

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2016-17**

Finance Portfolio  
5 May 2016

**Department/Agency:** Australian Electoral Commission

**Outcome/Program:** General

**Topic:** Same-sex marriage plebiscite

**Senator:** McAllister

**Question reference number:** F28

**Type of question:** Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Page 91-92, 5 May 2016

**Date set by the Senate for the return of answer:** Wednesday, 14 September 2016

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

**Senator McALLISTER:** The government has previously said it wanted to hold this plebiscite before the end of the year. You have not received any instructions to prepare for such a plebiscite. Admittedly, it is now May—what kind of time frame would be required to prepare for a plebiscite of any kind?

**Mr Rogers:** ... I think I have used the term previously that we would need about four months between those events. I think that is the advice I provided previously. I can check up on that for you ...

...

**Senator McALLISTER:** I apologise for making you do this again, but when you last provided advice to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee did you provide advice about the costs of supporting the yes and no cases?

**Mr Rogers:** When I said 'prepare the yes and no case': we publish the yes and no case—just to be specific. But I do not think we broke down that cost. I would have to take that on notice. There is a submission there, but I think we provided an overall figure rather than a breakdown of costs.

**Answer:**

The AEC needs approximately 4 months between electoral events, which takes into account the sourcing of materials and the implementation of any necessary operational or technical adjustments in preparation for an additional electoral event.

On 10 September 2015 the Electoral Commissioner's advice to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into a popular vote on marriage in Australia was that it would take around 3 months notice to source the raw materials like paper and other things required to conduct an electoral event.

The AEC's main submission of 4 September 2015 also included timings for the "preparation of a communication campaign and yes/no pamphlet to support a referendum in conjunction with the next federal election" with the total time required being 29 weeks. The 29 week time period for the preparation of a campaign represents a best practice model that incorporates legislative requirements, however in some circumstances this timeframe may be compressed.

The AEC 2015 submission also estimated the cost of \$27 million for preparing, printing and distributing a Yes/No householder booklet.