2016 Census Submissions
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10
Belconnen ACT 2616

April 13, 2013

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) is the peak body for the Ukrainian Australian community.

The AFUO thanks the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the opportunity to make this submission in relation to the current review of questions for the 2016 Census.

The AFUO submits that questions relating to "Ancestry" and "Country of Birth of Parents" should be retained in the 2016 Census, as these questions provide a specific benefit to our community (and undoubtedly other ethnic communities), as well as serving the broader public interest.

In the first respect, the data from the current questions regarding "Ancestry" and "Country of Birth of Parents" – particularly when considered in tandem - provide invaluable insights to our community in several ways, including:

- Assessing the communication needs of our community, including for the purposes of media and information dissemination about access to publicly available programs;

- Evaluating the cultural education needs of our community going forward, including the efficacy of community-based initiatives;

- Determining the geographical distribution of our community to optimise decisions about facility location and program delivery;

- Assessing social service and heath needs in our community according to generation, especially among our elderly members, and;

- Tracking the social development of our community over several generations, particularly given that we are one of the 'pioneer' communities in relation to the disbandment of the White Australia Policy.

We would note that a substantial number of people who self-identify under "Ancestry" as Ukrainian do so because they were born in territories that were

not subject to Ukrainian national sovereignty at the time of their birth, such as Poland and the USSR. Without the opportunity to answer the "Ancestry" question, they would effectively be put in a position of wrongly identifying their cultural and linguistic profile and needs.

Equally, we note that a substantial number of people who self-identify as under "Ancestry" as Ukrainian were born in "transit" countries as migrants and refugees in the post-World War II period. These countries include Germany and the UK. Again, without the opportunity to answer the "Ancestry" question, they would be put in a position of misrepresenting their identity. This is particularly where their parents may have been born in what was and is historically Ukraine, but was geo-politically Poland or the USSR (as per the previous point).

We would further argue that the retention of these questions serves a broader public interest. In particular, the gathered data empowers those designing the planning and delivery of public policy and programs. In so doing, it reduces social costs and optimises social benefits, including our national capacity to "mainstream" all our citizens and residents.

To limit the planning and delivery of public health or educational initiatives, for example, to data based largely on "Country of Birth" – as opposed to "Ancestry" or "Country of Birth of Parents" - could contribute to failure to consider the distinct needs of many people who are born in Australia of migrant parents. Fundamentally, agencies charged with considering the CALD needs of their clientele could be put in the unenviable position of excluding people who see themselves as CALD and have relevant characteristics - by identification if not by birth.

There is extensive evidence that the migration and settlement trajectory, including both its positive and negative attributes, continues in this generation, and that careful planning and program delivery is necessary. For example, it is probable that there are young people – born in Australia of migrant parents from conflict zones – who are subject to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related consequences. Other methods for collecting data on this cohort are triangulated by Census data.

We would respectfully suggest that some of the alternative questions under consideration – that could replace the questions with regard to "Ancestry" and "Country of Birth of Parents" - seek data that is necessarily available from other sources. For example, the educational sector is well placed to gather data on the travel patterns of its students (and it has a specific interest in so doing). On the other hand, data about "Ancestry" and "Country of Birth of Parents" would not be readily available from any other source in our society – and collection of such data by the non-government sector would be well beyond its resource capability.

Finally, we would suggest that the removal of the questions about "Ancestry" and "Country of Birth of Parents" is likely to run contrary to the principles of multiculturalism, such as those specifically enshrined in law in NSW. For

example, the NSW principles note that people *"are free to profess, practise and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage."*

Therefore, there is an inherently discriminatory effect in not giving citizens and residents the opportunity to self-identify (eg, "profess") with a particular cultural and/or linguistic background in the Australian context, and this may constitute a challengeable denial of their legal rights (in NSW at least). We would be concerned that an unnecessary debate about discriminatory aspects in the Census – if the relevant questions were to be removed - would be divisive in its own right, contrary to community harmony, and strongly detract from the great benefit that the Census provides our society.

We thank the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the opportunity to make this submission. Please feel free to contact me at any time on 0419 541 531 to further discuss any aspects raised.

Yours truly,

(signed)

Pete Shmigel
AFUO Public Affairs Representative