



## Maintaining an effective electoral roll (Chapter 4)

### KEY POINTS:

- The new Electoral Commissioner, Mr Ed Killesteyn told the committee at the public hearing in Canberra on 17 March 2009 that an estimated 1.2 million electors were not on the electoral roll. **(see page 81)**
- Electoral legislation is overly prescriptive and reflective of the paper-based age in which it was created. Methods and processes prescribed in the legislation are becoming increasingly ineffective in achieving acceptable rates of enrolment.
- Moving toward electronic interaction with electors is necessary if the AEC is to rise to the challenge of meeting changing community expectations.
- Many electors already interact conveniently with other government and non-government agencies and they expect services to be available 24 hours a day seven days a week. **(see page 103)**
- The committee has made a number of recommendations aimed at modernising the electoral system and removing barriers to participation. These include:
  - Recommending that proof of identity for enrolment purposes be required once only (recommendation 7) **(see page 91)**
  - Restoring provisions allowing electors to notify minor enrolment changes in writing (recommendation 8) **(see page 93)**
  - Recommending that the AEC create, implement and maintain an enrolment website to facilitate the receipt of enrolment information provided electronically by electors (recommendation 9) **(see page 113)**
  - Recommending the AEC be able to receive and use information from trusted agencies for the purposes of directly updating the electoral roll (recommendation 10) **(see page 114)**

## BACKGROUND:

- The AEC has traditionally received and used information provided by electors through a variety of means to update the electoral roll.
- All changes to enrolment details now require submission of a proof of identity compliant enrolment form. **(see page 90)** Prior to these requirements being in force, the AEC was able to receive and use written advice in the form of a letter or similar to make minor changes to the roll (for example to move an elector to a different address in the same electoral division). **(see page 91)**
- The Electoral Act requires interactions with electors to be conducted in writing and mandates the use of letters and hard copy enrolment forms. Australians are increasingly, however, conducting business using electronic means and there is a growing expectation that business can be and should be conducted using such means.
- In 2007 almost as many enrolment forms were sourced from the Internet as were obtained from post offices. **(see figure 4.4 page 100)**
- The AEC told the committee that it needs to modernise the way it goes about its business because a number of administrative arrangements it has in place with other bodies have or will shortly cease as those bodies move away from paper-based processes. It cited the ACT Government's move to its Canberra Connect facility and the proposed move by the Queensland Transport Authority to electronic interactions as affecting the AEC's receipt of enrolment forms from those agencies. **(see page 102)**
- The AEC proposed the creation of an 'Enrolment Website' through which it could receive the same information from electors as it currently receives through paper-based means. The committee sees such a move as both modernising the enrolment process and meeting the needs of the community, but has placed conditions on how such a facility might be used so as to maintain the integrity of the current system. **(see page 103)**
- Australian has a highly mobile population. Census data indicates that 43.1 per cent of the Australian population lived at a different address 5 years earlier. Earlier censuses held the figure to be 45 per cent. One respondent to an AEC letter remonstrated in a somewhat amusing manner that they had already told one government agency of their changed circumstances by changing their driver's licence and expected that government agencies would share such information. **(see page 106)** It is clear that some electors expect that data sharing happens already and that in the electronic age it should happen. The AEC has suggested a model that the committee agrees is worthy of adoption and has recommended accordingly. **(see page 113)**

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