
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Review of certain aspects of the administration of the Australian Electoral Commission

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

September 2007
Canberra

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ISBN 978-0-642-79015-6 (printed version)

ISBN 978-0-642-79016-3 (HTML version)



Chair's Foreword

Effective electoral administration is a vital component of a healthy democracy. With a federal election approaching, it has been a timely exercise for the committee to review certain aspects of the administration of the Australian Electoral Commission.

The terms of reference required the committee to direct much of its focus on the staffing arrangements across the AEC's divisional office network. Currently, there are 150 AEC divisional offices in 135 locations across Australia.

The committee received evidence which raised a number of concerns regarding workforce issues in some AEC divisional offices. These concerns related to employment structure, staffing levels, career opportunities for staff, retention issues and the effectiveness of co-located divisional offices.

Specific concerns came from the co-located divisional office in Chatswood, which services four electoral divisions in NSW. The Committee conducted a site visit of the Chatswood office as part of its inquiry, and appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with AEC employees about some of the issues identified in submissions.

Without an extensive body of evidence to draw on, however, it is difficult for the committee to determine whether the concerns raised during the inquiry are symptomatic of widespread issues within the AEC. While the committee is not in a position to draw comprehensive conclusions, it considers the concerns which were raised to be significant enough to warrant further investigation. Therefore the committee has recommended that the Auditor-General examine the issue of workforce planning in the AEC in further detail.

The committee was also asked to consider whether the National Tally Room should be maintained beyond the next federal election. The committee supports the continuation of the tally room and is of the view that the abolition of the tally room would have a negative impact on the perception of the transparency of

elections. Furthermore, the committee notes the value and logic of having a central tally room in the nation's capital which extends beyond any dollar or logistical considerations.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank all those who participated in the inquiry.

Sophie Mirabella MP
Chair



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Membership of the Committee

Chair Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP

Deputy Chair Senator Glenn Sterle

Members Mr Steven Ciobo MP

Senator Judith Adams

Mr Michael Danby MP

Senator Kim Carr

Mr John Forrest MP

Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Mr Alan Griffin MP

Senator Andrew Murray

Committee Secretariat

Secretary Mr Stephen Boyd

Inquiry Secretary Mr Justin Baker

Research Officer Ms Judith Ireland

Administrative Officers Ms Frances Wilson

Ms Natasha Petrovic



Terms of reference

- the adequacy of AEC co-location of divisional offices, including both financial and social consequences of co-locations;
- the number of staff and the employment structure of staff in divisional offices;
- whether the current arrangements meet career expectations for AEC officers;
- whether the current arrangements meet community expectations about the appropriate use of staffing resources;
- what any change to these arrangements would mean for the previous two points;
- what level of staffing would be required to meet ongoing habitation reviews;
- whether the current APS staffing levels are appropriate for the actual work of divisional offices; and
- any other issues relating to the staffing of divisional and central offices which may be raised in submission or by the committee;
- the continuing relevance of the National Tally Room to members of parliament, candidates, political parties, the media, and the general public;
- the possible alternatives to the National Tally Room flowing from advances in computer and telecommunications technologies, such as the Australian Electoral Commission's web-based Virtual Tally Room, and;
- the logistics, risks and cost of providing the National Tally room.



List of abbreviations

AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AEO	Australian Electoral Officer
CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union (PSU Group)
CRU	Continuous Roll Update
DOFA	Department of Finance and Administration
DRO	Divisional Returning Officer
ELMS	Election Management System
FTE	full-time equivalent
JSCEM	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
NTR	National Tally Room
VTR	Virtual Tally Room



List of recommendations

2 Adequacy of divisional office employment structure

Recommendation 1 (para 2.52)

The committee recommends that the Auditor-General conduct an audit of workforce planning in the Australian Electoral Commission, with a view to determining whether the Commission's workforce planning strategy is supporting effective practices in human resource management for divisional office staff and achieving efficient and effective outcomes.

3 Divisional offices with shared premises

Recommendation 2 (para 3.80)

The committee recommends that, as part of the audit on workforce planning in the Australian Electoral Commission proposed in Recommendation 1, the Auditor-General also examine the efficiency and effectiveness of working arrangements in co-located divisional offices.

Recommendation 3 (para 3.81)

The committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission includes an evaluation of the performance of all co-located divisional offices in the upcoming federal election in its submission to the JSCEM inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 federal election.

4 The future of the National Tally Room

Recommendation 4 (para 4.67)

The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures that the National Tally Room is retained for future federal elections.

