

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Additional Budget Estimates Hearing – 14 February 2006

Question: F54

Outcome : Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

Topic: Electronic voting

Written Question on Notice: 14 February 2006

Senator Carr asked:

1. Has the AEC investigated, or had discussions with the Government in respect to the implementation of an electronic voting trial?
2. What were the conclusions of those discussions and or investigations?
3. Has the AEC investigated the most suitable electronic voting system for such a trial?
4. What is the estimated cost of such a trial?
5. How much notice would the AEC need to implement such a trial?
6. Have the AEC liaised with any of the relevant stakeholder groups to determine the most suitable locations of a trial?

Answer:

- 1 and 2. Yes. The AEC briefed the Minister on the matters relating to electronic voting that were contained in an AEC submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) (submission 216). The AEC is now awaiting the Government Response to the relevant recommendations of the JSCEM report.
3. Discussion of electronic voting options is contained in a number of AEC submissions to the JSCEM inquiry into the conduct of the 2004 Federal Election. The relevant submission numbers are 216 and 205 (copies are attached).
4. Until details of any trial are determined, the AEC is not in a position to prepare any costings.
5. The amount of time required to implement an electronic voting trial would depend on the details of the proposed trial. However, if new IT software was required, the AEC would require a minimum of 12-18 months.
6. The AEC has discussed the issue of electronic voting with the Australian Defence Force as well as with peak disability groups such as the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disability Australia, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Blind Citizens Australia, Vision Australia, the Disability Advisory Council of Victoria and the National Council on

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Intellectual Disabilities. These discussions did not address possible locations as the Government has yet to respond to the relevant recommendations of the JSCEM report or indicate its support or otherwise for a trial.