

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: F77

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.1

Topic: Voting services for mine workers in Newman WA

Hansard Page: F&PA 124

Senator Webber asked:

I am aware of at least one mine site of 300 workers. They were bussed into Newman Primary School, but you had run out of interstate ballot papers so they were all turned away and could not vote.

Answer:

There were two polling places in Newman, one called Newman located at the Senior High School and the other called Newman North located at the Primary School.

The voting figures for these polling places were:

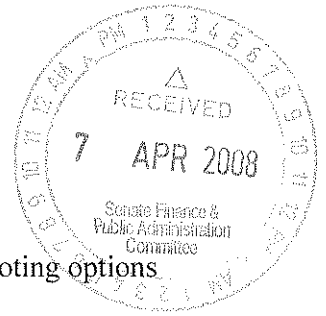
Newman - 816 ordinary votes, 381 absent votes and 50 provisional votes.

Newman North - 756 ordinary votes, 483 absent votes and 53 provisional votes.

The following should also be noted:

- The majority of static polling places for federal elections are not gazetted as interstate polling places for polling day. Neither of the polling places in Newman were gazetted as pre-poll or interstate voting centres, so interstate voting was not available.
- The Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Newman polling place recorded in the OIC return that 66 interstate electors attended the polling place and were informed that they were unable to vote.
- Similarly, the OIC of Newman North reported that 136 interstate electors attended the polling place and were informed they were unable to vote.

The AEC was well aware of the issues associated with miners, mining sites and 'Fly-in Fly-out' workers. In this context the State Manager for WA wrote to 116 mining companies in September 2006 providing enrolment information and enclosing enrolment forms for staff.



In addition staff from the Division of Kalgoorlie office:

- Sent letters to 45 mining companies on 15 October 2007 explaining voting options and enclosing postal vote applications.
- Contacted and provided voting information to 8 mining sites in or around the Newman area, including Cloudbreak (FMG), Yandicoogina, Area C (120 km NW of Newman), Hope Downs, Pilbara Iron, Mt Newman Orebody, Mt Newman Railway and BHP Port Hedland.
- Contacted and provided voting information to 5 organisations which supply contract labour to mine sites, including CCI, Downers, Monodolφος, Henry Walker Contracting and CSR Construction.

Postal vote applications were also provided to various mine sites on request. These included:

- CCI - discussed with company and agreed to download from website
- Yandi Mine - discussed with company and agreed to download from website
- FMG Port Hedland - 500 supplied
- FMG Cloudbreak - 2200 supplied
- Telfer minesite - 1000 supplied
- Monodolφος - 1000 supplied
- Marillana BHP - 250 supplied

The AEC believes it took a significant number of steps to improve the provision of electoral services to remote areas of Western Australia for the 2007 election. Having said that, the AEC will continue to further enhance service delivery for the next federal election.