



MEDIA RELEASE

2 pages

Parliament of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

11 December 2000

FEDERAL ELECTORAL ROLL INQUIRY MOVES TO BRISBANE

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters will continue to take evidence for its inquiry into the integrity of the electoral roll when it moves to Brisbane on Thursday 14 December for a public hearing.

‘The terms of reference of the Committee’s inquiry include the identification of incidents of fraudulent enrolment’, said Committee Chairman Mr Christopher Pyne MP (Member for Sturt). ‘The Committee has received submissions concerning alleged electoral fraud, and the Shepherdson inquiry hearings have now revealed substantive evidence of electoral enrolment fraud which directly interests the Committee’, said Mr Pyne. ‘The Committee will be using the public hearing to explore alleged and proven cases of electoral fraud with a series of witnesses, some of whom have already given evidence to the Shepherdson inquiry.’

The witnesses to appear before the Committee on Thursday include Karen Ehrmann, Lee Bermingham, Les and Anne Scott and Professor Colin Hughes.

Ms Ehrmann and Mr Bermingham are expected to be able to shed further light on the incidents of fraudulent enrolment that are the focus of the current inquiry. The Committee is expected to question them on the possible deficiencies in the Commonwealth Electoral Act and enrolment processes that leave the way potentially open for fraudulent activity to occur.

In their submissions to the Committee’s inquiry Mr and Mrs Scott identify anomalies in the conduct of branch preselection plebiscites and express concern over branch membership records and possible inaccuracies in the roll.

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. ‘The clear evidence of fraudulent activity concerning the electoral roll highlights the relevance of this inquiry’, said Mr Pyne. ‘We need to restore the confidence of the Australian public in the integrity of the electoral roll and one clear way we can do this is to propose changes to the Electoral Act that make it impossible to perpetrate such actions in the future’.

Professor Colin Hughes has suggested that in the event that large scale fraudulent enrolment is proved, the roll be purged using Section 85 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, which would result in the re-registration of all eligible electors.

Ends

11 December 2000

Further Information: Christopher Pyne MP (Chair)

02 6277 4842 (Parliament House)

08 8363 0666 (Electorate)

Bev Forbes (Secretary)

02 6277 4582

Hearing program attached

INQUIRY INTO THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL ROLL

BRISBANE PUBLIC HEARING

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

Witnesses: Ms Karen Ehrmann
Mr Les Scott
Mrs Anne Scott
Mr Lee Bermingham
Professor Colin Hughes
Dr David Watson 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 Jeannie Ferris
Senator Brett Mason
Mr Robert McClelland MP
Senator Andrew Murray
Mr Stuart St Clair MP
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)
Bev Forbes (Secretary)	02 6277 4582
Christine Moore (Inquiry Secretary)	02 6277 2374

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