within available resources, a range of information on labour statistics in order to meet the information needs of government, researchers, and the community.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's national statistical agency, and aims to assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within government and the community by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service.

The ABS's labour statistics provide insight into the overall performance of the Australian economy and effects of labour market policy settings, through measures of labour market demand and labour market supply. The ABS regularly seeks advice on statistical priorities and work program from the Australian Statistical Advisory Council, Labour Statistics Advisory Group, data users, and through regular engagement with the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments to ensure its work program remains relevant.

Current Evidence Base for Workplace Relations Framework Inquiry

The current ABS labour statistics program provides information on a range of topics including structure and performance of the labour market, employment conditions, working arrangements, earnings, labour costs and workplace relations through both household and employer surveys. The household surveys comprise the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and supplementary topics which provide the majority of labour supply data and information on employment conditions and working arrangements. The employer surveys include collections on specific aspects of business activity covering labour demand (job vacancies), earnings and labour costs, and workplace relations.

The ABS does not have an overarching "workplace relations statistical framework" to provide structure to statistics relevant to this inquiry and clearly identify data gaps. However, the ABS does have many data sources which can provide information on issues raised in the five issues papers from the inquiry. These ABS data sources are listed below and have been grouped under three broad headings:

- Key ABS collections which provide evidence relevant to specific issues raised in the papers
- Key ABS statistics to understand labour market conditions
- Other collections that provide additional depth on the labour market.

The main publication containing aggregate data for each collection is listed in this submission, and the availability of microdata (confidentialised unit record files) is also mentioned where appropriate. Further data not contained in the summary publication or microdata releases may be available on request.

This submission also highlights the known data gaps relevant to workplace relations statistics and outlines recent and future changes to the ABS labour statistics program. In the context of future changes, the submission also mentions the statistical potential of administrative datasets, such as Personal Income Tax (PIT) and the Australian Government's announcement to introduce Single Touch Payroll (STP), which could improve the richness of information available to policy and decision makers.

Key ABS collections which provide evidence relevant to specific issues raised in the paper

1. Industrial Disputes Collection (quarterly) (relevant to issues papers 1 & 3)

The Industrial Disputes (ID) collection produces quarterly statistics on the number of industrial disputes (where stoppages amount to 10 or more working days lost), employees involved and working days lost; classified by states and territories, industry, cause of dispute, duration and reason work resumed. The data support the analysis and monitoring of industrial disputation activity in Australia.

Summary results are published in [Industrial Disputes, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6321.0.55.001).

Estimates from the collection are released quarterly for March, June, September and December quarters.

The ABS recently conducted a review of the Industrial Disputes collection and an important element of the review was to understand the contemporary and potential future data requirements of users. The ABS has completed an assessment of the operational impact of implementing the recommendations from the Conceptual Review and the findings have been circulated to the ABS Labour Statistics Advisory Group for consideration. The ABS will outline future directions for the Industrial Disputes statistics in the March quarter 2015 issue.

2. Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (two yearly) (relevant to issues papers 1 to 4)

The Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (EEH) produces estimates of the composition and distribution of average weekly earnings of employees, the hours they are paid for and the methods used to set their pay (e.g. award, collective agreement or individual agreement). These data are cross classified by industry, occupation, state, managerial status, employer size and rate of pay. Estimates from the survey are used extensively in submissions to the annual minimum wage review, support the development of labour market policies, wage negotiation processes, and for research into various aspects of the labour market.

Summary results are published in [Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6306.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6306.0.55.001).

The survey was last conducted in May 2014 and will be again conducted in May 2016. The summary results for the 2014 collection were released in January 2015 and the microdata is expected to be released in mid-2015.

3. Labour Force Supplementary Surveys: (relevant to issues papers 1 to 5)

The following labour force supplementary surveys are relevant for this inquiry and provide evidence for specific issues raised in the issues papers.

- **Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey** (annual)

The Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership Survey (EEBTUM) collects information about employees' weekly earnings, leave entitlements, employment benefits and trade union membership. The collection of a range of socio-demographic and labour force characteristics makes the survey extremely valuable for comparing and analysing the distribution of weekly earnings across employees. The survey is the only frequent source of data on trade union members. The data support the development and review of wages and labour market policies and inform wage negotiation processes.

Summary results are published in [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6310.0). Microdata are available in [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6202.0.30.002).

The survey was last run in August 2013. From August 2014, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Characteristics of Employment Survey (described below).

- **Forms of Employment** (annual)

The Forms of Employment Survey (FOES) collects information about employed persons and their employment arrangements. The survey covers topics such as different types of employment arrangements including fixed-term contracts (for employees), casual employment and leave entitlements, independent contractors, and employment characteristics such as hours worked, industry and occupation. Information on the use of labour hire firms/employment agencies is also collected in this survey as part of three-yearly Labour Hire Module (last collected in November 2011). The survey supports analysis of demographic and employment characteristics of people with different employment types.

Summary results are published in [Forms of Employment, Australia](#) (FOES) (cat. no. 6359.0). Microdata are available in [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6202.0.30.002).

The survey was last run in November 2013. From August 2014, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Characteristics of Employment Survey (described below).

- **Working Time Arrangements** (three yearly)

The Working Time Arrangements Survey (WTA) collects information about the working arrangements of employees, such as shift work, extra hours or overtime, start and finish times in their main job and patterns of employees' work in all jobs. The data can be

cross-classified by hours worked, industry and occupation, and demographic characteristics. The data from the survey help to examine the aspects of differing working arrangements, including job stability, job flexibility and scheduling work.

Summary results are published in [Working Time Arrangements, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6342.0).

The survey was last run in November 2012. From August 2014, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Characteristics of Employment Survey (described below).

- **The Locations of Work Survey** (six yearly)

The Locations of Work Survey (LOW) collects information about the locations in which people work (such as their own home or employer's premises) and the job characteristics and working arrangements of people who work at home. The survey has a particular focus on people who usually worked more hours at home than elsewhere in their main or second job or business. The survey data are relevant to a wide range of policies and programs, including trends in work performed away from the employer's workplace, working conditions, changes in workplace arrangements, and the effects of technology. Information on locations of work is used to monitor trends in workplace locations.

Summary results are published in [Locations of Work](#) (cat. no. 6275.0)

The survey was last run in November 2008. The ABS 2010-11 Labour Household Surveys Content Review recommended that this topic be discontinued in the monthly population survey as information on locations of work was collected on the same frequency in the Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS). However, some information about working from home will be collected as part of the Characteristics of Employment Survey (described below).

- **Characteristics of Employment Survey** (annual)

The Characteristics of Employment (COE) Survey is a new integrated survey combining key elements of the EEBTUM, FOES (including labour hire) and WTA supplementary surveys. This new supplementary survey will inform users on several labour market issues such as earnings, employment arrangements, independent contracting, fixed-term employment, trade union membership, labour hire, working patterns, job stability, job flexibility and overwork. Including these data in a single survey will enable analysis of the key elements of people's employment and related outcomes.

This survey comprises core annual content and two biennial components included on a rotating basis (as some data items do not change substantially from year to year, and to fit content within available survey time). Some information about working from home (previously collected in the Locations of Work survey) will be collected as part of COE in one of the biennial components. Information about data items to be collected in the survey was published with the 2013 EEBTUM publication ([Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2013](#) (cat. no. 6310.0)).

The data are collected in every August from 2014. The summary results from the first iteration of this survey will be available in late 2015 in a new publication titled Characteristics of Employment, Australia (cat. no. 6333.0).

Key ABS statistics to understand labour market conditions

1. Monthly Labour Force Survey (monthly)

The monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) collects and releases timely information about Australia's labour market activity, providing estimates of employment, unemployment and labour force participation. The rate of change in the number of people employed is a key indicator of economic growth. The unemployment rate (the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed) and the underemployment rate (the percentage of the labour force that is underemployed) are the main measures of underutilised labour, and the participation rate (the percentage of the population in the labour force) reflects changes in total labour supply. Demographic information is also collected, allowing the data to be disaggregated by characteristics such as age and sex. Information on hours worked is also collected and output as hours actually worked in all jobs, hours actually worked in main job, hours usually worked in all jobs, aggregate monthly hours worked, preference for working more hours and reason for working less than 35 hours in the reference week. Aggregate monthly hours worked series provide a measure of total labour input to the economy. Information on occupation and industry of employed people (and of last job for the unemployed) is also collected in the quarter months of the survey (February, May, August and November).

[Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6202.0) is the monthly first release publication from the survey and contains estimates of employed and unemployed persons classified by sex, full-time/part-time status, states and territories and the youth population. It also contains estimates of monthly aggregate hours worked.

More detailed data are published one week later in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), which includes actual and usual hours worked of employed people and duration of job search for the unemployed. [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly](#) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003) is released quarterly and contains industry and occupation data. Other detailed estimates are available on request.

An expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) is available for the years 2008 to 2010. It provides data for each of the months in this period and allows the linking of selected dwellings and the people in them from month to month. The CURF includes a range of data to enable users to better understand the dynamics of the labour market and transitions between employment, unemployment and not in the labour force. Data from a range of labour force supplementary surveys are also included. For more information on CURF, see [Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6602.0).

Historical estimates can be found in [Labour Force Historical Timeseries, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6204.0.55.001). Family estimates are currently published in [Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families](#) (cat. no. 6224.0.55.001). Estimates on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are published in [Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Estimates from the Labour Force Survey](#) (cat. no. 6287.0).

From July 2014, ABS improved the content of Labour Force Survey and Labour Supplementary Surveys.

With the improvement in monthly Labour Force Survey, there will be increase in the frequency of underemployment and labour underutilisation rates (from quarterly to monthly). The scope of underemployment will also be expanded to include all employed people. The current approach only asks underemployment questions of people who are employed part-time or worked part-time hours during the reference week. The change will ask all employed people about whether they want, and are available, to work more hours. However, data on this new basis will not be published in standard publications until mid-2017.

Data on volume measures of labour underutilisation, leave entitlements, employment by sector and retrenchment will be available quarterly. New data items have also been added such as educational attainment that can help in understanding skills of the labour force. Subject to further testing, the new data outputs are expected to be available in labour force standard products from April 2015 issue for monthly data and from May 2015 issue for quarterly data. More information is available in [Information Paper: Forthcoming Changes to Labour Force Statistics, Oct 2014](#) (cat. no. 6292.0).

2. Job Vacancies Survey (quarterly)

The Job Vacancies Survey (JVS) provides estimates of job vacancies in Australia which are used as a leading indicator of economic growth, in monitoring of the Australian labour market and economy, and for formulating economic policy. Data are available by state and territory, sector and industry dissections.

Summary results are published in [Job Vacancies, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6354.0).

The survey is run quarterly in the months of February, May, August and November.

3. Wage Price Index (quarterly)

The Wage Price Index (WPI) measures changes in the price of labour services resulting from market pressures, and is unaffected by the quality or quantity of work performed. Four wage price indexes are constructed and published quarterly, i.e. ordinary time hourly rates of pay excluding and including bonuses and total hourly rates of pay excluding and including bonuses. The WPI informs on wages policy in Australia and is considered by the Fair Work Commission when determining award wages. It is also used to monitor inflationary pressure in the economy and determine macro-economic performance.

Results are published in [Wage Price Index, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6345.0).

The indexes are produced quarterly in the months of March, June, September and December.

4. Survey of Average Weekly Earnings (six monthly)

The Survey of Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) provides a measure of the level of earnings, measuring average gross weekly earnings of employees in Australia. Estimates of average weekly earnings, and changes in average weekly earnings, are produced every six months. Data are cross classified by sector, by states and territories, by industry at the Australia level and by sex for ordinary time and total earnings for full-time employees and total earnings for all employees. The survey estimates are widely used in Commonwealth, State and Territory

legislation for adjusting a variety of government payments, for supporting minimum wage claims, monitoring wage equity, and as an indicator of change in average wage rates for economic or taxation policy analysis. The data are also used for economic and labour market analysis.

Summary results are published in [Average Weekly Earnings, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6302.0).

The survey is run twice a year in the months of May and November.

5. Survey of Employment and Earnings (annual)

The Survey of Employment and Earnings (SEE) provides estimates of gross earnings and number of public sector employees by level of government by state on an annual basis. Data contribute to estimates of compensation of employees and of labour productivity in the Australian National Accounts.

Summary results are published in [Employment and Earnings, Public Sector, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6248.0.55.002).

The latest data available for the survey is for financial year 2013-14.

6. Survey of Major Labour Costs (irregular)

The Survey of Major Labour Costs (MLC) produces statistics on the main costs incurred by businesses as a consequence of employing labour, including employee earnings, employer payments for superannuation, workers' compensation, payroll tax and fringe benefits tax. Data from the survey are used by a wide range of users for labour market analysis and are also an important input to the National Accounts. In particular, they are used by governments for employment, prices and income policy development, for monitoring changes in the cost of labour, and for wage determination purposes.

Summary results are published in [Labour Costs, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6348.0).

The survey has been conducted on an irregular basis and was most recently conducted in respect of 2010–11. The survey is next scheduled to run with respect of the 2015-16 reference year.

7. Australia's National Accounts (quarterly and annual)

National Accounts provide a systematic summary of national economic activity and have been developed to assist in the practical application of economic theory. The Australian system of national accounts includes national income, expenditure and product accounts, financial accounts, the national balance sheet and input-output tables. At their summary level, the national income, expenditure and product accounts reflect key economic flows, for example production, consumption and investment. The national accounts include many detailed classifications depending upon the data item (e.g. by industry, by purpose, by state and territory, and by asset type) relating to major economic aggregates.

The National Accounts contain a number of labour market related indicators. Labour costs are the costs incurred by employers in the employment of labour. These costs include wages and salaries, bonuses, paid leave, superannuation, taxes on employment and fringe

benefits (included in wages and salaries in the National Accounts). They are of particular interest as they impact on the competitiveness of organisations, employers' willingness to employ and individuals' willingness to supply labour. Most labour costs are reflected in household income via compensation of employees and therefore have a significant impact on household consumption, investment and saving decisions. The Accounts also provide various productivity measures including labour productivity.

The data are available in a quarterly and annual basis in [Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product](#) (cat. no. 5206.0) and [Australian System of National Accounts](#) (cat. no 5204.0). More information National Account releases is available here: [National account releases](#).

Other Collections that provide additional depth on the Labour Market

1. Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (six yearly)

The Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS) is a Special Social Survey that collects detailed information about the diversity of employment arrangements in Australia, as well as the characteristics of retirement and the superannuation coverage of individuals. Data can be cross-classified by a number of demographic and labour force characteristics. The survey collects detailed information about employment arrangements, working patterns, work and caring, retirement and retirement intentions, superannuation coverage and other characteristics. These data inform on the diversity of employment arrangements in Australia and work and life balance issues, provide insights into the timing and extent of older workers exiting the labour market, as well as reasons why people retire from the labour force and what might attract them back. The data are also a rich source of superannuation coverage and inform on adequacy of superannuation policies.

Summary results are published in [Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6361.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6361.0.55.001).

The survey was last run in 2007 and was planned to be run in 2013 together with the former Time Use Survey to gain better insight into employment arrangements, working patterns, time use and work and life balance. However, due to resource constraints faced by the ABS at the time, the survey did not proceed. The survey is still in the ABS household survey program with indicative timing of 2019.

2. Other Labour Force Supplementary Surveys:

- **Labour Mobility Survey** (two yearly till 2012 and again run in 2013)

The Labour Mobility Survey collects detailed information about people who, over a 12 month period, either had a change of employer/business in their main job, or had some change in work with their current employer/business for whom they had worked for one year or more. The survey is the main ABS source of data on labour mobility over a 12 month period and is a major source of data for analysing the dynamic nature of the labour market.

Summary results are published in [Labour Mobility, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6209.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6202.0.30.004).

The survey was last run in February 2013 and from February 2015 key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Participation, Job Search and Mobility survey (described below).

- **Underemployed Workers Survey** (annual)

The Underemployed Workers Survey (UEW) collects information about workers who are not fully employed, i.e. part-time workers who indicate that they would prefer to work more hours, and full-time workers who did not work full-time hours in the reference period for economic reasons. The underemployed workers survey helps in understanding underutilised labour in the economy, along with the unemployed and those with marginal attachment to the labour force. While aggregate level data on underemployment are available quarterly from the Labour Force Survey, this supplementary survey collects additional information on the characteristics of underemployed workers, steps taken to find additional hours of work and their preferred number of hours. Data are available on number of hours usually worked, number of preferred hours, steps taken to find work with more hours and difficulties finding work with more hours.

Summary results published in [Underemployed Workers, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6265.0).

The survey was last run in September 2013. In February 2014, it was combined with the Job Search Experience survey and the Persons Not in the Labour Force survey and summary results were published in [Persons Not in the Labour Force, Underemployed Workers and Job Search Experience, Australia, February 2014](#) (cat. no. 6226.0.55.001). From February 2015, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Participation, Job Search and Mobility survey (described below).

- **Job Search Experience Survey** (annual)

The Job Search Experience Survey (JSE) collects information on the way people look for jobs, the methods they use and those which prove to be successful. Particular focus is on two key aspects: steps taken to find work, and barriers encountered in finding work. The survey data are used to inform on policies in areas such as labour market assistance, and to monitor mechanisms for unemployment benefit payments.

Summary results published in [Job Search Experience, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6222.0).

The survey was last run in July 2013. In February 2014, it was combined with the Underemployed Workers survey and the Persons Not in the Labour Force survey and summary results were published in [Persons Not in the Labour Force, Underemployed Workers and Job Search Experience, Australia, February 2014](#) (cat. no. 6226.0.55.001). From February 2015, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Participation, Job Search and Mobility survey (described below).

- **Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey** (annual)

The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey (PNILF) collects information on persons who are neither employed nor unemployed, including whether they wanted to work, reasons for not actively looking for work, availability for work, and main activity while not in the labour force. Many people not in the labour force have some attachment to the labour force. For example, they may want a job, but for a variety of reasons are not actively looking for work though they are available to start a job. There is some expectation that many of these people could participate in the labour force in the short term if labour market conditions changed. The survey data inform on potential labour supply, not reflected in employment and unemployment statistics, and characteristics of discouraged job seekers and others marginally attached to the labour force. The data are also relevant in policy context of labour market programs for the jobless, income support programs, retirement policies, and child care policies

Summary results are published in [Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6220.0).

The survey was last run in September 2013. In February 2014, it was combined with the Job Search Experience survey and the Underemployed Workers survey and summary results were published in [Persons Not in the Labour Force, Underemployed Workers and Job Search Experience, Australia, February 2014](#) (cat. no. 6226.0.55.001). From February 2015, key elements of the survey have been integrated into the Participation, Job Search and Mobility survey (described below).

- **Participation, Job Search and Mobility Survey** (annual)

As part of Labour Force program changes from July 2014, a new integrated supplementary survey Participation, Job Search and Mobility (PJSM), will inform on unemployment, underemployment, labour force participation, job change and job search. It will integrate the key elements of the Labour Mobility, Job Search Experience, Underemployed Workers and Persons Not in the Labour Force surveys into one. The survey will inform users on broad market issues such as job change, job mobility, job search, participation and increasing participation, underemployment and marginal attachment. Details of the content to be collected in the survey from February 2015 have been detailed in [Persons Not in the Labour Force, Underemployed Workers and Job Search Experience, Australia, February 2014](#) (cat. no. 6226.0.55.001).

The data are collected every February from 2015. The summary results from this first supplementary survey are expected to be available in late 2015 in a new publication titled Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia (cat. no. 6226.0).

3. Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation (two yearly)

The Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation topic is included in the Multi-Purpose Household Survey and collects information about people aged 18 years and over who are either not employed or usually worked less than 35 hours. The survey provides information on the potential labour force, what is preventing these people finding or taking up (more) work and a range of incentives to increase labour force participation. The survey provides information on characteristics of people who are not participating, or not

participating fully, in the labour force and the factors that influence people to join or leave the labour force.

Summary results are published in [Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6239.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 4100.0.55.001). TableBuilder data are available in [Microdata: Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Retirement and Retirement Intentions](#) (cat. no. 6238.0.55.001).

The latest data available from the survey are for 2012-13.

4. Retirement and Retirement Intentions (two yearly)

The Retirement and Retirement Intentions (RRI) topic is included in the Multi-Purpose Household Survey and collects information on retirement trends, factors which influence decisions to retire, and income arrangements that retirees and potential retirees have made for their retirement. The data are cross-classified by demographic and labour force characteristics. The data on retirement intentions inform social policy issues, such as the possible increase in the age pension eligibility age, and adequacy of government payments to and services for Australia's aging population. The data also provide evidence on the effectiveness of government taxation and superannuation policies.

Summary results are published in [Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6238.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 4100.0.55.001). TableBuilder data are available in [Microdata: Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Retirement and Retirement Intentions](#) (cat. no. 6238.0.55.001).

The latest data available from the survey are for 2012-13.

5. Pregnancy and Employment Transitions Survey (six yearly)

The Pregnancy and Employment Transitions Survey (PAETS) is a Labour Force Supplementary Survey that collects information on the employment experiences of, and leave taken by women with children under the age of two years, including some aspects of women's working experiences while pregnant and after returning to work. The data can be cross-classified by income, industry, occupation and demographic characteristics. The data inform on the transition between paid work and having a baby and factors influencing decisions about returning to work. It also informs on policies on flexible working arrangements and availability of appropriate child care.

Summary results are published in [Pregnancy and Employment Transitions, Australia](#) (cat. no. 4913.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 4913.0.55.001).

The survey was last run in November 2011.

6. Work Related Injuries (four yearly)

The Work Related Injuries (WRI) topic is included in the Multi-Purpose Household Survey and collects information about people who have experienced a work-related injury or illness in the previous 12 months, including the type of injury, how it occurred and if any

compensation was applied for as a result of the injury. Data collected in the survey assist in monitoring programs and formulating policies in relation to workers' compensation and occupational health and safety.

Summary results are published in [Work Related Injuries, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6324.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6324.0.55.002).

The survey was last run in 2013-14.

7. Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (three yearly)

The Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (CORMS) is a Labour Force Supplementary Survey that collects information on the characteristics of recent migrants, including labour force status, country of birth, proficiency in spoken English, educational attainment on arrival and since arrival, employment prior to arrival and since arrival, and sources of household income. The survey also collects information on temporary residents who plan to stay in Australia for 12 months or more. The information collected enables an assessment of the labour market experience of recent migrants.

Summary results are published in [Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6250.0). Microdata are available in [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6250.0.25.002).

The survey was last run in November 2013.

8. Migrant Data Matrices

[Migrant Data Matrices](#) (cat. no. 3415.0) presents summary data on migrants from a range of ABS collections. The labour topic includes 20 data cubes covering labour force status, weekly earnings, working arrangements and persons not in the labour force. The data available through matrices inform on socio-economic characteristics of migrants.

9. Survey of Income and Housing (two yearly)

The Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) is a Special Social Survey that collects detailed information about the level and distribution of income. The focus of the survey is household income but details about person level income including source of income are also available. The survey collects detailed information about employees' wages and salary income cross classified by personal and demographic characteristics. Data from the survey are widely used to understand distribution of income and wealth and how this affects the wellbeing of individuals and society, particularly people's ability to acquire the goods and services required to satisfy their needs.

Summary results are published in [Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia](#) (cat. no. 6523.0). Microdata are available in a [Confidentialised Unit Record File](#) (cat. no. 6541.0.30.001).

The latest data available from survey are for 2011-12 and the next available data will be for 2013-14 in mid-2015.

9. Census of Population and Housing (five yearly)

The Census of Population and Housing is the largest statistical collection run by the ABS. Run every five years, it is the only collection that provides a detailed picture of the entire population. The Census also collects information about their labour force status, status in employment, hours worked and detailed industry and occupation.

Census data can be accessed from the [Census webpage](#).

Known Data Gaps

In relation to workplace relations statistics, the ABS recognises that there are known data gaps that if addressed can help to better inform some of issues raised in context of this inquiry. Some known data gaps specific to this inquiry are:

- The field of workplace relations is complex and diverse and, for statistical purposes, is not easily measured. Though the ABS collects information on a number of topics to provide an insight into the state of the workplace relations environment from both employee and employer perspective, there is a lack of an overarching "workplace relations statistical framework" which makes it difficult to understand what should be covered and how to measure it.
- There is lack of precise definitions for important concepts in labour law (for which common law definitions are often adopted in practice, weighing up several complex factors), e.g. casual employee, independent contractors; which makes it difficult to statistically measure these concepts. Rather they tend to be measured by certain characteristics of employment e.g. absence of leave entitlements for casuals. Similarly there is difficulty in translating certain notions or descriptions to statistically objective and measurable quantities, e.g. flexibility, labour market efficiency, etc.
- The ABS recognises that there are certain type of activities which may be technically outside the workplace relations system, but are related including unauthorised bargaining (e.g. coordinated sick days), pattern bargaining (both employee and employer), not bargaining in good faith etc. These activities also have also not been precisely defined making it difficult to monitor their prevalence.
- Other topics not currently within the ABS labour statistics program that are relevant to the workplace relations framework are:
 - Information on penalty rates - prevalence, amount of rate, and characteristics of those who receive them
 - Employees paid at the national minimum wage, and how employees pay is set particularly in relation to awards
 - Data on trial periods/probation
 - Workplace bullying prevalence
 - Firm level performance, productivity and the relationship to labour utilisation
 - Information on wage density (and employees who are award free)
 - Hiring/firing and redundancy costs
 - Compliance costs.

- The ABS does not collect specific information on "Sham contracting". It is highly complex in nature, and the extent would thus be difficult to determine statistically. However some indicators of dependence on the hirer are available from FOES/COE.

Some of these known data gaps may be addressed through the planned ABS changes in the labour statistics program (explained below). However an important consideration when working towards making changes in the ABS labour statistics program will be balancing the continuity of key statistics series and overall needs for breadth of data (in terms of topics) against the resources available to the program, taking into consideration any efficiencies that may be realised through adopting different methodologies and integrating different surveys. If the costs of a new ideal program exceed the available resources, then additional funding would be required through user funding.

Recent and Future Changes to ABS Labour Statistics program

An integrated, efficient and responsive labour household survey program

From February 2014 the ABS has implemented changes to improve the content of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and labour supplementary surveys (described above). The improvements will result in:

- More information released monthly and quarterly
- A less fragmented labour supplementary survey program
- Datasets with interrelated topics combined to better enable analysis of key labour market linkages between groups and topics.

The changes made to the program are detailed in [Information Paper: Outcomes of Labour Household Surveys Content Review, 2012](#) (cat. no. 6107.0) and in [Information Paper: Forthcoming Changes to Labour Force Statistics, Oct 2014](#) (cat. no. 6292.0).

An integrated labour employer survey program

The current Labour Employer Surveys program is based around a set of stand-alone collections, each designed to meet a specific statistical need. There is a strong emphasis on earnings and related statistics, with significant data gaps (such as greater workplace relations information, work health and safety and human resource management practices) not able to be addressed. The ABS undertook user consultation in 2014 to gain a clearer picture of the uses of employer-based labour statistics and the future priorities of the program. This was the first stage to reshape the ABS Labour Employer Surveys Program. The plan is to develop an integrated program that allows ABS to be more proactive and to respond to emerging user needs in a more timely manner. In addition to identifying and prioritising information needs from existing employer surveys, the users also identified data gaps that can be important for policy and decision making. These gaps are:

- Job creation and destruction
- Penalty rates
- Detailed data on training and skills
- Fly in/fly out arrangements
- Hiring/firing and redundancy costs
- Absenteeism

- Work health and safety practices
- Information on employees paid at the national minimum wage.

The ABS will soon commence work on redevelopment of the program, however the new program will need to be achieved through the available resources, unless additional resources can be secured from users. Options for data substitution from administrative sources (such as pay as you go taxation data) will also be explored. The potential to integrate with administrative data sources and other ABS business surveys will also be considered.

Linked Employer Employee Dataset

A Linked Employer-Employee Database (LEED) represents a longstanding information gap in Australian labour statistics. There is currently no single dataset within the ABS or other organisations capable of answering complex and varied questions about employer-employee relationships at a static point in time, nor is there any dataset that can do this longitudinally.

The ABS has a vision for a longitudinally linked employer and employee database based on person and business level tax data (tax-based LEED).

The long term vision for LEED would be to extend the proposed tax-based LEED, by integrating other key administrative data, survey data (person and business level), and Census data to explore more complex policy and research questions.

Administrative LEEDs have been established in many other countries (e.g. New Zealand and the United States of America) for many years, and are used extensively for analytical research into the behaviour and dynamics of firms and employees, as well as providing a greater understanding of the micro-economic drivers of productivity and job creation/destruction. They have also provided a rich source of information about regional labour markets and economies, and are used as a sound evidence base for government policy formation and evaluation.

The ABS is currently undertaking a number of proof of concept projects to build support for the LEED. The development, ongoing production, and maintenance of the LEED is dependent on the ABS securing significant additional funding to undertake this body of work.

Single Touch Payroll (STP)

In late December 2014, the Australian Government announced its intention to introduce Single Touch Payroll (STP) to simplify tax and superannuation reporting obligations for employers through using software to report to the ATO on Pay As You Go Withholding (PAYGW) and the superannuation guarantee at the same time as wages are paid to employees. STP potentially presents significant opportunities for the ABS, including the possibility of more timely and frequent earnings data for the entire population of employees. Such data could be used to generate new statistics, particularly in relation to job churn and could potentially replace some of the direct collection activity undertaken by the ABS.

The ABS is working with the ATO to specify requirements for their STP development to maximise the benefits for statistical purposes. If this eventuates and the ABS can access timely STP data, it could provide a valuable source of hourly earnings data, which could also be incorporated into the LEED at some stage in the future should LEED be established.

ABS comments on a specific Issue raised in issues paper 2

While the majority of specific questions raised in the issues paper are not directly relevant to the ABS's primary role as data provider, issues paper 2 seeks advice on international comparison of minimum wage. Though there are no endorsed international standards in this area, the measure presented in the paper (Figure 2.1, i.e. minimum to medium wage) is detailed in the ILO Decent Work Indicators and is being promoted for use in many countries.

Non-ABS sources of information relevant to this inquiry

In addition to ABS data, there are several other sources of data which may be relevant to the five issues papers for this inquiry. These include:

- Australian Workplace Relations Study (February to July 2014), conducted by the Fair Work Commission. This survey used a combination of surveys of employers and their employees (similar to EEH) to collect information about a range of workplace relations and employment matters. Initial results from this study are available in the [First Findings Report](#).
- Fair Work Commission information collected administratively, e.g. data on protected action ballots, anti-bullying orders or unfair dismissal claims.
- Administrative information from state industrial tribunals/authorities.
- [Trends in Federal Enterprise Bargaining](#), a quarterly report prepared by the Department of Employment on the number of enterprise agreements made in the federal workplace relations system, the number of employees covered and the level of wage increases.
- The [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia](#) (HILDA) Survey, managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (University of Melbourne). HILDA is an annual survey which includes information about several aspects of households, such as labour market dynamics.
- The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) is a national survey of work and life outcomes of working Australians undertaken by the Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia. Further information is available [Australian Work and Life Index](#).
- Work safe bodies, such as [Safe Work Australia](#), who possess administrative information on topics such as work-related injuries and worker's compensation.
- Information on migration to Australia, including visa class, is administered by the [Department of Immigration and Border Protection](#). This includes data on those entering Australia on Class 457 visas.

Contact Information

For further information on the availability of the statistics that might support the work of this inquiry or if you have questions about the information above, please contact:

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