

Indigenous Franchise KPIs using Centrelink data

Background

As Australia's federal electoral roll does not have a personal Indigenous identifier, estimating the **enrolment**, 19 rates for Indigenous persons is problematic. Having these key franchise KPIs for the Indigenous population is important for *Closing the Gap* purposes and the AECs focus on how the franchise could be better delivered.

In 2014 the AEC's Research Section commenced indirect estimation of these figures, using a regression model of the relationship between the Indigenous population and each of the three franchise KPIs at a small area level, such as polling place catchment or the ABS' SA2 geography. While the models did not fit the data particularly well, the resulting Indigenous **enrolment**, 19 rates were statistically based on real data, rather than anecdote. Yet the resulting enrolment and turnout rates in particular were alarmingly low, and hopefully represented a worst case picture.

Centrelink Data

Around the same time, the Research Section informally proposed that person-level Centrelink extracts that the AEC received occasionally for other Roll validation work, could perhaps be extended to include Centrelink's Indigenous indicator. This came to fruition in 2017¹.

As part of the Annual Roll Integrity Review (ARIR), the person-level matching between the Roll and Centrelink now included Centrelink's Indigenous indicator. However as Centrelink customers represent only around half of the Roll, the matching (even if perfect) would be far from assigning all enrolments an Indigenous flag. Nevertheless, for the first time the AEC has a very large number of enrolled persons, over 6 million, with an explicit Indigenous status.

1. Enrolment Rate

The enrolment rate, even for all persons regardless of indigenaity, is difficult to calculate reliably due to conceptual, collection and methodological differences between the Roll (numerator) and the ABS-based enrolment-eligible population (denominator, "EEP"). In the case of the Indigenous population these problems are magnified by having no Indigenous identifier on the Roll and less reliable estimates of Indigenous EEP.

However, matching the Roll to Centrelink data allows a more direct method of estimating the Indigenous enrolment rate. It is still subject to quite significant assumptions, but as fewer are required it likely represents an improved approach. In summary:

- For all Centrelink customers with an identified Indigenous or non-Indigenous status, calculate the proportion on the Roll. This is the raw enrolment rate of Centrelink clients.
- Apply the raw enrolment rates to Indigenous and non-Indigenous EEP benchmarks² to yield draft Indigenous status enrolments. Calculate the factor to scale these to the overall enrolments used in the AEC's published enrolment rates.
- Apply the adjustment factor to the draft Indigenous status enrolments, then recalculate the enrolment rates against the EEP benchmarks.
- This process can be done at the State level, though results will have lower reliability.

NOTE: While this method avoids indirectly modelling Indigenous enrolment rates via geographic association, it does assume that any *bias* in Centrelink clients being enrolled is equal for Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and that there are no substantive Indigenous-status biases inherent in the Roll-to-Centrelink person matching.

¹ Acknowledge with appreciation the work of the former Electoral Integrity Unit and the IT Branch.

² Indigenous benchmarks use ABS projected adult populations, non-Indigenous are then the residual with published EEP.

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Conclusion and Results

The Centrelink client file with Indigenous indicator newly available to the AEC has presented an excellent opportunity, via matching to the Roll 19 [REDACTED], to improve estimation of Indigenous franchise KPIs.

While the results are subject to a number of non-trivial assumptions, the more direct estimation methods lead to a higher likelihood of robust results. The figures should nevertheless still be regarded as *indicative* only.

INDIGENOUS-STATUS FRANCHISE KPIs

KPI	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Non-enrolment (2017)	25%	4%
19		

^ enrolment 19

INDIGENOUS-STATUS (NON-)ENROLMENT

30 June 2017

State	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
NSW	14%	2%
VIC	26%	4%
QLD	30%	5%
SA	32%	3%
WA	37%	4%
TAS	17%	3%
NT	33%	9%
ACT	24%	1%
AUST	25%	4%

INDIGENOUS-STATUS (NON-)TURNOUT

2016 federal election

State	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
NSW	24%	8%
VIC	31%	9%
QLD	26%	8%
SA	37%	8%
WA	48%	10%
TAS	14%	6%
NT	34%	12%
ACT	26%	8%
AUST	30%	8%

Notes:

These modelled national estimates contain many assumptions and cannot be ascribed to any particular sub-national location. The absence of an Indigenous identifier on the Federal Roll has been partially supplemented with Centrelink information.

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These figures can be footnoted "unofficial internal AEC modelling".

Business Intelligence, Research and Electoral Integrity Section. 8 May 2018.

