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## Changes to allow AEC to directly enrol eligible Australians

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee has released its advisory report today on a Bill that will give the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) the power to directly enrol people not currently on the Commonwealth electoral roll, and to reinstate certain electors who have been removed from the roll.

The committee recommended that Parliament pass the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Protecting Elector Participation) Bill 2012. The committee concluded that it is 'appropriate that the AEC should have the tools and flexibility to maintain a complete and accurate roll'.

A dissenting report by Coalition members opposed to the passage of the Bill also forms part of the report. The Coalition believes it is an elector's individual responsibility to enrol to vote, notify the AEC if they change address and then to vote at elections.

There are 1.5 million eligible Australians missing from the roll. Some of these people have never enrolled, or have failed to notify the AEC of a change of address and have been removed under the objection process. In 2009-10, nearly 350 000 eligible electors were objected from the roll.

If the changes proposed in the Bill take effect, the AEC will be able to:

- Directly enrol eligible people who are not currently enrolled, based on data received from trusted third party sources. The data will also be subject to further checks to verify the identity, eligibility and address details before it is used to enrol someone.
- Reinstate some electors to the roll if they attend a polling place and cast a declaration vote and, when appropriate, admit their votes to the count. The AEC previously had this discretion prior to the 2007 federal election.

The Bill, in combination with the Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Maintaining Address) Bill 2011—which the committee reported on last week—aims to balance the effects of the objection process on the roll and enable the data collection systems deemed strong enough to remove electors from the roll, to be used to assist eligible people to meet their electoral obligations.

The **report** and a **fact sheet** outlining the key differences between the current arrangements and proposed changes are also available on the committee's website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>

**For media comment:** Please contact the Committee Chair, Daryl Melham MP on 02 6277 2054 (Parliament House office) or 02 9774 2111 (Electoral office).

**For general information:** Contact the secretariat on 02 6277 2374 or [jscem@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscem@aph.gov.au).