

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2014-15**

**Finance Portfolio**

**Department/Agency:** Australian Electoral Commission

**Outcome/Program:** General

**Topic:** Costs of a large-scale protected action ballot

**Senator:** Seselja

**Question reference number:** F35

**Type of question:** Hansard, F&PA Committee, Pages 112-113, 24 February 2015

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Friday, 10 April 2015

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

**Senator SESELJA:** So the ballot could have been done by you. Can you give me some idea of what those costs would be for a large-scale ballot? You would have some records for other large-scale postal ballots. We talked about the earlier ones with 18,000 members of Australia Post and 35,000 members of the ANF. They are large. The one we are talking about here is not quite as large, though it is a large one as well. What kind of cost would there be if the AEC did it to the AEC and to the Commonwealth?

**Mr Rogers:** I cannot give you the individual costs—I do not have those in front of me—but I can tell you that the revenue derived from protected action ballots conducted by us from the year to date 2014-15 was \$856,538. I am happy to take on notice some indicative costs there might have been for those other ballots, if that is of assistance.

**Answer:**

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) uses full cost recovery in relation to these services. This means that the cost to both the AEC and the Commonwealth of undertaking these ballots would be equal to the revenue received and the net cash flow or gain to the AEC and the Commonwealth is nil.

The AEC uses a costing sheet to record the costs involved in the conduct of a protected action ballot. There are a range of variables that will ultimately determine the cost of a ballot including the number of potential voters and the number who actually vote, and the number of questions to be put to voters. These variables impact on the quantity of outgoing and return mail, the size of the ballot paper(s) and voting pack material, the number of staff required for the scrutiny and the time it will take to conduct.

However, using the parameters and inbuilt calculations in the AEC's costing sheet, and making certain assumptions about the variables, it is possible to estimate costs for various sized ballots. On this basis, and assuming a 65% participation rate, a ballot with 18,000 eligible voters could cost approximately \$38,000 (GST exclusive) and the AEC would receive approximately \$38,000 (GST exclusive) in revenue. A ballot with 35,000 eligible voters could cost approximately \$72,000 (GST exclusive) and the AEC would receive approximately \$72,000 (GST exclusive) in revenue.