



Government Response

to the

Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters:

The Integrity of the Electoral Roll

Review of ANAO Report No. 42 2001-02, *Integrity of the Electoral Roll*

October 2003

**Government Response to the Report of the Joint Standing Committee
on Electoral Matters:
The Integrity of the Electoral Roll
Review of ANAO Report No. 42 2001-02, *Integrity of the Electoral Roll***

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission set a target for Electoral Roll accuracy, embracing accurate name, birth date and address and, commencing in 2002-03, use this target as a performance indicator in its Portfolio Budget Statements and report performance in its annual reports.

Response

Supported. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is in the process of developing revised performance indicators. However, the AEC may not be in a position to report on the basis of the performance indicators until the necessary management information system is fully implemented, which is expected in the 2005-06 financial year.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission set a target for Electoral Roll validity and, commencing in 2002-03, use this target as a performance indicator in its Portfolio Budget Statements and report performance in its annual reports.

Response

Supported. The AEC is in the process of developing performance indicators. However, the AEC may not be in a position to report on the basis of the performance indicators until the necessary management information system is fully implemented in 2005-06.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission report to the Committee, on a 12-monthly basis, outlining the circumstances of cases where enrolment forms have not been accepted as valid immediately, but have been subject to verification.

Response

Supported. The AEC will report to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on all cases where it is not satisfied of the veracity of the information provided by the applicant, and is required to take follow-up action.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the integrity of the Electoral Roll be tested by a total habitation review of a sample electoral division in a State which has not had an election in the 12 months preceding the habitation review.

Response

Supported.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that, at the earliest opportunity in 2002-03, policies and procedures for Australian Electoral Commission staff, aimed at preventing and detecting electoral fraud, be incorporated in the proposed electoral fraud control plan.

Response

Supported. Work on this has commenced and it is anticipated that the electoral fraud control plan will be completed in 2003.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission provide the Committee with regular 12-monthly progress reports on its development and implementation of:

- national standards for updating the Electoral Roll; and
- a timetable for the implementation of a consistent national Continuous Roll Update program.

Response

Supported.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission's Central Office conduct the negotiations with State and Territory agencies to ensure it has optimal access to relevant Continuous Roll Update data sources in all States and Territories.

Response

Supported. This matter will be taken up by the AEC with the Electoral Council of Australia (comprising the Chief Executive Officers of State / Territory Electoral Authorities together with the AEC). However, it should be noted that it may be difficult to obtain consistent access to relevant data sources across all States and Territories due to differing privacy legislation. Further, the demand power contained in section 92 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* has limited application to State, Territory and local government authorities. The AEC's Central Office will continue to liaise with State and Territory Electoral Authorities.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission consider whether the Joint Roll Arrangements should be modernised to take into account recent changes in the Continuous Roll Update process.

Response

Supported. The AEC will consider whether the Joint Roll Arrangements should be modernised and will raise the issue with its Joint Roll Partners.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission conduct periodic, random spot checks of enrolment details at a sample of addresses as a means of testing whether the Continuous Roll Update process is working effectively in maximising accuracy of enrolment details.

Response

Supported. The AEC will consult with the Australian Bureau of Statistics in regards to developing an appropriate methodology.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that, as a matter of priority, the Australian Electoral Commission implement more effective management information systems, with a view to ensuring it has the ability to:

- establish target levels for accuracy, completeness and validity of the Roll and assess whether targets have been met;
- determine the costs of, and timetable for, implementing the Australian National Audit Office's recommendations;
- prevent and detect electoral fraud;
- determine the true cost of producing the Electoral Roll;
- ensure that the Electoral Roll is generally managed effectively; and
- provide greater transparency and accountability through better performance reporting.

Response

Supported. Work on developing the specifications for such a system has commenced. The AEC anticipates a staged implementation with final implementation in the 2005-06 financial year.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission consider making its procedures manuals and related material available to its staff 'on-line', via the Commission's Intranet, and making them available to the public where this is consistent with fraud control protocols.

Response

Supported. The AEC will make its procedure manuals available to staff on-line, and available to the public where this is consistent with fraud control protocols.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that, as soon as practicable, the Australian Electoral Commission report to the Committee as to when the recommendations in the Audit Report will be implemented and, where appropriate, the funding needed to implement them. The implementation should be conducted expeditiously in order to enable a follow-up audit to be conducted well in advance of the next Federal Election.

Response

Supported.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office conduct a follow-up audit to its Audit into the 'Integrity of the Electoral Roll', so that the Committee can review the Australian Electoral Commission's progress in implementing the recommendations from the Audit Report, well in advance of the next Federal Election.

Response

Supported.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that, with a view to recovering costs associated with the provision of the Electoral Roll data to Commonwealth agencies and departments listed in Schedule 2 of the *Electoral and Referendum Regulations 1940*, the Australian Electoral Commission:

- develop and implement a pricing regime to charge for use of Electoral Roll data; and
- review current pricing arrangements for the exchange of data with CRU data sources.

Response

Supported in principle. However, it should be noted that as provision of elector information to the Commonwealth Agencies and Authorities listed in Schedule 2 of the *Electoral and Referendum Regulations 1940* (the Regulations) is determined by the Electoral Commissioner on the basis that the proposed use of the elector information falls within Information Privacy Principle 11 of the *Privacy Act 1988*, (for example, for law enforcement purposes or protection of the public revenue), the Government considers it is not in the public interest to apply full cost recovery in these instances. Furthermore, it is not appropriate to apply full cost recovery for such products in cases where the AEC receives valuable reciprocal information for roll maintenance purposes.

Although noting that intra-agency and inter-governmental charging are excluded from the Government's Cost Recovery policy (of December 2002), the AEC has taken the Guidelines into account in implementing its pricing regime.

As the provision of this information to most agencies listed in Schedule 2 of the Regulations occurs only on a six-monthly basis, increasing charges is unlikely to yield a significant benefit.