

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN JUNE 2009 SUBMISSION

THE LAMB REPORTS

Key Points

- Socio-economic influences should be measured at the finest geographical level.
- The Lamb reports' methodology is not sufficiently transparent.

GEOGRAPHICAL LEVEL

The Lamb reports analyse data at the level of statistical sub-division. Western Australia considers that measurement should be at the finest geographical level possible. The larger the area used the greater the extent to which the areas will contain heterogeneous populations, which will reduce the meaningfulness of the results.

- This is consistent with ABS advice about using SEIFA indexes, which are used in the Lamb analysis: "Because of this diversity, using the SEIFA indexes for CDs are generally more appropriate than for larger areas, such as SLAs. If using SEIFA indexes for larger areas, any diversity should be acknowledged".¹

TRANSPARENCY

The derivation of the results is at times difficult to follow - notably the "state-sensitive methodology" sections are opaque to us.

In addition, it is not clear why some numbers have changed between the February 2009 and April 2009 post-compulsory reports.

In particular, the coefficients for SES and Indigeneity are now significantly different. As we indicated at the May 2009 meeting with the CGC, we have found it difficult (in the context of a WA offender database) to calculate reliable values for coefficients of the SES/Indigeneity variables for multiple regression analysis, reflecting that these variables are on average highly correlated. We found that even very high levels of statistical significance from SES and/or Indigeneity could not be trusted – the results were unstable when the analysis was done at a finer/coarser level, or when a subset of "untrustworthy" datapoints was left out.

¹ ABS 2039.0 *An Introduction to Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2006*, page 30