

Appendix B. Commentary on the 2006 Interviewer Household Form

A particular task of the 2006 Census observation was to consider the efficacy of changes made since the 2001 Census to the collection instrument—in particular, the streamlining of the interview process brought about by the change from a two-form to a single-form schedule. In this Appendix, we draw together our comments on the 2006 Interviewer Household Form in two main sections. The first considers the structure of the single matrix form that was used for the first time in 2006 (see Appendix A) and some of the consequences of that structure for the way in which the form was used in the field. We make suggestions for minor changes to the form’s design. The second section looks at the content of the questions and their wording—in some cases drawing comparisons between the different field sites—to assess the likely effects on the quality of the data that were gathered.

Structure

The matrix form is considered to be a definite improvement on the previous arrangement of Household Forms and Personal Forms used in 2001. This was not just the view of the present researchers, but also that of others who had experience of both censuses. One of these was one of the Community Coordinators (CCs) at C3 in Arnhem Land, who had been a collector-interviewer (CI) in 2001. At the Census Field Officer (CFO) debriefing (see Chapter 7), a CFO from another area commented that several people who had worked on both censuses had said to him that the form was ‘heaps better than last time’.

The single form was far less demanding of interviewers in a practical sense. Taylor comments that what appeared initially to CIs to be a daunting document was mastered in terms of its mode of application by most—though not all—of the team by day two of interviewing at Wadeye. The idea that dwelling information was sought in Questions 2–9, and that the people listed in Question 12 were then carried through sequentially by working down each subsequent page of questions through to the end of the schedule, was soon grasped. In practice, this was the way in which the form was filled in at all the field sites.

After observations at the Data Processing Centre (DPC) (see Chapter 8), Morphy thinks that too much emphasis was placed during the training of the CFOs and therefore of the CCs and CIs on the importance of using horizontal marks as opposed to ticks in the ‘tick boxes’ on the form. It is also questionable whether it is really necessary to require that written responses be in capital letters, and that each letter be written in a box. In Morphy’s experience (personal as well as observational, see Chapter 4), writing in capital letters in boxes is laborious, time-consuming and highly conducive to spelling mistakes. The CIs that she

observed in Arnhem Land frequently began with capital letters, but almost invariably switched to the easier and more natural upper and lower case printing at some stage on the form. Horizontal lines and capital letters are necessary for successful automatic coding. However, where data is being coded manually the images on the screen that are available to coders are of sufficient quality to distinguish ticks from crosses and to identify lower case letters.

Thorburn notes that as a general point, the interviewers tended not to read the fine print on the Interviewer Household Form (IHF), which explains each question. This fine print needs to be highlighted very strongly in the training.

As will be argued at length below, the form needs to be designed so that the 'persons temporarily absent' (PTA) table appears after, not before, the list of persons present. Therefore, when people are away, the reasons for their absence can be ascertained and those unlikely to be counted elsewhere can be added to the main form before the PTA table is drawn up. This procedure should be reinforced in training at every level: of the CFOs, the CCs and the CIs.

Length

The form contains too many questions for comfort. The sheer length of interviews in often large, multi-family households was tiring for the CIs and the interviewees. In Arnhem Land, Morphy observed consistently that people tended to start flagging once they hit the education questions (beginning at 32) and were worn out by the time they reached the employment questions (beginning at 40). Often, the CIs were lucky to have even one interviewee left at that point. The questions on education and employment are also those that people find most difficult to answer (see below), and for which the CIs are unlikely to know the answers themselves. It might be advisable to promote these questions higher up the form, so that the CI and interviewees are tackling them when they are feeling relatively fresh. The length of the form and other aspects of its design—notably the lack of sequencing discussed below—encouraged formulaic responses (also discussed below). We suggest that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) needs to look again at reducing the number of questions and better specifying questions and categorical answers in this form designed for discrete Indigenous communities in remote Australia.

Sequencing

All the observers noted that lack of sequencing in the IHF meant that in the latter part of the questioning—about people's educational and employment characteristics—there was a fairly heavy demand on CIs repeatedly marking redundant boxes such as 'No qualification' or 'Did not have a job'. Under the sequencing directions used in the 'mainstream' Household Form, these questions would have been skipped. With the IHF, however, interviewers had to rely on either minimal questioning or humour to get them through as they filled in boxes

that indicated such obvious things as young children not having jobs, incomes or post-school qualifications. Often—particularly later in the interview—the CI would cease to fill in the redundant boxes.

We would argue that leaving out sequencing from the IHF was, however, still the correct decision. Sequencing works only if all questions for one person are asked before moving onto the next person. As anticipated in the design of the IHF, and as noted above in practice, this was not the predominant way in which the IHF was used. ‘Working vertically’—or answering each question for all people listed before moving on to the next question—is the most attractive and efficient way of working with the IHF. Sequencing instructions could lead to questions being skipped for those to whom they apply as well as for those to whom they do not apply.

Sanders notes, however, that there could be some use made of instructions such as ‘Only continue for persons aged 15 years or more’, as in the general Household Form. This instruction could probably have been inserted at the top of Page 15 of the IHF before Question 34 about the highest year of primary or secondary school the person had completed. Such a system would also be easier to implement if the interviewers were encouraged to list adults first, then children, rather than grouping individuals into ‘family groups’. One other way to reinforce this instruction would be to make the question pages after that instruction a different colour.

Another consequence of the lack of sequencing, noted by Morphy, is that the necessity to mark a lot of redundant boxes focused the attention of the CI on the form rather than on keeping the interviewees engaged in the interview process. In 2001, in Arnhem Land, the interview session tended to be a bit of a social event, and individuals were engaged because each had their own form. In 2006, the interview tended to be with one or two people, and everyone else was unengaged or even absent. At times, it was hard to keep even one or two engaged—Morphy observed several cases where the CI was left to fill in the form by themselves. Taylor notes that at Wadeye this repetition tended to cause CIs and respondents a good deal of irritation and consequent loss of flow in rapport during which time some respondents became diverted by events around them and it took considerable effort to regain momentum.

Given the design of the form, this is an intractable problem, but shortening the form and moving the education and employment questions nearer to the front (as suggested above) might improve matters.

Formulaic and standardised responses

Thorburn observes that the people working for the census team at Junjuwa in the Fitzroy Crossing area have a long association with the place and the people there. She estimates that on average they probably knew about 80 per cent of

the answers to the questions they were asking people; there were very few exceptions or surprises. The only time she saw someone's presumption proven wrong was with a woman in her late 40s, known as having 'grown up' many children. The interviewer had not realised that this woman had never actually given birth to any of these children. Arguably, biological motherhood is less salient than social motherhood for these women, for whom 'growing up' children is to 'have them'—but it is of some significance to the census.

A similar observation could be made about the local knowledge of the CIs in the Arnhem Land case study. By and large in these small kin-based communities everyone knows exactly how people are related to one another, how many children people have and so on. For these kinds of questions, it was common for the CI to fill in the form without much reference to the interviewee. The only questions, apart from date of birth, for which the CIs regularly had to ask for details were those relating to post-school qualifications.

As was observed to occur in 2001 (Martin et al. 2002), the CCs and the CIs very quickly developed standardised answers to many of the questions. This was a rational response to questions that had little meaning or relevance for people being asked (see below), and had the effect of speeding up the interviews. CIs would often ask the questions, just for the theatrical and humour value, but more often they would quietly fill in the answer for the respondent, while the latter waited for the next one that the interviewer might need confirmation for. People would regularly answer questions for others in the house who were away, or who had lost interest in the process and wandered off.

If anything, the 2006 form structure proved to be so convenient that at times it encouraged—even more than was the case in 2001—a formulaic filling in or ticking of boxes down the page. As a consequence, there was a tendency for CIs to give more similar responses to the same question for different individuals than would otherwise be the case. This is a likely effect of the interview method in general, as opposed to self-enumeration, and is particularly likely when the question asked does not relate well to the social context of the people being interviewed.

One instance of this, which Sanders has noted in the past, is asking people in Indigenous communities where most people do not have a job whether they looked for work in the past four weeks. If people without a job answer 'yes' to this question they will show up in subsequent analysis as unemployed, while if they answer 'no' they will show up in analysis as not in the labour force. How interviewers and interviewees together decide to answer that question for the people associated with a dwelling in such a community is pretty arbitrary and depends on many things. One is their understanding of the eligibility rules for Newstart or unemployment payment entitlements. If people are being told that they must look for work as a condition of that entitlement, they are probably

more likely to answer 'yes' to the question about whether they have looked for a job, and hence turn up in subsequent analysis as unemployed. In 2001, only 11 per cent of people aged 15 years and over in the Alice Springs town camps answered this way, while 76 per cent showed up as not in the labour force having answered 'no' to this question (Sanders 2004: 6). Sanders predicts that in 2006, with a recent policy emphasis pushing people to do more to get off unemployment payments, the proportion answering 'yes' and hence being categorised as unemployed in the Alice Springs town camps will probably go up and the proportion answering 'no' and being categorised as not in the labour force will go down from 2001. This is largely 'policy noise' in the statistical system produced by a patterning of answers that arises from interviewer and interviewee knowledge of other policy systems, which have little to do with the ABS, but which affect the way in which these particular census questions are answered. Patterning of such answers under an interviewer process of enumeration is probably stronger than under a self-enumeration process, however, it can occur under both types of enumeration processes and is largely unavoidable.

In the Fitzroy Crossing area, the questions that were most commonly approached in a standardised way by the CIs were: Question 5 (amount of rent), Question 7 (who is this dwelling being rented from?), Question 9 (can the Internet be accessed?), Question 40 (income) and Questions 42–6 relating to a person's occupation (particularly where the respondent was on Community Development Employment Projects [CDEP]).

Thorburn notes that such standardisations are not necessarily the same across interviewers, for example, some put down every CDEP person they counted as working 32 hours, when it is very likely that what they meant was 16 hours—the standard for a week. A very valuable part of the training then would be to discuss some of these possible standards—rent paid for different kinds of housing, for example—so that answers are thought about and answered in the same way across interviewers.

This issue could also be addressed in the training if the CFO were aware of the questions to which people would be likely to develop standardised answers. It seems important for the ABS to acknowledge that such standardised answering procedures will develop spontaneously in any case; recognising this in the training would go some way to ensure consistency within communities, and across regions.

Content

Almost inevitably, given the processes of cultural translation that were necessary, issues surrounding the interpretation, understanding and relevance of certain questions arose. Just comparing the various site-based observations and the findings from 2001 (Martin et al. 2002), there seem to be perennial conceptual

confusions in regard to such matters as usual place of residence, family composition, income and industry. Some of the new questions on the census form relating to unpaid and voluntary work also presented difficulties.

The 'resident' versus 'visitor' problem

After the count, when the Northern Territory forms were back at the Darwin Census Management Unit (CMU), the detailed checking of the whereabouts of PTA and people's place of residence threw up some interesting examples of definitional problems surrounding the concepts 'resident' and 'visitor' (see also Chapters 3 and 4). In mainstream terms, being a 'visitor' tends to denote a short-term stay in a place other than one's own residence. In the Indigenous world, the concept could be interpreted very differently. In desert areas, particularly, a person who has lived in a community for half a lifetime could still be considered a 'visitor' and be entered on the form as such at Question 12, but nevertheless respond to Question 15 that they live in 'this community' most of the time—and also did so one and five years ago. This is most likely because they are not living on their own country. There were even cases where the 'Person 1' on a household form was designated as a 'visitor'. Conversely, people might be listed in Question 12 as residents—because the settlement is on their country—but specify that they live 'elsewhere' at Question 15. In other cases—and this seemed more common in Arnhem Land than elsewhere—certain people did not have a clear idea of themselves as 'residents' in a single place. Typically, these were people who divided their time, for various reasons (seasonal, family or work-related) between a homeland and a hub settlement. Such people ran the risk of being designated as a PTA in one place and a resident elsewhere.

'Persons temporarily absent'

This question is treated in detail in all the case-study chapters (see Chapters 3–6) and also in Chapters 7 and 9. The way in which PTA were treated was a major problem at all the study sites, and possibly was one of the most significant factors contributing to the under-count of Indigenous people in Western Australia and the Northern Territory in 2006 (ABS 2007; Taylor 2007b).

In the Indigenous Enumeration Strategy (IES) documentation, it states that:

[The] counting methodology will be 'as enumerated' but will have the flexibility to include people who may not be counted anywhere. People not present...will be listed on the Interviewer Household Form. If they are away hunting or fishing...and it is thought they will not be counted where they are, then they will be included as present and personal details should be completed for them. If they are in a town or city etc, where they should be counted, then they will be listed as being away and only summary details will be completed for them.

As noted above, we conclude that it was a mistake to have the PTA table before the 'people there now' question (12). Although most CIs grew used to this order of questions over time, it was not the most logical and often confused interviewees. The more logical order would be to ask first for people living or staying at the dwelling and then for usual residents who are currently away. As it was, the conceptual problems over 'resident' status compounded the problem and, all in all, it was much too easy to 'forget' to move people onto the main form, especially if there were a lot of people to be counted and if it was difficult to make judgments about whether they would be counted elsewhere.

The problem was compounded further by the lack of guidance in the training of the Northern Territory CFOs and therefore of the CCs and CIs about how to make judgments on the question of whether PTA would be counted elsewhere. There was also a lack of clarity—there was nothing explicit in the documentation and it was not covered in anyone's training—about whether the CIs were to be paid for everyone listed on the form, including PTA, or just for those listed at Question 12.

Thorburn notes that in Fitzroy Crossing the distinction was not understood by the CC or the CIs and perhaps not even by the CFO. Certainly in the day of crosschecking that she observed, with the CFO and the Bunuba CC, no questions were asked about whether or not people who were marked down as being away should have been included as present. In her observation, no forms for any of the Bunuba communities were reviewed in this way. Fieldwork at the DPC in Darwin (see Chapter 7) suggests that a large proportion of PTA would not have been counted on a form anywhere else, and so would have been missed in the population count.

Taylor observes that the phrasing of Questions 12 ('People who are living or staying here now') and 10 and 11 ('People who live here most of the time but are away') sometimes led to people who were just away at the shops or out bush being treated as PTA. He also noted that people he knew to be associated with dwellings who were away were simply not listed, either at 12 or 11. There was therefore not a clear sense among CIs and interviewees that this twofold categorisation was supposed to be exhaustive of people associated with the dwelling.

The issue could also be discussed in terms of demands and interest. Because the demands of the census are high and interest is low, any opportunity to minimise the amount of work to be done by *not* identifying more people to go on a form is quite likely to be taken by interviewees and CIs.

It was suggested to Sanders by a number of users of the form that the switch in order could be accommodated by having the questions about people who live at the dwelling but are currently away on the first spiral-bound right-hand page. That way all the people associated with a dwelling would be able to be seen in

one opening, with those currently there on the left page and usual residents who are currently away on the right page. With this form design, people currently away would be effectively folded out of the way as the more detailed questioning began about those currently there.

In the event, in the Northern Territory, many people were not moved back inside the form to Question 12 until the forms reached the CMU (see Chapter 7). This means that for many people there is only very basic information recorded: age, sex, place where they are thought to be and reason for being away. It is regrettable that there is no information on their relationship to Person 1. At the family-coding stage (see Chapter 8), such people have to be coded as 'unrelated', and this will give a misleading picture of the structure of remote Indigenous households in 2006. Comparison with 2001 could yield a false impression that there are now significantly more households containing people who are not relatives.

'Household' and 'family' structure

The questions on relationships within the household (13–14 and 31–2) yielded more coherent and interpretable data than their equivalents in the 2001 Census (see Martin et al. 2002), although intractable problems of interpretation remained (see Chapter 8 and Morphy 2007). In Question 13 ('How is the person related to Person 1/Person 2?'), it was much clearer what to do with Person 1, but the specified relationships to Person 1 and 2 were structured on the assumption that 1 and 2 were a couple, and it sometimes caused difficulties if they were not. There also seems no good reason to have excluded some of the options that were allowed for on the mainstream form, particularly 'brother or sister of Person 1'. We are in favour of retaining a modified version of Question 13 for 2011, removing the assumption that Person 1 and Person 2 are a married couple and restricting the options to the following relationships to Person 1: father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, child, other relative, unrelated.

There were some instances in which Question 13 on family relationships was answered upside down (or back-to-front), with the relationship of Person 1 to Person x sought instead of the other way round. The research at the DPC revealed that this was an uncommon problem, but one that occurred sporadically everywhere. It is extremely difficult to think of a wording for the question that makes the direction of the relationship totally unambiguous.

Question 13 contains the category 'de facto', but this is not given as an option in Question 14 ('Is the person married?'). This was sometimes confusing to the CIs and the interviewees.

The addition of Questions 31 ('Is the person's mother staying in the dwelling?') and 32 ('Is the person's father staying in the dwelling?') was invaluable—particularly at the data processing stage in the DPC—although

people were not always successful at filling them in consistently. These were a great improvement on the essentially unanswerable 2001 question about being 'more closely related to' someone other than Person 1.

Two researchers (Morphy and Thorburn) noted that these questions sometimes caused problems when a household was big enough to require more than one form, if the CIs had not been told to leave 'Person 1' and Person 2' blank on the second and subsequent forms. At Wadeye, these questions presented issues in the case of deceased parents and others who were in respite care or currently located with another relative. Interestingly, some respondents wanted to know how to respond if their parent was temporarily away, and yet this fact had not been recorded in answer to Question 11 relating to PTA.

Thorburn notes that in Fitzroy Crossing most interviewers presumed that these questions related to biological mothers and fathers. Given the earlier question (25) about babies that the mother had given birth to, rather than 'grown up', it is not surprising, and Thorburn suggests that Question 25 primes people to answer the later questions in a non-Indigenous way, which is precisely what they did—that is, defining mothers and fathers biologically, rather than as 'adoptive, step or foster', which are the descriptors given in the fine print.

Date of birth

In Wadeye and Arnhem Land, major difficulties arose in trying to establish age or date of birth (DOB) in Question 12. In numerous cases this item was left blank, and on the occasions where DOB was unknown and an attempt was made to establish age instead, this invariably became a more or less well-educated guess. So prominent was this omission in Wadeye that an attempt was made by one of the CCs to extract DOB information from the TRC population database, although this was unsuccessful owing to difficulties in establishing a procedure that preserved confidentiality. In Arnhem Land, the CFO tried to use the local health database to check, but was stymied by the multiple names problem (see Chapters 4 and 7).

Usual residence

In Arnhem Land and Wadeye, Questions 15, 16 and 17—regarding usual residence now, one, and five years ago—were treated essentially as the same and the tendency was for interviewers to rush through these with a standard response and little discussion. Given the different values surrounding the terms 'resident' and 'visitor' in mainstream and remote Aboriginal cultures this is not surprising, and these data cannot be interpreted as a reliable reflection of mobility patterns, either in the shorter or longer term.

Language

As in 2001, Question 21 ('Does the person speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language *at home*?') and Question 22 ('How well does the person speak *English*?') revealed interesting regional differences in attitudes to language. The data gathered in these questions cannot be taken to be an objective measure of language use (cf. Kral and Morphy 2006).

People in Fitzroy Crossing did not answer Question 21 consistently. In Thorburn's view, this is because belonging to a 'language group' has become a marker of political identity, to an extent, particularly in terms of traditional ownership of country. That there is an organisation in Fitzroy Crossing called Bunuba Inc.—that is, called by a language group name—probably further confused matters. So stating that one is Walmajarri or Bunuba does not necessarily mean that one speaks that language the majority of the time; rather, it distinguishes one's identity in contrast with other language groups in town, and marks one as a member of a group. Some CIs also interpreted the question as meaning 'Can you speak language, and if so, which one?' This issue is probably something specific to those settlements and towns where a number of language groups coalesce. In any case, answers to this question were not consistent across interviewees and some tended to write down 'Kriol', the most accurate answer for the majority there.

In north-east Arnhem Land, where the majority of people speak a Yolngu-matha dialect as their first language, the data on real usage are more reliable. It is likely that a generational effect is beginning to be evident, with the language form '*dhuwaya*'—the term for the lingua franca that has developed in the eastern part of the Yolngu-speaking area—being recorded for the majority of people of about 40 years of age and below. This variety is replacing clan dialects spoken by the older generations, and whereas in 2001 interviewees were still volunteering their clan dialect as their 'language' (even if they were most of the time speaking *dhuwaya*), there seems to have been a shift in the intervening years to reporting real (rather than clan-identificational) usage.

Question 22 on English usage was for the most part considered patronising and/or confusing by people in Fitzroy Crossing. This question was interpreted as being similar to Question 28 ('Does the person ever need someone to help with understanding other people or being understood by other people?'), where it is not clear who the person is not being understood by. The implication seems to be it is non-Indigenous people who are not understanding, and that is certainly how the question was interpreted.

In Arnhem Land, in contrast, as in 2001, most people found this question unexceptionable. Answers tended to be formulaic, with infants classified as non-English speakers, children of primary-school age being classified as speaking 'not well' and nearly everyone else as speaking English 'well'. There was an

occasional politically motivated response to the question (see Chapter 4). At Question 28, people felt it odd, even insulting, that language comprehension was put in the same category as disabilities such as deafness. None of the few people who responded 'yes' to this then ticked the 'difficulty with English' box at Question 29.

Religion

As with the language question, Question 24 ('What is the person's religion?') elicited culturally mediated responses. Thorburn comments that it is not clear whether the ABS really is seeking to ascertain how many Indigenous people maintain traditional beliefs and cultural practice. If it is seeking to capture that, more discussion needs to take place in the training, and perhaps other words suggested on the form. She is not sure that people in Fitzroy Crossing like to describe themselves as 'traditional' with its undertone of 'backward' (see Martin 2002 for similar comments with respect to Aurukun in 2001).

In the Yolngu area, as in 2001, some people wanted to put 'traditional beliefs' and a Christian option, while others disputed that traditional beliefs were the same thing as a religion. In this very 'traditional' region, where funerals made the count almost impossible (see Chapter 4), most people chose to put their Christian affiliation. Traditional beliefs were highly under-reported in the Yolngu region in 2001 and 2006.

We strongly recommend—as Morphy did in 2002—that if some attempt to get at traditional orientations is to stay, it should be separated from the religion question. At the very least, it should be possible to choose the 'traditional' and another option.

Number of babies ever born

Question 25 ('For each female, how many babies has she given birth to?'), which had been a worry to the ABS—and a focus of training—was relatively unproblematic, although Taylor comments that in Wadeye the question often generated discussion, perhaps not surprisingly given possible sensitivities.

In the Yolngu area, in general, female CIs asked this question. If there was no female CI the form was handed over to a female member of the household for the question to be completed. In some cases, the female CIs were able to add deceased children from their personal knowledge, but often only currently living children were counted. In Fitzroy Crossing, the question was understood well enough, but was certainly not one that was asked of older women by younger male interviewers.

Need for assistance

The four questions (26–8) about people needing help—which were designed to probe disability issues—were wordy and could be interpreted in very different ways. The Yolngu CIs had difficulty reading them out, and the interviewees in interpreting them. People understated their disabilities. They thought it odd that children had to be included—their reasons for needing help are different than for adults—and the ‘old or young age’ box did not come until Question 29.

In Fitzroy Crossing, these questions caused irritation at times and the tendency was for interviewers to focus more on Question 28 (whether the person needed help being understood) and then to interpret this primarily as a test of English-language ability in Question 29—in contrast with the Yolngu-speaking interviewees and CIs (see above).

Education and training

In the Yolngu area, as in Wadeye, Question 33 on attendance at an educational institution elicited fairly stock responses. At Wadeye, there was discussion at times as to whether the Thamarrurr Regional School was a primary or secondary institution given that it was, strictly speaking at the time, a primary school but with secondary-enrolled students—a common occurrence in remote Aboriginal settlements.

Question 34 on the highest year of schooling completed also presented subtleties at Wadeye and often two categories were ticked (‘Went to primary school’ and ‘Finished primary school’). In the Yolngu area, the prompt on Question 34 to put ‘Year 8 or below’ for ‘mission days’ schooling was a good idea—it saved a lot of time and discussion.

There followed a series of questions containing default categories that, as previously noted, tended to disrupt the interview and cause it to lose momentum. Almost invariably at Wadeye and in the Yolngu-speaking area the answer to Question 35 on post-school qualifications was answered in the negative, so the answers to Questions 36–9 were also negative, yet each question had a box that required ticking. For Question 38 (‘What was the name of the educational institution where the person completed their highest qualification?’), the CFO at Wadeye instructed CIs in training to write down for this question the name of the high school if that was the highest level of qualification, but no one did. For whatever reason, it was interpreted by CIs—correctly, although the form of the question was not unambiguous—as a question about education after school.

Income and employment

At Question 40 ('How much money does the person get each fortnight...') many incomes were understated in the Arnhem Land case study area; pensions were not included, by and large, nor were child allowance or intermittent income from artwork. In Fitzroy Crossing, this question was also problematic, and Thorburn suggested that a cheat sheet on people's pays depending on what government payment they received would have been very useful. Largely, people are not aware of the total amount of money they receive, as rent and often 'chuck-in' (communal savings) are removed immediately the pay goes into their account. Many people also are unaware of whether or not they are taxed. The question also presumes that a person's pay has not changed—that is, for people who are contract workers, or who change jobs often, the question could be hard to answer. More attention needs to be given in the training to some of the difficulties with calculating people's income.

All of the questions from 42 to 50, relating to work, also would have benefited from more discussion during the training sessions—in particular, how to answer the questions for those people on CDEP, who are the majority of employed people in these communities.

In Fitzroy Crossing, in answer to Question 42 ('In the main job held last week, what was the person's occupation?'), people wrote 'CDEP' where appropriate. For Question 44 ('For the main job held last week, who did the person work for?'), however, some CIs wrote the name of the community where the person worked, rather than the CDEP grantee organisation for whom they were working—indeed, the fine print encouraged them to do so. In the Fitzroy Valley, however, almost all of the smaller CDEPs have been transferred to Marra Worra Worra (MWW) in the past five years, so the smaller communities no longer run their own CDEP programs.

Question 46 ('...what did the person's employer do?') was most problematic in the Arnhem Land area: people do not know how to describe what their CDEP organisation does. Here, the CIs gradually worked out a formulaic response: 'Provides community services'. Thorburn comments that in the Fitzroy area MWW is a multi-million-dollar organisation that receives funding from various government agencies to provide all kinds of services to communities around Fitzroy Crossing. A descriptive tag such as 'community organisation' could have been decided on and adhered to by all CIs. Again, discussion in the training and the drawing up of a cheat sheet would have been very helpful in both locations.

As with Question 46, Question 47 ('Last week, how many hours did the person work in all jobs?') had very stable answers for most people in Fitzroy Crossing: either 'Did not have a job' or '16 hours'—the hours required under CDEP rules. As previously noted, however, one of the CIs wrote 32 hours for all CDEP respondents, thinking that, like the pay question, it was referring to a fortnight.

In Arnhem Land, the question was often filled in with daily rather than weekly hours. Morphy comments that it would make things much easier for the CIs if the same time frame applied to all income and job questions.

In Question 50 ('If the person had found a job, could the person have started work last week?'), two of the options given were 'No, other reason' and 'Did not look for work'. The latter was a 'default' category—as in the previous question—but this was very unclear in the context because it was not a coherent response to the real question asked.

Taylor comments that, at Wadeye, because many people do not have a job, Questions 42–8 were effectively redundant but nonetheless required filling out. By this stage—as in the other field sites—there was generally a sense that all participants wanted to move quickly to finish the proceedings. Consequently, Question 49 on looking for work was answered universally in the negative—whether people were registered with Centrelink was not asked. Question 50 on availability for work was then seen as another default situation.

Unpaid work, unpaid care and voluntary work

In the Yolngu-speaking area and at Wadeye, the final four questions tended to be answered speedily and without too much thought, with the CIs quickly establishing stock responses to what seemed rather irrelevant questions. In Arnhem Land, Question 51 (on unpaid domestic work) was a bit perplexing to some, as they were putting 'home duties' down as their CDEP employment in answer to an earlier question. The need to choose between several alternatives in terms of hours spent caused difficulties, until the CIs worked out some formulaic responses: boys, less than five hours; young men, none; girls, 5–14 hours; women, 15–29 hours. In Wadeye, this question was overwhelmingly answered 'yes', but the quality of the answers on hours spent appeared questionable as people had little measurable sense of this.

Interestingly, in the Yolngu-speaking area, nearly everyone from about the age of 10 up—boys as well as girls—was said to have looked after children in response to Question 53. In contrast, the concept of 'voluntary work' (Question 54) is foreign to people, and no one responded 'yes' to this question.

The keeping of information

Question 55, on the archiving of personal information, was treated differently by different CIs, and there could also have been an effect caused by the nature of the form. In the Yolngu-speaking area in 2001, when everyone had a personal form, they answered this question for themselves. The use of a matrix form in 2006, as noted above, led to less engagement with the process among members of the household and often only the CI and one interviewee were left by the end. The CIs had been told that people had to answer this question for

themselves, so most of the boxes were left blank. Those people who did respond invariably responded in the affirmative, as in 2001.

In Fitzroy Crossing, the question was asked of Person 1 only (who invariably assented to archiving), and each of the boxes for other household members were then ticked in the same way. This was contrary to the instructions the CIs had received in training.