

**Extract From Submission Number 205
6th Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
30 August 2005**

The proposed EAV scheme also raises logistical issues related to the printing requirement. Printers connected to electronic voting machines are a high-risk point of failure (for example, PC connection failures, consumables failures or paper jams can all jeopardize the effectiveness of the system). In Australia in particular, there are additional challenges that arise due to the number and variety of ballot papers that an EAV printer would be required to produce. While House of Representatives ballot papers are of uniform 1/3rd A4 size, Senate ballot papers vary from A4 size to up to a metre in length.

If the EAV systems are used in pre-poll voting centres, printers would need to be able to produce 150 different House of Representatives ballot papers and 8 different Senate ballot papers. This would require up to eight different printers and paper feeds (one for the House of Representatives ballot papers, one for the uniformly-sized ACT and NT Senate ballot papers, and one for each of the six State Senate ballot papers). If the EAVs were used only in ordinary polling places, two separate printers and paper feeds would be required in each polling place.

The AEC notes that the ACT Electoral Commission, which has the most experience in electronic voting machines in Australia, does not support the use of printers connected to electronic voting machines.

An alternative to the proposed EAV scheme, that may better meet the needs of electors and logistical efficacy, is the use of DREs where votes are recorded electronically and are then integrated directly with the results of the counts of paper ballots. This system does not require a printed component, and under this method of adding the DRE votes to the count it is difficult to distinguish between the votes cast using the two systems. The ability to distinguish would become even lower if a wider group of electors with special needs had access to electronic voting – for example, electors with print disability and electors with linguistically diverse backgrounds could use the DRE to cast pre-poll votes in pre-poll centres.

The AEC notes that evidence presented to the Committee at the Melbourne 25 July hearing may have been understood by the Committee to mean that EAV in the form proposed by BCA has been used in pilot trials in local government elections in the United Kingdom. However, it is the AEC's understanding that this is not the case.

The AEC understands that a variety of electronic voting systems have been trialled at UK local government elections, but that this form of EAV has not. The AEC has confirmed with Vision Australia that they are not aware of the use of this form of EAV in the UK, and The Electoral Commission of the UK has not made mention of this form of EAV in recent reports published on electronic voting.

The AEC will be providing further information and discussion of electronic voting options in a future submission to the current inquiry.

Extract From Submission Number 216
7th Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
9 September 2005

3. Queensland direct voter mailout trial in 2004

The Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) conducted a trial of a direct elector mail campaign in support of the 2004 Queensland state general election. The ECQ annual report advises:

Personally addressed information packs were mailed to each enrolled elector following the close of rolls for the election. The packs contained details of the elector's enrolled District and polling booth details. In addition, a leaflet gave details of the various options for voting, an explanation of the optional preferential voting system and the counting method and provided contact details for the Commission's call centre and website. Translation service details were included for electors requiring such assistance.

Electors were encouraged in their voter information letter and in complementary advertising to take their letter with them wherever they voted. Results were patchy across the State but sampling suggests that some 60% of electors took their letters with them when they voted.

The ECQ has also advised the AEC that this approach was also used with success at the recent by-elections for the Queensland Districts of Chatsworth and Redcliffe.

Electronic voting options

This section of the submission discusses options for electronic voting and provides detailed information in relation to possible trials.

Electronic voting can be delivered by using either electronic vote recording systems (also called direct recording electronic voting systems, or DREs) or remote electronic voting systems.

DREs are any system where the elector casts their vote on an electronic voting machine, such as a dedicated computer terminal, touch screen computer or other purpose-built equipment in a polling place. Once recorded, the elector's vote is stored in the machine. After voting has concluded, data is transferred electronically to a counting system.

Remote electronic voting can use a variety of delivery systems. These include the Internet, an organisation's intranet, touch-tone phones using interactive voice recognition (IVR), mobile phones using short message system (SMS) text facility, or interactive digital television (iDTV). All of these delivery systems have two things in common: they are remote access systems, that is to say remote from a traditional polling place, enabling the elector to vote from home, work or any public outlet (such as an Internet café); and they are online systems, where the elector's vote is despatched in real time to a secure electronic vote store, where it is held prior to counting.

Against the background of current IT development and costs, the AEC does not believe

that DREs can be deployed in all polling places for a federal election in the near future. The deployment and support of DREs at over 7,700 polling places at a federal election would be an extremely expensive exercise. For example, it cost the ACT Electoral

Commission \$406,000 to develop and deploy ten DREs each at four pre-poll voting centres and eight polling places at the 2001 ACT election. \$225,000 of this was invested in reusable software and hardware. As a consequence the cost of deploying fifteen or twenty DREs each to the same number of pre-poll voting centres and polling places at the 2004 election was \$179,000.