

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Submission No. 168
Date Received 14/10/02
Secretary [Signature]

## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

### SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE CONDUCT OF THE 2001 FEDERAL ELECTION

#### Summary

The provision of voting facilities for Australians overseas is an important consular service performed on behalf of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and state and territory electoral commissions by posts managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade).

While there is no formal agreement, DFAT effectively acts as the AEC's agent, providing voting facilities at posts defined by the AEC. DFAT is not funded directly for the delivery of electoral services. Posts are reimbursed for some specific costs on application to the AEC.

Consular staff at posts undertake election work overseas as an adjunct to their consular responsibilities. These include assisting Australians who are hospitalised or imprisoned, helping families when Australians die, are injured or go missing, and, when required, coordinating the evacuation of Australians from trouble spots. Consular staff and the AEC are responsible for ensuring that voting facilities at posts for federal elections are managed well. For the 2001 federal election, posts issued 49,981 pre-poll votes and 13,035 postal vote applications in 99 locations worldwide (Attachment 1). Australia House in London, which issued 19,160 votes, was by far the largest polling place for the 2001 federal election.

This submission focuses on the role of DFAT in federal elections, with particular reference to the conduct of overseas voting for the 2001 federal election.

#### Overview of DFAT's role in federal elections

All diplomatic missions and consular posts (apart from consulates headed by honorary consuls<sup>1</sup>) provide voting services for federal elections and referendums. While there is no formal agreement, the AEC liaises closely with DFAT to ensure that information, guidance and materials are provided to overseas posts to facilitate voting.

DFAT is not funded directly for the delivery of electoral services. In federal elections, posts are expected to fund these costs out of their existing budgets. Overseas posts may, however, bid for funds direct from the AEC for identifiable costs where, for example, large expatriate Australian communities require the hiring of additional staff.

Posts are not normally required to provide overseas voting facilities for by-elections, however, the AEC may call upon larger posts to send out postal vote applications to voters who are overseas at the time of the by-election.

---

<sup>1</sup> The sole exception is the honorary consul in Vancouver.

## **Conduct of federal elections**

Overseas posts offer both pre-poll and postal voting services for federal elections. In consultation with the AEC, an assessment is made of the likely number of electors in each locality to determine the extent of pre-poll voting offered by posts. For example, for the 2001 federal election many posts provided pre-polling facilities from 29 October 2001. Overseas posts also receive applications for postal votes shortly after the announcement of an election. However, these are not processed until ballot material is received from the AEC in Australia.

When advice is received from the AEC about a possible federal election, overseas posts are tasked to appoint Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) and alternates. Their details are provided to the AEC. Before each election the AEC provides instructions to posts in booklet form (Attachment 2) which detail the duties to be undertaken by the AROs or alternates.

## **Information available to electors**

A further element of DFAT's service is to ensure that information on voting in an election is available to Australians overseas. Posts, with the support of the AEC, include information on the federal election in any of their normal publications, including through websites and hotlinks to the AEC website, and the issuing of media releases. In some cases they also place paid advertisements in publications accessed by Australians. The advertisements are paid for by the AEC and must be approved by them. Posts need to demonstrate that the proposed advertising would reach a significant number of electors.

The AEC's instructions to posts make it clear that staff are not to provide advice to electors on questions of enrolment status. Staff are to refer inquirers to the AEC. Every Australian who wishes to cast a vote at an overseas post may do so. Overseas posts are not provided with copies of the electoral rolls so are unable to confirm enrolment status. An elector's claim to vote is checked by the Divisional Returning Officer in Australia.

## **The 2001 federal election**

Following meetings between AEC and DFAT, the AEC wrote to DFAT on 1 August 2001 to confirm arrangements for the overseas voting for the 2001 federal election. In a message to posts on 8 August 2001, DFAT requested details of AROs and alternates, addressed issues including polling equipment, and sought advice from posts on any additional requirements, including funding requests (eg. for additional staff or advertising).

On 8 October 2001 the AEC advised that the Governor-General had issued Writs for the election. This information was conveyed to posts in a priority message the same day.

Staff at posts overseas worked hard on behalf of the AEC to ensure that every opportunity was extended to Australians overseas to exercise their right to vote in the 2001 federal election. The Electoral Commissioner wrote to the Secretary of DFAT

on 3 December 2001 expressing appreciation for the work undertaken on behalf of the AEC by DFAT staff overseas (Attachment 3). The Electoral Commissioner wrote that he was "impressed by the good humoured and resourceful manner whereby DFAT staff resolved difficulties arising from delays in receiving material, and handled the sheer volume of electors". The Electoral Commissioner added that he was "confident that every opportunity was extended to Australians overseas to exercise their right to vote".

Pre-polling commenced on 29 October 2001. It was expected that posts would receive ballot material prior to that date, but delivery delays meant that some posts did not receive their shipments until after 29 October. Some shipments also had items missing. The AEC remedied the situation by faxing and e-mailing ballot papers to posts that could be photocopied to enable pre-poll votes to be cast from 29 October.

Posts in the United States responded to delays caused by the late despatch of postal vote envelopes and anthrax threats affecting the US mail system by advising postal vote applicants to forward their completed ballots direct to Divisional Returning Officers in Australia.

### **Conduct of future elections**

DFAT continues to work with the AEC on ways to improve voting facilities for Australians overseas. DFAT and the AEC have discussed the problems that arose during the 2001 federal election and are examining possible contingencies that could be put in place for future federal elections. For example, the possibility of the AEC pre-positioning blank ballot papers at posts and placing ballot papers on an intranet service for overseas posts to download if required. These facilities would provide a backup should material despatched to posts not be received in time.

DFAT is also looking to develop with the AEC a means for issuing postal votes using the Automated Postal Vote Issuing System (APVIS) in Australia. In addition, DFAT is working with the AEC to develop a post-specific manual for overseas voting for use by high volume posts such as London and Hong Kong. The manual will be funded by the AEC.

### **Training of staff overseas**

For the 2001 federal election, the AEC provided a training video and an instruction booklet on Overseas Voting Procedures (Attachment 2). DFAT has taken the initiative and has begun to include training on electoral matters in regional seminars for overseas consular staff. In addition, DFAT is having ongoing discussions with AEC on training.

### **Availability of information relevant to Australians resident overseas**

DFAT provides comprehensive advice relevant to Australians travelling and living overseas through its website [www.dfat.gov.au/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel). In recent times DFAT has been seeking to address the broader interests of increasing numbers of long term expatriates. For example, DFAT has recently produced a brochure on Living and Working Overseas, which provides essential information for the Australian expatriate.

DFAT also met the Canberra representative of the Southern Cross Group in September to discuss the group's concerns about the lack of readily accessible information on Government services relevant to Australians resident overseas (eg taxation, social security etc). DFAT is continually exploring ways in which its website might be more helpful, for example by providing hotlinks to websites of interest to Australians living overseas. DFAT's website is hotlinked to the AEC website.



## List of overseas posts and votes issued

LOCATION	COUNTRY	VOTES	LOCATION	COUNTRY	VOTES
Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	210	Malta	Malta	185
Amman	Jordan	72	Manila	Philippines	634
Ankara	Turkey	65	Mexico City	Mexico	100
Apia	Samoa	132	Milan	Italy	139
Athens	Greece	453	Moscow	Russia	92
Atlanta	USA	247	Mumbai	India	79
Auckland	New Zealand	1024	Nagoya	Japan	69
Bali	Indonesia	263	Nairobi	Kenya	58
Bandar Seri Begawan	Brunei	137	New Delhi	India	222
Bangkok	Thailand	1128	New York	USA	1327
Beijing	China	770	Nicosia	Cyprus	93
Beirut	Lebanon	374	Noumea	New Caledonia	77
Belgrade	Yugoslavia	86	Nuku'alofa	Tonga	75
Berlin	Germany	457	Osaka	Japan	277
Brasilia	Brazil	13	Ottawa	Canada	285
Bridgetown	Barbados	14	Paris	France	739
Brussels	Belgium	147	Phnom Penh	Cambodia	388
Bucharest	Romania	23	Pohnpei	Micronesia	23
Budapest	Hungary	154	Port Louis	Mauritius	113
Buenos Aires	Argentina	65	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea	888
Cairo	Egypt	111	Port Vila	Vanuatu	126
Caracas	Venezuela	17	Pretoria	South Africa	200
Chicago	USA	261	Rangoon	Burma	61
Colombo	Sri Lanka	266	Riyadh	Saudi Arabia	292
Copenhagen	Denmark	152	Rome	Italy	373
Dhaka	Bangladesh	93	San Francisco	USA	667
Dili	East Timor	1975	Santiago	Chile	213
Dubai	United Arab Emirates	271	Sao Paulo	Brazil	13
Dublin	Ireland	1117	Sapporo	Japan	41
Frankfurt	Germany	201	Sendai	Japan	33
Fukuoka City	Japan	86	Seoul	Korea	372
Geneva	Switzerland	451	Shanghai	China	858
Guangzhou	China	714	Singapore	Singapore	2748
Hanoi	Vietnam	311	Stockholm	Sweden	386
Harare	Zimbabwe	85	Suva	Fiji	415
Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	775	Taipei	Taiwan	864
Hong Kong	China	9699	Tarawa	Kiribati	37
Honiara	Solomon Islands	90	Tehran	Iran	41
Honolulu	USA	88	Tel Aviv	Israel	116
Islamabad	Pakistan	34	The Hague	Netherlands	499
Istanbul	Turkey	58	Tokyo	Japan	879
Jakarta	Indonesia	868	Toronto	Canada	308
Kathmandu	Nepal	180	Vancouver	Canada	636
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	759	Vienna	Austria	291
Lagos	Nigeria	25	Vientiane	Laos	148
Lima	Peru	31	Warsaw	Poland	150
Lisbon	Portugal	64	Washington	USA	1070
London	UK	19166	Wellington	New Zealand	638
Los Angeles	USA	597	Zagreb	Croatia	100
Madrid	Spain	219			
			<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>63036</b>

**OVERSEAS VOTING  
PROCEDURES**

**AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION  
10 Nov 2001**

# CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1 Australian Elections .....	2
1.2 Assistant Returning Officer .....	2
1.3 Contact with the AEC.....	3
1.4 Overseas Voting Centre.....	3
1.5 Financial Allocations .....	3
1.6 Advertising .....	3
1.7 Election Information .....	3
<b>2 MATERIALS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1 Equipment stored at post.....	4
2.2 Materials sent in the lead-up to/after an election is announced.....	4
2.3 Materials sent after close of Nominations .....	5
2.4 Checking Material .....	6
<b>3 VOTING AT YOUR POST</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1 Undertaking by Polling Staff.....	7
3.2 Office hours .....	7
3.3 Setting up the voting area .....	7
3.4 Political material.....	7
<b>4 VOTERS WHO ATTEND IN PERSON</b> .....	<b>8</b>
4.1 Issuing Pre-Poll Votes – Pink Declaration Vote Envelope .....	8
4.2 The Five Golden Rules .....	9
4.3 Ballot Papers.....	9
4.4 Spoilt Ballot Papers.....	9
4.5 Discarded Ballot Papers .....	9
<b>5 POSTAL VOTING</b> .....	<b>10</b>
5.1 Postal Vote Applications .....	10
5.2 Issuing Postal Votes .....	10
5.3 Receiving Postal Votes .....	11
5.4 Duplicate Postal Vote Applications .....	12
5.5 Replacement of spoilt Postal ballot papers.....	12
5.6 Postal Votes received AFTER close of voting at your Post .....	12
<b>6 RETURNING MATERIAL TO AUSTRALIA</b> .....	<b>13</b>
6.1 First Dispatch.....	13
6.2 Second dispatch (on Friday after election Saturday) .....	14
6.3 Late dispatches.....	14
6.4 Material to be kept at your post.....	14
<b>7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Australian Elections

Overseas Posts which provide full consular services also provide voting services for Australian federal elections and referendums. The only *Honorary* Consulate which provides this service is Vancouver.

Australia is divided into six States and two Territories. For federal elections, each State or Territory is divided into divisions. Australians vote for two houses of parliament, the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 150 electoral divisions so there are 150 different House of Representatives ballot papers, coloured green: one for each division. There are eight different Senate ballot papers, coloured white: one for each State and Territory.

To be eligible to vote in Australian federal elections the voter must be enrolled on the electoral roll for a division. Overseas officers should not get involved with electors on questions of enrolment status. An elector's claim to vote will be checked by the divisional returning officer in Australia.

Voters may vote by attending in person at your Post and casting a pre-poll vote, or they may apply for a Postal Vote by forwarding the prescribed application form to your Post. These methods of voting are explained in Sections 4 and 5 of these procedures.

Voting at Australian federal elections and referendums is compulsory and all Australians are encouraged to vote. However, an elector who is outside Australia on election day will not be fined for not voting.

Elections are held on a Saturday. Australians voting overseas must cast their votes by close of voting at your Post, which cannot be offered beyond 6:00 pm Western Australian time.

## 1.2 Assistant Returning Officer

When a federal election is announced, the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) will ask your Post for the name and contact details (including e-mail address) of an Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) to manage the voting service at your Post. It is important that this information is advised to the AEC by the nominated date, so that communications can be established. By agreement with Consular Branch, if a nomination is not received by this date, then the SAO will be appointed as the Assistant Returning Officer.

The ARO should be a member of the permanent staff at the Post and is responsible for the voting arrangements provided to electors on behalf of the AEC. The ARO does not have to be Australia-based, but Australia-based staff may have a better understanding of the voting system.

Other staff who assist in providing the voting service are NOT appointed as AROs.

The ARO should send an undertaking (Form OS003) to the AEC as soon as possible. If the ARO is away from the voting area at any time, the ARO and the ARO's substitute should sign an appointment of substitute ARO (Form OS011).



### 1.3 Contact with the AEC

Mr Bernie Hogan has been appointed Manager of Overseas Voting for this election and Ms. Michelle Lawrence as the co-manager. They will be your direct contact at the AEC's Parliamentary Elections section in Canberra. They can be contacted as follows:

Telephone: +61-2-6271-4497 or +61-2-6271-4418  
Facsimile: +61-2-6271-4560 or +61-2-6271-4691  
E-mail: [bernie.hogan@aec.gov.au](mailto:bernie.hogan@aec.gov.au)  
[michelle.lawrence@aec.gov.au](mailto:michelle.lawrence@aec.gov.au)

E-mail facilities will be used by the AEC to keep AROs informed of election activities. 

### 1.4 Overseas Voting Centre

The AEC has established its Overseas Voting Centre in Canberra for Election 2001. The address is:

Australian Electoral Commission  
Overseas Voting Centre  
9 Sleigh Place  
Hume ACT Australia

### 1.5 Financial Allocations

Posts which seek election funding will be advised of the funding allocation, and the method for administering these funds. A record of all election related expenses is to be provided in the ARO's return (Form OS004).

Posts which require consideration of election funding for extraordinary costs (refer to cable O.CE949471 of 8/9/99) should forward a request to the Manager of Overseas Voting at the AEC.

### 1.6 Advertising

Please include information about the federal election in any circulars or newsletters to the Australian community and through free press releases in local newspapers where possible. The AEC will provide election information material for this purpose. Posts which have a web site are urged to publicise local voting arrangements through their site, and to provide a hot link to the AEC's website (see Sec 1.7).

No paid advertising is to be undertaken without the prior approval of the AEC. Detailed requests for advertising funds are to be sent through the Manager of Overseas Voting.

### 1.7 Election Information

Further information about this election, and about the AEC generally, is available at the AEC's internet website [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)

General inquiries about voting, and enrolling to vote, can also be sent to [info@aec.gov.au](mailto:info@aec.gov.au).

## 2 MATERIALS

### 2.1 Equipment stored at post

The following material should be stored at your post:

- ballot boxes;
- voting screens (where voters go to mark their ballot papers in private); and
- "Received" rubber stamp.

### 2.2 Materials sent in the lead-up to/after an election is announced

The following material will be sent to you shortly after an election is announced:

FORM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
OS003	Undertaking by Officers and Employees	To be completed by each person assisting with the voting service
OS004	ARO's Return booklet	For recording important election information.
OS004(a)	Summary record of postal vote applications, postal votes and pre-poll votes received	Record of Total votes received at overseas Post up to close of voting
OS004(b)	Summary of postal vote applications, postal votes and pre-poll votes included in this dispatch	Cover note for inclusion with material, for use only where return dispatches are made prior to polling day.
OS004(c)	Record of postal votes received after polling day	Used to record only those Postal votes received after polling day and included in 2nd dispatch
OS005	Record of postal vote certificates issued	This records particulars of Postal Votes issued for a division and is used for non-voter purposes by the DRO
OS006	Inventory of overseas voting material	This is a check list of all election material
OS008	Letter to elector	Sent with postal vote certificate envelope and ballot papers
OS009	Letter to elector	Sent if an application for a postal vote is incomplete, or received too late

FORM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
OS011	Appointment of substitute Officer in Charge	To be completed to cover the absence of the ARO during voting hours
EF012	Pre-Poll Vote Certificate Envelope	For use by voters who attend in person to vote
EF020	"Please Read the Instructions" poster	To be placed in each voting screen – where not preprinted (older style screens only)
EF022	Spoilt or Discarded Ballot Paper Envelope	To be used when a voter spoils a ballot paper
EF048	Application for a Postal Vote	For supplying to electors who require Postal Votes
EF049	Postal Vote Certificate Envelope	For issuing to electors who complete Postal Vote Applications
	Voting screens (if requested)	
	Ballot boxes (if requested)	
	Plastic seals	Used to secure the ballot box. Each seal has a unique number
	Courier satchels and pre-printed consignment notes Adhesive address labels	For return of material to Australia
	AEC tape	Used to wrap parcels of material for return to Australia

### 2.3 Materials sent after close of Nominations

The following materials will be sent to Posts after nominations close and ballot papers have been printed:

FORM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
EF054	List of Localities and Streets	8 editions, 1 for each State and Territory.
EF068	Senate Group Voting Ticket posters and/or booklets	One for each State or Territory. See Sections 3.3 and 6
	Senate ballot papers (White)	For each State and Territory
	House of Representatives ballot papers (Green)	For each Division. There are 150 Divisions
EF132	List of Candidates	1 for each State and Territory. Lists candidates for each Division.

## **3 VOTING AT YOUR POST**

### **3.1 Undertaking by Polling Staff**

Make sure that every member of your staff who may issue votes understands these instructions and signs the 'Undertaking to be made by Election Staff at Overseas Posts' (Form OS003). The completed forms are to be faxed to the AEC on +61-2-6271-4691 or +61-2-6271-4560 by 22 October 2001.

### **3.2 Office hours**

Your office only needs to be open during normal office hours. If you want to open your office on the election Saturday, contact the AEC, because time zone differences will limit the time until which votes can be issued.

***No votes can be issued after 6.00 pm Western Australian time on election Saturday.***

### **3.3 Setting up the voting area**

Set up two or more voting screens where people will be able to vote in private. Put a 'Please Read the Instructions' poster in each screen, if not supplied preprinted. Attach a pencil in to each screen.

If possible, display the Senate Group Voting Ticket posters and/or booklets (GVTs) in the public area. If there is no space to do this, ask every voter if they would like to see the GVT poster and/or booklet for their State or Territory.

The ARO is responsible at all times for the security of:

- Ballot boxes and
- Ballot papers.

Secure the ballot box by placing the plastic seals provided through the two holes, so that the box cannot be opened without breaking the seals. Write the seal numbers used in your ARO's Return booklet. Ensure that the ballot box is locked in a safe place overnight and cannot be tampered with.

If you fill a ballot box, seal the slot as well and write the seal number in your ARO's Return booklet. If you only have one ballot box and fill it, you may break the seals to remove the contents, which must be stored securely ready for return to Australia. Continue using the ballot box only after affixing fresh security seals.

### **3.4 Political material**

If a political party sends material, put it in a different room or corridor where voters can go to pick it up. Don't put it in the voting area. It is appropriate for local representatives of political parties or candidates to distribute How-to-Vote material outside the voting area.

If a voter asks for political material, show them where it is kept. Do not offer or hand the material to a voter.

## 4 VOTERS WHO ATTEND IN PERSON

Voters who attend your office are given a Pre-Poll Vote.

### 4.1 Issuing Pre-Poll Votes – Pink Declaration Vote Envelope

- Ask the voter to complete sections 1, 2 & 3 of the Declaration Vote Envelope. If the voter asks, you can help to complete the envelope.
- Make sure the voter has answered all questions and signed the Declaration Envelope
- From the 'Address on the Electoral Roll', or if not given, the Permanent Address section, find the voter's correct Division by using the List of Localities and Streets - EF54.
- The EF54 reference must be completed for every Declaration Vote Envelope, in the space provided at the top of the envelope in the 'Polling Official To Complete Section'.
- It is to be written as follows: 1-23 (page 1, Entry 23)
- Write the Enrolled Division on the Declaration Envelope as soon as you have determined the Division by using the EF54.
- Witness the voter's signature and ensure the name of the Post is shown. Tick the 'Pre-Issue Check' in the bottom right-hand corner. This confirms the EF54 reference has been completed and that the elector has signed the Declaration Envelope.
- Select the correct ballot paper. Make sure the name of the Division on the ballot paper matches the Division written on the Declaration Vote Envelope from the EF54 reference.
- Initial the front of a green House of Representatives ballot paper for the voter's enrolled division and white Senate ballot paper for the voter's State or Territory. Ask the voter to go to a voting screen, mark the ballot papers, fold them and bring them back.
- While the elector is voting complete the 'ABC' check of the Declaration Vote Envelope. Start at the checking from the bottom of the envelope:
  - A. Has the elector signed it?
  - B. Did you use the correct address to find the correct Division?
  - C. Did you issue ballot papers for the correct Division – the Division you wrote at the top of the Declaration Vote Envelope?

***Any polling official can sign the Declaration Vote Envelope and initial the ballot papers.***

- Pull the Counterfoil out of the Declaration Vote Envelope and file it, by Division, by State.
- When the elector returns the ballot papers, ensure that you match them with the correct Declaration Vote Envelope put them in the envelope, seal the envelope and put it in the ballot box before the voter leaves.

## 4.2 The Five Golden Rules

1

Always use the List Of Localities And Streets (EF54)

2

Always use the enrolled address instead of the permanent address if both are given. Write the voter's Division and E54 reference on the Envelope

3

Make sure the Division on the ballot paper = the Division on the Envelope

4

Check that you and the voter have both signed the Declaration Envelope

5

Put the ballot papers in the Declaration Envelope before sealing it

### 4.3 Ballot Papers

You will have a supply of printed ballot papers for all States and Territories in Australia. In the event that the supply of ballot papers for a particular State or Territory runs low you should **photocopy** more. Ensure that you have one left that can be used as a master to photocopy. Ensure you initial the **front** of any photocopied ballot papers. A note explaining that photocopies of a ballot paper for a State or Territory have been made should be entered in the ARO's Return including the number of copies and the State or Territory name.

### 4.4 Spoilt Ballot Papers

An elector who claims to have spoilt a ballot paper must be given a replacement, but only after **handing back** the original to the polling official who issued it. You must not look at the way it has been marked.

- cancel the spoilt ballot paper by writing 'SPOILT' on the back;
- in full view of the elector place it in a Spoilt or Discarded Ballot Paper Envelope;
- tick the Spoilt box on the envelope;
- tick the envelope with the type of ballot paper that is enclosed, and seal the envelope;
- use a separate envelope for each spoilt ballot paper; and
- issue a new ballot paper to the elector.

### 4.5 Discarded Ballot Papers

During the day you or an elector may find ballot paper/s (marked or unmarked) that have been dropped or left in a voting screen.

- cancel the discarded ballot paper by writing 'DISCARDED' on the back;
- in full view of any electors place it in a Spoilt or Discarded Ballot Paper Envelope;
- tick the Discarded box on the envelope;
- tick the envelope with the type of ballot paper that is enclosed, and seal the envelope; and
- use a separate envelope for each Discarded ballot paper.

## 5 POSTAL VOTING

Voters who are unable to come to your office can have a Postal Vote.

### 5.1 Postal Vote Applications

You **must** receive a Postal Vote Application (Form EF048) before you issue Postal Voting material to a voter. You can fax an application form to anyone who asks, and you can accept a faxed application from a voter. The Postal Vote Application form can also be downloaded from the AEC's internet website and copied for use.

### 5.2 Issuing Postal Votes

Receive the Postal Vote Application and check that it is not defective. To be accepted as valid, an application must include the following details:

- signature of applicant;
- signature of authorised witness<sup>\*</sup>; and
- enrolled address of applicant,

and must be received by (and including) the Thursday before election Saturday.

<sup>\*</sup> Where a Postal Vote Applicant is outside Australia and is unable to locate a qualified witness, the elector will be able to verify their identity by lodging, along with their Postal Vote Application or Postal Vote Certificate the following:

- a signed statement setting out why their application could not be witnessed:  
and
- a photocopy of their passport which they have had certified to be a true copy, showing:
  - country and date of issue;
  - the passport number;
  - their date of birth, signature and photograph.

Other minor defects or omissions do not affect the validity of an application.

If the application is rejected (because of one of the defects listed above), send the voter a Form OS009, a new Postal Vote Application, and a return envelope addressed to your post. Write "OS009 sent" on the incomplete application.

Where the application is rejected because it is received too late, only the Form OS009 should be sent - there is no opportunity for the voter to correct the defect, so a fresh application form and return envelope is not needed.

If the application is complete:

- Print the voter's name and enrolled address on a postal vote certificate envelope (Form EF049). Print the name of your Overseas Post in the space provided.
- Look up the voter's enrolled suburb or town in the front of the list of localities and streets (EF54) for the voter's State or Territory and write the name of the enrolled division in the space on the Postal Vote Certificate envelope. If the list says "Refer to street section", look up the voter's enrolled street in the back of the EF54 and write the enrolled Division in the space on the certificate envelope.

A reference number for this EF54 entry is required to be recorded in the space provided in the "Office Use Only" section of the Postal vote application form. This reference number is a combination of the Page No. - Line No. eg 35-19 (Page 35 Entry 19) and is shown opposite each entry.

- Complete a separate 'Record of Postal Vote Certificates Issued' (Form OS005) for each division for which you have issued postal votes. This form is an important record of postal vote applications processed, and is also used for administrative purposes in the home division after the election.
- Complete the "Office Use Only" section at the bottom of the Postal Vote Application.
- Initial the front of a green House of Representatives ballot paper for the voter's enrolled Division and a white Senate ballot paper for the voter's State or Territory.
- Prepare an envelope addressed to the voter at the voter's postal address and a return envelope addressed to your Overseas Post.
- Complete a return envelope addressed to the Divisional Returning Officer in Australia by writing the name of the elector's enrolled Division after the words "Divisional Returning Officer for" on the envelope.
- Send the following material to the voter:
  - ballot papers (House of Representatives & Senate)
  - Postal Vote Certificate Envelope;
  - EF45(OS) – 'How to Postal Vote Overseas'
  - covering letter (Form OS008)
  - return envelopes (2)
- File the Postal Vote Applications by Division by State ready for return to Australia with the first dispatch after polling day.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT VOTING MATERIAL IS SENT TO THE VOTER THE SAME DAY YOU RECEIVE THE POSTAL VOTE APPLICATION.**

### 5.3 Receiving Postal Votes

- Impress your "Received" rubber stamp on the reverse of each postal vote certificate envelope you receive. Complete the details on the stamp to show the place, time and date you received the envelope, and whether you received it by hand or in the mail.
- Record the date received on the control Form OS005.
- Store the certificates securely until your first dispatch to the AEC.
- You may also receive postal vote certificates issued by other posts, or issued in Australia. Once stamped as "Received .....", simply store these with other Postal Vote Certificates, and ensure they are included in the summary totals (Form OS004a).

application, the duplicate application must be processed in the same manner as an original application.



## 5.4 Duplicate Postal Vote Applications

In the event that you receive a duplicate Postal Vote Application from an elector who has already been issued with a Postal Vote by your Post, issuing staff may contact the elector by telephone and enquire as to whether the duplicate application should be cancelled. If contact is not made with the elector, or the elector does not agree to cancel the duplicate. Where a duplicate Postal Vote Application is cancelled on the basis of contact with the elector concerned, the duplicate must be endorsed "CANCELLED WITH ELECTOR'S CONSENT, hh:mm, dd/mm/yy" and signed by the person who contacted the elector.

The letter (Form OS002) must also be sent to the elector with Postal Voting material. If the elector votes more than once, the matter is dealt with by the AEC under the multiple voting provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Where a duplicate Postal Vote Application is cancelled on the basis of contact with the elector concerned, the duplicate must be endorsed "CANCELLED WITH ELECTOR'S CONSENT, hh:mm, dd/mm/yy" and signed by the person who contacted the elector.

If a duplicate application is received from an elector to whom the Postal Vote has not yet been issued, only the later application is to be processed. In such cases, staple both applications together, with the first-received application endorsed "DUPLICATE RECEIVED".

## 5.5 Replacement of spoilt Postal ballot papers

A voter who spoils a postal ballot paper may obtain another ballot paper by returning the spoilt ballot paper to the place of issue. A replacement postal ballot paper may then be posted or issued personally to the voter at any time up to the close of the poll.

Any spoilt postal ballot papers returned by a voter must be placed in the "*Spoilt or Discarded Ballot Paper Envelope*" referred to in Sec. 4.1.

## 5.6 Postal Votes received AFTER close of voting at your Post

All Postal Vote Certificate envelopes received by you AFTER election Saturday should be clearly stamped as to Place/Date/Time of receipt and held for return to the AEC with your second dispatch on the Friday after polling day.

Postal Votes received by you after your second dispatch of material to Australia must be returned to the AEC via the normal Diplomatic Airfreight bag (see section 6.3), and do not need to be recorded by you.

## 6 RETURNING MATERIAL TO AUSTRALIA

You are expected to make **only two** dispatches to Australia. The first dispatch must be made on the Monday after election Saturday. The second dispatch should be on the Friday after election Saturday.

*Posts which have received a large number of votes may wish to return some material prior to election Saturday. If earlier dispatches of material are made, a Form OS004b (Summary of .....votes included in this dispatch) must be included with each dispatch, and a copy faxed to +61-2-6271-4560.*

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE CONTENTS OF EACH DISPATCH OF MATERIAL BEING RETURNED IS SORTED BY STATE AND BY DIVISION AND PACKAGED ACCORDINGLY.**

*(It is NOT necessary for material for a Division to be sorted alphabetically by electors' surnames)*

Courier satchels, pre-prepared consignment notes, adhesive labels addressed to the Overseas Voting Centre in Canberra, and *Urgent Election Material* labels have been provided for return of material to Australia. If the satchels do not hold the material, please package securely in a carton or other suitable container, but please **DO NOT RETURN MATERIAL IN BALLOT BOXES**. Ballot boxes are to be retained at your Post for the next election.

Where more than one (1) package is being returned with each shipment, please clearly label each as '1 of 2', '2 of 2', as appropriate.

### 6.1 First Dispatch

#### **Include in this dispatch:**

- all Pre-Poll Vote Certificate Envelopes used for Pre-Poll Voting;
- all your Postal Vote Applications, even if the matching Postal Vote Certificates have not yet been returned to you;
- all Postal Vote Certificates received until (and including) election Saturday;
- Form OS004a completed to show the quantities in your dispatch. If you have an application and a certificate from the same voter, show them as "1 application" and "1 certificate";
- a Form OS003 for each person at your post who has worked on the voting service;
- a Form OS011 for each person who has worked as substitute Officer in Charge.
- all Declaration Vote Counterfoil slips

Once you are satisfied that all information on Form OS004a is correct, please fax a copy to +61-2-6271-4560, or +61-2-6271-4691. If you have been maintaining this record electronically and have e-mail access, please also send this as an attached file by e-mail to [bernie.hogan@aec.gov.au](mailto:bernie.hogan@aec.gov.au).

Securely parcel the material and seal the parcel with AEC tape. Send the parcel to the AEC through **DHL International, on a receiver-to-pay basis**. You will not be charged for this dispatch, unless your post has been given other arrangements. Send the parcel immediately: the result of the election may depend on the votes from your post!

## 6.2 Second dispatch (on Friday after election Saturday)

Include in this dispatch:

- all Postal Vote Certificates received after election Saturday;
- all record sheets of Postal Vote Applications processed (Form OS005)
- all Postal Vote Applications for which you have sent a Form OS009 (see section 5.2);
- your completed ARO's Return booklet (Form OS004); and
- Form OS004(b) completed to show the quantity of Postal Vote Certificates in your dispatch. Don't show quantities of Postal Vote Applications for which you have issued a Form OS009.

Fax a copy of your Form OS004(b) to **+61-2-6271-4560**, or **+61-2-6271-4691**.

Securely parcel the material and seal the parcel with AEC tape. Send the parcel to the AEC through **DHL International**. This parcel **must** be dispatched on the Friday after election Saturday.

## 6.3 Late dispatches

If you receive any more postal vote certificates after the second dispatch, forward them to the AEC **through the normal Diplomatic Airfreight bag**, addressed as follows:

**Bernie Hogan, Parliamentary Elections  
Australian Electoral Commission  
Parliamentary Elections Branch  
West Block Offices  
Parkes ACT**

Please **DO NOT** use commercial courier arrangements for these items, or for any subsequent dispatches to the AEC.

## 6.4 Material to be kept at your post

Securely store the following election material, clearly labelled for easy retrieval:

- Ballot boxes;
- Voting screens;
- "Received" rubber stamp; and
- Training Video (if issued prior to this event)
- Ballot box seals

Retain all remaining material specific to this election (both used and unused) until advice is received from the AEC regarding disposal.

## 7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Will I be fined if I don't vote?**

Voting at federal elections and referendums is compulsory, and all Australians are encouraged to vote. If, however, you are not in Australia on election day, you will not be fined for not voting.

### **If my name isn't on the roll, can I still vote?**

Yes. Let the elector vote and issue a pre-poll or postal vote as usual. Use the list of localities and streets to find the voter's division. The AEC will decide whether or not the vote can be counted. Do not get involved in questions of enrolment eligibility.

### **I don't know who to vote for.**

The names of candidates and political parties are shown on the ballot papers. Consular staff must not offer any further comment on the election.

### **How is it a secret ballot when my name is on the envelope?**

This is needed so your name can be marked off the electoral roll for your division. The envelope will be kept face down when the ballot papers are taken out so that no one can see your name. Your ballot papers will be mixed with many others before your votes are looked at. To ensure its integrity, this process is also closely observed by party scrutineers.

### **How do I mark the ballot papers correctly?**

On the green House of Representatives ballot paper, write the numbers 1,2,3,4 and so on in the boxes to the left of the candidates' names in the order of your choice. You must put a number in every box.

On the Senate ballot paper you may vote in one of two ways:

- you may vote for a political party by putting the number 1 in any of the boxes above the black line. Put the number 1 in one box only.

OR

- put the numbers 1,2,3,4 and so on in the boxes to the left of the individual candidates' names in the order of your choice. You must put a number in every box if you mark your vote below the black line.

### **What is a Senate Group Voting Ticket?**

If you mark your vote above the black line on the Senate ballot paper, the political party you have chosen will decide the order of choice for all the candidates. The Senate group voting ticket posters (EF068) show the order of choice determined by each political party.

If you vote below the black line, you decide your own order of choice for all the candidates.

### **Power of Attorney – Can I vote for the elector?**

A person who holds a power of attorney for a voter is *not* permitted to vote for an elector.

**Who can I contact if I need more information on voting?**

Any general enquiries by the public should be directed to the AEC's Information Section in Canberra on **+61-13 23 26**, or **+61-2-6271 4411**, during business hours, Australian Eastern Summer Time.

Email enquiries can also be sent to **info@aec.gov.au**

Information about the AEC and about voting in this election is also available at the AEC's internet website **www.aec.gov.au**.



Electoral Commissioner

West Block  
Parkes ACT 2600

PO Box E201  
Kingston ACT 2604

Telephone (02) 6271 4  
Facsimile (02) 6271 4

Dr Ashton Calvert  
Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
RG Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Dr Calvert

### 2001 FEDERAL ELECTION

I am writing to express my appreciation for the work undertaken on behalf of the Australian Electoral Commission by staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who issued votes at Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and Trade Commissions to Australians who were overseas on polling day.

Staff at overseas voting centres issued some 49,500 pre-poll votes and 13,200 postal votes from 100 locations around the globe. The overseas voting centre at Australia House, London issued over 19,000 votes, making it by far the largest polling place for the election.

I was impressed by the good humoured and resourceful manner whereby DFAT staff resolved difficulties arising from delays in receiving material, and handled the sheer volume of electors. I am confident that every opportunity was extended to Australians overseas to exercise their right to vote.

I would be grateful if you would arrange for the Consular Coordination Unit to pass on my thanks to all staff at Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and Trade Commissions.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Becker  
Electoral Commissioner

3 December 2001