

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates Hearing – 24 February 2009

Australian Electoral Commission

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.3

Topic: Implementation of the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008*

Question reference number: F75 a-g

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 April 2009

Number of Pages: 1

Senator Ronaldson asked:

- a) Has the AEC formally requested by way of budget submission extra funding to cover any additional costs that they will incur, assuming the passage of the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008*?
- b) What is the AEC's internal estimation of the additional cost to the AEC of implementing the proposed changes in the Bill?
- c) How many extra staff are you planning to put on because of changes in the Bill?
- d) What is the expected cost of any additional IT requirements, including software, to give effect to the proposed changes in the Bill?
- e) What is the expected timeframe between the passage of the Bill and the full implementation of its requirements by the AEC?
- f) If the Prime Minister were to call an early election for late 2009, how would that effect your implementation plans?
- g) Are there any plans for the amalgamation of DRO offices in the next 12 months? If so, in which electorates?

Answer:

a-f) The *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008* was not passed by the Senate. The issue of the costs for the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to implement the proposed new measures is part of the Budget process and is Cabinet in Confidence. Accordingly, details of the costs for implementation are unable to be provided at this time.

The AEC is on the record as stating that the proposed new measures will result in a threefold increase in the workload for the Funding and Disclosure Section within the AEC. The AEC would require up to six months to have new staff and IT systems in place to implement proposed new measures. An early election in 2009 would have no direct impact on the implementation of the proposed new measures. Reporting periods of six months, contained in the Bill, would require new staff and systems to be in place by the first reporting date, previously planned for 31 December 2009.

- g) No.