

## **D Grade Round 5**

### ***That it should be optional to complete the Census in Australia***

#### **Background:**

The Australian Census is a national survey conducted every five years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It collects detailed information on the population — including demographics, income, religion, housing, and more — and is mandatory for all residents under the Census and Statistics Act 1905. Failure to complete the Census can result in a fine.

The data gathered plays a vital role in government policy, funding decisions and determining electoral boundaries. However, some people argue that the mandatory nature of the Census is outdated. They raise concerns about privacy, government overreach, and personal freedom. It has also been suggested that with the advancement of technology there are other methods for obtaining the necessary data. Proponents of a mandatory census argue that making it voluntary would reduce data accuracy, especially for underrepresented communities, and damage the effectiveness of public planning.

#### **Questions for Consideration:**

- Is completing the Census a reasonable civic duty in exchange for public services?
- Are concerns about the privacy of Census data justified?
- What might be the impact on data quality and reliability if the Census were optional?
- Could Australia rely on alternative sources of data (e.g., tax, healthcare, mobile networks) instead?
- Does making the Census optional increase trust, or does it reduce faith in government institutions?
- Could a voluntary model widen gaps in representation, planning, or services?

#### **Resources:**

<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/about-census/australian-census>

<https://www.abs.gov.au/about/legislation-and-policy/privacy/privacy-abs/2016-census-privacy-statement/privacy-confidentiality-and-security-census-data>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/explainer-what-is-the-census-and-why-does-it-matter/4p3j2278p>

<https://theconversation.com/in-a-world-awash-with-data-is-the-census-still-relevant-70642>