

MDP talk on "Strategic issues facing ABS and MD":

- My Name is Frank Masci from the Time Series Analysis Section of the Methodology Division.
- I'll be talking about 2 strategic issues facing the ABS and 1 issue specific to the Methodology Division in which I work.
- The first relates to latest changes to the ABS mission regarding: "becoming a leading national statistical service" (or NSS for short):
 - a lot of administrative & personal data about Australians and businesses is out there and it's becoming owned by more and more people.
 - the ABS aims to: collect all such data, quality assure it for correctness and authenticity and train users on how to disseminate it for their needs.
 - so the ABS is trying to set up a centralised NSS, and a challenge is how to control all the data collections.
 - the biggest obstacle is from competitors to the ABS who might offer data to people and businesses that the ABS doesn't have access to. Obviously these competitors will charge customers.
 - so I believe we will need further legislation to regulate this in the plan.
- The other ABS broad strategic issue is with regards to "Workforce shaping".
 - in other words, thinking about how the ABS would look like in 5-10 years time.
 - two examples of external changes that might affect the ABS are first: less people studying mathematics & statistics and second, an aging workforce population.
 - so there'll be a shortage of skilled workers or technical specialists and an aging workforce means that there'll be more people leaving than coming in.
 - this means that ABS employees will need to have broader skills as they'll be needed in different areas. One solution is for the ABS to devise broader graduate/training programs to continue to meet its needs.
- The final issue is with regards the MD and concerns enhancing communications with clients:
 - this is really my own opinion but I sense that others in my section have similar views. Now I might get in trouble for saying this, but the MD has been noted to have the worst customer service skills of any other division in the ABS.
 - Maybe it's because we're all technically and mathematically minded and our focus is on analytical aspects or getting a problem solved rather than presenting results in a clear concise manner.
 - one way of getting around this is to encourage methodologists to be more involved in a client's data collection or survey activities. Also, continued relocation of MD staff to other areas means that a more effective training procedure needs to be in place for new starters.