

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2007

Question: F70

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.1

Topic: Postal voting

Written Question on Notice

Senator Evans asked:

Can you advise where the planning team (as outlined in Rec 16 of the Minter Ellison Review) is up to in relation to looking at the experiences of postal voting in the 2004 election?

Has a report been prepared for the AEC Executive as recommended? Can you provide me with a copy?

I understand that a report on early voting has been prepared in line with Rec. 24 of the Minter Ellison review and has been circulated to State Managers for comment. Can you provide an update on where that report is and provide me with a copy?

Answer:

In response to Minter Ellison Recommendation 16 a planning team was established in 2005 incorporating representation from Divisional, State and National Office areas of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). The planning team developed a process map of the postal voting, and performed a risk analysis of the postal voting process and the contract process.

The AEC also joined the Major Mail Users of Australia Ltd (MMUA), the peak industry group for the postal industry. The MMUA brings together mailhouses, materials suppliers, significant generators of mail (such as the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and the Health Insurance Commission) and Australia Post.

While a formal report was not prepared, the processes mentioned were separately documented culminating in executive agreement being given to proceed to the development of a Request for Tender (RFT) for the provision of postal voting services at the next federal election. Independent legal and probity advisers were engaged to review and approve the RFT, evaluation plans and contract, and to provide probity advice during the evaluation phase. A senior Centrelink Manager of Bulk Mail services was also seconded to take part in the tender evaluation process, which included a 50,000 record production test by the shortlisted tenderers. A contractor was selected in 2006 and the AEC is now working with them to finalise detailed documentation of the service requirements in readiness for a 150,000 record production test planned for late March 2007.

In relation to the report on early voting, a copy of the final recommendations is attached.