

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2008



Question: F75 and F76

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.1

Topic: Availability of voting services in New York

Hansard Page: F&PA 117 and 119

Senator Forshaw asked:

“It would be useful if you could supply that information to the committee when you obtain it. Certainly the advice that was on the website and was distributed by the consulate was that it was to be open in New York from 9 am to 5 pm from Monday to Wednesday, closed on Thursday for Thanksgiving and closed on Friday. That was it...”

AND

“—yes—people were told, ‘The ballot papers are not available today, they have not arrived; you must come back on Tuesday.’”

Answer:

The AEC sought advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) regarding the availability of voting services at the Consulate-General in New York and DFAT provided the following information:

“Pre-poll voting commenced at the Consulate-General in New York on Tuesday 13 November 2007. Due to key staff departures, the post was unable to locate the pre-poll envelopes and was unable to offer pre-poll voting on Monday 12 November as scheduled. The post did, however, offer the option of postal votes to the few people who attended the Consulate-General on the Monday.

Pre-poll voting took place at the Consulate during business hours from Tuesday 13 November - Wednesday 21 November (excluding the weekend of 17/18 November). Hard copy ballot papers arrived at the Consulate-General on Thursday November 15. Prior to this, the post had printed the ballot papers from SATIN [DFAT’s secure intranet] and issued them to pre-poll voters.

The Consulate-General was closed on Thursday November 22 and Friday November 23 for the Thanksgiving holiday, a major holiday in the United States. The Consulate-General had advertised this closure on its website and in its promotion of voting in the Federal Election. The Australian Embassy in Washington was also closed on these days.”