



MEDIA RELEASE

2 pages

Parliament of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

1 December 2000

ELECTORAL ROLL INQUIRY TO QUESTION QUEENSLAND WITNESSES

As part of its inquiry into the Integrity of the Electoral Roll, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters will hear from the AEC Divisional Returning Officers for the Federal electorates of McPherson, Forde and Rankin, and from Emeritus Professor Colin Hughes, Australian Electoral Commissioner 1984-1989, at the Committee's public hearing to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 5 December 2000.

The Committee will then move to Brisbane to hear key witnesses at a public hearing on Thursday 14 December 2000.

'The Committee's inquiry is proceeding at a rapid pace', said Committee Chair, Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Member for Sturt). 'Against the backdrop of the Shepherdson inquiry and associated developments in Queensland, it is highly appropriate for the Committee to focus the inquiry on the views of Queensland witnesses. The Electoral Roll is vital to the conduct of free and fair elections and it is essential that we identify any deficiencies in the Commonwealth Electoral Act or the enrolment processes that jeopardise its integrity.'

'The witnesses we have invited to appear in Brisbane include current members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, former ALP party officials, and former candidates who have made allegations of branch-stacking activities, one of whom is apparently the first Australian to be jailed for electoral fraud', said Mr Pyne.

'The four witnesses we are hearing in Canberra have provided submissions to the Committee's current inquiry as well as to previous election inquiries. Mr Lamerton has pointed out weaknesses in the AEC's database of electors' details and the Continuous Roll Update process. Mr Smith has exposed deficiencies in enrolment procedures that may lead to fraud. Mr Patching has expressed concern about the enrolment of non-citizens and has alleged persecution by AEC management. Professor Colin Hughes has suggested that in the event that large scale fraudulent enrolment is proved, the roll be cleansed using Section 85 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, which would result in the re-registration of all eligible electors,' said Mr Pyne.

Mr Pyne emphasised that the current inquiry is not an inquiry into the internal party matters of any political party but is targeted at the identification of fraudulent enrolment practices. 'We hope that the evidence we will obtain will pinpoint fraud that has occurred and will enable us at the conclusion of our inquiry to recommend legislative changes to make it impossible in the future to perpetrate actions that undermine the roll's fundamental integrity', he said.

Ends

1 December 2000

Further Information: Christopher Pyne MP (Chair) 02 62774842 (Parl. House) 08 8363 0666 (Electorate)
Christine Moore (Inquiry Secretary) 02 62772374

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL

CANBERRA PUBLIC HEARING

Date: Tuesday 5 December 2000
Time: 11.30am - 2.00pm
3.30pm - 5.00pm (if required)
Place: 11.30am - 2.00pm House of Representatives Committee Room 2R1
3.30pm - 5.00pm House of Representatives Committee Room 2R2
Parliament House, Canberra

Witnesses:

11.30am - 12.15pm Mr Mark Lamerton, AEC DRO for McPherson (*Submission 35*)
Mr Graham Smith, AEC DRO for Forde (*Submission 36*)
12.15pm - 1.00pm Mr Robert Patching, AEC DRO for Rankin
1.00pm - 1.45pm Professor Colin Hughes, former Australian Electoral Commissioner (*Submission 19*)
3.30pm - 5.00pm (if required)

Televised on Channel 10 of the House Monitoring System and broadcast on audio channel 98.3. Also broadcast on the Parliamentary Internet site at: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/webcast/>

BRISBANE PUBLIC HEARING

Date: Thursday 14 December 2000
Time: 8.30am - 3.30pm
Place: Function Room A, Level 4, Parliamentary Annex, Brisbane

Witnesses invited: Ms Karen Ehrmann
Mr Ian McLean
Mr Les Scott
Mrs Anne Scott
Dr David Watson MLA
Mr Lee Birmingham
Mr Mike Kaiser MLA

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Chair)
Mr Laurie Ferguson MP (Deputy Chair)
Senator Andrew Bartlett
Senator the Hon. John Faulkner
Senator Brett Mason
Mr Stuart St Clair MP
Mr Michael Danby MP
Senator Jeannie Ferris
Senator Andrew Murray
Hon. Alex Somlyay MP

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL

On 23 August 2000 the Special Minister of State, Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, asked the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to examine the issue of the integrity of the electoral roll and fraudulent enrolment. At its meeting on 5 September the Committee agreed that in examining the matter it would look at the following.

That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into and report on:

- the adequacy of the Commonwealth Electoral Act for the prevention and detection of fraudulent enrolment;
- incidents of fraudulent enrolment; and
- the need for legislative reform.

Further information:

Christopher Pyne MP (Chair) 02 6277 4842 (Parliament House) 08 8363 0666 (Electorate)
Christine Moore (Inquiry Secretary) 02 62772374

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Tel: 02 62772374, fax: 02 62774710,
Parliament House Email: JSCEM@aph.gov.au
Canberra ACT 2600 <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/>