

**AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION**

**THIRD SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS' INQUIRY  
INTO THE 2004 FEDERAL ELECTION AND  
MATTERS RELATED THERETO**

**Responses to issues raised by JSCEM at Dalby and  
Ingham public hearings, 27 & 28 April 2005**

**8 JULY 2005**

# THIRD SUBMISSION TO THE JSCEM 2004 FEDERAL ELECTION INQUIRY

## Introduction

This is the third submission by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' (JSCEM's) inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 federal election.

This submission provides responses to requests for information, documentation and statistics that were either taken on notice or requested of AEC staff during the Dalby and Ingham hearings on 27 and 28 April 2004.

The table of contents (below) sets out the relevant issues raised, identified by subject matter and the page number of the relevant Hansard transcript.

Because of the large volume of information that is relevant to many of the requests, much of the information has been provided electronically (on a data CD) at Attachment A. References to the electronic data are provided in the text.

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**Attachment A [CONFIDENTIAL]** – Data CD '3<sup>rd</sup> Submission Attachment A'

**Attachment B** – Postal Vote Package examples

## **DALBY HEARING – WEDNESDAY 27 APRIL 2005**

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### **Page 30: Close of rolls transactions by division**

*Mr Danby requested that the Committee be provided with statistics that showed for each division, the number of enrolment additions and changes made on a daily basis through the roll close period.*

Response:

This information is provided on the Attachment A CD as an Excel document 'CoR Activity'. The document is located in *Folder 1 – Close of Rolls transactions*.

## **INGHAM HEARING – THURSDAY 28 APRIL 2005**

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### **Page 18: Qld postal voting package spoils**

*The AEC took the following question on notice from the Chair in relation to the spoilt Queensland GPVs: "Did you ask for and did you receive confirmation of the number of spoilt ballots and what action had been taken to rectify them?"*

Response:

During the week commencing 27 September, because of the increasing complaints about delayed receipt of postal vote packages (particularly relating to Queensland), the contractor was asked to provide to the AEC proof of the lodgement of the Queensland General Postal Voter (GPV) postal voting packages with Australia Post.

The contractor provided a copy of the manifest for the lodgement of the Queensland GPV file with Australia Post indicating that all Postal Vote Certificates (PVCs) had been lodged in Sydney on 20 September. This manifest showed that the total number lodged equalled the number of records extracted by the AEC.

In discussions with Australia Post on 1 October (to make special delivery arrangements for the lodgement of other PVCs into capital cities to expedite delivery), the AEC also discussed the apparent slowness of delivery in some remote areas of Queensland. The Queensland GPV lodgement on 20 September was provided as an example; many calls had been received from electors included in this mail-out file who had not yet received their PVCs. Later that day, a memorandum was received from Australia Post confirming the special delivery arrangements mentioned above, and advising that they did not have any information to suggest any material issue with the Queensland GPV lodgement.

Until late in the day on 7 October the AEC was unaware of any spoils in the Queensland GPV batch that had not been lodged. At that time, Australia Post advised that despite the manifest indicating complete lodgement, an initial review of the data associated with this lodgement indicated that there were spoils. The following explanation was provided in the Australia Post memorandum: *'As a part of the acceptance procedure the mailing house includes the total planned volume (including spoils) in the mailing statement. They then have an agreed period of time (i.e. 5 working days) to lodge the spoils with a spoils report to reconcile back to the original lodgement. Lodgement staff confirmed today that the spoils from this lodgement have not yet been lodged in that state.'*

The AEC immediately contacted the contractor for confirmation of this information. Confirmation was received from the contractor at 7.35pm on 7 October. Their investigations revealed that 1,832 spoils from the Queensland GPV batch were in fact never lodged. They advised that initial advice to the AEC (regarding no spoils and complete lodgement) was provided *'in good faith based on lodgement documentation, also approved by Australia Post'*. The elector data for these records was then provided both by AEC programmers and the contractor late that evening, and a plan was drafted to enable local reproduction of PVCs in the Queensland divisional offices concerned. Special lodgement arrangements were made with Australia Post in Queensland to ensure that delivery and return could be achieved in all remote areas, in accordance with the terms of the Proclamation.<sup>1</sup>

## **Page 26: AEC Call Centre scripts**

*Senator Brandis asked the AEC to provide call centre scripts to the committee.*

Response:

The requested scripts are included on the CD in *Folder 2 – Call Centre Scripts*. Because the scripts were part of an interactive database and not designed as stand alone documents, the following information on the database and how the call centre operated should be read in conjunction with the scripts.

For the 2004 Election the AEC provided an election call centre service from 7 Centrelink sites: Brisbane, Mooreland, Moorabbin, Newcastle, Adelaide, Bunbury and Perth. Up to 450 operators were trained for the election call centre service. The call centre operated for 14 hours a day (allowing for closing time in Western Australia), 7 days a week.

Approximately 25 additional operators were trained to provide back-end administrative and callback support for the call centre network. The cell, known as the Wizard Cell, was based in the AEC's central office in Canberra and operated with up to 9 operators per shift including a supervisor. The Wizard Cell processed callbacks, forms, complaints, and postal vote issues which could not be completed in the wider call centre network.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of delays in the issue of postal ballot materials to 1359 GPVs in Queensland, on 8 October the AEC sought the issue of a proclamation under subsection 285(1) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. This proclamation extended the time for the issue and receipt of PVCs and postal ballot papers for a specified list of GPVs whose ballot papers had not been posted to them as required by legislation. The Governor-General issued the proclamation on 8 October 2005.

Centrelink staff and Wizard Cell staff were provided with 3 to 6 hours of training depending upon the trainees' role, which included an overview of the election process, protocols staff were required to follow and instruction and navigation of the AEC's Election Call Centre Application (ECCA). ECCA was an AEC in-house web based application and was used by Centrelink's Customer Service Operators (CSOs) to answer 485,000 calls and process 33,500 customer product orders.

ECCA contained 6 database look up facilities; 9 forms and over 1200 scripts. The scripts included:

- 383 "What's New" Issues and Update scripts received by CSOs in real time;
- 667 Question and Answer & protocol scripts which were built with conditional tags i.e. all or part of the script could be switched on or off according to the election phase and converting from present tense to past tense;
- 46 Database application scripts to support operators conducting roll or postal vote look ups;
- 90 Question and Answer Reference Guide scripts to support 1<sup>st</sup> Help Desk in Centrelink and 2<sup>nd</sup> Help Desk in AEC central office in Canberra; and
- 15 scripts for each of the nine forms and six database look-up facilities.

The bulk of the scripts were written before the AEC went live with the application on 30 August 2004. However, scripts were amended or new ones built on an as-required basis during the campaign. The bulk of changes were uploaded nightly, ready for the next day.

Four full-time content managers (supervisor; technical; and 2 administration support officers) were responsible for maintaining ECCA's scripts, database and development work from 30 August 2004 to 22 October 2004. The content management team was able to provide advice or feedback on emerging issues to CSOs in real time. CSOs were trained to always return to the home page to monitor "What's New". The content management team could post items more than once during the day. Each item was posted as critical, warning or for information at the discretion of the content management team and each item was dated and time stamped. Included on the CD in *Folder 2 – Call Centre Scripts* are samples showing postal vote advice posted during the weeks 29 September to 3 October 2004, and 4 October to 10 October 2004.

As issues emerged regarding postal vote difficulties, particularly for Queensland GPVs and silent GPVs, "What's New", scripts and protocols were changed to assist both operators and callers. Teleconferences were also arranged with all the call centre sites to make sure staff were reminded to observe the protocols and monitor "What's New".

CSOs transferred any Queensland GPVs or silent GPVs who contacted the network to the Wizard Cell in central office in Canberra. CSOs knew to transfer the calls because they had been given this advice in "What's New" and from their team leaders. The AEC's Elections Branch provided the Wizard Cell operators with a spreadsheet of all Queensland electors affected and provided advice verbally and via email on what to say to callers transferred from the network.

Central office support staff were in regular contact with AEC head office information officers (in the states and territories) through email and phone hook-ups. Advice was also provided to divisions on how the call centre would operate and temporary mailboxes on the AEC's internal email system were created so that call centre operators could communicate elector/election information directly to the relevant section or division. Divisional staff were also provided with instruction on how to manage the emails, and a copy of the ECCA database.

The Centrelink call centre in Brisbane answered 91,484 calls during the election.

## **Page 26: Instruction and training manuals for call centre staff**

*Senator Brandis asked the AEC to provide a copy of "the instruction manual or procedures manual that tells staff how these various categories of inquiries are to be handled within the processes of the AEC".*

Response:

In relation to the call centre staff, all instructions and procedures were in the form of training modules rolled out to Centrelink sites and ECCA. ECCA was the prime reference for processing all election enquiries. CSOs could utilise up to 6 database lookups, 9 forms or over 1200 scripts including 383 scripts in real time to assist callers at first resolution, or electronically escalate the call to 1<sup>st</sup> level help desk and 2<sup>nd</sup> level help desk.

Daily teleconferences were held with the call centre network and feedback was provided online via real time scripts or team meetings with staff working the AEC business line.

Regular contact was also made between the AEC's central office in Canberra and the State/Territory information officers, who were the conduit for the provision of information to divisional staff.

Information was provided in:

- 5 x training modules for the wider network;
- Trainer Familiarisation Kit;
- Team Leader and Business Continuity Kit;
- Wizard Training; and
- ECCA of which 383 scripts/instructions were provided in real time to operators and 90 scripts provided specifically for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level help desks, known as 'Reference Guide'.

Copies of the training manuals provided to the Wizard Cell (for the most part, AEC temporary employees) are provided on the CD in *Folder 3 – Training Modules*. Additionally, the first two folder attachments provide the information distributed to AEC State and Territory information officers, which were then forwarded on to divisional offices.

## **Page 28: Election bulletins**

*Senator Brandis asked "Can a set of those news bulletins be provided to the committee?"*

Response:

The AEC issued 52 election bulletins to all staff between Monday 30 August and Wednesday 24 November 2004. These are included on the CD in *Folder 4 – Election Bulletins*, with an index document.

## **Page 29: Using Qld courthouses as pre-poll voting centres**

*Senator Murray asked if Ms Bright could "liaise with the Queensland State Electoral Commission and establish for the committee ... aspects of prepolling at courthouses" through the provision of a report. The report was to include "how many courthouses are involved in Queensland, what restrictions there are with timing and pre-polling, and what onus that places on the courthouses themselves". The response should be compartmentalised into "regional and remote as distinct from other parts of Queensland".*

Response:

The AEO for Queensland sought advice from the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) on the operation of pre-poll voting at Court Houses for the 2004 State election and the following response was received:

The attached list [below at Table 1] details the Magistrates Courts Offices and Queensland Government Agent's (QGAP) offices utilised by the Electoral Commission of Queensland for the taking of pre-poll in person votes at the 2004 Queensland State Election.

The list does not include the Commission's own pre-polling voting venues at ECQ headquarters, Brisbane City Hall and the Gold Coast, nor the office locations of the 89 State returning officers except where a returning officer operated from a Magistrates Courts Office.

Voting was available for electors at Magistrates Courts and QGAP offices during ordinary business hours from Tuesday 27 January 2004 to 6:00pm Friday 6 February 2004. However, a small number of QGAP offices in rural areas operate for limited hours/days each week and carried out pre-poll voting only for the times that they were open for business.

The Commission has a practice of providing an allowance for casual assistance at those Court Houses where it is estimated that in excess of 800 votes will be taken. Any such casual staff employed at Court Houses, were paid at the election casual staffing rate of \$18.63 per hour.

In accordance with the Queensland Government's approved charging mechanism for QGAP offices, the Commission was charged at the rate of \$40.00 per hour (in 1 minute intervals) for any electoral work carried out.

**Table 1: Queensland Magistrate Courts and QGAP offices used as pre-poll voting centres in Qld State elections**

Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes	Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes
Agnes Water	QGAP	48	Cannonvale	QGAP	186
Aramac	QGAP	13	Charleville	Mag. Court	47
<b>Atherton*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>271</b>	Charters Towers	Mag. Court	156
Augathella	QGAP	12	Childers	Mag. Court	64
<b>Ayr*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>440</b>	Chinchilla	Mag. Court	73
Babinda	QGAP	2	Clermont	QGAP	154
Barcaldine	Mag. Court	26	<b>Cleveland*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1997</b>
Beaudesert	Mag. Court	417	<b>Cloncurry*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>77</b>
Bedourie	QGAP	0	Collinsville	QGAP	46
Beenleigh	Mag. Court	1329	Cooktown	QGAP	53
Biloela	Mag. Court	142	Coolangatta	Mag. Court	466
Birdsville	QGAP	5	Crows Nest	QGAP	9
Blackall	QGAP	137	Croydon	QGAP	8
Blackbutt	QGAP	18	Cunnamulla	Mag. Court	15
Blackwater	Mag. Court	119	Dalby	Mag. Court	292
Boonah	QGAP	184	Dirranbandi	QGAP	2
Boulia	QGAP	2	Eidsvold	QGAP	11
Bowen	Mag. Court	257	Emerald	Mag. Court	362
<b>Bundaberg*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>Gatton*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>694</b>
<b>Caboolture*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1188</b>	Gayndah	Mag. Court	59
Cairns	Mag. Court	2008	Georgetown	QGAP	20
Caloundra	Mag. Court	1481	<b>Gladstone*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1229</b>
Camooweal	QGAP	8	Goombungee	QGAP	6



Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes	Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes
Goondiwindi	Mag. Court	145	<b>Maroochydore*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>2404</b>
<b>Gympie*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>968</b>	Maryborough	Mag. Court	471
Herberton	QGAP	1	Middlemount	QGAP	32
<b>Hervey Bay*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1334</b>	Miles	QGAP	46
Holland Park	Mag. Court	1258	Mirani	QGAP	76
Hughenden	QGAP	48	Mitchell	QGAP	17
Inala	Mag. Court	356	Monto	QGAP	40
<b>Ingham*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>151</b>	Moranbah	QGAP	404
Inglewood	QGAP	29	Mossman	Mag. Court	141
Injune	QGAP	7	Mount Garnet	QGAP	1
Innisfail	Mag. Court	170	Mount Isa	Mag. Court	446
Ipswich	Mag. Court	1572	Mount Morgan	QGAP	16
Isisford	QGAP	4	Moura	QGAP	53
Jandowae	QGAP	5	Mundubbera	QGAP	35
Julia Creek	QGAP	14	Murgon	QGAP	103
Jundah	QGAP	0	<b>Nambour*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1266</b>
Kalbar	QGAP	5	Nanango	Mag. Court	118
Kilkivan	QGAP	18	<b>Noosa*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>890</b>
Kingaroy	Mag. Court	249	Normanton	QGAP	6
Laidley	QGAP	149	North Stradbroke Island	QGAP	2
Landsborough	Mag. Court	120	Oakey	Mag. Court	65
Longreach	Mag. Court	86	<b>Petrie*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>875</b>
Lowood	QGAP	47	<b>Pittsworth*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>41</b>
Mackay	Mag. Court	2235	Pomona	Mag. Court	39
Malanda	QGAP	55	<b>Proserpine*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>450</b>
Maleny	QGAP	51	Quilpie	Mag. Court	14
Mareeba	Mag. Court	168			

Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes	Pre-Poll Centre	Status	Total Votes
Ravenshoe	QGAP	33	<b>Thursday Island*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Redcliffe*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>1304</b>	Toogoolawah	Mag. Court	21
Richmond	QGAP	23	<b>Toowoomba*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>2809</b>
Rockhampton	Mag. Court	1275	<b>Townsville*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>2242</b>
Roma	Mag. Court	138	Tully	Mag. Court	101
Sandgate	Mag. Court	364	Wandoan	QGAP	78
Sarina	QGAP	187	<b>Warwick*</b>	<b>Mag. Court</b>	<b>583</b>
Springsure	QGAP	33	Weipa	QGAP	78
St George	QGAP	59	Windorah	QGAP	3
Stanthorpe	Mag. Court	191	Winton	QGAP	61
Surat	QGAP	10	Wynnum	Mag. Court	678
Tara	QGAP	37	Yarrabah	QGAP	7
Taroom	Mag. Court	21	<b>Yeppoon*</b>	<b>QGAP</b>	<b>530</b>
Texas	QGAP	26	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>43275</b>
Thargomindah	QGAP	8			

To enable the above information to be compared more readily to federal electorates throughout Queensland, and determine the rural and regional locations, the information has been resorted into divisional office order and is included on the CD in *Folder 5 - Courthouses*.

It is apparent that the use of Magistrates Courts and QGAP offices results in a significant number of additional locations, which afford electors the opportunity to cast a pre-poll vote, at State elections compared to federal elections. However it is also appropriate to point out that the AEC currently issues more than double the number of pre-poll votes than ECQ. The AEC will now undertake a further examination of the information in order to determine areas for improvement in the provision of electoral services to regional and rural electors for future electoral events.

In response to a recommendation of the Minter Ellison report, the AEC has already committed to undertaking a national review of the provision of pre-poll services.

### **Page 30: Postal voting package samples**

*Senator Murray asked if the AEC could “provide for the committee a sample pack of postal votes: firstly, the applications; secondly, the postal vote package, which is the envelopes plus interiors; and, thirdly, a sample of how they look when returned—because that addresses the privacy issue—and how they look when they are discarded because of wrongful stuffing”.*

Response:

Sample packs of postal vote material are provided in Attachment B as follows:

- Pack 1:** AEC Postal Vote Applications.
- Pack 2:** Completed postal voting package as sent to postal vote applicants.
- Pack 3:** PVC envelope as expected to be received back in a divisional office (except these samples have not been signed and witnessed).
- Pack 4:** PVC envelope as returned to a divisional office (except these samples have not been signed and witnessed) where elector has used own outer envelope, and the Senate ballot paper has been returned outside the PVC envelope but inside the outer envelope. In this circumstance the Senate ballot paper is regarded as “missing”.<sup>2</sup>
- Pack 5:** PVC envelope as returned to a divisional office (except these samples have not been signed and witnessed) where Senate ballot paper has not been returned. In this case the Senate ballot paper is regarded as missing.

### **Page 30: Postal vote application numbers and postal votes cast**

*Senator Murray requested “the number of postal vote applications received by the AEC compared with the number of postal votes cast, so that we can identify the difference in those numbers; and in an explanation, if you have one, for the disparity”.*

Response:

Postal voting statistics used by the AEC take various forms, depending on whether they are describing:

- (a) The total Postal Vote Applications (PVAs) received, including General Postal Voter (GPV) registrations and invalid PVAs;
- (b) Valid PVAs received;
- (c) Postal votes issued against valid PVAs received;
- (d) PVCs returned for scrutiny;

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of the numbers and causes of ‘missing’ senate ballot papers, please see the discussion below from page 17.

- (e) PVCs admitted to the further scrutiny;
- (f) House of Representatives postal ballot papers counted; and
- (g) Senate postal ballot papers counted.

Depending on the context, items (a)-(c) may also be expressed in terms including or excluding PVA processing at overseas posts. For the purposes of its 2004 postal voting analysis, the AEC also at times refers to the number of postal vote applicants (as distinct from applications).

At the 2004 election:

- (a) 815,263 PVAs were received in Australia and overseas, of which 132,929 were in the form of pre-election GPV registrations. 21,359 of the non-GPV PVAs received in Australia were defective and could not be processed.<sup>3</sup>

Reasons why a PVA might be defective include:

- Not signed by the applicant;
- Not witnessed;
- No date of witnessing;
- Completed before the announcement of the election; and
- Received too late;

- (b) 793,904 valid PVAs were received, including 13,745 received by overseas posts. The 793,904 also includes 19,833 known duplicate PVAs received by divisions in Australia. Most of these duplicate PVAs were completed before ballot papers were available – at least 11,370 were completed by GPVs. Only 3,703 known duplicate PVAs required the re-issue of the Postal Vote. There may have been many more duplicate PVAs, but the exact number cannot be determined because of the difficulty of matching some PVAs with each other and/or enrolment records. No analysis of duplicate PVAs received by overseas posts has been done. In any event, issuing instructions for overseas posts require duplicate PVAs to be processed in the same manner as the originals;
- (c) 774,071 Postal Votes were issued against valid PVAs received – 760,326<sup>4</sup> by Divisions within Australia and 13,745 by overseas posts. Between 758,993<sup>5</sup> and 770,368 individuals (ie. Postal vote *applicants*) submitted the PVAs for these Postal Votes; again, the exact number cannot be determined because of the difficulty of matching some PVAs with each other and/or enrolment records;
- (d) 660,324 PVCs were returned for scrutiny;

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<sup>3</sup> How many of these were the subject of subsequent valid applications cannot be determined because of the difficulty of matching defective PVAs with valid PVAs. In any event, some of the defective PVAs may have been duplicates of valid PVAs already received.

<sup>4</sup> This does not include the 1,832 certificates that were the subject of the 8 October 2005 Proclamation.

<sup>5</sup> This represents the number of unique PVAs matched with enrolment records at the time of issue, plus any additional PVAs matched with enrolment records at the scrutiny but not at the time of issue. The figure of 758,993 refers to postal vote applicants who applied for postal votes within Australia. The figure of 770,368 includes postal vote applicants who applied for postal votes at overseas missions.

- (e) 614,250 PVCs were fully admitted to the further scrutiny. Another 1,999 for which the House of Representatives votes were disallowed and only the Senate ballot papers could be counted were partly admitted to the further scrutiny. A further 44,075 PVCs were rejected at the preliminary scrutiny;
- (f) 613,277 House of Representatives Postal ballot papers were counted, of which 600,370 were formal and 12,907 were informal. 973 House of Representatives Postal ballot papers were missing from the fully admitted envelopes when they were opened; and
- (g) 613,871 Senate Postal ballot papers were counted, of which 604,281 were formal and 9,590 were informal. 2,387 admitted Senate Postal ballot papers were missing from the fully and partially admitted envelopes when they were opened.

**Correction note:** In AEC submission No 1 to this inquiry, Fig 1 at page 14 had a descriptor advising the table contained the “Number of PVA applications received by the AEC...”. This in fact should read “Number of PVA applicants in Australia...”.

Table 2 below provides historical statistics relating to the number of PVAs received and number of postal votes cast.

**Table 2: Postal vote applications received and postal votes cast**

Federal Election Year	Enrolment		General Postal Voters (GPVs)			Valid Postal Vote Applications (excl GPVs)			Postal Votes Cast		
	At Close of Roll (CoR)	As % Change from Previous Event	Registered	As % of Enrolment @ CoR	As % Change from Previous Event	Received	As % of Enrolment @ CoR	As % Change from Previous Event	Cast	As % of Enrolment @ CoR	As % Change from Previous Event
<b>1993</b>	11,348,967	-	40,775	0.36	-	321,382	2.83	-	337,144	2.97	-
<b>1996</b>	11,655,190	2.70	51,512	0.44	26.33	362,651	3.11	12.84	383,264	3.29	13.68
<b>1998</b>	12,056,625	3.44	62,677	0.52	21.67	544,314	4.51	50.09	549,961	4.56	43.49
<b>2001</b>	12,636,631	4.81	109,817	0.87	75.21	452,916	3.58	-16.79	516,434	4.09	-6.10
<b>2004</b>	13,021,230	3.04	132,929	1.02	21.05	660,975	5.08	45.94	660,324	5.07	27.86

**Page 31: ‘Missing’ postal voting ballot papers**

*Senator Murray requested, in relation to postal votes discarded as a result of ballot papers being returned outside the postal vote certificate envelope, “the total number of votes which are returned and, for one reason or another, are being discarded”.*

Response:

In considering the following statistics please note that in relation to what constitutes a “missing” ballot paper, the AEC makes no distinction between whether a postal ballot paper had:

- Not been returned to the AEC, or
- Been returned to the AEC, but outside the Postal Vote Certificate envelope

Missing HoR ballot papers

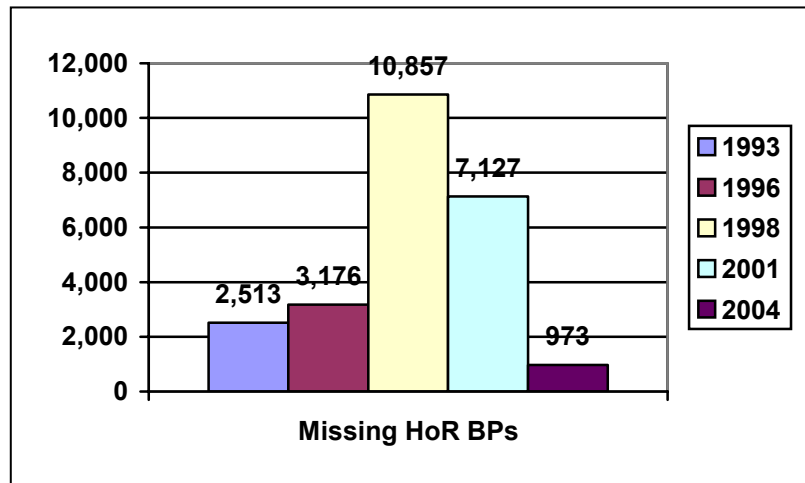
Table 3 summarizes the numbers and proportions, respectively, of missing HoR ballot papers from 1993 to 2004.

**Table 3: Missing HoR ballot papers**

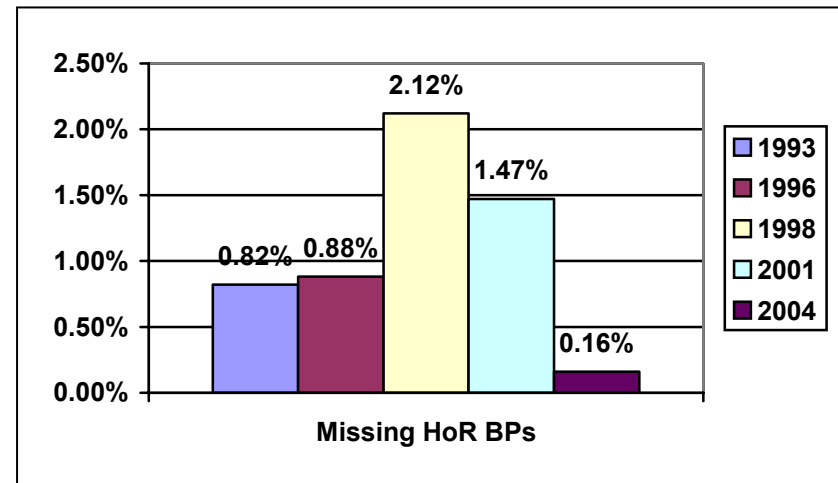
	<b>HoR BPs Missing 1993</b>	<b>HoR BPs Missing 1996</b>	<b>HoR BPs Missing 1998</b>	<b>HoR BPs Missing 2001</b>	<b>HoR BPs Missing 2004</b>
<b>ACT</b>	53 0.93%	39 0.72%	73 0.72%	32 0.53%	14 0.18%
<b>NSW</b>	821 0.89%	745 0.71%	4,760 2.70%	3,074 2.13%	341 0.18%
<b>NT</b>	23 1.06%	17 0.64%	47 1.64%	34 1.40%	2 0.06%
<b>QLD</b>	362 0.57%	616 0.77%	1,863 1.91%	1,620 1.39%	233 0.17%
<b>SA</b>	303 1.14%	366 1.24%	589 1.05%	156 0.43%	35 0.08%
<b>TAS</b>	85 0.91%	406 2.95%	225 1.69%	75 0.55%	15 0.09%
<b>VIC</b>	722 0.87%	811 0.84%	2,795 2.21%	1,824 1.40%	280 0.16%
<b>WA</b>	102 0.53%	176 0.68%	505 1.66%	312 0.92%	53 0.13%
<b>AUS</b>	<b>2,471 0.82%</b>	<b>3,176 0.88%</b>	<b>10,857 2.12%</b>	<b>7,127 1.47%</b>	<b>973 0.16%</b>

Tables 4 and 5 below track the changes in the numbers and proportions, respectively, of missing HoR ballot papers from 1993 to 2004.

**Table 4: Number of missing HoR ballot papers**



**Table 5: Proportion of missing HoR ballot papers**





The proportion of ballot papers missing from postal vote certificate envelopes at the 1996 election, including those returned between the privacy flap and the PVC, increased 8% on the proportion so affected in 1993. For the 1998 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC increased by 139% compared to 1996. For the 2001 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC decreased by 30% compared to 1998. For the 2004 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC decreased by 89% compared to 2001.

Missing Senate ballot papers

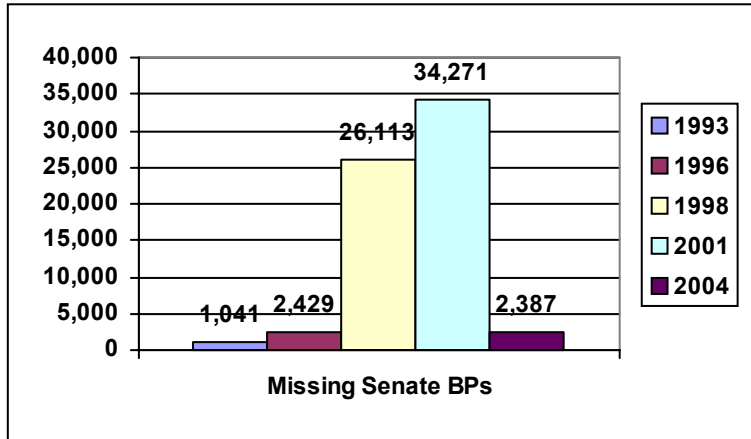
Table 6 summarizes the numbers and proportions, respectively, of missing Senate ballot papers from 1993 to 2004.

**Table 6: Missing Senate ballot papers**

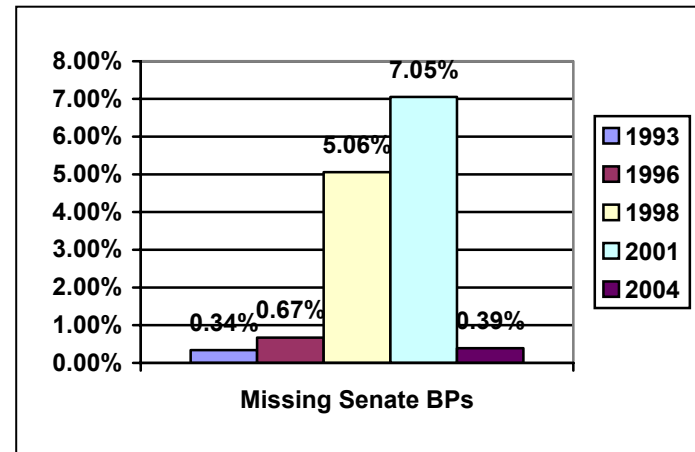
	<b>Senate BPs Missing 1993</b>	<b>Senate BPs Missing 1996</b>	<b>Senate BPs Missing 1998</b>	<b>Senate BPs Missing 2001</b>	<b>Senate BPs Missing 2004</b>
<b>ACT</b>	3 0.05%	7 0.13%	23 0.23%	115 1.89%	31 0.41%
<b>NSW</b>	171 0.18%	453 0.43%	12148 6.83%	13381 9.22%	563 0.30%
<b>NT</b>	4 0.18%	11 0.41%	30 1.05%	121 4.99%	51 1.64%
<b>QLD</b>	266 0.41%	799 0.98%	5035 5.15%	9118 7.79%	627 0.45%
<b>SA</b>	57 0.21%	139 0.47%	471 0.83%	1165 3.17%	96 0.21%
<b>TAS</b>	18 0.19%	257 1.86%	96 0.72%	674 4.98%	16 0.10%
<b>VIC</b>	451 0.54%	700 0.72%	7592 5.96%	8199 6.25%	883 0.49%
<b>WA</b>	53 0.27%	63 0.24%	718 2.35%	1498 4.41%	120 0.30%
<b>AUS</b>	<b>1023 0.34%</b>	<b>2429 0.67%</b>	<b>26113 5.06%</b>	<b>34271 7.05%</b>	<b>2387 0.39%</b>

Tables 7 and 8 below track the changes in the numbers and proportions, respectively, of missing Senate ballot papers from 1993 to 2004.

**Table 7: Numbers of missing Senate ballot papers**



**Table 8: Proportion of missing Senate ballot papers**



The proportion of ballot papers missing from PVC envelopes at the 1996 election, including those returned between the privacy flap and the PVC, increased 100% on the proportion so affected in 1993. For the 1998 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC increased by 653% compared to 1996. For the 2001 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC increased by 39% compared to 1998. For the 2004 election, the proportion not returned within the PVC decreased by 95% compared to 2001.

### Conclusions

As noted above, the statistics above do not separate the cases where the AEC receives a PVC without any ballot papers at all. However, taking this into account, the statistics suggest that:

- the introduction of a privacy flap in 1996 coincided with a small increase in the proportion of discarded Senate postal ballot papers;
- double-enveloping for postal votes at the 1998 and 2001 elections coincided with major increases in the proportions of discarded HoR and Senate postal ballot papers; and
- the attachment of the HoR ballot papers to the postal vote certificate envelopes at the 2001 election improved this situation for HoR ballot papers.

Reverting to a single-envelope system, without a privacy flap, in 2004 resulted in a dramatic decrease in the proportion of discarded postal ballot papers (i.e. returned outside the certificate envelope). Whilst the 2004 system might have raised some concerns regarding privacy of elector details, it did have the advantage of saving in excess of 30,000 Senate ballot papers when compared to 2001.

## **Page 31: GPV lodgement numbers**

*Mr Ciobo noted that Mr Orr had indicated that the mail house contractor had furnished the AEC with an Australia Post lodgement notice indicating the exact quantity of GPVs that they had lodged, which correlated with the exact quantity of GPVs the AEC had registered. Mr Ciobo requested the AEC to “furnish the committee with a copy of that document and also the number of GPVs that the AEC has recorded”.*

Response:

The contractor provided daily acknowledgement on receipt of extract confirming receipt of AEC batches.

The AEC sent the Queensland GPV extract of 27,930 records to the contractor on 17 September 2004. The contractor acknowledged receipt and allocated job number 271054N to the portion of the file that was processed in Sydney (27,911) and job number 271054V to the small number of records that were processed in Melbourne (19). For processing purposes the Queensland batch was split into two, one with 7,924 records and the other with 19,987.

The contractor provided Daily 'run sheets' containing lodgement dates with Australia Post. The run sheets indicated that the Queensland GPV extract had been processed and lodged on 20 September 2004 in Sydney (27,911) and Melbourne on 21 September 2004 (19).

Because of the number of complaints from people in the Queensland GPV extract, the AEC asked the contractor to provide further documentation confirming this lodgement in the week beginning 27 September, and on 4 October 2004 a copy of the Australia Post Manifest was provided. This is included on the CD in *Folder 6 – Australia Post Lodgement Notice*.

Note that pages 1/2 and 2/2 relate to the batch of 7,924, as shown on the "Mass Summary" at page 2/2. Similarly, pages 1/3 to 3/3 show a total of 19,987.