

Attachment 6:

Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) Coding Index

A coding index is required to link responses from the 'Main language other than English spoken at home' question to the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) Second Edition, ABS cat. no. 1267.0*. This index can be obtained in the form of an electronic text file from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1267.02005-06?OpenDocument> or as a link to this Manual on the MCEETYA website.

Information provided in administrative collections does not always comprise the exact words used as the official names of classification categories in the ASCL. A coding index is therefore necessary to act as a link between individual responses and the classification categories, enabling data to be coded accurately and quickly to the appropriate category in the classification.

The coding index has been developed to assist in the implementation and use of the ASCL and should be used when coding responses to questions relating to language spoken. The coding index has been devised by reference to existing literature in the field; consultation with language experts, government and private organisations with language knowledge and expertise, and ethnic and community groups; and by analysis of existing ABS data. It contains a comprehensive list of the most probable responses to questions relating to language and their correct classification codes.

The base-level units of the classification are languages as described in the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) Second Edition, ABS cat. no. 1267.0*. The term 'language' is used in the ASCL to describe languages, dialects, pidgins, Creoles, and invented and sign languages. As well as the relevant recognised language and its official name, many of the Language categories also cover dialects and regional varieties of that language not separately identified in the classification. In addition to its coding function, the numerical index can be used to clarify the nature, extent and diverse content of each Language category. For example, Occitan and Walloon appear in the index with the same classification code as the Language category French.

The ASCL Second Edition

The first edition of the ASCL was published in 1997. Analysis of 2001 Census data revealed that the language profile of Australia had changed since the development of the first edition. The ASCL was reviewed and amended to improve its usefulness with a second edition being published by the ABS in July 2005.

The ASCL Second Edition

- extended the coverage of non-Indigenous languages to include an additional 56 languages in the classification giving a total of 194 categories;
- extended the coverage of Australian Indigenous languages to include an additional 115 new Australian Indigenous language categories in the classification giving a total of 170;
- revised the structure of Australian Indigenous languages at the narrow groups level to provide increased consistency, a more useful structure and improve the statistical balance among the narrow groups;

- reclassified certain non-Indigenous languages and groups of languages so that they more closely align with the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) and they are more appropriately classified; and
- renamed a number of categories and groups to make them more transparent and accurate.

Further information on the changes made to the ASCL can be found at pages 16-22 in the ABS publication, *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) Second Edition*, ABS cat. no. 1267.0.

Users and providers of language data are urged to use the second edition of the ASCL to collect, classify and disseminate data. Some users may need to convert data collected using the 1997 ASCL First Edition to the 2005 ASCL Second Edition. The ABS publishes a correspondence table between the second and first editions of the ASCL to facilitate this process. The table can be obtained in the form of an electronic text file from the ABS website at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1267.02005-06?OpenDocument>.

Coding Rules

A range of coding rules is applied in the coding index to facilitate accurate coding of responses to the ASCL classification. These rules include:

Responses that match exactly with an entry in the coding index are assigned the code allocated to that index entry.

Responses that relate directly to a Language category are coded to that Language category. Such instances include responses that are an exact match with the Language category title except in terms of alternative spelling, the use of abbreviations, or the use of foreign or idiosyncratic words, etc., and responses that match the title in terms of the fundamental or basic words of the title and differ only in terms of qualifying or extraneous words.

Responses that relate directly to a Language category because they describe a variety, dialect or geographic variation of that language, for which a separate base unit has not been established in the classification, are coded directly to that Language category. For example, Siamese appears in the index with the same classification code as the Language category Thai.

Responses that cannot be identified as relating to a separately identified Language in the classification are assigned a residual category code, or a supplementary 'n.f.d.' (not further defined) code. A response should only be coded to a residual category if it is clear that it belongs in that category. For example, responses that cannot be identified as relating directly to a particular Language category, but which is known to be within the range of languages relating to a particular Narrow Group, are coded to that Narrow group and allocated an 'n.f.d.' code (for example, Celtic n.f.d. 1100). Responses that are not precise enough to be coded to any category of the classification are assigned the appropriate supplementary code, for example, an 'inadequately described' (0000) or a 'not stated' (0002) code.