The Territory Government has announced that it will commission independent high level research into methodology used to estimate the Territory population, to assist the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) with future statistical collections.

Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said that Government was aware of reports by some Territorians that their forms were not collected in the last census.

"Under-counting costs us in Commonwealth revenue and, as we saw last week, a small statistical blip was enough to affect our Federal Parliamentary representation - a ludicrous result," she said.

"I have written to Prime Minister asking that he legislate to guarantee NT minimum two seats while this independent research will be undertaken to ensure that the Territory population is accurately reflected in official statistics.

"While we accept that ABS needs to make estimates, where forms aren’t returned or people are not home, however we’re concerned that the ABS model doesn’t take account of our population demographics, and whether there is inherent under-counting in the model.

"The Territory has different factors include a large indigenous population, language and cultural difficulties, and a highly mobile population."

Ms Martin said that the ABS does the best job possible, with resources available, but the Government wants to ensure figures are accurate.

"Having as accurate a picture as possible of Territory population will help us better target the provision of infrastructure and services in an equitable manner," she said.

"Officials in the Department of Chief Minister have had initial discussions with the ABS, and we will work co-operatively with them to make sure the model and collection methods used to estimate our population are the most accurate available.

"This work is long over due and will give Government’s, both Territory and Federal, a valuable tool with which plan for our future.

"I expect the work to be completed by the end of this year, in time for the next inter-census population review."

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