Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates Hearing –February 2009 Australian Electoral Commission Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Outcome 2, Output 2.1 Topic: Wheelchair accessible polling places

Question reference number: F78 a-c Type of Question: Written Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 9 April 2009

Number of Pages: 16 Senator Boyce asked:

I refer to question on notice F8 from the Supplementary Estimate Hearings, where I asked about wheelchair accessible polling booths and improvements in accessibility between 2004-2007. The AEC's answer was that 78% of polling booths in 2004 were wheelchair accessible and in 2007 there was 79.1%

a) Does the AEC have a target percentage for wheelchair accessible booths and how is the AEC planning to exceed 79.1%?

b) The AEC noted that it has improved the polling place inspection checklist for the purposes of grading polling booths. Can the AEC make this checklist available?
c) The AEC was budgeted over \$14 million in 2008-09 to encourage 'an informed community'. Is any of this money being spent to provide additional services in informing disabled Australians about the election system and process? Can you outline how this money is being spent?

Answer:

a) Whilst the AEC is committed to providing the best possible access and service to clients including people with disability, it should be noted that the AEC delivers a range of its electoral services in premises that it does not own or control (eg polling places in local community venues).

Since the dates for federal elections are not known until the election is announced, it is not always possible to secure venues or to deliver electoral services in a manner that meets the full range of access requirements for people with disability.

In the case of polling places for federal elections, it is the AEC's policy to hire premises with appropriate access first. However, where full access for people with disability cannot be provided, the AEC will include this information in its advertising published prior to polling day.

Given the above, the AEC does all it can to maximise the number of polling places with disabled access at each federal electoral event. In addition, the AEC has an established Disability Advisory Committee that meets regularly with representatives from the peak bodies representing the disabled to discuss the delivery of electoral

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services. The AEC will be conducting polling place inspections in the next financial year which may result in a change to the number of polling places with wheelchair access.

b) A copy of the AEC's Polling Place Inspection Checklist is attached.

c) The AEC has a Disability Action Plan which guides the AEC's delivery of its products and services for people with disability. Activities in the plan aim to ensure accessibility to products and services and to enable participation in the electoral process by people with disability.

The AEC's Disability Advisory Committee provides input on product and service delivery, including how best to deliver public awareness programs for people with disability. The Disability Action Plan includes specific short, medium and long-term actions aimed at informing the community. Some of these activities are ongoing, whilst others are scheduled for the election year when they will have most impact.

Community visits under the AEC's Schools and Community Visits program are undertaken locally by AEC divisional offices. Public awareness strategies target community groups, including people with disabilities.

The AEC's primary enrolment and voting information brochure – *Your Vote is a Valuable Thing* – is produced in large print and e-text formats, available from the AEC website.

Australian Electoral Commission

About this form

- Information relating to the basis for inspections and related issues can be found in EPM (DO) at Part 1, subpart 2, commencing paragraph 3.1.3. Inspecting officers should refer to this prior to undertaking inspections
- This form is available on the intranet under Elections > Forms > Parliamentary Election Forms
- A digital photographic record should be taken of each polling place for future reference and stored on the Division (S) drive
- When the inspection is completed remember to update ELMS PPMS

| 1. Polling place details | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|----|----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|---|---|
| Dolling place name | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dromicos nomo | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Address | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other details | CCD | | | Map ref | | | Telephone | e (at prem | nises availa | able to OIC) | | |
| Poom/Escility (on Music Poom) | I | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agreement type | | Govt School | Other Pre | emises 🗌 | l | Fee 🗌 🛛 No Fee | e 🗌 | Category | | | | |
| Primary contact | Name | | | | | | | | Title | | | |
| | Address | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Telephone | Business | | | AH | | Fax | | | Mobile | | |
| Key/Access contact | Name | | | | | | | | Title | | | |
| | Address | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Telephone | Business | | | AH | | Fax | | | Mobile | | |
| | Additional info | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other entrance(s) to building or | grounds | Address Description | | | | | | | | | | |
| Open to voters for access on polling day | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| List street address for each entrance ope if different from above address and type of | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gate) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inspection details | Inspecting Officer | | | | | | | | | Date | / | / |

| 2. Building | Yes | No | N/A | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|-----|---|
| Does State/Local Govt also use the polling place? | | | | |
| Does the building appear to be in sound condition? (for example, does the building appear to be free from any roof leaks, loose exterior fittings, cracked windows etc?) | | | | If No, identify here |
| Are the premises licensed? (refer EPM Part 1, subpart 2, 3.1.2 for use of licensed premises as polling places). | | | | |
| Are the premises available for setting up on the Friday before polling day? | | | | If YES what time? |
| Can the building/voting area be locked? | | | | If YES record contact for key |
| Is the storage for cardboard equipment accessible to staff? | | | | |
| What are the arrangements in the event of a power failure? (eg Is the Fuse Box accessible to staff?) | | | | Note details |
| Are the exit signs illuminated and clearly visible? | | | | |
| Can the exit doors be opened/unlocked from within building? | | | | |
| Is the polling area large enough to cater for the anticipated voter numbers and allow for scrutiny purposes? | | | | |
| Are the premises serviced by public transport? | | | | Note details |
| Is the yard/parking lot even and free from trip hazards such as tree roots, rough and uneven surface, missing grates, potholes etc? | | | | Identify anything that may be a potential trip hazard** |
| Do the stairs appear to be non-slip with secure handrails on both sides? | | | | |
| Does the lighting appear to be adequate for voting purposes and staff duties? | | | | |

| 2. Building (continued) | Yes | No | N/A | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|---------------------------------------|
| Are the light switches accessible? e.g. able to be reached and not in a locked area | | | | |
| Are the power points accessible? e.g. able to be reached and not in a locked area | | | | |
| Does the building have heating/cooling? | | | | |
| Will the heating/cooling be available on polling day? | | | | Note arrangements |
| Are there external areas that would provide for undercover queuing? | | | | |
| Are there any areas of concern? | | | | |
| 3. Fixtures & fittings | Yes | No | N/A | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
| Are fire extinguishers available for use and accessible? Building manager to advise | | | | Note location |
| Are instructions provided on usage of fire extinguishers (for different types)? Building manager to advise | | | | |
| Does the building have hoses/sprinklers/smoke detectors? | | | | |
| Are floor surfaces even, carpets firm and not frayed or loose, floorboards not loose? | | | | |
| Is there a security alarm/system in use? | | | | Code or key needed? |
| Is there a storage area accessible for all staff? | | | | Key required? |
| Are tables and chairs to be stored after use? | | | | Where? |
| Are there any issues of concern? | | | | Note details |

| | - | | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|---|--|--|
| 4. Furniture & equipment | Yes | No | N/A | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken | | |
| Are adult size chairs available in good condition? | | | | Quantity? | | |
| Are ergonomically adjustable chairs available? | | | | Quantity? | | |
| Are suitable tables available in good condition? | | | | Quantity? | | |
| Are tables suitable for use as table top voting screens available? | | | | Quantity? | | |
| If the polling place will be supplied with a Disabled Persons Voting Screen, wheelchair access under a table is not required. | | | | | | |
| b should be 850mm \pm 20mm high, 500mm deep and have unobstructed space underneath to permit wheelchair access. | | | | | | |
| Are there any materials in the polling area that may be considered hazardous ? E.g: storage of paper waste, chemicals etc? | | | | | | |
| Is an Evacuation Plan prominently displayed? | | | | | | |
| Are trolleys available for moving materials? | | | | | | |
| Is disposal of waste/litter available? | | | | Key required? | | |
| Is a telephone available for use by OIC? | | | | If YES, record number | | |
| Are emergency numbers available List is prominently displayed? | | | | | | |
| 5. Public access to building | Yes | No | Rema | rks / Remedial action to be taken | | |
| Assessment of wheelchair/disabled persons access must b | e from th | e street t | to the pol | ling place, as well as from specified off street parking to the polling place (if available). | | |
| Points marked 🕏 are essential requirements for determining whether full access for people with disabilities is available and must be answered. | | | | | | |
| Is on street parking available? | | | Describ | ne de la constante de la consta | | |
| Is parking space available off-street for: | | | | | | |
| Staff | | | Numbe | r of spaces? | | |
| Public | | | Numbe | r of spaces? | | |

Disabled **b** should be designated 'disabled', be level, within 50m of building, car space should be min 3.2m wide with

unobstructed access to footpath

•

If not, is there a space that can be designated as a disabled carpark? (Appropriate cardboard signage will be required.)

| 5. | Public access to <u>building</u> (continued) | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|--|--|-----|----|--|
| Is there a kerb ramp with a gradient no steeper than 1:8 (or 7.1 degrees) or longer than 1520mm from the carpark to the footpath? | | | | |
| Does the carpark have lighting? | | | | |
| | e route between <u>parking and the entrance</u> he polling place is: 5 | | | |
| • | firm and slip resistant 🔥 | | | |
| • | free of crossfall 🔥 (ie not sloping to left or right) | | | |
| • | free of pot holes, ridges, overgrowth or moss 🕏 | | | |
| • | free of obstructions including overhanging growth to a height of 2 metres or protruding obstructions b (eg signs, open windows, benches) | | | |
| • | free of steps - all lips and thresholds to be less than 5mm 🔥 | | | |
| • | obvious and likely to be used 🕏 | | | If not, are signs in place to identify an alternative route? |
| • | has a gradient not steeper than 1:14 (or 4.1 degrees) b . (refer to diagram on page 14). | | | If not, are signs in place to identify an alternative route? |
| • | at least 1m wide on straight, 1.5m wide on curves | | | If not, are signs in place to identify an alternative route? |

| 6. Public access to building entrance (Access is from the kerb to the door) | | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|--|---|-----|----|--|
| ls t | he main entrance free of stairs or steps? | | | |
| | here are stairs or steps, is there a ramp or lift he polling area? b | | | Must be obvious or clearly sign posted |
| If there is a single step, is there a ramp no steeper than 1:8 (or 7.1 degrees) or longer than 1520mm? | | | | |
| Is the entrance able to be illuminated at night by switch accessible to the OIC? | | | | |
| If there are stairs/steps into building are they: | | | | If yes, how many? |
| • | constant in rise or height of each step | | | |
| • | in good condition | | | |
| • | provided with handrails on both sides between 865mm and 1000mm from the ground | | | |
| | here a Ramp into the building? es, does the Ramp have: | | | |
| • | a gradient no steeper than 1:14 (or 4.1 degrees) & (refer diagram on page 14) | | | |
| • | at least 1m width on straight, 1.5m width on curves 🔥 | | | |
| • | slip resistance and no cross-fall (ie not sloping to left or right) | | | |
| • | the ability to be illuminated at night by a switch accessible to the OIC | | | |
| • | handrails on both sides 🔥 | | | |
| • | a landing of 1500 mm at the top and bottom b . If the ramp is longer than 9 metres it must have a flat landing every 9 metres along the length of the ramp. | | | |
| • | a handrail on both sides between 865 and 1000 mm from the ground 🕏 | | | |

| | Public access to <u>building entrance</u> ntinued) | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|---|--|-----|----|---------------------------------------|
| The | Doorway/Entrance to the building has: | | | |
| • | at least 800mm wide (clear opening width) (refer diagram on page 14) If the clear opening width is 740mm a wheelchair user can enter with assistance | | | |
| • | circulation space on both sides of the door must be unobstructed for 1500mm on both sides of door and 500mm beside door handle b . Note: Applies only if the door will be closed and have to be opened by the voter. | | | |
| • | cover, with protection from rain $ {f b}$ | | | |
| abo Appli open Note | e door handle between 900 and 1100mm ve ground and easy to use? b es only if the door will be closed and have to be ed by a voter : Applies only if the door will be closed and have to be ed by a voter | | | |
| Is the door easy to push or pull open? b Applies only if the door will be closed and have to be opened by a voter | | | | |
| | e doorway free of any lips or thresholds e than 5mm? 5 | | | |
| Are any mats lying flat and no higher than 5mm – if recessed, are they level with the surrounding surface? b Note: If mat protrudes, it may be possible to move a mat out of the path of travel, but the conditions specified will still need to be met. | | | | |

| 7. Public access to <u>voting area</u> Leave first 6 points blank if same as Point 6 | | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|--|--|----|---------------------------------------|
| Doorways/entrances to voting area have: at least 800mm wide (clear opening width) (refer diagram on page 14) circulation space on both sides of the door | | | |
| must be unobstructed for 1500mm on both sides of door and 500mm beside door handle. | | | |
| Is the door handle between 900 and 1100mm above ground and easy to use? b Applies only if door will be closed and will be opened by a voter | | | |
| Is the door easy to push or pull open? b Applies only if door will be closed and will be opened by a voter | | | |
| Is the doorway free of any lips or thresholds more than 5mm? | | | |
| Are any mats lying flat and no higher than 5mm – if recessed, are they level with the surrounding surface? b Note: If mat protrudes, it may be possible to move a mat out of the path of travel but the conditions specified will need to be met. | | | |
| Corridors are at least 1.2m wide | | | |
| Is the voting area in more than one room? | | | |
| Is the voting area on more than one level? | | | |
| Does voting area allow for optimum use of equipment? b . (area can be set out to allow easy flow of voters without obstacles or back tracking and at least 1500mm space around voting cubicles and tables) | | | |

| 7. Public access to <u>voting area</u> (continued) | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|--|
| Does the floor surface appear to be slip resistant (especially if wet)? b Note: Advice from building manager may be necessary | | | |
| Is there more than one entrance/exit to the voting area? If a separate exit is used the same access standards that apply to the entrance also apply to the exit. | | | |
| Is the voting area free of steps, or if there are steps is there a ramp or elevator/escalator available? | | | Note: If ramp is less than 1500mm long maximum is 1 in 8 or 7.1° and if ramp is more than 1500mm long maximum gradient is 1 in 14 or 4.1°. Ramps and stairs require handrails both sides. Steps require constant risers. |
| 8. Amenities – staff | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
| Are there toilets for male staff? | | | |
| Are there toilets for female staff? | | | |
| Are there lockable unisex toilets? (if no separate toilets) | | | |
| Are there accessible designated toilets for disabled staff? Must be specifically constructed for this purpose | | | |
| Is there a clear accessible route of travel for staff to a designated toilet for disabled staff? | | | |
| Refrigerator – available? | | | |
| Kettle/urn – available? | | | |
| Microwave – available? | | | |
| Stove/oven – available? | | | |
| Any issues of concern? | | | |

| 9. Expected cost of premises | Yes | No | Remarks / remedial action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|---------------------------------------|
| Hiring fee determined | | | Note cost |
| Extras Furniture, security, lighting, setup etc | | | Note type & cost |
| Key collection arrangements determined | | | Note arrangements |
| OIC has been advised of arrangements After Issue of Writ only | | | |
| 10. Access for People with Disabilities | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |

* *Full Access

The essential items for access for people with disabilities (marked with \clubsuit) are met.

*Partially Accessible

Some of the essential items do not fully comply but access for wheelchairs and other people with disabilities is possible with assistance as is necessary, e.g.: ramps steeper than 1 in 14 (4.1°); handrails not on both sides of steps/ramps; steps greater than 5mm in path of travel; doors narrower than 800mm but greater than 740mm.

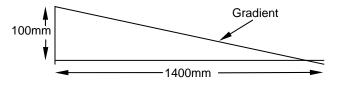
Not Accessible

Significant barriers exist to prevent wheelchair access and impede access for other people with disabilities.

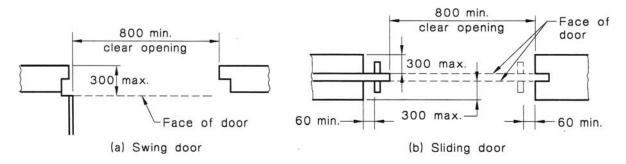
This polling place has:

| • | Full Wheelchair Access ** | | | |
|----|--|-----|----|---------------------------------------|
| • | Partial Access * | | | |
| • | No Access | | | |
| 11 | 1. Update ELMS | Yes | No | Remarks / Remedial action to be taken |
| In | screen PSAC – F , A or N | | | |

Gradient not steeper than 1:14 (not to scale)



How to measure clear openings of doorways



DIMENSIONS IN MILLIMETRES



(AS 1428.1)

Prepare a floor plan of voting area.

Include a sketch of recommended layout of equipment.