

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2015-16

Finance Portfolio
20 October 2015

Department/Agency: Australian Electoral Commission
Outcome/Program: General
Topic: Closure of polling places – numbers and distribution

Senator: Smith

Question reference number: F8

Type of question: Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Pages 38-39, 20 October 2015

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 4 December 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Mr Rogers: ... At this stage we might be looking at closing about 800 polling places around Australia at the next election, but we are still in a process and we have not made final decisions just yet, and we are still taking consultation from members and senators on that as well.

...

Senator SMITH: Are you able to give us an indicative number of the state-by-state, territory-by-territory breakdown of that?

Mr Rogers: Yes, I can take that on notice and provide that for you.

...

Senator SMITH: Are you now able to give me a sense of how many of those 800 fall in the high-density to remote categories?

Mr Rogers: Again, I can give you the detailed numbers on notice, but I can tell you that nearly 65 per cent of the proposed abolitions were in high- or medium-density areas, so well over half were in those higher density areas rather than rural and remote areas.

Senator SMITH: I am assuming that, because you classify federal electorates as being regional, inner et cetera, you would be able to provide the information about how many of those 65 per cent in higher density might be in a large regional town, because high density does not necessarily mean capital cities.

Mr Rogers: No, it does not. Regarding the threshold that we developed for high density, for example, we have described that as suburban areas incorporating single dwellings and apartment complexes with about 100,000 persons per square kilometre. That is a high-density area, and we have thresholds below that. I can provide that to you as well, if you would like.

Answer:

A total of 730 polling places were abolished as part of the recent assessment of polling places.

State/Territory	Number abolished
NSW	253
Vic	197
Qld	133
WA	44
SA	51
Tas	38
ACT	10
NT	4

Below is an indicative breakdown by category:

Demographic Category	Number abolished
High density	394
Medium density	102
Low density	208
Remote	26

Demographic classifications and minimum vote thresholds:

Classification	Description	Maximum Persons per km²	Threshold (minimum estimated ordinary votes)
High density	Suburban areas incorporating single dwellings and apartment complexes	99 999	1100
Medium density	Large blocks in semi-rural environment	1000	600
Low density	Rural townships and associated farmlands	400	150
Remote	Small isolated townships with associated large agricultural undertakings	20	100