



## Electoral Commissioner

Our ref: 15/288

Ms Rebecca Gordon  
Inquiry Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gordon

### **Inquiry into electoral education – responses to questions taken on notice at the 15 July 2015 JSCEM public hearing**

At the 15 July 2015 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) hearing into the delivery of electoral education, the AEC took a number of questions on notice. The AEC's responses to those questions are at **Attachment A**.

I am happy to respond to additional questions the Committee may have, or provide further information that would be useful to the Committee in its inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Kitson  
Acting Electoral Commissioner

3 August 2015

## **AEC responses to questions on notice from the 15 July 2015 JSCEM hearing inquiry into the delivery of electoral education**

### **1. Electoral Education in Canadian schools**

- 1.1. On page three of the transcript, Senator Ketter asked if the parallel elections program in Canada was limited to certain schools.

**Senator KETTER:** That Canadian exercise is limited to registered schools, as I understand it. Is there any evidence of to what extent this happens? Is this limited to certain schools?

**Mr Rogers:** I am not sure. I could find out for you fairly easily. We do liaise very regularly with the UK, Canadian and New Zealand electoral commissions, and I can say that each of them to a greater or lesser extent are doing a lot of work in the area of education. Again, that is partially based on the resources that they have at a particular point in time to do that and the experience they have.

#### *AEC Response*

- 1.2. The Canadian 'Student Vote' program, run by charity organisation CIVIX, is open to all elementary, intermediate and secondary schools.
- 1.3. Schools must register and there is no cost to participate.
- 1.4. More information about the program can be found at:  
<http://studentvote.ca/home.php>

### **2. Number of Australian students unable to attend the AEC National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC) in Canberra**

- 2.1. On page four of the transcript, Senator Goodenough requested the difference between the number of students attending the NEEC and those unable to visit.

**Mr GOODENOUGH:** In terms of the number of students per year that pass a particular mark in high school, would there be about a million or two million that graduate into the system?

**Mr Rogers:** I am not sure, I am afraid.

**Mr GOODENOUGH:** I was trying to compare that with the 90,000 that attend education, to see what the shortfall was.

**Mr Rogers:** I do not know the exact numbers. What I could say is that it is a big shortfall. We are really tapping a small part of the market

*AEC Response*

- 2.2. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' annual "Schools, Australia" publication for 2014, there was a total 3 694 101 students in Australia schools, spread across all 12 years of schooling.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3. Approximately 250 000 students were in Grade 6, the year level most commonly undertaking a trip to Canberra.
- 2.4. The NEEC provided sessions to 90 982 students in the 2014-15 financial year. Although not all of these students are in year 6, over time this equates to approximately 30 per cent of year 6 students.

**3. Parliamentary and Civics Education Rebate (PACER)**

- 3.1. On page six of the transcript, Senator Canavan asked what the current rebate was under the PACER program.

**Senator CANAVAN:** I had some questions about PACER. I know you mentioned it in your submission. You would not administer that I presume. Do you know how much it is at the moment? You do not know?

**Mr Rogers:** We can find that out though.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Take that on notice.

**CHAIR:** You can take that up in the round table.

**Senator CANAVAN:** So we will have people there. Do the House of Representatives administer it?

**CHAIR:** Yes, we have got—

*AEC response*

- 3.2. The Parliamentary and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) is an initiative of the Australian Government which provides some financial assistance for students in Years 4-12 across Australia to travel to Canberra. It is administered by the Busy At Work organisation.
- 3.3. The following table outlines the funding amount per student based on distance travelled:

**Table 1: PACER rebate per student based on distance travelled<sup>2</sup>**

Distance (Kilometres)	Dollar (\$)
150–499	20
500–999	30
1 000–1 499	60
1 500–1 999	80
2 000–2 499	120

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Commentary on student numbers* (5 February 2015), accessed 24 July 2015, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4221.0>

<sup>2</sup> PACER, *PACER Guidelines*, accessed 24 July 2015, <http://www.pacer.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/PACER-Application-Form-2605014-final.pdf>.

<b>2 500–2 999*</b>	150
<b>3 000–3 999</b>	240
<b>4 000 and over</b>	260

\*includes all students from Tasmania because of additional air/sea travel expenses.

- 3.4. More information about the PACER program can be found at: <http://www.pacer.org.au/>

#### 4. Innovative school electoral education activities

- 4.1. On page eight of the transcript, Senator Canavan requested information about schools undertaking innovative electoral education activities.

**Senator CANAVAN:** We want to organise some visits to different areas of the country to look at what is happening. I was interested in whether you have any information; you do not necessarily have to provide it here, if you do not want to identify particular schools. But are there any schools doing it really well or doing innovative or different things that we could perhaps consider?

**Mr Rogers:** Perhaps we could take that on notice. But, speaking broadly, I remember that when I was in the commission previously I visited a school that ran a sort of a mock parliament—and I think a large number of schools did this—full time: the school captain was the Prime Minister, and they had debates and elections and...

#### *AEC response*

- 4.2. The AEC is unable to comment on specific schools or the success of their activities. However, through the AEC's work with the education sector, the AEC is anecdotally aware of a number of different models of student engagement with civics and citizenship practiced at the school level.
- 4.3. School Parliament. School parliaments are a form of student government modelled on the processes of the Australian Parliament. Students are generally elected by the student population from each year level, and may also take on roles such as a Speaker, Prime Minister, or Sergeant at Arms. Student representatives meet regularly to propose and debate ideas on changes within the school in the form of 'Bills'. In some cases teachers may act as a Senate and the Principal as the Governor General.
- 4.4. School elections and campaigns. Many schools conduct elections for their student leadership roles. Some schools take this process further, by conducting a campaign period where potential representatives can make themselves known to the student voters. This may include giving speeches, conducting debates and displaying campaign material around the school.
- 4.5. Engagement with Members of Parliament. Some schools actively engage with their local, state or federal representatives. This may include regular visits to the school, presentations at school events or other opportunities

for parliamentarians to interact with students. Jurisdictions have varying policies around how these relationships are managed.

- 4.6. Democratic schools. Democratic schools are an alternative education movement which involves teachers, students and parents in all school decision-making-processes including governance, curriculum and funding.

## 5. Youth enrolment

- 5.1. On page 11 of the transcript, Senator Ketter requested information about the rates at which young people are enrolling.

**Senator KETTER:** I accept that parents and individuals should take responsibility for that. Regarding enrolment of young people, do you have information about the rates at which people are enrolling?

**Mr Rogers:** I do not have the stats with me today, but I can tell you that, traditionally, young people, however we define that, are underrepresented on the electoral roll. We are working with a range of initiatives to try to address that. I might ask Ms O'Meara to talk about something we did before the 2013 election.

### *AEC response*

- 5.2. As at 30 June 2015, it is estimated that 80.4 per cent of eligible adults aged 18 to 25 are on the federal electoral roll. This compares to the rate for all ages of 93.2 per cent. The gap between the eligible and enrolled population diminishes as the population ages, as seen in the rising enrolment rates between ages 16 to 25 in the following table.

**Table 2: Federal Enrolment Rate at 30 June 2015**

Age	Enrolment Rate (%) (including provisional enrolment)
16	6.0
17	17.7
18	51.0
19	68.5
20 - 25	87.2

- 5.3. Persons aged 16 and 17 years old are not required to enrol but may do so under the provisional enrolment provisions of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. A person cannot however vote until he or she has attained 18 years of age.

## 6. AEC budget for the delivery of electoral education

- 6.1. On pages 12 and 13 of the transcript, Senator Ketter asked what proportion of AEC resources support the delivery of AEC electoral education.

**Senator KETTER:** All this requires resources and money, and I am very conscious that you have other priorities that you have to deal with. Can you give us some rough idea as to what proportion of your resources goes into this education area.

**Mr Rogers:** Perhaps I might give you one figure and I can provide some more data later on about the amount of money that we spend on education. It is a bit hard to separate some of those items because, when you are dealing with a community, there might be a range of things going on, not just education, so how do you actually code that? But I think the budget for the National Electoral Education Centre for 2015-16 is \$1.2 million. To give you another example, we are separately funded by government to run a thing called the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, and there is a heavy educative element in that. We have allocated \$2.6 million in financial year 2015-16 just to that program. Again, there is a sort of crossover between education and community outreach. Anytime one of our staff speaks to a member of the public, there is an element of education that occurs there as well. So there is an amount of money that we are spending on that education at the moment, but it is one of our key outcomes—we need to spend that money to get the outcome we need. I do not know how much it is going to cost us if we are to revamp the Electoral Education Centre. Our National Electoral Education Centre here has served as a model for some other electoral education centres that have been built around the world

.....

**CHAIR:** Mr Rogers, you were asked by one of my colleagues about the AEC education budget and you mentioned a figure of, I think, \$2 million.

**Mr Rogers:** For the education centre?

**CHAIR:** Yes. You may or may not have this with you, but are you able to give us the cost of the teacher preservice training, or what the budget was?

**Mr Rogers:** Can I take that on notice, if you do not mind?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Rogers:** I can give you bits of data about how much we are spending in various areas.

### **AEC response**

6.2. For the 2015-16 financial year, the AEC has allocated a budget of \$1.6 million for direct education expenditure. This amount can be broken down as follows:

- Cost of running the NEEC: \$ 1.4 million
- Professional learning workshops: \$0.12 million
- Education projects: \$0.08 million.

6.3. This is supported by indirect education activities undertaken by state and divisional office staff. The AEC has also allocated a budget of \$2.6 million for the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP), a community outreach program, which includes some education sessions.

## **7. Pre-service teacher program budget**

7.1. On page 13 of the transcript, the Chair requested the budget of the former pre-service teacher program.

**CHAIR:** Mr Rogers, you were asked by one of my colleagues about the AEC education budget and you mentioned a figure of, I think, \$2 million.

**Mr Rogers:** For the education centre?

**CHAIR:** Yes. You may or may not have this with you, but are you able to give us the cost of the teacher preservice training, or what the budget was?

**Mr Rogers:** Can I take that on notice, if you do not mind?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Rogers:** I can give you bits of data about how much we are spending in various areas.

*AEC response*

- 7.2. The former pre-service teacher program's budget allocation was \$0.12 million.

**8. Confirmation of Get Voting data**

- 8.1. On page 14 of the transcript, Senator Canavan requested that the AEC confirm the statistics contained within Table 3.1 of the AEC's 10 July 2015 submission to the inquiry.

**Senator CANAVAN:** On the data, I noticed that you distributed 375 packs in 2012-13 and only 14,000 students participated and you have basically had a threefold increase in the number of students participating but only a quarter or so increase in the number of packs.

**Mr Rogers:** I think it just depends on the size of the schools that we are dealing with.

**Senator CANAVAN:** It is a big difference.

**Mr Rogers:** Yes.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Could you have a look at that on notice? It just seems a bit anomalous. We are talking about a 300 per cent increase in student participation and only a 24 per cent increase in packs distributed.

**Mr Rogers:** I will unpack that and make sure.

*AEC response*

- 8.2. The number of student participants in 2012-13 was 39 969. 14 000 was the number of unique visitors to the Get Voting website in that year.

**9. Former AEC school and community visits program**

- 9.1. On page 14 of the transcript, Senator Canavan requested data on how many students were exposed to the former AEC school and community visits program which has since been replaced by the Get Voting program.

**Senator CANAVAN:** In terms of comparing this to the SCV program, you are covering 60,000 students now. How many would have been exposed to the old program?

**Mr Rogers:** I do not have those stats to hand. I will delve back and find out exactly how many students we would have dealt with under the old program. But I do want to make sure the committee understands that the effectiveness of that program was patchy. A couple of our staff were very disappointed that we stopped doing the school and community visits program—terribly disappointed. They wrote to local members and they wrote to me and agitating still, to this day. They were very good at the bits that they did, but for every one of those I had staff who either did not want to do it or, frankly, were not trained as teachers to do it. So it was an inconsistent delivery of that program, and I am not sure that it produced an

outcome that was commensurate with the time and effort we were spending on that. In fact, in some cases, it was having the reverse effect that we would have hoped for kids looking at electoral education. So I am more comfortable with this national approach. I will do the stats for you anyway, Senator, so you can have a look at it. But I am far more comfortable and I would not contemplate at the moment going back and redoing the school and community visits program, for all of the reasons that we discontinued it.

*AEC response*

- 9.2. The School and Community Visits (SCV) program was in operation up until October 2012 when the Get Voting program was launched. The SCV program involved AEC divisional staff attending community events, giving presentations to schools and community groups and conducting school elections.
- 9.3. The last full financial year this program operated was 2011-12. In that year the AEC reached a total of 131 876 participants. This included adult audiences, enrolment stimulation, attendance at community events, and school visits.
- 9.4. Of that total, the number of school participants in the SCV program for 2011-12 was 65 303.

**10. Indigenous communities accessing AEC education resources**

- 10.1. On page 18 of the transcript, Senator Canavan asked if Indigenous communities were accessing the AEC NEEC and other education resources.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Just going back to the schools in Indigenous communities, have you looked at all at their access? I am using the term 'Indigenous communities' broadly. I am including Mornington Island, Kowanyama and other places with large Indigenous populations. Have you looked at all at how they are accessing the Canberra visits—they are long way from Canberra—or other resources? Are they doing so less than other non-Indigenous areas?

**Mr Rogers:** Not that I am aware of, I can make some inquiries to see if we have some statistics on that.

*AEC response*

- 10.2. The AEC does not collect data on which students using its education resources are Indigenous.
- 10.3. The table below outlines the number of students in 2013-14 who used *Get Voting* in remote and rural divisions.



**Table 3: Use of Get Voting in remote and rural divisions\* during 2013-14**

State	Division	Number of schools	Number of students
<b>NSW</b>	Farrer	8	1 006
	Parkes	4	257
<b>NT</b>	Lingiari	4	588
<b>Qld</b>	Kennedy	3	300
	Leichhardt	1	20
	Maranoa	6	314
<b>SA</b>	Grey	1	15
<b>WA</b>	Durack	4	135
	O'Connor	2	625
<b>Totals</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>3260</b>

\* The AEC classifies a division as 'remote and rural' if it is outside capital cities and without majority enrolment in major provisional cities.

10.4. Comprehensive data on visitation to the NEEC by division is provided at Question 11. However, this does not specifically identify Indigenous students, but rather provides a breakdown of schools visiting by division.

## 11. NEEC school visitation/original location

11.1. On page 18 of the transcript, Senator Canavan requested a breakdown of where students visiting the NEEC came from.

**Senator CANAVAN:** That would be useful, thanks. Going back to the NEEC, I meant to ask this question earlier. Do you have data on where students come from? Do you record where they are from?

**Mr Rogers:** Yes, we do.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Could you provide that to us in some way, perhaps by postcode or division or however is easiest? I am very interested in it being more disaggregated than just state based because that does not necessarily tell us a regional breakdown. I am interested to know where—

**Mr Rogers:** I am happy to provide whatever data we have collected to you.

**Senator CANAVAN:** Thank you.

### *AEC response*

11.2. The following table outlines the number of schools, by division, visiting the AEC NEEC in 2014.

**Table 4: Number of schools visiting the NEEC in 2014**

Division	Total Schools 2014	Division	Total Schools 2014
<b>NSW</b>			
Banks	8	Lyne	14
Barton	7	Macarthur	11
Bennelong	14	Mackellar	19
Berowra	16	Macquarie	17
Blaxland	10	McMahon	12
Bradfield	18	Mitchell	23
Calare	32	New England	29
Charlton	21	Newcastle	22
Chifley	18	North Sydney	17
Cook	16	Page	18
Cowper	5	Parkes	26
Cunningham	12	Parramatta	21
Dobell	20	Paterson	17
Eden-Monaro	5	Reid	7
Farrer	40	Richmond	14
Fowler	11	Riverina	26
Gilmore	14	Robertson	23
Grayndler	11	Shortland	17
Greenway	20	Sydney	9
Hughes	9	Throsby	7
Hume	13	Warringah	12
Hunter	31	Watson	10
Kingsford-Smith	11	Wentworth	17
Lindsay	22	Werriwa	11
		<b>Total</b>	<b>783</b>
<b>Vic</b>			
Aston	4	Hotham	2
Ballarat	5	Indi	14
Batman	5	Isaacs	8
Bendigo	6	Jagajaga	5
Bruce	4	Kooyong	11
Calwell	7	LaTrobe	8
Casey	4	Lalor	8
Chisholm	7	Mallee	20
Corangamite	6	Maribyrnong	4

Corio	5	McEwen	14
Deakin	4	McMillan	16
Dunkley	6	Melbourne	6
Flinders	5	Melbourne Ports	6
Gellibrand	3	Menzies	3
Gippsland	7	Murray	12
Goldstein	10	Scullin	5
Gorton	3	Wannon	10
Higgins	7	Wills	2
Holt	3	<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Qld</b>			
Blair	8	Hinkler	2
Bonner	5	Kennedy	7
Bowman	3	Leichhardt	2
Brisbane	15	Lilley	9
Capricornia	12	Longman	3
Dawson	7	Maranoa	21
Dickson	6	McPherson	9
Fadden	8	Moncrieff	7
Fairfax	3	Moreton	7
Fisher	5	Oxley	5
Flynn	5	Petrie	5
Forde	8	Rankin	5
Griffith	13	Ryan	14
Groom	17	Wide Bay	7
Herbert	4	Wright	6
		<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>WA</b>			
Brand	5	Moore	0
Canning	5	O'Connor	8
Cowan	2	Pearce	4
Curtin	8	Perth	0
Durack	14	Stirling	2
Forrest	7	Swan	3
Fremantle	2	Tangney	9
Hasluck	5	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>SA</b>			

Adelaide	10	Makin	5
Barker	16	Mayo	18
Boothby	7	Port Adelaide	2
Grey	6	Sturt	8
Hindmarsh	6	Wakefield	7
Kingston	3	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Tas</b>			
Bass	5	Franklin	7
Braddon	4	Lyons	3
Denison	16	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>ACT</b>		<b>NT</b>	
Canberra	3	Lingiari	5
Fraser	7	Solomon	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

## 12. Electoral education internationally

12.1. On page 19 of the transcript, the Chair requested information on the delivery of electoral education by electoral management bodies in comparable democracies.

**CHAIR:** My other question is completely unrelated. It is to you, Mr Rogers, and you are not going to have the answer to this, as prepared as you are. It is a question following up on something from my colleagues a bit earlier. We have talked a bit about what is done internationally. Senator Ketter, I think, was talking about the total spending on electoral education here, and we have asked for a bit of a breakdown. Appreciating that you are not going to get every single detail, we are very interested in as much information as you can provide us on comparable democracies.

**Mr Rogers:** I will take that on notice. As I said, we have a very strong linkage with the UK, Canada and New Zealand, and I can easily ask those questions.

**CHAIR:** Appreciating there are various bodies involved, but for us to get an appreciation of whether we are spending more or less is, I think, an important thing for us to be able to get. Take your time as we do not need it today. But it is important foundation material for the inquiry. You can do it on a per capita basis or on any basis you think makes sense. We are a federal system and there are different challenges in that, so you can look to Canada and the US, but also the UK and New Zealand.

**Mr Rogers:** I will also ask my state colleagues, because I think that is a relevant total picture for Australia, and I am sure they will be able to provide that.

**CHAIR:** That is a very good point.

*AEC response*

- 12.2. The AEC is aware of a number of examples of electoral education or civics education programs operating in other countries. Some of these programs are provided by electoral management bodies or other government agencies; others may be provided by not for profit or private organisations. The AEC does not have access to information regarding expenditure on these programs.
- 12.3. New Zealand: Kids Vote is a parallel election program run by the New Zealand Electoral Commission. Registered schools are provided with resources to conduct education activities in the lead up to a real election, including student voting.
- 12.4. United Kingdom: The United Kingdom Electoral Commission does not conduct education programs for schools; however it does provide some support for other organisations to do so. The Y Vote program is run by the Hansard society with support from the Electoral Commission and provides resources for schools to run mock elections as well as conducting online polls for students on school related issues.
- 12.5. Canada: Elections Canada provides resources for teachers and students via their website. They also provide links to a number of other electoral education programs offered by third parties, such as the Student Vote program.
- 12.6. Australia: State and territory electoral commissions each conduct a variety of different electoral education activities. Some focus specifically on the provision of information and resources, however not all have resources specifically developed for schools. The AEC is unaware of the budget allocated for these activities.

**13. Indigenous electoral education**

- 13.1. On page 19 of the transcript, Senator Ketter requested information about the Indigenous gap, and the level of under representation of Indigenous people on the electoral roll.

**Senator KETTER:** Going back to the Indigenous education participation program, in your submission you talk about the fact that it was established to close the gap. I am interested in what the actual gap is, and the level of under-representation.

**Mr Rogers:** Certainly. We can provide that as a statistic for you. But there is an issue with part of that in that people do not necessarily—

**Ms O'Meara:** That is right. On the electoral roll, obviously, you are not identified by your race and things like that. It is an accepted fact that Indigenous people are under-represented in terms of enrolling, voting and voting correctly.

**Mr Rogers:** I think we have some research, rather than a statistic, and we can provide that for you.

**Ms O'Meara:** That is right. It is based on, I guess, divisions where Indigenous people live.

**Senator KETTER:** Any comparison over time is problematic, I suppose. Do you have anything as to how it is trending?

**Mr Rogers:** There is no requirement for people to self-identify as Indigenous on the enrolment form. We have relied on research rather than statistics, but we can see what we have that might be useful in that regard. We can provide what we have to you

*AEC response*

- 13.2. The Indigenous gap, in electoral terms, describes the perceived understanding that Indigenous Australians are less likely to enrol, less likely to vote and less likely to vote formally than any other Australians. Unfortunately, it is difficult to provide a precise measure of the electoral Indigenous gap as information collected at the time of enrolment or voting, does not include whether an elector identifies as an Indigenous person.
- 13.3. An indirect estimation using regression models for internal AEC analysis suggests that compared to the wider Australian population, Indigenous citizens are significantly under-represented on the roll, are less likely to turn out to vote and exhibit higher rates of informal voting. The research and data on this topic is indicative only, as robust data is not available for analysis.