

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Finance and Administration Portfolio**

**Australian Electoral Commission**

Additional Budget Estimates Hearings – 14 February 2006

**Question: F38**

**Outcome: Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)**

**Topic: AEC School Programs**

**Written Question on Notice: 14 February 2006**

**Senator Faulkner asked:**

1. What programs do the AEC conduct in Australian primary schools? How many schools ran, or requested, these programs? Are these programs run in regional and urban areas?
2. How much does the AEC budget for the provision of these programs?
3. I have sighted correspondence from various Bendigo schools stating that AEC assistance with school elections has been withdrawn. When and why did the AEC make this decision?
4. Will these programs be reinstated?
5. Has the AEC advised the Government that their allocated funding is restricting their ability to provide this service?

**Answer:**

1. As part of the AEC's Schools and Community Visits Program, AEC staff visit primary schools throughout Australia to deliver electoral education sessions. AEC staff conduct professional development for teachers, including primary school teachers, to help them teach electoral processes as outlined in their subject curriculum. The AEC's Electoral Education Centres (EEC) located in Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne also provide electoral education sessions designed for primary school students.

In 2005, AEC staff visited a total of 632 primary schools nationally to deliver electoral education sessions. During 2004-05, 68,237 primary students participated in a session at one of the AEC's EEC.

During 2004-05, schools from approximately 130 divisions attended the Canberra EEC. These divisions represent metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

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2. The AEC's Financial Reporting system is unable to split Electoral Education program costs between primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions. In financial year 2004-05 the AEC spent approximately \$2.2 million on the Schools and Community Visits program. In addition, approximately \$1.7 million was spent on EEC programs.

3 and 4. The AEC reviewed its electoral public awareness program in 2002-03 and decided to adopt a more targeted approach than previously. This meant directing resources to specific areas such as young people at or near voting age, new citizens, people from non-English speaking backgrounds and indigenous voters.

The AEC has recently reviewed that decision and while assistance with school elections (and public awareness activities) will continue to be focused on secondary students near voting age, the AEC will provide election and education services to primary schools, whenever possible. Where it is not possible for AEC staff to be involved directly in school elections, the AEC will continue to provide assistance in the form of voting and polling equipment. Obviously this assistance would be based on operational capacity.

5. The 2005-06 AEC budget is sufficient to continue to provide programs and support to primary schools.