



Dissenting Report – The Hon. Alan Griffin MP, the
Hon. Gary Gray MP, Senator Chris Ketter,
Senator Lee Rhiannon

**Dissenting Report to the JSCEM Inquiry into All Aspects
of the conduct of the 2013 Federal Election and matters
related thereto**

Direct Enrolment and Update—4.23 to 4.28 and Rec.10

As was noted in the JSCEM report into the Bill that sought to introduce Federal Direct Enrolment and Update system (FDEU), “The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), in its review of the AEC’s conduct of the 2007 federal election, noted that ‘the most significant long-term issue facing the AEC remains the state of the electoral roll’. In the last decade it is estimated that the Commonwealth electoral roll has decreased from 95 per cent complete to around 90 per cent complete. In practical terms, that means 1.5 million eligible electors are unable to vote unless they take action to enrol.”¹

FDEU has helped to address the issues surrounding the decline in accuracy of the electoral roll and has been an important tool for the AEC to maximise the completeness of the roll.

The first enrolments under the new FDEU system took place at the end of 2012 with a small pilot run in Tasmania. The system was then only progressively rolled out in 2013 across the nation. It has therefore only been in operation for around two years.

1 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Advisory Report on the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012*, March 2012, p.15.

In that time, there has been absolutely no evidence or indication of fraudulent behaviour brought to the attention of the AEC.

In fact, as outlined in the AEC submission to the Inquiry by the JSCEM into the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011, the available evidence into the existing direct enrolment system in NSW found that

- 25 per cent of those who had their enrolment details directly updated said they would probably not have updated their enrolment details themselves;
- Less than 2 per cent of individuals notified of the NSWEC proposal to place them on the roll disagreed; and
- Most of those who disagreed did so because of errors in data or changes in their circumstances;
- Less than 0.1 per cent of people objected to the NSWEC using data they had provided to other government agencies.²

Notwithstanding comments by the Electoral Commissioner at the recent public hearing of the JSCEM in March, given that the AEC are currently reviewing the operation of the FDEU it is premature for the Committee to make any recommendation to alter the existing enrolment process without at least considering the result of that review when it is completed.

Labor and Green Members of the Committee therefore reject Recommendation 10.

Voter Identification Issues—5.47 to 5.82 and Rec. 17

While accepting most of the commentary included in this section, there are disagreements with aspects of the analysis and the recommendation that has been made.

The Queensland system for voter identification when voting, while appearing to not produce an onerous requirement on those seeking to vote, does have some apparent problems regarding voter engagement. At the 2015 Queensland election, voter turnout dropped to 89.89 per cent of those enrolled. This was the lowest turnout since 1980. The lowest turnout in twelve state elections.

Given the large swings that were indicative of the electoral volatility in the 2015 Queensland election, it is surprising that voter turnout was actually down from the previous election. If voter turnout was maintained at 91 per cent as it was at the 2012 election, over 32 000 more Queenslanders would have exercised their democratic right. That is the equivalent of more than one full Legislative

2 Australian Electoral Commission(AEC), *Submission to the Inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters into the Electoral and Referendum Amendment Bill(Maintaining Address) Bill 2011*, p. 11.

Assembly seat. If such a drop in turnout were to result at the next Federal election, more than 165 000 Australians may be excluded from the electoral contest. This would not be a positive development in our democracy.

It would appear that there may well be more serious implications for voter engagement for many groups of disadvantaged voters, including itinerant and indigenous voters as well as those escaping domestic violence. It would be a pity to take actions that would impact on the involvement of these voters in order to address an issue where there is little evidence of any problem and where the proposed solution only addresses one aspect of the stated concern. That is, while there is some limited evidence of individuals voting multiple times in their own name, the Queensland system will not address this. It will address the concern of people impersonating others but there has been no evidence produced that would suggest this has occurred.

Labor and Greens Members of the Committee therefore reject
Recommendation 17.

The Hon. Alan Griffin MP
Deputy Chair

The Hon. Gary Gray MP

Senator Chris Ketter

Senator Lee Rhiannon

