

## Election and enrolment — State and Territory issues

- 5.1 The structure of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) includes a national office, seven state and territory offices (responsible for managing AEC activities within each state and territory), and 135 divisional offices (some operating as co-located or amalgamated offices) providing services to electors in 150 divisions.
- 5.2 This chapter examines some of the activities in state offices at the 2007 election and how electoral roll stimulation activities in each state and territory contributed to the national growth in the electoral roll before the 2007 election.

### **Reports by Australian Electoral Commission state managers**

- 5.3 As part of its public hearings, the committee heard from all of the AEC's state and territory managers (who also hold a statutory role as the 'Australian Electoral Officer' (AEO) for their respective jurisdiction) to examine a range of jurisdiction-specific issues. The Australian Capital Territory is managed by the NSW state manager except through an election period, during which time an AEO for the ACT is appointed.
- 5.4 The following section concentrates mainly on some of the activities undertaken in each jurisdiction in relation to maintaining the electoral roll. However, where state-specific issues relating to other matters have been identified, comments relevant to those matters are included.

## New South Wales

- 5.5 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 4.3 million electors on the electoral roll for NSW, 193,214 (4.5 per cent) more than the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.6 The New South Wales state manager reported to the committee that 'the NSW aspects of the election proceeded smoothly, administrative arrangements worked well, and electors enjoyed a relatively trouble free day'.<sup>2</sup>
- 5.7 The state manager highlighted some of the enrolment initiatives targeted at young people, culturally and linguistically diverse Australians and Indigenous Australians. These included:
- youth – In addition to national activities and with access to TAFE data for the first time, the AEC conducted a direct mail campaign to approximately 18,000 17 and 18 year old TAFE students just prior to the announcement of the federal election. Student data from the Board of Studies was also utilised in direct mail campaigns throughout the year to encourage eligible 17 and 18 year olds to enrol to vote;
  - culturally and linguistically diverse Australians – Staff attended five multicultural festivals in metropolitan Sydney with the SBS outside broadcast van to promote enrolment at these events in the lead up to the 2007 federal election. These events were held at locations including Auburn, Cabramatta, Darling Harbour, Fairfield and Lakemba; and
  - Indigenous Australians – Three community electoral information officers were employed and based in Sydney, the far north coast and the central/far west. They visited close to 100 indigenous organisations to raise awareness of the federal election and distribute information on enrolment and voting. Their activities also included attending Indigenous events such as the Annual Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout, the Indigenous Employment Expo, the National Indigenous Tertiary Education Student Games and the Croc Festival in Kempsey.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.8 A number of opportunities taken by the NSW office to promote awareness about the election and voting opportunities through the media were also discussed by the state manager. Some examples of these included:

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1 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 3.

2 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 1.

3 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, pp 1-2.

- radio news releases to target areas of the state – Specifically those radio stations broadcasting in divisions with high numbers of candidates in the lead up to election day with messages about formality; and
- live to air radio interviews were ‘particularly successful’ in communicating the AEC’s key election messages. Interviews that included talkback to assist callers with their enrolment and voting problems received positive feedback from radio listeners:
  - ⇒ For example, during one interview, a caller to talkback radio was embarking on a cruise before election day and was unsure of how to vote. NSW staff followed up to check the cruise details and identified six cruises in total that would be departing Australian ports either on or before election day, affecting over 9,000 passengers. Cruise passengers were then provided with information on their voting options based on their cruise itinerary through various means including letters, emergency notification to travel agents, ‘pillow letters’ on the cruise and, in a first, a voice trial was made to 1,089 passengers departing on a cruise providing them with brief details on their voting options in a recorded message to their phone.<sup>4</sup>

5.9 As part of the national targeted enrolment stimulation (TES) program (discussed in chapter 4), the state manager for NSW noted that approximately half a million people at 374,000 addresses were targeted by fieldwork, which was supported by advertising, media and public awareness activities. As at 7 September 2007, staff had visited 374,299 addresses in person and collected 89,750 enrolment forms at the time of the visit (a response rate of 24 per cent of addresses visited). Overall, 111,555 enrolment forms were received from this program (a response rate of 29.8 per cent of addresses visited). Of this total, 13 per cent were new enrolments, 18 per cent were re-enrolments and 69 per cent were changes of enrolment.<sup>5</sup>

5.10 One area of concern in NSW arising from previous elections is the high level of informality relative to other jurisdictions, with NSW consistently having a higher informality rate for House of Representatives elections (see chapter 2). The NSW state manager outlined several strategies implemented for the 2007 election in NSW to reduce levels of informality, including:

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4 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, pp 1–2.

5 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 2.

- an attempt to employ language-appropriate staff for selected polling place;
- some polling places played a DVD of translated formality television advertisements;
- the questions issuing officers are required to ask of electors were translated into 21 languages;
- how-to-vote guides were translated into 21 languages; and
- polling staff in divisions with the highest 2004 informality levels were provided with extra training.<sup>6</sup>

5.11 The NSW state manager told the committee that the AEC ‘intends to continue to research and analyse the informal voting figures from the 2007 election to understand which mix of the strategies listed above may have had the greatest impact in working to reduce the informality levels at the 2007 federal election’.<sup>7</sup>

## Victoria

5.12 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 3.44 million electors on the Victorian electoral roll, 149,687 (4.6 per cent) more than the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>8</sup>

5.13 The Victorian state manager noted that efforts to stimulate roll growth over 2007 comprised of a range of strategies including:

- fieldwork and door knocking over a three-month period at the beginning of the year – targeting 59,000 addresses where there had been no response to AEC mailouts. A further 148,000 addresses were doorknocked to engage with electors not on the roll or re-engage those who were not currently on the roll. Combined, these activities resulted in the return of over 50,000 enrolment forms;
- sample audit fieldwork – used to measure the accuracy of the roll and effectiveness of mail activities. Between February and March 5,200 addresses were contacted by doorknocking, telephoning or writing to electors, resulting in a further 426 enrolment forms;
- National enrol to vote week – 435 schools registered to participate by conducting an enrolment activity for their senior secondary students.

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6 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 3.

7 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 3.

8 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 7.

This resulted in over 9,000 enrolment forms, including 8,500 aged 17 and 18;

- continuous roll update mail-outs – From January to September 2007 a total of six mail-outs were undertaken. A total of 475,000 letters were sent and around 100,000 enrolment forms were returned.
- new citizenship ceremonies – Over 20,000 enrolment forms were collected from new citizens at ceremonies held between January and September 2007.<sup>9</sup>

5.14 Arrangements relating to the sourcing of some state agency data in Victoria are somewhat different to some other jurisdictions. The state manager for Victoria noted that:

With the roll in Victoria, being a joint roll, the state runs its own arrangements. That is in WA and Victoria, but Victoria clearly has its own roll and therefore it uses its state's departments and agencies to inform its roll and then its roll is merged with ours, if you like. Most of the state agencies deal directly with the state roll, which then has the computer matching done with our roll. We do not have a direct relationship with the state as a number of other AEC states have. However, we do have, as I mentioned, arrangements with the Office of Apprenticeships and Trainees, Births, Deaths and Marriages, and with the prisons service.<sup>10</sup>

5.15 Using data sourced through the state Office of Training and Tertiary Education, 13,000 apprentices aged between 17 and 25 were mailed enrolment forms, with 2,200 forms returned, including 1,700 from 17 and 18 year olds.<sup>11</sup>

## Queensland

5.16 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 2.61 million electors on the Queensland electoral roll, 148,898 (6.0 per cent) more than the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>12</sup>

5.17 As part of the national TES program, the Queensland state manager noted that AEC staff across Queensland reviewed around 338,000 addresses throughout the state from March to July 2007. This contributed to

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9 Wight D, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 11 August 2008, pp 1-2.

10 Wight D, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 11 August 2008, p 15.

11 Wight D, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 11 August 2008, p 2.

12 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 7.

51,000 new and re-enrolments for Queensland and around 74,000 electors updating their enrolment details.<sup>13</sup>

5.18 A feature of the 2007 election in Queensland was the use of Queensland Government offices and courthouses as pre-poll centres. The Queensland state manager told the committee that:

A memorandum of understanding was entered into with the Queensland departments of Justice and the Attorney General, and Smart Service Queensland, to facilitate the issue of pre-poll votes at 22 courthouses and 17 Queensland government agency program offices. This service operated from 14 November up to and including election day. A total of 171,000 pre-poll votes were issued to electors throughout Queensland, and these 35 centres alone issued a total of some 10,800 pre-poll votes to electors. This represented approximately 6 per cent of the total number of pre-poll votes.<sup>14</sup>

5.19 Staff at the Queensland state office undertook a range of local school and community programs across Queensland to complement national initiatives. These included:

- youth – Activities for young people; attending tertiary orientations; market days and career expos; the Triple J AWOL concert in Innisfail; displays at school constitutional convention events in Mackay, Toowoomba, Townsville and Wide Bay, as well as Youth Week in Brisbane. In partnership with the Surfers Paradise management, a media and public relations campaign was also conducted to advise all year 12 students enjoying Schoolies how and where to vote;
- new citizens – Attendance at citizenship ceremonies to assist with the completion and collection of enrolment forms;
- Indigenous Australians – displays at NAIDOC events, the sports and cultural festival on election day, and the Brisbane Indigenous Jobs Market. Staff from the division of Leichhardt also presented information at the Croc Festival on Thursday Island. Information about enrolment voting and the program was posted to some 870 Indigenous organisations throughout Queensland; and
- general community activities – All community electoral information officers were employed in the lead-up to the election and they were based in Brisbane, Cairns, Mount Isa and Dalby. These officers

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13 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, p 37.

14 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, p 38.

undertook a program of visits to inform electors of the importance of participating in electoral events and to collect enrolment forms.<sup>15</sup>

- 5.20 A state initiative that appeared to be an effective strategy to grow the roll in Queensland was an arrangement with the Queensland Department of Transport that includes a reminder on change of address labels for drivers licences that people need to update their enrolment details when they move.<sup>16</sup> This arrangement had resulted in the return of 55,000 enrolment forms in the previous year.<sup>17</sup> The Queensland state manager told the committee:

We have an arrangement whereby people come in to them or contact them by phone or on the Internet to update their licence. The Department of Transport will send out relevant material to facilitate the person updating their licence, but they will also include an enrolment form and a business reply paid envelope on our behalf. If a person physically comes into their agency to update their enrolment they will be advised that they can obtain an enrolment form and update their details at the same time.<sup>18</sup>

## Western Australia

- 5.21 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 1.3 million electors on the Western Australian electoral roll, an increase of 75,593 electors (6.1 per cent) compared to the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>19</sup> Almost 57,000 of these new electors were added to the roll during 2007 in the lead up to the election.<sup>20</sup>
- 5.22 The Western Australian state manager noted that efforts to stimulate roll growth over 2007 comprised of a range of strategies including:
- fieldwork and door knocking over a three-month period between March and July – 110,615 addresses throughout Western Australia were reviewed between March and July, resulting in 43,066 enrolment forms being collected (a response rate of 39 per cent);
  - mail review activities – 222,467 letters were sent and almost 50,000 enrolment forms returned (a response rate of 22 per cent);

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15 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, p 38.

16 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, p 40.

17 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, p 43.

18 Bright A, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 6 August 2008, pp 42–43.

19 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, p 3.

20 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, p 3.

- National enrol to vote week – 158 (61 per cent) of Western Australian high schools participated. Around 16,300 enrolment forms were distributed and 2,218 enrolment forms were returned (a response rate of 14 per cent);
  - birthday cards – In conjunction with the Western Australian Electoral Commission, birthday cards and enrolment forms were mailed to people turning 17 years of age, using data from the Department of Education and Training. In the period July to October, 6,207 enrolment forms were mailed, resulting in 372 enrolment forms being received (a response rate of 6 per cent); and
  - citizenship ceremonies – AEC staff continued to attend citizenship ceremonies and achieved a return rate of enrolment forms of better than 93 per cent from all participants.<sup>21</sup>
- 5.23 The State office also conducted a range of community education and awareness activities targeting Indigenous electors including:
- a letter promoting the electoral process and a supply of enrolment forms was mailed to the chairpersons of 104 Indigenous communities. The letter sought the chairperson's assistance in ensuring that community members were correctly enrolled.
  - Commencing in October, four community electoral information officers were employed to promote the electoral process and enrolment in rural and remote areas in the lead-up to the election. Those officers visited over 100 Indigenous communities in a period of eight weeks.<sup>22</sup>
- 5.24 The Western Australian state manager also noted that staff from the AEC in Western Australia attended a range of major community events across the state and university orientation days at the major campuses of all universities in the state.<sup>23</sup> Remote and rural areas were also targeted, with 34,000 letters with enrolment forms sent in September to every private and roadside delivery point throughout rural and remote Western Australia.<sup>24</sup>

## South Australia

- 5.25 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 1.1 million electors on the South Australian electoral roll, an increase of

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21 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, pp 2–3.

22 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, p 3.

23 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, p 2.

24 Nagle C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 21 August 2008, p 3.



26,154 electors (2.5 per cent) compared to the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>25</sup>

5.26 Targeted fieldwork was conducted in South Australia between March and July 2007, with over 72,400 homes visited and 18,000 enrolment forms collected.<sup>26</sup>

5.27 South Australia was one of the few jurisdictions involved in a ‘bounty’ scheme that rewarded schools with \$1.70 for every enrolment form returned.<sup>27</sup> The South Australian state manager noted that:

At the moment it is on hold because our enrolment people in Canberra are developing a policy to try to roll this out, I believe, across the country. About a year ago, some state electoral authorities were implementing the program and the AEC was implementing it in other states. So, to assess the effectiveness of the program and to ensure consistency, our people in Canberra are reviewing that and developing a policy right now. But we used to provide, prior to being requested by the Electoral Commissioner to hold that program back until the review had been completed, bounties with what we called our Youth Outreach Initiative, where our divisional staff would make an appointment for at least 10 minutes or so. It is quite difficult sometimes to get into final-year classes; they are really very busy in terms of their programs. But if we could just find a time, after assembly sometimes, to get in there and to get the enrolment message to them and to get them at that point to fill out enrolment forms, the schools got bounties for those enrolment forms.<sup>28</sup>

5.28 Between July and September 2007, the state office community electoral information officer program was delivered in South Australia. The program is designed to promote enrolment and electoral awareness amongst Indigenous communities in South Australia and is delivered by officers, all of whom were Indigenous, visiting people living in the APY Lands, West Coast, Yorke Peninsula, Riverland and the south-east of the state.<sup>29</sup>

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25 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 7.

26 Drury C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 20 August 2008, p 4.

27 Drury C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 20 August 2008, p 15.

28 Drury C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 20 August 2008, p 15.

29 Drury C, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 20 August 2008, p 1.

## Tasmania

- 5.29 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were almost 350,000 electors on the Tasmania electoral roll, 10,199 (3.0 per cent) more than the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>30</sup> All but 200 of these electors were added to the roll during 2007.<sup>31</sup>
- 5.30 As part of its targeted fieldwork program, 25,000 houses across the state were visited between February and April, resulting in the return of 8,000 enrolment forms.<sup>32</sup>
- 5.31 In Tasmania, the AEC and the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) have entered into a memorandum of understanding on a program of joint roll activities, which is agreed by the Tasmanian state manager and the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner.<sup>33</sup>
- 5.32 The AEC noted a number of activities undertaken under the memorandum of understanding including:

The principal method for maintaining electoral rolls is the Continuous Roll Update (CRU) program. In this regard, the TEC facilitated access to Tasmanian motor registry data which is a component of the national CRU dataset.

Information about newly sentenced and released prisoners is now regularly provided by the Tasmanian prisons authority, as are details of deaths recorded by the Tasmanian Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages. Access to each of those datasets was originally facilitated by the TEC.

The TEC has also facilitated access to Tasmanian schools data and change of address data obtained from Service Tasmania shopfronts. This data is actioned by divisional staff to contact electors who may need to update their enrolment details. More recently the TEC has obtained TAFE student data which will again be actioned by divisional staff as part of their ongoing roll management responsibilities.

Ongoing dialogue occurs with the TEC to investigate new sources of roll update information.<sup>34</sup>

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30 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 7.

31 Neilson M, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 12 August 2008, p 22.

32 Nielson M, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 12 August 2008, p 22.

33 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, p 44.

34 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, pp 44–45.

## Northern Territory

- 5.33 At the close of rolls for the 2007 election, there were around 118,000 electors enrolled in the Northern Territory, 6,252 (5.6 per cent) more than the close of rolls for the 2004 election.<sup>35</sup>
- 5.34 Throughout 2007, the Northern Territory office processed close to 39,000 enrolment forms in a jurisdiction of only 118,000 electors.<sup>36</sup> Under the targeted fieldwork program, AEC staff in the Northern Territory doorknocked 5,579 addresses.
- 5.35 In addition, staff visited 83 Indigenous communities and collected 912 enrolment forms, of which 325 were new, and confirmed the elector status of a further 11,154 electors. Indigenous media was also targeted by the AEC:
- In terms of public awareness, a number of electoral ads were translated into seven main Indigenous languages for press and radio. For the first time, TV ads were run in remote areas to inform remote electors that remote mobile polling had begun. The total expenditure for media placement of Indigenous pre-enrolment and election advertising in 2007 was \$404,000. As previously discussed, a DVD was translated into 12 Indigenous languages plus a simple English version. This resource was utilised by undertaking electoral awareness sessions with Indigenous organisations and communities. It was used to emphasise the formality message.<sup>37</sup>
- 5.36 The Northern Territory state manager also highlighted a number of other activities undertaken in the Territory to target remote and Indigenous electors. These are discussed in chapter 6.

## Relationships with state and territory electoral authorities

- 5.37 The AEC has formal relationships with state and territory electoral authorities through joint rolls agreements with each jurisdiction. These are supplemented by separate memorandums of understanding on joint rolls maintenance activities.

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35 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 7.

36 Loganathan I, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 17 October 2008, p 36.

37 Loganathan I, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 17 October 2008, p 38.

5.38 The AEC and state electoral authorities have formed a consultative body, the Electoral Council of Australia (ECA), to consider issues relating to the development and maintenance of the electoral roll for elections and matters of electoral administration.<sup>38</sup> Membership of the ECA comprises the Australian Electoral Commissioner and four senior AEC staff members and state and territory electoral commissioners.<sup>39</sup> The stated mission of the ECA is twofold:

- First, through consultation to facilitate the management of the electoral rolls prepared for Federal, State, Territory and, where appropriate, Local Government elections, so as to:
  - ⇒ Maximise their accuracy and ensure their integrity; and
  - ⇒ Ensure that efficient and effective roll methodologies are implemented; and
- Second, to consult on matters which will facilitate or improve Australian electoral administration.

5.39 In addition to these formal arrangements, the AEC's state and territory offices and state and territory electoral authorities have cooperative arrangements in place. In relation to arrangements in Victoria, the AEC's Victorian state manager noted that:

There is a fair bit of cooperation between the two bodies. I can talk from my Victorian experience, where there is cooperation for state, local government and federal electoral events between the two bodies, and staff have been seconded to each agency to help out at various times. There is a fair degree of practical and operational ... back office stuff between the two agencies. In terms of some of our agendas, they are quite similar as well. We are all trying to alert people to the provisions of the act, to get people on the roll and to encourage voting. We have produced a joint booklet in Victoria, the Guide to enrolling and voting, and there is co-branding and so forth.<sup>40</sup>

5.40 The committee notes the AEC's concerns that with different eligibility criteria applying across jurisdictions, there were risks that some potential electors may be discouraged from enrolling.<sup>41</sup> The AEC noted that:

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38 Electoral Council of Australia, 'About the ECA: Mission statement', viewed on 1 May 2009 at [http://www.eca.gov.au/about/mission\\_state.htm](http://www.eca.gov.au/about/mission_state.htm).

39 Electoral Council of Australia, 'About the ECA: Members', viewed on 1 May 2009 at <http://www.eca.gov.au/about/members.htm>.

40 Wight D, Australian Electoral Commission, transcript, 11 August 2008, p 10.

41 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 19.

The AEC is concerned that the different enrolment criteria between federal and some state jurisdictions are unnecessarily complicating the enrolment process, and thereby potentially impacting upon the franchise of eligible electors at both federal and state levels. Electors often do not distinguish between state and federal electoral authorities, and there is a risk that confusion and frustration with bureaucracy may discourage ‘state-only’ and ‘federal-only’ electors from enrolling again to meet both requirements.

For joint roll arrangements to be fully efficient and effective:

- the AEC believes there should be one enrolment form nationwide, rather than different forms for each state and territory;
- the lodging of such a form should suffice to effect the elector’s enrolment for federal, state, territory and local government elections, without any need for further interaction to resolve ‘federal-only’ or ‘state-only’ status; and
- all jurisdictions should work together towards achieving these objectives.<sup>42</sup>

## Committee conclusion

- 5.41 Cooperation and coordination with state and territory electoral authorities is important to deliver electoral services in a cost effective manner, with the AEC and state and territory electoral authorities all sharing the benefits of formal and informal working arrangements.
- 5.42 In order to maximise the benefits for all electoral authorities, it is important that, wherever possible, differences between eligibility for enrolment are minimised.
- 5.43 The committee recognises that ultimately, decisions about eligibility at a state and territory level are a matter for their respective parliaments. That said, there are clear benefits to electoral administration and reducing elector confusion by harmonising eligibility provisions wherever possible. The committee therefore encourages the Australian Government to work with state and territory governments to identify those areas where agreement can be reached, and then set about amending eligibility provisions to achieve greater harmonisation.
- 5.44 At a practical level, the committee encourages the AEC to continue to work cooperatively with state and territory electoral authorities. The

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42 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169, p 19.

committee notes that, when reviewing the ECA's website, there does not appear to have been a consistent range of activities reported on, with research papers published dating back to 2004 and the most recent published continuous roll activity update report published relating to 2004-05.<sup>43</sup> That said, the website has been updated to recognise the appointment of a new Australian Electoral Commissioner in January 2009.<sup>44</sup>

- 5.45 The committee encourages the AEC to continue to work proactively within the ECA framework and within its other formal arrangements with state and territory electoral authorities to maximise opportunities to work cooperatively wherever possible.

## **Contributions to growing the electoral roll**

- 5.46 The AEC has a national target that 95 per cent of eligible electors should be on the electoral roll.<sup>45</sup> While this provides some guide to evaluating AEC performance at a national level, it is difficult to assess performance at a state office level. In part, this will reflect the different nature of the populations within each jurisdiction and the extent to which 'national' operations can be an effective way of persuading electors to update their electoral roll details.
- 5.47 Since 1993, the rate of growth to the electoral roll has varied across jurisdictions relative to the population growth (figure 5.1).

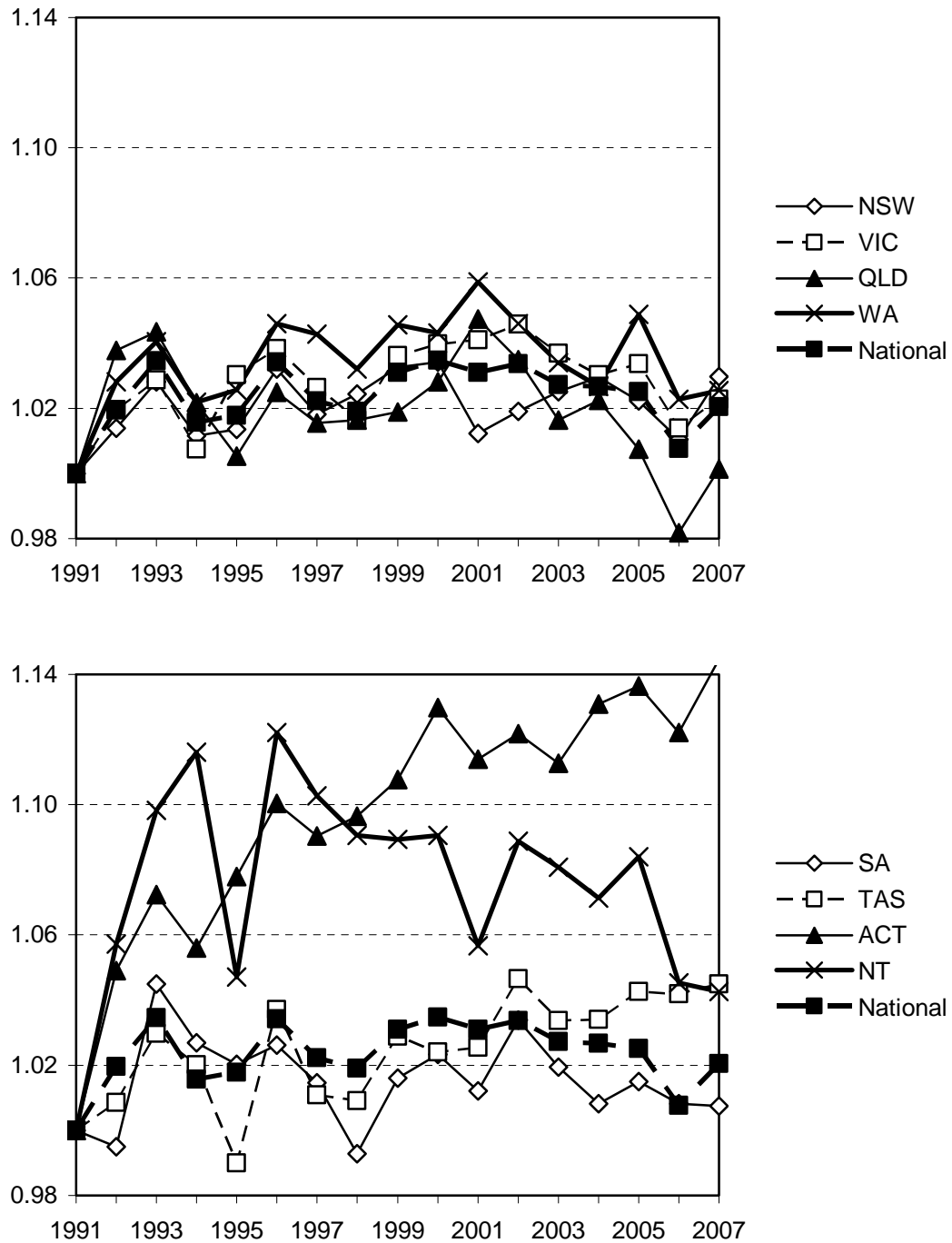
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43 Electoral Council of Australia, 'Reports' viewed on 1 May 2009 at <http://www.eca.gov.au/reports/index.htm>; 'Electoral Research', viewed on 1 May 2009 at <http://www.eca.gov.au/research/index.htm>.

44 Electoral Council of Australia, 'About the ECA: Members', viewed on 1 May 2009 at <http://www.eca.gov.au/about/members.htm>.

45 Department of Finance and Deregulation, Portfolio budget statements 2008-09, Budget related paper No 1.8, p 68.

Figure 5.1 Electoral roll growth relative to population growth, by jurisdiction, as at 30 June 1991 to 2007 (base year 1991)



Source Appendix C, tables C.6 and C.7.

5.48 To some extent, all states and territories have a different population mix and can face different challenges over time in providing services to electors sometimes complicated by a range of factors including geography, mobility, migration and age (table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Selected characteristics of potential electors, by jurisdiction

	Persons who speak English not well or not well at all	Net interstate migration	Population density	Persons aged 65+	Persons who lived at a different address 5 years ago	
	No. persons	No. persons	Persons per square km	No. persons	No. persons	% pop.
NSW	194,790	-22,400	8.2	905,765	2,322,149	40.8
Vic	151,460	-2,400	21.7	674,899	1,696,553	39.2
Qld	35,678	22,700	2.3	482,906	1,735,217	51.3
WA	26,846	5,600	0.8	233,138	814,274	48.2
SA	26,477	-4,700	1.5	235,567	516,431	38.4
Tas	1,562	450	7.0	71,122	171,527	40.7
ACT	4,387	-290	134.1	31,573	126,398	44.0
NT	2,003	1,100	0.1	9,399	75,637	47.9
National	443,203	60	2.6	2,664,369	7,458,202	43.1

Source Parliamentary Library, 'Electoral division rankings: Census 2006 second release', Research paper no 23 2007-08, p 132; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Demographic Statistics September 2008 (2009)*, cat no 3101.0, p 8; 2006 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B36.

5.49 As an example of the extent of some of these differences between jurisdictions, the mobility of the population in Queensland in 2006, when measured as the proportion of the state population who lived at a different address five years ago, was 51.3 per cent. This compares to South Australia, the state with the lowest mobility, where 38.4 per cent of the population lived at a different address five years earlier.<sup>46</sup>

5.50 These relatively high rates of mobility have been sustained for a number of years. Data from previous Censuses in 1991, 1996 and 2001 indicates that nationally, around 45 per cent of persons lived at a different address five years prior to the census year.<sup>47</sup> Queensland and Western Australia have remained higher mobility states, with South Australia and Victoria continuing to exhibit lower mobility.<sup>48</sup>

5.51 Election turnout may be an indicator of the efforts of the AEC in each jurisdiction to maximise participation at an election. Based on this

46 Parliamentary Library, 'Electoral division rankings: Census 2006 second release', *Research paper no 23 2007-08*, p 132.

47 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B36; 2001 Census, *Basic community profile*, tables B01 and B22; 1996 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B01; 1991 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B03.

48 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B36; 2001 Census, *Basic community profile*, tables B01 and B22; 1996 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B01; 1991 Census, *Basic community profile*, table B03.



indicator, it is clear that there are significant differences between jurisdictions (table 5.2). There are clear reasons for these differences in some jurisdictions. Perhaps the best example, discussed in chapter 6, is the difficulties encountered in the Northern Territory in providing electoral services to the high proportion of Indigenous electors throughout the Territory.

Table 5.2 Voter turnout, Senate, by jurisdiction, 1993 to 2007 elections (per cent)

Jurisdiction	1993	1996	1998	2001	2004	2007
NSW	96.5	96.7	95.3	95.2	95.1	95.4
VIC	96.6	96.5	95.9	95.6	95.4	95.6
QLD	95.8	95.1	94.5	94.8	94.1	94.8
WA	95.9	95.6	95.1	95.0	93.7	93.9
SA	95.5	96.4	96.1	96.0	95.4	95.8
TAS	96.6	96.9	96.4	96.2	95.9	96.0
ACT	97.1	96.9	95.9	95.1	95.2	96.0
NT	89.0	89.2	90.3	86.2	84.4	86.9

Source *Appendix C, table C.12.*

- 5.52 Given some of the diversity across the states and territories, it is expected that the various strategies employed at national office level and within state offices activities to maintain the roll should be flexible enough to be tailored to the characteristics of electors within each jurisdiction.
- 5.53 In light of the difficulties in measuring the performance of state offices within the AEC's national network, the committee has examined a number of areas where there are significant differences between states and territories in how effective they are in enrolling electors aged 17 and 18, and how the various strategies used at national and state and territory level can influence the source of enrolment forms received.

## Youth enrolment activities

- 5.54 It is widely recognised that young electors are less likely than older electors to be on the electoral roll. The AEC noted that relative participation by young people is generally below that of other electors and that participation rates do peak around an election for young voters.<sup>49</sup> The AEC noted that:

[there is] a tendency for youth enrolment to peak around an election. This is due in part to potential electors attempting to

49 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 9.

enrol after the close of rolls, and in part to enrolment forms filled in on polling day. Not only do numbers of 18-24 year olds enrolled peak around elections and wane in between, so do relative participation rates varying from a low of approximately 75 per cent in June 2006 to high of 85 per cent at the 2007 election.<sup>50</sup>

- 5.55 In the lead up to the 2004 election, an additional 87,650 electors aged 17 or 18 were added to the electoral roll from February 2004 to the close of rolls on 7 September 2004. The corresponding figure for the lead up to the 2007 election, including an additional month up to the close of rolls on 23 October 2007 was 64,187. It should be noted that although lower, the growth in 2007 was coming off a higher base of 213,600 electors compared to 169,000 in 2004.
- 5.56 The committee has previously noted its concern about the impact of the changed close of roll arrangements on young electors, with 4,068 eighteen year olds who would have exercised their franchise for the first time at the 2007 election denied the opportunity to do so.<sup>51</sup>
- 5.57 While most of the smaller states and territories contributed in relatively similar terms to overall growth among 17 and 18 years olds in the election year, the larger states demonstrated significantly different contributions between election years (figure 5.2). The negative contribution to growth in the 2004 election year reported for 17 year olds in Queensland and at the 2007 election for 17 year olds in Western Australia reflects the fact that enrolment of 17 year olds actually declined by 2,516 and 739 respectively.<sup>52</sup>

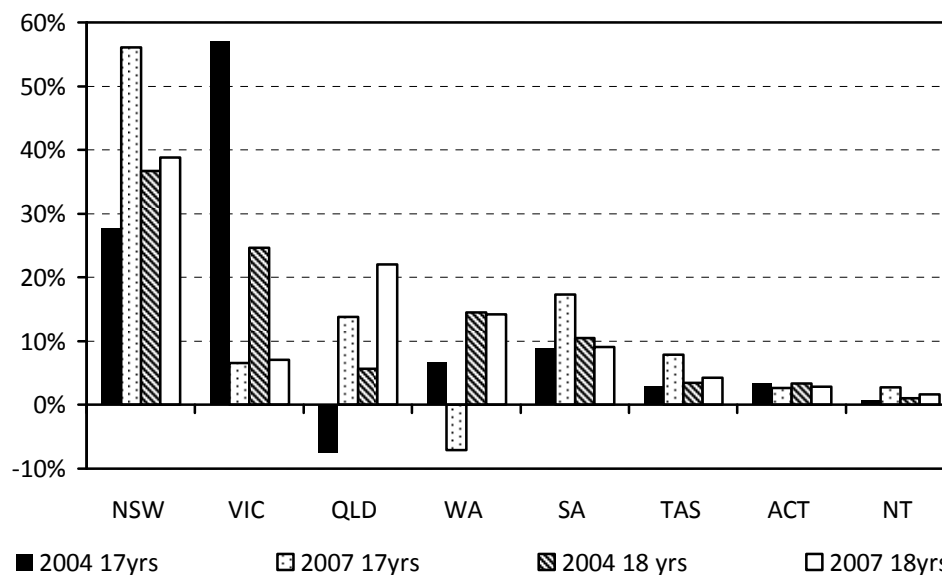
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50 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 9.

51 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.15, p 2.

52 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 1, pp 3-8.

Figure 5.2 Contribution to total 17 and 18 year old enrolment growth, by jurisdiction, 31 January to close of rolls for the 2004 and 2007 election years (per cent)



Source Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 1, pp 3–8; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, Jun 2008 (2008)*, cat no 3201.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument>.

5.58 For example, NSW contributed a larger share of the total number of 17 and 18 year olds enrolled nationally (56 per cent and 39 per cent respectively) compared to its relative population share of 32 per cent of 17 and 18 year olds.<sup>53</sup> Victoria contributed a smaller share of the total number of 17 and 18 year olds enrolled nationally (both 7 per cent), compared to its relative population share of 24 per cent of 17 and 18 year olds.<sup>54</sup>

### Committee conclusion

5.59 There are many factors that may explain these differences. The committee does not suggest that the results demonstrate the relative effectiveness of the AEC's efforts to enrol young electors in an election year. That said, the committee considers that differences in outcomes between jurisdictions should be examined closely by the AEC and mitigated wherever possible.

53 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, Jun 2008 (2008)*, cat no 3201.0, [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument).

54 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, Jun 2008 (2008)*, cat no 3201.0, [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument).

- 5.60 One area where the committee considers that an additional program can be delivered at a state and territory level at relatively minor cost is to introduce a 'bounty' scheme to schools and other educational institutions in order to encourage the promotion of enrolment amongst students. Such a bounty should be paid on a \$ per enrolment form collected by each school.
- 5.61 The committee understands that such bounty schemes have operated for a number of years in some jurisdictions, including South Australia. The committee considers that the introduction of such a scheme nationwide would complement other changes suggested by the committee in this report, including provisional enrolment for 16 year olds and online enrolment update (chapter 4). Both of these changes are designed to facilitate greater participation in the electoral process especially by young Australians.

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#### **Recommendation 14**

- 5.62 **The committee recommends that, in order to encourage the enrolment of young Australians, the Australian Electoral Commission introduce a national 'Schools Bounty Scheme' under which government and non-government schools, universities and technical colleges and the like would receive a specified amount for valid enrolment forms collected and forwarded to the Australian Electoral Commission.**

#### **Source of enrolment forms**

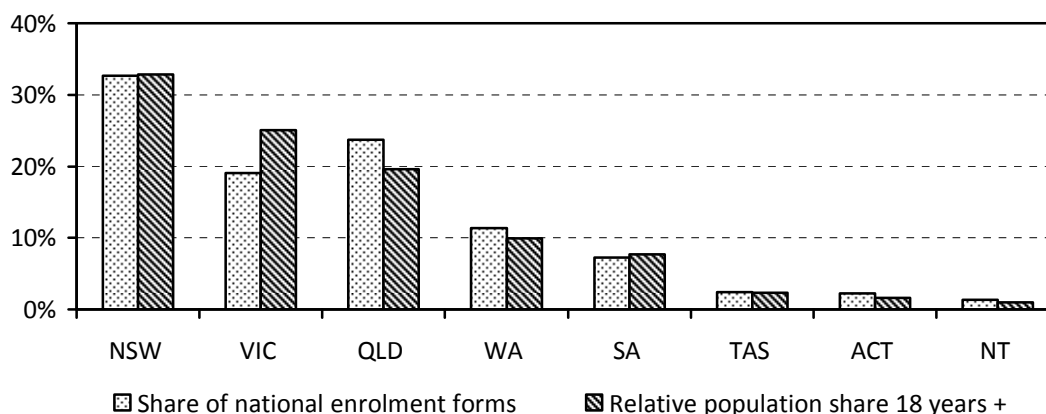
- 5.63 Data provided by the AEC revealed that over the first nine months of 2007 in the lead up to the election prior to the close of rolls more than 2.5 million enrolment forms were received from various sources. Forms sourced through post offices (17 per cent), AEC mail reviews (16.5 per cent), and state electoral authorities (6.6 per cent), the Internet (10.5 per cent) and AEC fieldwork (18.1 per cent) accounted for 70 per cent of enrolment forms received.<sup>55</sup>
- 5.64 An analysis of this data at a state and territory level reveals that there are significant differences between jurisdictions in the sources of enrolment forms. While the share of total forms collected in each state and territory is

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55 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 2A, p 9.

broadly in line with each jurisdiction's relative population share for persons aged 18+, Victoria and Queensland have significantly different results (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 Relative share of enrolment forms collected compared to relative population share of persons aged 18+, by jurisdiction (per cent)



Source Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 1, pp 3–8; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, Jun 2008 (2008)*, cat no 3201.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument>.

- 5.65 Further analysis of the source of enrolment forms in Victorian and Queensland reveals that both jurisdictions have broadly similar patterns of sourcing enrolment forms. It is simply the case that Queensland collected a significantly higher number of forms (604,447) than Victoria (484,738) relative to their respective population shares for persons aged 18+ (20 per cent and 25 per cent respectively).<sup>56</sup>
- 5.66 While some of this may be explained by the relatively higher mobility of Queenslanders generally, there may be other factors that warrant further examination, with the AEC developing appropriate strategies to accommodate these factors.
- 5.67 When the different sources of enrolment forms are compared across states and territories, it is clear that there are significant differences between jurisdictions, reflecting how the actions taken by the AEC's national and state and territory offices influence the manner by which forms are sourced by electors and returned to the AEC (table 5.3).

56 Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 1, pp 3–8; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, Jun 2008 (2008)*, cat no 3201.0, [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3201.0Jun%202008?OpenDocument).

Table 5.3 Selected sources of total enrolment forms collected, by jurisdiction, January 2007 to October 2007(per cent)

Source	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
Mail review	12.5%	15.0%	13.7%	16.8%	15.9%	15.7%	16.6%	10.7%
Bounty/exit schemes	1.7%	5.3%	6.7%	6.3%	6.5%	8.0%	4.3%	2.4%
Post Office	21.2%	14.8%	15.3%	13.5%	15.6%	11.2%	14.1%	16.6%
School/community visits	0.3%	0.6%	2.1%	0.5%	0.9%	3.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Transport authorities	1.0%	1.4%	5.3%	0.6%	1.3%	0.1%	0.5%	0.5%
Birthday cards	2.7%	1.9%	0.8%	1.4%	1.5%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%

Source Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 2A, p 9.

5.68 For example, Queensland is a standout jurisdiction in terms of the proportion of forms sourced from transport authorities, possibly reflecting its unique arrangement with the Queensland Department of Transport discussed earlier. Another example is the contribution from bounty and exit schemes in Queensland (6.7 per cent), Western Australia (6.3 per cent), South Australia (6.5 per cent) and Tasmania (8 per cent) compared to a low of 1.7 per cent in New South Wales.<sup>57</sup>

### Committee conclusion

5.69 The committee does not suggest that the strategies used in each of the jurisdictions are not effective. That said, it is important that the AEC national office and state and territory offices work closely together to improve enrolment participation by determining:

- what strategies work best at a national level
- whether successful state-based strategies might also be effective in other jurisdictions; and
- whether any particular strategies are indeed only relevant to a single jurisdiction.

5.70 The committee encourages the AEC to examine these issues closely, with a view to ensuring national consistency wherever possible in the state/territory-based activities and strategies undertaken to facilitate roll management activities.

<sup>57</sup> Australian Electoral Commission, submission 169.1, Annex 2A, p 9.

**Recommendation 15**

- 5.71 **The committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission ensure national consistency wherever possible in the state/territory-based activities and strategies undertaken to facilitate roll management activities.**
- 5.72 The committee also considers that there is merit in developing state and territory-based enrolment targets that reflect each jurisdiction's contribution to the current national target of having 95 per cent of potential electors enrolled. Such targets should be part of the AEC's internal performance management framework to underpin the national target and be reported in the agency's annual report.

**Recommendation 16**

- 5.73 **The committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission develop state and territory-based enrolment targets that reflect the contribution that is expected by each state and territory to the national enrolment target. Such targets should take account of the particular challenges faced in each state and territory and be reported annually in the Australian Electoral Commission's annual report.**