



AEC

Australian Electoral Commission

Review of the Continuous Roll Update Program

June 2007

CONTENTS

TERMS OF REFERENCE	IV
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	V
Background	v
Findings and conclusions	v
RECOMMENDATIONS	VIII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
The Review	2
This Report	3
2. ROLL FUNCTION FRAMEWORK	4
The basics . . . why electoral rolls exist	4
Challenges to achieving objectives	4
<i>The requirements and people's response</i>	4
<i>Balancing AEC and elector responsibilities</i>	6
<i>Balancing accuracy and completeness objectives</i>	7
What is roll review?	8
<i>Implementation of continuous roll review</i>	9
<i>Mainstream and targeted populations</i>	9
Specific Recommendations	10
3. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	11
Current roll-related performance measurement	11
<i>Assessment of current performance measures</i>	11
Objective – gain elector information to enable roll updating	13
Measuring responses to activities	14
Other information requirements	15
<i>Sample Audit Fieldwork (SAF)</i>	15
<i>Roll-related research and analysis</i>	15
Specific Recommendations	17
4. PLANNING FOR THE MAJORITY	19
The basic 'mainstream' program	19
Active management of enrolment activities	21
<i>Focussing on results</i>	21
<i>Responsiveness to a changing environment</i>	21
<i>Flexibility to tailor activities to the local characteristics</i>	22
The decline in numbers on the roll – 2005 to 2006	23
<i>An imbalance in current activities</i>	23
<i>Underperforming activities</i>	25
Culling of matched and unmatched records	27
<i>A suggested approach</i>	28
Business Rules	29
Australia Post mail delivery service	29
<i>Making better use of the information provided by Australia Post</i>	30
Letters	30
Pre-populated enrolment forms	31
Increased public awareness about enrolment	32
Linking enrolment stimulation activities to the electoral cycle	33
Specific Recommendations	33

5. ENGAGING THE MINORITIES	36
Introduction	36
Young people	36
<i>Demographic Profile</i>	36
<i>Current enrolment activities and outcomes</i>	37
<i>Studies into young people's behaviour</i>	38
Indigenous populations	39
<i>Demographic Profile</i>	39
<i>Current enrolment activities and outcomes</i>	39
<i>Conclusions for indigenous populations</i>	41
Other groups	41
6. THE NEED FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES	43
Introduction	43
Current follow-up activities	43
The case for and against fieldwork	44
<i>Fieldwork in rural and remote areas</i>	46
The 'true' recalcitrants	47
Specific Recommendations	47
7. ROLL REVIEW INTO THE FUTURE	48
Introduction	48
The enrolment form	48
<i>More intelligent Internet forms</i>	49
<i>Direct enrolment</i>	50
Specific Recommendations	51
POSTSCRIPT	52

Terms of Reference

Review the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, of the CRU program.

Review the adequacy of the standards and guidelines for the operation of the CRU program, including the degree to which those standards and guidelines are met.

Obtain and examine the mechanisms for monitoring of the program at all levels.

Review the business rules that apply to the functioning of the program, especially those relating to the operation of the IT systems that underpin the program.

Develop performance indicators for the operation of the roll review function.

Review the operation of roll review activities in rural and remote areas in consultation with the team examining the remote area strategy.

Identify those target groups that are not reached through the current program of activities and consider options for doing so.

Make recommendations for improvement against each of the items listed above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Continuous Roll Update (CRU) is the primary methodology used by Australian electoral authorities to maintain electoral rolls and was implemented mainly to address shortcomings of the full habitation review, or doorknocking, method. With CRU, data on the roll is reviewed and/or matched with other Commonwealth and state/territory data to identify specific addresses from which, or into which, people are moving, and to identify any anomalies in roll data, such as more people being enrolled at an address than the expected number for the type of dwelling. The advantage of CRU is that it is more targeted than traditional methods of maintaining electoral rolls, such as doorknocking, as it focuses efforts on areas where evidence suggests current roll information is incorrect or the roll is incomplete.

Since its national introduction in 1999, CRU has developed incrementally as resources and data sets became available, and as ideas for enhancements and upgrades were formed. While there has been regular reporting and evaluation of CRU, it has not been the subject of a comprehensive review to determine whether it is undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner or whether it meets Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and state and territory electoral authorities' (SEAs) requirements.

Further, evidence is showing that relative to the eligible population, the number of electors on the roll is declining and in some cases the actual number has declined. From 30 June 2005 to 30 June 2006, the number of electors on the roll declined nationally from 13,114,475 to 13,081,539, with declines evident in all jurisdictions except South Australia and Tasmania, states in which there were state elections during the year.

Therefore, it was timely to review the operations of the CRU program.

Findings and conclusions

There are several key findings and conclusions that can be drawn from the way that CRU currently operates:

- A more universally understood definition of what is meant by 'roll review', what activities this entails and what is meant by the term 'CRU', is needed;
- The main challenge in ensuring the quality of a continuously maintained roll is the constant change brought about as young people come of voting age or migrants obtain Australian citizenship, as people die or leave Australia permanently, and as people change their name or address;
- A more universal understanding of the definition of roll integrity¹ and its elements is required;
- A need for clear links between high level objectives such as those contained in the corporate plan various business plans, and frame works such as the elements that comprise the definition of 'roll integrity', and specific operational functions;

¹ That is, entitlement, accuracy, completeness, processing correctness and security.

- That the tension between the ‘roll integrity’ elements of accuracy and completeness may have contributed to the current decline in total enrolment numbers;
- The legislative change in 2004 from divisional-based enrolment to address based enrolment appears to have resulted in more people being removed from the electoral roll based on non-residence;
- As a result, an imbalance now exists because people must complete a new enrolment application to enrol or update their enrolment, but to be removed from the roll an elector need do nothing, and that action to remove them from the roll can be taken even if the elector is living in the same division;
- There is an imbalance between the acceptance of obligation of the elector and the AEC responsibility to encourage the elector to enrol or change their details on the roll;
- It appears that many people do not see the urgency (or need) to update their enrolments when prompted by letters from the AEC. Updating enrolment details, or enrolling at all, generally appears to have a low priority for many people;
- It appears community knowledge of the need to update enrolment information every time a person changes address is poor; people seem not to understand the basic legislative requirement surrounding enrolment;
- Focus groups have identified that electors believe that nothing needs to be done by the elector, as the AEC will either doorknock the area or will send a form. Further, these focus groups have identified that some electors believe that enrolment is automatically updated when other government agencies;
- To date there has not been an active campaign to tell people that they can be removed from the roll if they don’t re-enrol;
- The incidence of data from external agencies that is of poor quality or is out-of-date that has caused difficulties for matching and ultimately for mail not being delivered. A similar issue arises in areas of Australia that have no, or limited, mail delivery services to individual residential addresses;
- The roll and the strategies that are used to maintain the rolls and encourage enrolment require continuous monitoring and analysis at all levels of the organization to ensure the ongoing appropriateness and effectiveness of activities and to identify emerging trends and potential problems. This requires the relevant tools. This includes keeping across and watching for emerging trends and changes in the environment;
- The current roll review program employs a standard suite of enrolment stimulation activities that are expected to effectively address the needs of the whole population whereas there are several target groups for which this program, for various reasons, appears to be inadequate;
- There are benefits in taking a more considered approach, segmenting the eligible population into specific characteristics and tailoring activities to better service different groups, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of enrolment

stimulation activities. Such an approach can be styled as *plan for the majority, engage the minorities*²;

- Opportunities have been identified for SOs and DOs to tailor the national CRU program to local demographic characteristics, requirements and target groups. Relevant performance-related measures to monitor achievements would be needed;
- The building of the address base in RMANS, whilst important to business processes, appears to have diverted our focus to those processes and away from pursuing the enrolment of the eligible elector; and
- As a result of RMANS being an address-based system, it is difficult to access information on electors contacted through the CRU program, or who have responded to that contact;³

The overall conclusion from the review is that electoral rolls are in a better shape under a continuous roll review process than if a more passive approach was undertaken or no enrolment-stimulation occurred at all. Of the 2 million enrolment forms processed by the AEC in 2005-06, it is estimated 1.3 million (66 per cent) came from CRU-related activities.

CRU also appears to be more cost effective than would be the case if habitation review occurred and the enrolment workloads generally are much more evenly spread over the year.

Notwithstanding the deficiencies identified in the report, it is considered that in the short to medium term the current CRU program, with those deficiencies addressed, should remain.

² Minorities is referred to in the electoral context.

³ It is possible to identify that a person returned an enrolment form, and whether that form was CRU generated, but other response types are not identified to individuals, only to addresses.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

A program of activities be identified that is consistent with an appropriate apportionment of responsibility for maintaining enrolment between electors and electoral authorities.

Recommendation 2

A roll review approach be developed that differentiates between the mainstream population and specific minorities and develops appropriate strategies for both.

Recommendation 3

Improve the ability of managers and staff to obtain roll review performance information by electors (in addition to that available on addresses); at the very least information on which individuals are sent correspondence and what response, if any, resulted.

Recommendation 4

Specific response codes be employed to the Mail Review System to record the outcomes from mail review activities, with the following being a minimum requirement:

- enrolment form received (if this fact is not captured automatically when enrolment forms are processed);
- resident ineligible;
- correctly enrolled;
- no further action/action completed; and
- return to sender mail.

Recommendation 5

The Sample Audit Fieldwork be subject to a full evaluation.

Recommendation 6

The feasibility of extending the Sample Audit Fieldwork to include rural and remote localities be investigated. If inclusion of rural and remote localities proves not to be feasible, that alternative roll measurement be developed and implemented for these localities.

Recommendation 7

Divisional demographic and socio-economic profiling be developed and state management and Divisional Returning Officers use this information proactively in their management of the rolls.

Recommendation 8

Further research and analysis of the rolls be undertaken. Evaluation could take the form of an annual work program of research and analysis, which would be reviewed and agreed by senior management and be based on an accountability model.

Recommendation 9

State management teams and Divisional Returning Officers actively seek and use intelligence opportunities that might exist locally that can provide useful information for stimulating enrolment and managing the rolls.

Recommendation 10

Ensure that State Offices and Divisions have the flexibility to supplement the national enrolment stimulation program with activities tailored to identified local demographic characteristics, requirements and target groups and allow some controlled experimentation and trial as necessary, in developing local enrolment stimulation strategies.

Recommendation 11

A formal process of identifying, evaluating and disseminating innovation in regards to roll management and enrolment stimulation be introduced, with State Managers and management teams actively facilitating this process at relevant state and national fora.

Recommendation 12

While encouraging local innovation, ensure, wherever possible, that performance monitoring occurs.

Recommendation 13

Implement the following modifications to existing CRU practices:

- objection batches to be matched to external data sets to attempt to identify current addresses for electors facing removal from the rolls;

- the suspension of:
 - reminder letters in most circumstances;
 - the review of addresses under the ‘two-year rule’;
 - mailings to ‘from’ addresses;
- activities to be undertaken more frequently (even by manual methods, if this is necessary) for people identified as potential electors;
- not using old data, for example when the program is suspended for an electoral event, unless these data have been checked for currency;
- the data source be included on all CRU-generated enrolment stimulation letters,
- divisional staff be provided with the facility to cull as well as amend records from matched and unmatched batches; and
- any unmatched records remaining after being divisional staff have made corrections to allow mail to be delivered, be discarded.

In addition, consideration will need to be given to the need to continue the background review process should the suspension of the review of addresses under the 2 year rule be adopted.

Recommendation 14

Improve the documentation on business rules so that they are clearly documented, comprehensive, accessible, recognisable, correct and relevant. As part of this process, prepare simple checklists for use by Divisional staff.

Recommendation 15

Improve business rules management and monitoring involving:

- more effective involvement of operational staff in maintaining business rules;
- introducing a more formal process for instigating and prioritising requests for business rule changes, including approval by an appropriate manager within the Roll Management Branch;
- implementation of a program of systematic review of business rules to ensure they are meeting their intended purpose. This activity to be undertaken jointly by IT programmers and suitably experienced operational staff; and
- allocation of consistent, appropriate resources for scoping, developing and testing of business rules prior to systems being released into production.

Recommendation 16

Return some culling abilities to Divisions when investigating unmatched addresses for CRU mailouts but with the strict understanding that State Offices will monitor performance and Divisions will, if required, need to justify their performance. Further, investigate the benefit in continuing to review unmatched addresses at all and abandon this activity if the returns are not commensurate with the time and effort expended.

Recommendation 17

Progress the current review of correspondence (especially that related to enrolment stimulation activities) as a high priority. Investigate the feasibility of introducing a suitable message on the front CRU-mailout envelopes, especially in the period leading up to electoral events.

Recommendation 18

Introduce a continuing program of public awareness into the basic requirements for enrolment, with the aim in the long-term of increasing the number of people taking responsibility for maintaining their own enrolment information without the need for continual active prompting by electoral authorities.

Recommendation 19

Align enrolment stimulation activities closely with the electoral cycle and increase efforts in the months preceding an electoral event. In the case of state/territory events, these efforts should be determined and implemented in consultation with, and complement efforts by, the relevant State or Territory Electoral Authority.

Recommendation 20

Undertake some form of fieldwork continuously and consider allowing Divisions to engage a small number of full time Review Officers to undertake this work. To contain costs and provide better continuity of work for staff it might be possible to share permanent Review Offices amongst adjoining Divisions.

Recommendation 21

State Offices and Divisions have the flexibility to determine what follow-up activities will occur within their areas of responsibility, with the ability to substitute reviews of growth areas in lieu of Non-Response Fieldwork, if better outcomes are achievable.

Promulgate instructions that activities other than Non-Response Fieldwork must be based on identified target characteristics, whether these are non-response addresses or areas of high turnover and/or growth, and achieve identified outcomes.

Recommendation 22

Review the policy and procedures with respect to enforcement of compulsory enrolment provisions, particularly with respect to the true recalcitrants.

Recommendation 23

Investigate replacing the existing PDF Internet enrolment forms with a smart form, modelled on the Australian Taxation Office's *eTax* program; this form be have the option of the elector printing, completing and returning or nominating to receive a pre-populated form from the AEC.

Recommendation 24

Explore with Government the possibility and feasibility of linking updates of client information (name, residential and postal address and date of birth) under the “smart card” system to updates of the electoral enrolment.

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the CRU program and then discusses the review. It details the analyses and other work undertaken, consultations and meetings held and some of the challenges faced during the course of the review.

Introduction ⁴

- 1.1 Continuous Roll Update (CRU) is the primary methodology currently used by Australian electoral authorities to maintain the electoral rolls. CRU consists of a range of complementary activities designed to ensure the electoral roll is continuously kept up-to-date. With CRU, data on the roll is reviewed, and/or matched with other Commonwealth and state/territory data, to identify specific addresses from which, or into which, people are moving, and to identify any anomalies in roll data, such as more people being enrolled at an address than the expected number for the type of dwelling. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) then contacts the residents at these addresses and asks them to confirm or update the enrolment information. Other CRU activities aim to identify eligible persons that are not enrolled, such as school leavers and new citizens, and invite them to enrol.
- 1.2 The advantage of CRU is that it is more targeted than traditional methods of maintaining electoral rolls, such as doorknocking of all addresses, as it focuses efforts on areas where evidence suggests current roll information is incorrect or the roll is incomplete. A major criticism of this comprehensive doorknocking was that around 65 per cent of resources were expended during each review confirming enrolments that had not changed.
- 1.3 The major component of the CRU program is matching data received from organisations and other government agencies, such as Centrelink, Australia Post, road transport authorities and rental bond boards, against the rolls, to identify electors needing to update their enrolment details, or potential new electors.
- 1.4 However, CRU is not just about data matching but includes a comprehensive suite of varied activities designed to address differing elector behaviour. Other CRU activities are:
 - strategies collectively known as data mining that review existing AEC roll data to identify:
 - addresses where no electors are enrolled;
 - addresses that have multiple elector surnames or the number of enrolments at that address exceed the expected number for the type of dwelling;

⁴ Material for this section has been taken from the AEC's information brochure on CRU: *Continuous Roll Update – An overview of the program*.

- initiatives to encourage enrolment by eligible persons when attending to civic or private business, such as transactions that require a change of address, young people turning 17 or 18 years of age or new citizens attending citizenship ceremonies; and
 - data integrity maintenance and checking such as using lands departments and local government data to maintain the Address Register, comparing the rolls to death data and checking enrolment data for duplication.
- 1.5 Since its national introduction in 1999 CRU has developed incrementally, as resources and data sets became available, and as ideas for enhancements and upgrades were formed. CRU has not been the subject of a comprehensive review, apart from regular reporting and evaluation, to determine whether it is undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner or whether it meets AEC and state and territory electoral authorities' (SEAs) requirements.
- 1.6 Further, there is concern that evidence is showing that relative to the eligible population, the number of electors on the roll is declining and in some cases the actual number has declined. From 30 June 2005 to 30 June 2006, the number of electors on the roll declined nationally from 13,114,475 to 13,081,539, with declines evident in all jurisdictions except South Australia and Tasmania, states in which there were state elections during the year.
- 1.7 In this report there is reference to business rules and business processes. This terminology is defined as follows:
- Business rule is used to describe the underpinning decision-making that is required in various parts of the business process. Business rules are typically of an "If situation X, then apply Y process" nature, and are often translated into automated (that is IT-based) processes.
 - Business process is the method used for undertaking a business activity (in the context of this report that will be an enrolment or CRU activity). Business processes may be either manual or automated.

The Review

- 1.8 Activities undertaken during the review, included:
- inviting all AEC staff for submissions on CRU, and roll review in general, identifying problems and opportunities for improvement and gaining better outcomes;
 - consultations with AEC staff and SEAs in each jurisdiction. Meetings with a good cross-section of staff at all levels were arranged so that a balanced view of concerns of staff with the current system and procedures were obtained;
 - various data analyses of outcomes from the 2005-06 CRU program, Close of Rolls in each jurisdiction that had an election during 2006, enrolment patterns and trends over time and 2001 Census data; and
 - workshops held on standards and business rules in Sydney and Canberra.

1.9 Until the implementation of the Enrolment Management Information System (EMIS) in June 2006, there has been a limited amount of data available to effectively evaluate roll function activities. This continues to some extent with EMIS as it relates specifically to CRU activity. This limitation of available data is pointed out in the main body of the report, with recommendations made for improvement.

This Report

1.10 The structure of this report is as follows:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction; provides an overview of the CRU program and discusses the review.
- Chapter 2 – Conceptual matters; considers and evaluates the rationale behind the activities undertaken as ‘roll review’ and attempts to identify and define what the objectives are (or should be) for undertaking these activities.
- Chapter 3 – Performance management; considers how electoral roll performance is identified and measured and how this relates to roll review activities.
- Chapter 4 – Planning for the majority; explores the proposed basic, national, program identified for the majority, ‘mainstream’ population, based largely on the existing mail review but ‘fine-tuned’ to improve outcomes.
- Chapter 5 – Engaging the minorities; identifies groups of potential electors for whom the strategies and activities considered appropriate for the mainstream population are not effective for geographic, demographic and socio-economic reasons. Separate strategies, in addition to those required for the mainstream program, to adequately service the identified target populations are identified.
- Chapter 6 – The need for follow-up activities; discusses those people who continue to ignore letters seeking their enrolment, who will not be aware or not understand the messages from education and public awareness initiative or who are just not engaged.
- Chapter 7 – Roll Review into the future; presents options for the longer-term.

2. Roll function framework

This chapter considers and evaluates the rationale behind the activities undertaken as 'roll review' and attempts to identify and define what the objectives are (or should be) for undertaking these activities. It also discusses what specific objectives might be as 'roll review' moves forward in the context of applicable legislation.

The basics . . . why electoral rolls exist

- 2.1 In Australia electoral rolls exist through the legal requirement⁵ to have a list of eligible voters at election times, to assist in ensuring that only those people eligible to vote in a particular area do so. A permanent, public, electoral roll with high integrity allows the AEC to manage elections effectively and assists to maintain the confidence of citizens in Australia's electoral system.
- 2.2 The importance of elections, and the relationship between elections and electoral rolls, to electoral authorities is shown in their mission and vision statements. For example, the AEC 2006-07 Corporate Plan identifies the AEC's purpose as being:
- To help people have their say in who will represent them in the Parliament of Australia. We do this by providing impartial and accessible electoral services.⁶
- 2.3 In relation to Outcome 1, *An effective electoral roll*, the AEC states its objective is:
- Australians have an electoral roll that ensures their voter entitlement and provides the basis for the planning of electoral events and electoral redistributions.⁷
- 2.4 Generally SEAs also identify similar purposes and emphasise the importance of electoral rolls in ensuring citizens can exercise their right to vote. Therefore, the primary objective of roll management must be in ensuring the best possible roll is available at electoral events. As such efforts expended in roll review activities must show tangible evidence of achieving accurate and complete rolls at election times. However, federal elections do not have a fixed polling date and state, territory and local government elections can occur at various times. Therefore, it follows that it is necessary to have a roll that it is accurate and up-to-date as far as practicable at all times.

Challenges to achieving objectives

The requirements and people's response

- 2.5 The main challenge in ensuring the quality of a continuously maintained roll is the constant change brought about as people change their name or address, as

⁵ *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, Part VI

⁶ *Corporate Plan 2006-07*, Australian Electoral Commission, p.2.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.3.

young people come of voting age or migrants obtain Australian citizenship, and as people die or leave Australia permanently.

- 2.6 The AEC processes, on average, about 2.5 million transactions each year. This is estimated to be only about two-thirds of all potential transactions, if electors notified us each time a relevant change in their circumstances occurred.⁸
- 2.7 Most changes to the electoral roll result from people changing their address. Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) data suggests that about one fifth of the population change address at least once per year.
- 2.8 Commonwealth and state/territory laws each place the obligation on enrolling with the individual and require eligible persons to enrol, or to update their enrolment within a certain time of becoming eligible. These requirements are stated on enrolment forms and related correspondence produced by the AEC and SEAs, appear on websites and can form part of media advertising, especially in election periods.
- 2.9 However, the timeframes set for eligible persons to enrol, or update their enrolment if changes have occurred, do not have any link to tangible and critical events outside of election periods. Therefore, many people do not see the need to update their enrolment until an election is imminent. Evidence from focus groups points to a number of factors, including that:
- Community knowledge or acceptance of the need to update enrolment information every time a person changes address is poor, and
 - Updating enrolment details, or enrolling at all, generally has a very low priority for most people⁹.
- 2.10 The legislative change in 2004 from divisional-based enrolment to address based enrolment has meant that more people are being removed from the electoral roll based on non-residence. Since 2004, it has been a requirement that electors re-enrol whenever they change address, even if that change is within the same electoral Division (or to next door). Prior to the change made in 2004, an elector need only advise in writing (and this could take the form of notification at the time of voting for any election) of a change of address, and removal of an elector from the roll on the grounds of non-residence was not possible where the change of address was within the same Division. Thus, an imbalance now exists because people must complete a new enrolment application to enrol or update their enrolment, but to be removed from the roll an elector need do nothing, and that action to remove them from the roll can be taken even if the elector is living in the same division.
- 2.11 To date there has not been an active campaign to tell people that they can be removed from the roll if they don't re-enrol.

⁸ This comment is based on the level of non-response to CRU activities. If it is assumed that the majority of these are legitimate potential transactions, a conservative estimate of an additional one million transactions per year should be received and processed.

⁹ Supported by the number of self-generated enrolment forms that electoral authorities receive (only one third of enrolment forms received by the AEC in 2005-06 were self-generated),

- 2.12 Research into population mobility disclosed that between 1996 and 2001, 6.8 million people aged five years and over (42.4 per cent) changed their place of residence in Australia. Of all the people who moved during this period, 86 per cent moved within the same state or territory and 11 per cent moved interstate (the rest were undefined).¹⁰
- 2.13 The effects of this nationally are shown in Table 1 for the 2005-06 year. Enrolments reflecting movements are down on the previous year by 20 per cent; that is, a 10.47 per cent movement rate in 2005-06 compared to 13.19 per cent in 2004-05.

Table 1: Movement Rate

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
<i>ABS movement rate</i>	17.12	16.16	21.82	19.86	15.99	17.55	21.38	26.39	18.20
1st Qtr 2006-07	9.29	10.71	26.17	12.28	9.25	10.18	11.22	13.57	13.19
Fin Year 2005-06	9.02	9.42	13.87	10.65	10.62	12.94	10.71	10.90	10.47
Fin Year 2004-05	10.81	11.99	15.67	19.17	12.57	13.92	15.20	22.03	13.20
Fin Year 2003-04	11.35	10.36	21.43	11.92	11.17	14.32	14.41	18.97	13.19

It should be noted that peaks shown in this table, eg. Queensland 06/07, are generally related to elections in the state/territory (eg the Qld September 2006 election).

Balancing AEC and elector responsibilities

- 2.14 There are some thoughts that the AEC's roll review activities such as wide-spread mailings and door-knocking has created an impression in the minds of a minority, but significant, group of electors that they need do little until contacted by the AEC. This may be reinforced by a further perception that advising a change of details to any government agency, eg Centrelink or Medicare, informs all of government. Further, the fact that the AEC mails to addresses to which electors appear to have moved may give them the impression the AEC has already enrolled them for their new address.
- 2.15 These factors together with some indication from focus groups that indicates that not all electors are aware that they need to update their enrolment each time they change address, highlights an imbalance between the responsibilities of the AEC to encourage and inform electors of their obligations and the requirement on electors to fulfil those obligations themselves. Although there is a requirement under s.92(2) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act) for the AEC to undertake roll reviews, this does not reduce the obligation on individuals under s.101 to take responsibility for their own enrolment.
- 2.16 However, there appears to be a gradual trend for people to not take up their responsibilities for maintaining their enrolment, with an expectation that the

¹⁰ *Australian Demographic Statistics*. Australian Bureau of Statistics. December 2002.

AEC and other stakeholders increase efforts and therefore take on a greater share of the responsibility.

- 2.17 Assuming the role of the AEC and SEAs is to facilitate all eligible people to comply with legislative requirements, then one aspect of this role may be a nationally consistent branding and ongoing advertising campaign between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. This would augment a CRU program that focused on identifying those who have not yet updated their enrolment. The objective of this twofold approach would be moving people away from relying on enrolment stimulation activities and more into taking self initiated action to enrol or re-enrol.

Balancing accuracy and completeness objectives

- 2.18 A further consideration in the effectiveness of roll management is in balancing the tensions that exist in maintaining quality rolls.

- 2.19 The AEC and SEAs have defined 'roll integrity' as having the following five elements:

- entitlement – the individual meets all legislative qualifications for enrolment on the electoral roll, information provided by individuals and witnesses is tested to detect and prevent enrolment fraud;
- accuracy – the individual is enrolled for the address at which they are entitled to be enrolled;
- completeness – all individuals who are entitled to enrolment are enrolled;
- processing correctness – information provided by individuals and organisations is entered correctly, completely and in a timely manner on the roll, addresses are correctly and completely described, classified and aligned; and
- security – the electoral roll is protected from unauthorised access and tampering.

- 2.20 Each of these elements is necessary to achieve a quality roll but a tension exists between the elements of accuracy and completeness. However, an imbalance exists in the roll review program whereby current activities that remove people from the roll (making it more accurate) are more successful than those that add them to the roll (making it more complete and accurate). As noted elsewhere in the report, this imbalance is partially resultant from the fact that to remove an elector from the roll, the elector need to do nothing, yet to enrol or change their enrolment details they must complete an enrolment form.

- 2.21 Activities that are aimed at completeness fall into two categories: the first such as school programs and attending citizenship ceremonies focus on the newly eligible and tend to be relatively successful in obtaining completed enrolment applications from eligible participants. The second, such as mail review and fieldwork, are aimed at those who have moved and those who were formerly enrolled. However, the success of these is dependent on the elector taking action to complete an enrolment form. For example, the collection rate of enrolment forms at citizenship ceremonies is about 90 per cent, whereas the

response rate to first letters sent to potential electors varies from about 25 per cent to 37 per cent, and only a proportion of these are enrolment applications

- 2.22 Activities that actively seek to test accuracy and identify those persons whose information is not up-to-date can result in those persons being removed from the rolls, because the elector needs to do nothing for the removal to take effect. These activities include reviewing addresses where there have been recent enrolments (to ascertain whether people already enrolled at these addresses remain) and addresses that have not been reviewed for two years.
- 2.23 It is important in managing the continuous roll review program to monitor outcomes against each integrity element so that adjustments can be made to activities where necessary, to ensure that a balanced approach is taken.

What is roll review?

2.24 It has been identified that a more universally understood definition of what is meant by 'roll review', what activities this entails and what is meant by the term 'CRU', is needed. In the AEC's information brochure on CRU, *Continuous Roll Update – An Overview of the program*, a broad definition of CRU is provided as being *a range of complementary activities designed to ensure the electoral roll is continuously kept as up-to-date as possible*.

2.25 'Roll review' in its broadest context is a legal requirement under s.92(2) of the Electoral Act, which states that:

The Electoral Commission must cause reviews to be conducted of the Rolls, with a view of ascertaining such information as is required for the preparation, maintenance and revision of the Rolls.

2.26 Until the amendments to the Electoral Act passed in 2004¹¹ there was a requirement that roll reviews occurred each two years, a requirement largely a remnant from the former practice of undertaking full habitation reviews. With the move to CRU in the late 1990s scheduled "snapshot" roll reviews no longer occur. The requirement for undertaking reviews in this manner was later removed giving the AEC much more flexibility in undertaking 'roll reviews'.

2.27 The following is how federal and state electoral jurisdictions have defined 'roll review', including the activities that form it:

- Roll review aims to achieve the electoral roll integrity elements of entitlement, accuracy and completeness. This will involve activities that:
- identify potential enrolment transactions, whether these are for existing electors who have moved or those who are not enrolled currently (transaction identification activities);
- undertake enrolment stimulation activities to encourage those identified in dot point one to enrol or update their enrolment. These might be active strategies, such as mailouts and fieldwork, or passive strategies, such as

¹¹ *Electoral and Referendum Amendment (Access to Electoral Roll and Other Measures) Act 2004*.

the wide availability of enrolment forms and public awareness and education activities;

- undertake activities to test accuracy of the rolls and identify those persons no longer eligible and remove them from the rolls (accuracy testing activities).

These activities are undertaken as suite of continuous roll management activities.

Implementation of continuous roll review

- 2.28 An April 1996 consultants report¹² prepared for the then Australian Joint Roll Council (now the Electoral Council of Australia), recommended that CRU be introduced. In 1997 a pilot CRU project was conducted in Queensland.
- 2.29 The introduction of CRU was largely to overcome the difficulty of ensuring the accuracy of electoral rolls for all electoral events, whether those events be for federal, state/territory or local government, as well as addressing deficiencies in the full habitation review methodology.
- 2.30 It is fair to say that the implementation of CRU has been an evolving process. As implementation progressed, additional functionality and data sources have been added. One aspect of this evolution appears to have been to rely on a greater incidence of mass mailing. However, while some evaluation and reporting has taken place, sufficient data has not been available to undertake a full evaluation of the implications of the implementation of changes to the program, and partly as a result of insufficient data availability, not always being fully aware of issues that were developing. This situation has improved recently with the implementation of EMIS, but access to further data is still required and further development of EMIS to this end is occurring.

Mainstream and targeted populations

- 2.31 The current roll review program employs a standard suite of enrolment stimulation activities that are expected to effectively address the needs of the whole population whereas there are several target groups for which this program, for various reasons, appears to be inadequate.
- 2.32 There are benefits in taking a more considered approach, segmenting the eligible population into specific characteristics and tailoring activities to better service different groups, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of enrolment stimulation activities. Such an approach can be styled as *plan for the majority, engage the minorities*.
- 2.33 The issue for the majority of the eligible population (the mainstream) is largely to encourage action by them sooner than would otherwise occur. The mixture of active and passive activities within the existing CRU program will largely service this group. However, there is a need to improve those activities to address shortcomings in electors' compliance and to improve awareness of the basic requirements, which appears to have declined from

¹² *Electoral Roll Review Alternatives*,

previous times. Issues relating to this group are discussed at Chapter 4 – *Planning for the majority*.

- 2.34 There are those, however, that for various reasons, require a much more targeted approach. These people are not catered for adequately by activities effective for the mainstream population. They will often require much more effort to identify and so should be considered, operationally, to be outside the activities used for the mainstream population and addressed in more appropriate means. The issues concerning these people are discussed in Chapter 5 – *Engaging the minorities*.
- 2.35 Therefore, in an effort aimed at targeting potential electors and those electors who are changing address, a program of roll review based on the following characteristics is recommended:
- identification of potential enrolment transactions through continued data matching of the rolls to quality external data;
 - an ongoing program enrolment stimulation activities using information generated by activities at the first dot point;
 - reduced use of data mining activities coupled with increased efforts to identify potential transfers before electors are removed from the rolls;
 - continued regular mailings to those identified in dot points one and two but with a stronger emphasis on potential electors and existing electors whose details have changed but who have not updated their enrolment;
 - increased efforts in public awareness to place the emphasis back on eligible people to maintain their own enrolment information and reduce reliance on active enrolment stimulation strategies by electoral authorities;
 - an increase in efforts to occur in the months preceding an electoral event; and
 - to continuously monitor the environment and the effectiveness of activities.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1

A program of activities be identified that is consistent with an appropriate apportionment of responsibility for maintaining enrolment between electors and electoral authorities.

Recommendation 2

A roll review approach be developed that differentiates between the mainstream population and specific minorities and develops appropriate strategies for both.

3. Performance measurement

This chapter provides background on how performance currently is measured, information on the state of the roll since the introduction of CRU and proposes changes to improve performance measurement.

Current roll-related performance measurement

- 3.1 The AEC undertakes various activities to measure the quality of electoral rolls and report results to stakeholders. The AEC's roll-related performance indicators and targets are formed largely to meet legislative and regulatory requirements and the requirements of particular external stakeholders. Some of the AEC's performance targets are agreed with the Government; others arise through agreement between the AEC and SEAs.
- 3.2 Although enhanced key performance indicators and targets were adopted in July 2003, it is only comparatively recently that the AEC has been in a position to commence reporting against these indicators and targets. This is primarily because information was not collected and/or was not easily obtainable from AEC systems; the latter aspect has largely been addressed by the implementation of EMIS. Currently the primary reporting avenues for roll-related information are:
- the AEC annual reports, which provide performance against Portfolio Budget Statement outcomes and targets, the enhanced suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) agreed with the Electoral Council of Australia (ECA) in July 2003 and various internally-defined performance targets;
 - the quarterly report on the enhanced suite of KPIs provided to AEC management and the ECA;
 - various internally-generated performance reports for management; and
 - ad hoc reports to address specific enquires from stakeholders.
- 3.3 Much of the above performance information, particularly dot points one and two, aim to report at an outcome level on the state of the rolls. Therefore, information on performance against targets for accuracy, completeness and validity are included. Performance reports for management and stakeholders tend to concentrate on specific lower-level issues, for example enrolment trends for the 18–25 year old cohort, rather than the overall state of the rolls. More recent developments for internal reporting have developed workload analyses, which aim to provide managers with the tools to monitor differences amongst DOs and assist with the allocation of resources according to need.

Assessment of current performance measures

- 3.4 The current performance targets and measures are focussed on the needs of external stakeholders and senior AEC management. However, the lower level targets and measures are not as well developed for the management of activities at the operational or local level. The characteristics identified for

measuring the rolls at this level, that is, accuracy, completeness, validity and so forth, are considered to be valid and appropriate. However, it is noted that some of the actual measures identified are not the most relevant and therefore the indicators and targets for ongoing appropriateness and potential improvement should be reviewed.

- 3.5 In addition, some aspects of the quality of the rolls might be missed at the operational level by current performance measures. For example, it may be that the examination of simple, periodic, snapshots of the roll (such as end of month or end of a quarter) and a summary of changes (such as how many re-enrolments occurred, how many objections), would be beneficial. However, the availability of demographic information to compliment the other information would also be of benefit.
- 3.6 Performance information is not as well understood or used at an operational level. In regard to the main components of the current CRU program, mailouts and fieldwork, the measures generally used are the response rate and the number of enrolment forms received, rather than a more comprehensive suite of information that would have operational staff looking at the impact of activity on enrolment levels.
- 3.7 This identifies that there is a need for clear links between high level objectives such as those contained in the corporate plan, business plans and frameworks, such as the elements that comprise the definition of 'roll integrity', and specific operational functions. For example, in Chapter 2 the tension between the elements of accuracy and completeness is discussed, and it is considered that the decline in total enrolment numbers that occurred during 2005-06 results largely from not identifying and actively managing that tension.
- 3.8 Further, as CRU has tended to evolve as an automated or systems driven process, there appears to have been the consequence for less opportunity at the local level for input or for implementing flexibility into the program to achieve better outcomes.
- 3.9 To address this issue it is considered that managers and staff need a much clearer understanding of what each enrolment stimulation activity aims to achieve, what that achievement will be (that is, an enrolment form, information to enable electors to be removed from the rolls and so forth) and how achievement will be measured if this is not apparent from the previous step. The refresh of conceptual issues recommended in the last chapter should assist this process and should, when developed, cascade down to individual operational aspects and activities.
- 3.10 Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some difficulties in measuring outcomes of public awareness and education activities, if they are to be successful on basic enrolment requirements, over time one would expect to see:
 - a decrease in the proportion of enrolment forms coming from CRU-related activities and a commensurate increase in self-generated forms;
 - an increase in the number of external data records not being required for mailouts (because electors would have already changed their enrolments or enrolled);

- a decline in the objection rate, again because electors would be transferring before they were removed from the rolls; and
 - an increase in the total number of enrolments processed, as more potential transactions would actually occur. Related to this would be that the transaction rate (the number of transaction divided by the total number of electors enrolled) would close the gap with ABS movement rates, as measured by KPI 5.1.
- 3.11 Each of these dot points is measurable by existing methods and, although there might not be a direct link to specific public awareness and education activities, a strong inference is possible if each measure shows improvement. Of course, pilot projects, trials and control populations can be used to give more precision against specific activities if this is required.
- 3.12 Therefore, the number of enrolment forms generated by activities is identified as the basic measure of success for enrolment activities at the present time. Although this might seem simplistic to many stakeholders, under the current legislative requirements enrolment forms are the main way that changes to the rolls should occur.
- 3.13 Coupled with the number of enrolment forms collected needs to be the cost of obtaining those forms. An analysis of the direct cost of enrolment forms for 2005-06 and found that, depending on the type of activity, an enrolment form could cost as little as 76 cents or as much as \$26. Although a simple analysis, it nevertheless would be useful for SOs and DOs in determining the optimal mix of activities locally.

Objective – gain elector information to enable roll updating

- 3.14 It follows then, that efforts need to be concentrated on activities that will be the most beneficial to the quality of the rolls, measurable through key performance indicators. That is, concentrating on the primary outcomes as being either new enrolments, re-enrolments or changes to existing enrolments. This means that under-performing activities need to be identified and discontinued despite the fact that these may obtain other information seen as valuable, such as information to update the Address Register, but which may not be information that necessarily leads to tangible benefits to the AEC in maintaining the rolls.
- 3.15 For example, an argument has been made that by obtaining and recording address information, the Address Register is in better shape at election time when divisional staff have less time to verify unknown addresses for those seeking enrolment. However, focussing considerable effort on capturing data on the off-chance that it might reduce workloads later might not be the best strategy.
- 3.16 Similarly, staff suggest that accurate address information assists in the data matching process. However, the objective in this case is to enable matching of address records with external data so that records can be removed from a mailout. Effectively this means that work is undertaken simply so that mail

will not be sent, rather than in the pursuit of potential enrolment transactions, with the ultimate goal of a better quality roll.

Measuring responses to activities

- 3.17 With any enrolment stimulation activity it is important to know and measure what action occurred in the target population and what response resulted. Response rates, and more importantly what those responses are, give managers the information to 'fine tune' activities. For example, the primary objective for each potential transaction is either to obtain an enrolment form or determine why the person does not have to enrol.
- 3.18 At present it is difficult to know exactly what is obtained from current CRU activities, as the information being captured is inadequate. Firstly, being an address-based system it is difficult to access adequate information on electors. The current system can provide information on the number of addresses reviewed, and the activities undertaken at those addresses, but generally cannot provide information on the number of electors involved and whether particular electors were targeted by an activity. Generally it is also not possible to determine whether a particular person responded to an activity.¹³ It is apparent that CRU has evolved with a growing focus on the address, and away from the elector.
- 3.19 Some improvement in the ability of managers and staff to obtain information on electors is necessary. At the very least there is the need to be able to obtain information on which individuals are sent correspondence and the response, if any, and type of response from that elector.
- 3.20 Secondly, under the current Mail Review System (MRS) Divisional staff can record only whether a response was received or not; not the type of response or the quality of the information comprising that response. For example, returned undelivered mail might be classed as a response. Similarly, other information unrelated to the elector and which does not improve the accuracy or completeness of the rolls might qualify as a response.
- 3.21 Thus, the measurement of the effectiveness of CRU mailouts needs to be improved. The following are responses that have been identified as being useful to managers:
- enrolment form received – if this fact is not captured automatically when enrolment forms are processed;
 - resident ineligible - mainly to identify non-citizens;
 - correctly enrolled - the aim of this response code would be to identify potential data or activity deficiencies, for example when a potential transaction is identified from external data but on mailout the roll is found to be accurate. If a significant number of these occur then this would be identified as a potential issue to raise with the data provider;

¹³ It is possible to identify that a person returned an enrolment form, and whether that form was CRU generated, but other response types are not identified to individuals, only to addresses.

- no further action/action completed - this code would be used to 'close' a record after any required follow-up by staff occurred. By way of example, if the DO received information that the addressee was deceased, this code would be used - or be automatically applied by the system - when the death deletion occurred; and
- return to sender mail.

Other information requirements

Sample Audit Fieldwork (SAF)

- 3.22 The annual SAF is an important information source on the quality of the rolls and, indirectly, the effectiveness of enrolment stimulation activities. SAF provides the AEC and stakeholders with one measure for the completeness of the roll and currently is the only method available for measuring the accuracy of the rolls.
- 3.23 A full evaluation of SAF is necessary and the AEC intends to approach the ABS to assist in undertaking a review of the SAF methodology including sample size and breadth of coverage. For example, it was found that SAF does not currently cover some Census Collection Districts (CCDs) even though addresses within those CCDs may still receive CRU mail. No CCD should automatically be excluded from the random draw process¹⁴, and what is undertaken currently might not necessarily be consistent with the methodology the ABS consultancy provided.
- 3.24 Since SAF was introduced the business rules supporting mailout to addresses in Exclusion Tables have been changed and the effect of this on the SAF methodology needs to be reviewed.
- 3.25 A further issue is that SAF currently it only occurs in metropolitan areas and provincial and rural towns; it covers few rural areas (generally on the outskirts of cities and towns) and no remote areas. As a result, there is little measurement of roll quality occurring in rural and remote areas. This deficiency means that the reliability of SAF results for individual jurisdictions can be questioned. However, the AEC is currently investigating ways these areas can be included in the SAF process.

Roll-related research and analysis

- 3.26 While there has been recent research¹⁵ undertaken to improve the AEC's understanding of elector behaviour, there is a need for the AEC to undertake more analysis into enrolment and roll management issues.

¹⁴ An important part of the SAF methodology is to randomly select a number of CCDs to be reviewed through the Sample Audit Fieldwork (SAF) process

¹⁵ *Youth Electoral Study*

Eureka Strategic Research. *Campaign Development*. June 2006.

Australian Electoral Commission – *Indigenous Research Informing the AEC 2007 Election Campaign*, Winangali P/L, 2006.

- 3.27 This research has been used to develop strategies for the AEC to address these behavioural issues and the identified target audiences mentioned in chapter 5 of this report.
- 3.28 The review of CRU would have been assisted by more readily available information on procedures and processes and performance information. The implementation of EMIS, and the training of, and active use by, staff in using this tool that is occurring that will assist in addressing this in the future.
- 3.29 Allied with access to tools such as EMIS and the information that they can provide on the roll, there is a need for SOs and DOs to be provided with more information on environmental factors and the particular characteristics of their jurisdiction and Division(s) that might assist in managing activities better. To test the ease and viability of preparing demographic and socio-economic data on a Divisional basis, data from the 2001 Census was obtained and various characteristics compared, such as ethnicity, language, literacy, education and income, across different types of Divisions (inner and outer metropolitan, provincial cities, rural and remote). Although results from this analysis were not as conclusive as hoped, nevertheless they do show some promise. Therefore, Divisional demographic and socio-economic profiling should be developed.
- 3.30 Evaluation could take the form of an annual work program of research and analysis, which would be reviewed and agreed by senior management and be based on an accountability model. A regime of performance monitoring and timeframes set and the expectation of a tangible output (a research paper or analytical report) from each task would be included in the work program. Also, there is the need for more basic research into roll management and enrolment-related issues and this could be undertaken through joint analysis projects with the ECA.
- 3.31 Further, SO and DO managers need to be more aware of intelligence opportunities that might exist locally that can provide useful information for stimulating enrolment and managing the rolls.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 3

Improve the ability of managers and staff to obtain roll review performance information by electors (in addition to that available on addresses); at the very least information on which individuals are sent correspondence and what response, if any, resulted.

Recommendation 4

Specific response codes be employed to the Mail Review System to record the outcomes from mail review activities, with the following being a minimum requirement:

- enrolment form received (if this fact is not captured automatically when enrolment forms are processed);
- resident ineligible;
- correctly enrolled;
- no further action/action completed; and
- return to sender mail.

Recommendation 5

The Sample Audit Fieldwork be subject to a full evaluation.

Recommendation 6

The feasibility of extending the Sample Audit Fieldwork to include rural and remote localities be investigated. If inclusion of rural and remote localities proves not to be feasible, that alternative roll measurement be developed and implemented for these localities.

Recommendation 7

Divisional demographic and socio-economic profiling be developed and state management and Divisional Returning Officers use this information proactively in their management of the rolls.

Recommendation 8

Further research and analysis of the rolls be undertaken. Evaluation could take the form of an annual work program of research and analysis, which would be reviewed and agreed by senior management and be based on an accountability model.

Recommendation 9

State management teams and Divisional Returning Officers actively seek and use intelligence opportunities that might exist locally that can provide useful information for stimulating enrolment and managing the rolls.

4. Planning for the majority

This chapter explores the proposed basic, national, program identified for the majority, 'mainstream' population, which for the present would be based largely on the existing mail review and allied components of the current program but 'fine-tuned' to improve outcomes.

The basic 'mainstream' program

- 4.1 The majority of the population can be identified and serviced adequately within existing roll stimulation activities, albeit with some modifications to improve outcomes and so long as these activities are actively monitored and managed to respond to changing environmental factors and to ensure an optimal mix of activities is undertaken.
- 4.2 In simple terms there are two parts to the mail review component of what currently is known as CRU: the identification of potential enrolment transactions, and the number of responses received. Through access to external agencies' data, the AEC and SEAs are probably identifying a majority of electors as they move – this conclusion is based on analysis of the quantity of mailings that are occurring.
- 4.3 CRU mailouts and allied activities generated approximately 1.36 million enrolment transactions in 2005-06, representing 66 per cent of the total of 2 million transactions processed. A significant proportion of the CRU mailouts were generated from data matching with external agency data. However, for approximately 60 per cent of letters mailed there is no response, and a number of individual letters are not sent because of address-based business rules¹⁶. Adding these provides a better indication of the level of potential transactions. In 2005-06 approximately 3.13 million¹⁷ addresses were identified for potential transactions – this represented approximately 35–40 per cent of all enrollable addresses recorded on RMANS.
- 4.4 The second part of the CRU equation is, of course, the response rate from activities, which averages around 40 per cent for most data sources. Although the commercial mailing sector would consider such a response rate as highly successful, in the context of what CRU aims to achieve there is room for improvement.
- 4.5 Nevertheless, analysis has identified that not all potential transactions are known. For example, analysis of information on South Australian (SA) Declaration Votes from the March 2006 Election shows that of 9,656 people removed previously from the roll who attended a polling place and claimed that they were left off the roll in error only 1,577 (16.3 per cent) were known

¹⁶ Address-based business rules may remove letters from the mailout for those addresses, for example, where it is unlikely that they will be delivered.

¹⁷ This figure is the number of first letters sent to the identified addresses. In total 4,559,855 letters were sent but of these 1,431,975 were reminder letters.

to CRU. At the same event of the 1,298 people claiming Declaration Votes that had no previous enrolment only 125 (8 per cent) were known to CRU – most of the unknown people were in the 18-25 age cohort.

- 4.6 There is a need for more analysis of external data, data matching and mining outputs and enrolment stimulation outcomes, to quantify much of the information that is currently anecdotal or conjecture in regards to those people the data sources might not be reaching.
- 4.7 The following elements of the basic, national, ‘mainstream program’, which should be undertaken in all jurisdictions for those areas where a reliable mail delivery service exists are:¹⁸
- identification of potential enrolment transactions through continued data matching of the rolls to quality external data with ongoing analysis occurring to understand the demographic ‘mix’, and identify gaps in the coverage, of external data;
 - reduced use of those data mining activities which largely aim at testing the quality of those already enrolled and often with a poor return for efforts. Coupled with this reduction should be increased efforts to identify potential transfers before electors are removed from the rolls;
 - continued regular mailings to those identified in dot points one and two but with a stronger emphasis on chasing potential electors (those not already enrolled) and existing electors (where there is reliable evidence that they have moved to an identified address). Emphasis should also change from an address-based approach to a more elector focus with increased use of the data held by mailing individually to all people identified at an address rather than just the one person;
 - follow-up action on those who do not respond to activities mentioned in the last dot point to be better targeted to concentrate on reaching the potential electors. Reminder letters should be sent only in exceptional circumstances where a clear business case for doing so exists. (Fieldwork and other strategies to address those people that do not respond is discussed in Chapter 6.); and
 - increased public awareness of the obligation on eligible people to maintain their own enrolment information and reduce reliance on active enrolment stimulation strategies by electoral authorities.
- 4.8 To complement the national mainstream program SOs and DOs need to be given leeway to implement locally-based enrolment strategies developed from identified demographic, geographic or socio-economic characteristics of jurisdictions.

¹⁸ By a ‘reliable mail delivery service’ it is meant where a regular delivery of mail to a street address occurs that is, where the AEC is confident a correctly addressed letter will be delivered as intended. There are opportunities, discussed later in the chapter, where areas with a restricted mail delivery service might also be included in the Mainstream Program, if Australia Post can supply information on these areas and the restrictions that exist, and the AEC captures this information in its systems.

- 4.9 Further, an increase in efforts should occur in the months preceding an electoral event, with activities such as additional data matching and mailouts and follow-up action for non-respondents (whether by telephone, fieldwork or other methods) to occur. In the case of state/territory events, these efforts should be determined and implemented in consultation with, and complement efforts by, the relevant SEA.

Active management of enrolment activities

Focussing on results

- 4.10 As discussed above, analysis and performance monitoring, and active management, are critical to the success of the proposed 'mainstream program' (or any) model. The level of monitoring and management required by continuous, rather than periodic, roll review is different. Therefore, a monitoring regime should be developed specifically for CRU as the roll review strategy.
- 4.11 Currently, monitoring of specific operational aspects occurs, such as ensuring external data is loaded for matching with the rolls, providing the mail-house with data for monthly mailouts, and so forth. However, there has been less focus on monitoring activities and results to ensure that an efficient and effective program occurs, that external data is analysed for ongoing relevance or that the whole program is balanced; not favouring detrimentally one roll integrity¹⁹ aspect over another. Also, there has been less emphasis on identifying changes in the environment and its effect on current practices and procedures.
- 4.12 As mentioned earlier, CRU has tended to evolve as an automated or systems driven process. A consequence is that emphasis has been placed on improving the efficiency of procedures, particularly in relation to information technology, rather than on monitoring what outcomes are derived from activities.

Responsiveness to a changing environment

- 4.13 Emerging trends and changes in its environment have created a number of challenges for the AEC.
- 4.14 For example, there is an emerging generation who rarely conduct business by mail and for who mail-based activities largely are irrelevant. These people mainly fall within the younger age cohorts, a traditional area of challenge to the AEC and SEAs to obtain enrolments, and are use to being able to do business immediately, either by telephone or via the Internet.
- 4.15 Through increased monitoring and identification of changing environmental factors, the AEC may be better placed to inform government and assist in developing recommendations for legislative change that will cater for the changing environment and public expectations.

¹⁹ That is, entitlement, accuracy, completeness, processing correctness and security.

Flexibility to tailor activities to the local characteristics

- 4.16 Broad national consistency in how the roll is managed is important in ensuring that all citizens receive a similar level of service, that one group is not favoured over another to the detriment of their ability to exercise their franchise and that the electoral roll is free from bias.
- 4.17 However, it must also be recognised that there are real differences amongst jurisdictions, Divisions, and even within Divisions, that need to be considered. These might be geographical issues, such as remoteness and terrain with difficult access or communications; demographic, including high concentrations of youth, indigenous or people from non-English speaking background; and socio-economic factors, such as the homeless, under-privileged and low income.
- 4.18 Therefore, there is an opportunity for some leeway for SOs and DOs to supplement the national program through tailored activities, which address local demographic characteristics, requirements and target groups. This could be undertaken through experimentation and trial to determine the best alternatives.
- 4.19 For this to occur, a formal framework for identifying, evaluating and disseminating innovation and State Managers and management teams actively facilitating this process at relevant state and national fora will be required.
- 4.20 In some areas of the AEC innovation and proactive approaches already occur that achieve encouraging results, such as:
- use of simple, locally-developed, courtesy letters to follow-up those electors who submitted deficient enrolment forms or who stated that they had sent forms but had failed to do so;
 - pre-populating enrolment forms (so that electors only had to sign the form and get it witnessed) accompanied with a hand-written with complements slip;
 - newspaper inserts and leaflet drops to post office boxes;
 - including enrolment forms in local initiatives such as council welcome packs for new residents; and
 - using local resources such as real estate agents, service club and community organisations to disseminate enrolment forms.
- 4.21 To enable staff to undertake local activities and initiatives and to more actively manage enrolment related activities, staff will require the necessary tools and skills to identify changes to the electoral roll and their relationship to an electoral cycle, and clear performance-related measures to monitor achievements.
- 4.22 In addition to encouraging innovation and improvement, staff should also be further encouraged to be outcomes and achievements-focussed, and to consider when proposing or undertaking new activities, how achievements might be measured.

The decline in numbers on the roll – 2005 to 2006

- 4.23 As mentioned earlier in this report, for electors to be removed from the roll requires no action on the part of the elector. However, to enrol, re-enrol or change their details on the roll, the elector must take positive action – they must complete an enrolment application and submit it to the AEC. This had led to an imbalance in CRU activities that could be perceived as favouring removal of people from the roll rather than encouraging enrolment.
- 4.24 In addition segments of the program that are under-performing have been identified. Operationally this manifests itself in an over emphasis of the current program on testing the quality of existing enrolments, which results in information being actively pursued on where people *are not*, rather than placing emphasis on determining where people *are*.
- 4.25 For 2005-06 the CRU program was more effective in identifying persons for removal from the roll than in the past, and this combined with objections arising from local government elections in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania resulted in a higher level of objections actioned than in previous non-election years. As a result the number of electors enrolled nationally declined from 13,114,475 at 30 June 2005 to 13,081,539 at the same time in 2006. The growth in the eligible population for 2005-06 should be added to the decline in real numbers (32,936) to gain a complete picture of the relative decline in roll numbers during that year.

An imbalance in current activities

- 4.26 The basic problem with enrolment numbers in 2005-06 was the imbalance between re-enrolments and re-instatements, and objections. During that year the CRU program was not as effective in encouraging re-enrolments as in previous years (new enrolments appeared to have been sustained at past levels for a non-election year). However, it is reasonable to conclude that, to maintain enrolment levels and participation rates, additions (through re-enrolments and re-instatements) and deletions (through objections) should be around the same level.
- 4.27 In 2005-06 no state or territory had a positive net change to existing electors; that is, where re-enrolments and re-instatements exceeded objections. Nationally there were 198,848 more objections than re-enrolments and re-instatements in 2005-06, and that trend has continued into 2006-07. Without a steady stream of new enrolments, through young people turning 18 years of age and new citizens, the rolls would have declined more than they did.²⁰
- 4.28 Further, in an attempt to identify the reason for the decline in enrolments for 2005-06, this analysis was refined to dissect changes at a state level into what is termed 'demographic changes' and 'operational changes'. Demographic changes have been determined to include new enrolments, death deletions and

²⁰ In 2005-06 there were 288,630 new enrolments and 104,832 deaths, giving a net addition to the rolls of 183,798. The difference between this figure and the net number for objections less re-enrolments and reinstatements in 2005-06 is 15,050, or nearly half of the decline in the rolls between 2004-05 and 2005-06 of 32,936 electors.

net interstate movements; conceptually demographic changes are considered to be largely outside the influence of the AEC. Generally net interstate movements were small and new enrolments nearly always exceeded death deletions so, overall, demographic changes have a positive effect on roll numbers.²¹

- 4.29 This is not the case for operational changes, where the AEC is actively influencing roll numbers by its activities. Re-enrolments, reinstatements, objections and other (net) adjustments are classified as operational changes. Analysis of enrolment for the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2006 in those states that had elections during 2006, namely, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, shows that there has been such an imbalance since at least 2001. The statistics for these jurisdictions also highlights the fact that, in the majority of instances, the only times when operational changes add to the rolls (that is, where re-enrolments and reinstatements exceed objections) are at electoral events, showing clearly the importance of elections as a catalyst for action to many people.
- 4.30 Although the available information is not conclusive, it is suspected that the imbalance has worsened since the introduction of address-based enrolment and also the MRS in early 2005. This, as mentioned earlier, is because objection action can commence that will remove an elector from the roll because they have changed address and not updated their enrolment, regardless of how far they have moved. This combined with other factors discussed elsewhere, such as the apparent lack of understanding about the obligation to re-enrol every time address changes, and that they need to do nothing to be removed from the roll, leads to a situation of electors being removed more readily than before.
- 4.31 Several items in the current CRU correspondence suite actively pursue (not necessarily by design) information on where people have left their enrolled addresses. For example, 'Enrolment Activity' letters (where people update their enrolment and the AEC then reviews that address to confirm any existing enrolments) in 2005-06, from 165,997 letters sent, generated 3,276 new or re-enrolments and 42,474 electors for the objections file.²² For 'Enrolment Limits' (where the number of people enrolled exceeds a determined maximum for the particular type of residence) 15,009 letters were sent, 363 new or re-enrolments occurred and 14,311 records were added to the objections file; and for 'Non-Reviewed Addresses' (those not reviewed by any other means in the last two years) 12,160 new or re-enrolments occurred and 38,157 people were added to the objections file.
- 4.32 Other CRU activities also obtain information that might lead to people being removed from the rolls. For example, Australia Post (AP) change of address data aims at identifying enrolment transfers and, with a response rate of

²¹ Generally the AEC and SEAs have reasonably effective activities in place, such as access to fact of death information and education and Centrelink youth data, to identify those changes that might be classified as 'demographic changes'.

²² Not all people added to the objections file actually end up being removed from the rolls but currently the proportion that are removed is estimated at around 80 per cent.

around 40 per cent, is reasonably effective at obtaining such transfers. However, in addition to assisting to identify enrolment transfers, AP data was instrumental in 2005-06 in identifying 13,603 new or re-enrolments but also resulted in 73,000 electors added to the objections file. AP reminder letters gained another 10,658 new and re-enrolments but generated a further 19,679 potential objections.

- 4.33 The removal of people who are not living at their presently enrolled address is a valid undertaking in maintaining an accurate roll but electoral authorities need to ensure that this activity is not undertaken at the expense of actively pursuing the elector at their new address. The difficulty for electoral authorities is that available evidence suggests that some people removed from the rolls never return.
- 4.34 For example, analysis has determined that of the new²³ electors removed from the rolls after the 2004 Federal Election; about 65 per cent (approximately 102,000) had not re-enrolled up to 30 June 2006. Other analyses show similar patterns. A more recent finding is that the majority of those that have not re-enrolled fall in the under-40 age cohort, especially in the traditionally difficult cohort to encourage and maintain enrolment, the 18-25 year olds.
- 4.35 The balance in the current program could be improved by increasing the emphasis on actively pursuing those who have moved so that they might update their enrolment before they are removed from the roll.
- 4.36 The balance might be improved further if, before objection action is taken, and later before it's finalised, attempts to match the individual to external data are undertaken to enable the active pursuit of an update to an elector's enrolment in the first instance.

Underperforming activities

- 4.37 Several aspects of the current CRU program appear not to be generating enrolment transactions commensurate with the resources expended. However, as indicated above, the available data does not allow a complete analysis.
- 4.38 Therefore, it is suggested that aspects of the current program be suspended rather than abandoned. As further data becomes available, more analysis can be undertaken to determine if these activities should be reinstated. However, by suspending these activities, in the interim, resources can be reallocated to more productive activities.
- 4.39 Some of these apparently underperforming activities are discussed in the following paragraphs.

²³ New electors are those who were enrolled with no previous history. That is, they were enrolled for the first time.

Reminder letters

4.40 The value of reminder letters in most circumstances is questionable as only a relatively small proportion of responses come from reminder letters.

4.41 There are three factors which may influence the rate of response:

- there is no significant increase in the tone of language or other changes to indicate that the person's failure to enrol from the first letter has prompted potentially more severe consequences for that person - the current reminder letter only differs from the first letter in having 'Reminder' in bold print at the top;
- the time lag between the first letter and the reminder letter is too long; and
- the AEC does not follow through with compulsory enrolment action.

Two-year review of addresses

4.42 The AEC applies the principle that every address should be reviewed at least once every two years. The strategy for reviewing addresses is to apply what is known as "background review". Background review flags addresses where the residents also appear at that address in external data, resulting in the bulk of addresses being flagged as reviewed without manual intervention being needed. Those addresses not picked up by this data match are included in mailouts.

4.43 On the surface, mailing to addresses under this strategy appears to be effective. In 2005-06, for just over 500,000 addresses reviewed there was a good response rate of just over 60 per cent. However, of those responses, 80 per cent (247,988) were 'no change' – that is, nearly half of the 500,000 addresses reviewed. Although it might be argued that such information is confirming the ongoing accuracy of the current roll, its value is questionable at an estimated (conservatively) cost of half a million dollars per annum.

4.44 Further, consideration should to be given as to whether Background Review occurs unless there is a specific business case for reviewing the accuracy of existing enrolments. If it is considered that background review should occur, then the matching process needs to be improved to avoid unnecessary mailings²⁴ and more consideration given to what follow-up action is appropriate for those records that do not match.

'From' addresses

4.45 Mailing to 'from' addresses is another area that has been identified where current practices might be improved. From addresses are those obtained from data suppliers (mainly AP, but also from some road transport authorities) that relate to the address from which a person has moved. It is, in effect, flagging a newly vacated address.

²⁴ For example, where an address on RMANS includes a habitation name and this does not appear in the external data. This situation resulted in one Review member receiving a review letter, despite the fact that no change in circumstances had occurred at the address for several years.

- 4.46 There are some issues surrounding the use of 'from' addresses. Firstly, as there is no name available for the from address the letter is sent to 'The Current Resident' and may then, in the absence of any effort to distinguish the letter, be seen by recipients as junk mail. Secondly, there is the difficulty in gaining delivery of 'The Current Resident' mail in rural and remote areas – this issue is dealt with further commencing at paragraph 4.64.
- 4.47 In addition, some 'from' addresses will become a 'to' address as data relating to a new potential elector for the address comes to the AEC. Effectively, the cycle of people from address to address and the use of that information to mail to a potential elector (a 'to' letter), will take care of the need to mail to a 'from' address.
- 4.48 It is considered that vacant addresses are dealt with effectively by that part of the CRU program that looks specifically at these addresses. Therefore, there appears to be no advantage in mailing to 'from' addresses, especially with the generally poor response rates achieved.

System inflexibility, infrequent mailouts, the age and quality of data

- 4.49 Efforts to gain operational efficiency in processes have been to the detriment of effectiveness in some areas. This has made the current system somewhat inflexible and lacking in responsiveness where *ad hoc* enrolment stimulation opportunities arise.
- 4.50 By concentrating information into more efficiently sized batches, some of that information becomes dated before it is being actioned. At the time that it is actioned potential client's information might be many months old and no longer relevant, which affects the ultimate outcome trying to be achieved.
- 4.51 The fact that AEC enrolment stimulation activities need to be undertaken in a much more timely manner is especially important given challenges of a mobile society.
- 4.52 The suspension of the CRU program for a lengthy period, say for an election, will also cause data to become many months old before it can be used. After such suspensions in the program, data should be checked to determine its relevance.
- 4.53 Similarly, there is some evidence that the information that the AEC obtains from Commonwealth and state/territory agencies is of a quality that leads to poor matching with elector data. The result is that potential electors can be missed because mail is removed before posting, or if sent, is not received.
- 4.54 The quality of the external data is also impacted by its currency, that is, it includes old information.

Culling of matched and unmatched records

- 4.55 The time-consuming process of attempting to resolve 'unmatched' addresses occurs each month before CRU mailouts so that the system can automatically action these at the next stage of processing. However, often this activity is

limited to cleaning up the unmatched record just to enable the system to cull that record. The process would be made easier by returning some culling abilities to Divisions²⁵.

- 4.56 However, the benefit in reviewing unmatched addresses at all is questionable, as spending staff time and effort in cleaning dirty data only to allow the system to cull those data would appear to be of little value. Statistics show that in 2005-06, 121,264 unmatched addresses were used in mailouts (compared to 4.4 million matched addresses). Figures on how many enrolment forms resulted are not available.
- 4.57 It is therefore arguable that unmatched records should be checked by divisional staff only for the purpose of amending the record to allow mail to be delivered, and any that remain unmatched simply be discarded.

A suggested approach

- 4.58 To improve the effectiveness of activities and remove waste from the current program, the following modifications to existing practices are suggested:
- objection batches to be matched to external data sets to attempt to identify current addresses for electors facing removal from the rolls;
 - activities to be undertaken more frequently (even by manual methods, if this is necessary) for people identified as potential electors;
 - the suspension of:
 - reminder letters in most circumstances;
 - the review of addresses under the ‘two-year rule’;
 - mailing to ‘from’ addresses (the quantum of these letters may be low if there is more frequent mailing to potential electors – see also 4.46);
 - not using old data, for example when the program is suspended for an electoral event, unless these data have been checked for currency;
 - the data source be included on all CRU-generated enrolment stimulation letters;
 - divisional staff be provided with the facility to cull as well as amend records from matched and unmatched batches; and
 - any unmatched records remaining after being divisional staff have made corrections to allow mail to be delivered, be discarded.
- 4.59 In addition, consideration should to be given as to whether to continue the background review process should the suspension of the review of addresses under the 2 year rule be adopted.
- 4.60 The balanced approach suggested will require careful consideration of the timing of activities to avoid the possibility of the accuracy of the rolls declining in the short term. The greater emphasis on the pursuit of electors to

²⁵ A better outcome could be for divisional staff to identify such addresses and have them flagged in the system so that staff do not have to cull these addresses manually each time they might appear in data.

update their enrolment before they are removed from the roll will, if successful, lead to both accurate and more complete rolls. Therefore, the suspension of activities cannot be done in isolation from increased efforts to pursue actively electors using available information, coupled with increased public awareness activity (see later in this chapter). An additional requirement of this approach will be the management of stakeholders' expectations to avoid perceptions that the rolls are being manipulated only to improve participation. However, the balanced approach that suggested will ensure that accuracy is addressed as a product of the strategy.

Business Rules

- 4.61 Business rules underpin what the CRU program does and how it functions. They can determine how data are matched, what will be mailed and how, and what will cull from mailing. As CRU has developed, the rules that are applied have become complex, and in some cases inconsistent, outdated or simply redundant. With staff turnover, the original principles behind some rules have been lost, leading to them being misunderstood or misinterpreted. This is made more difficult because the recording of the business rules has not been documented consistently.
- 4.62 It is also possible that relevant areas of the AEC are not using the existing system to its full potential because the business rules are not widely known or understood.

Australia Post mail delivery service

- 4.63 There are difficulties with AP mail deliveries in many areas that reduce the effectiveness of current enrolment stimulation activities. In particular, the level of mail returned undelivered that bears clear indications that it never left the post office. This is especially relevant where the letters are to 'The Current Resident', and primarily affects rural and remote Divisions where special delivery arrangements might exist, for example with people collecting their mail from the local post office or shop. There is also limited or no street delivery in some provincial towns and remote communities. Further, in remote and rural areas a single address can have more than one residence and/or groups of families.
- 4.64 Special mail collection arrangements often are the reason that CRU mail is returned. For example, letters with an apparently valid address cannot be delivered because the local mail delivery point only knows people's names and not their addresses. In such cases sending a letter to 'The Current Resident', even when these have an apparently valid address, may not be delivered. Similarly mail will not reach vacant addresses, and might not be delivered if the address is a lot number, Roadside Mail Box number, or property name.
- 4.65 It can be difficult to define the exact areas because mail delivery to a residential address may occur within parts of an area but not other parts.
- 4.66 Feedback from AP as to why mail might not be deliverable also is variable with apparently illogical information marked on the undelivered mail sticker

(which only provides four options: insufficient address, left address/unknown, refused and unclaimed). Examples are letters 'To The Current Resident' marked left address/unknown and addresses with AP Delivery Point Identifiers (DPIDs) returned undeliverable as insufficiently addressed.

- 4.67 These issues have been raised with AP. Further discussion will occur to develop a protocol/MOU and in particular, to provide specific feedback with examples of mail delivery problems.
- 4.68 A separate review undertaken by Walter Turnbull of return-to-sender mail has made specific recommendations with respect to these issues. One recommendation is for the establishment of locally based committees, comprising representatives of relevant agencies including the AEC, AP and local councils, to manage addressing issues.

Making better use of the information provided by Australia Post

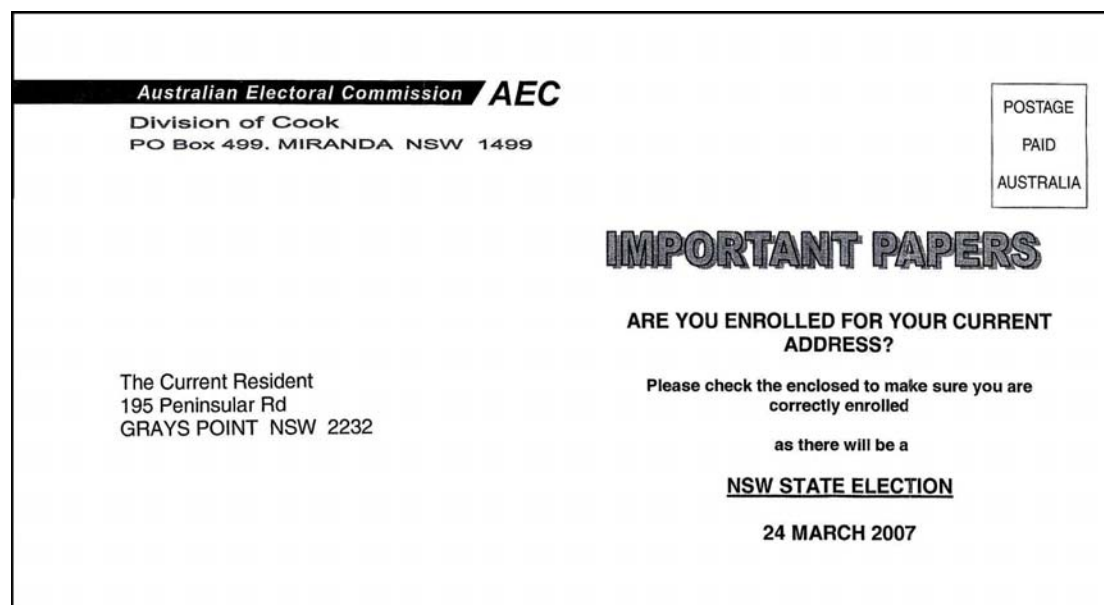
- 4.69 AP is able to provide the AEC with some information on areas with mail delivery limitations. While the effective use of this information by the AEC has been an issue, the AEC is working on its integration into its processes.
- 4.70 RMANS contains an exclusion table that can be used to manage the areas where there might be difficulties with mail deliveries, with Divisions being able to request information be added to the hierarchical table by CCD, GDB, locality and post code. Individual addresses can be notated for non-delivery.
- 4.71 Revised business rules now allow mailing to postal addresses rather than a street address. Previously the street address would override the post box or postal delivery address. As the change was recently made, it is not possible to determine the effect of the change at the time of the writing of this report.

Letters

- 4.72 The wording of AEC letters has been raised consistently by staff, with the broad consensus being that the current suite of letters, especially CRU letters, needs urgent improvement and, as such, should get high priority.
- 4.73 Currently, the objectives and content of the letters are subject to a review with the aim of increasing responses, particularly the submission of enrolment forms, by:
- Simplifying the message of the letters and the language used to deliver the message;
 - Giving priority to contact with individuals, especially potential electors and electors who have moved, rather than trying to cover all individuals and situations at a residence in a single letter; and
 - Distinguishing electoral correspondence from junk mail.
- 4.74 With respect to the last point, it is arguable that letters addressed to 'The Current Resident' are considered to be junk mail in many cases and therefore, not opened. The first challenge is, therefore, to have the recipient open the envelope and read its contents.

- 4.75 It has been suggested using the front of the envelope to give a message – an example is provided following this paragraph. Although the message in the example is targeted to an election, appropriate messages that aim to have the recipient open the letter should be at least trialled.

Figure 1: An example of a possible message for CRU envelopes



Source: Milan Kuban Divisional Returning Officer for Cook, New South Wales.

Pre-populated enrolment forms

- 4.76 In the short-term there are opportunities to make the enrolment form more user-friendly to the average elector. This can occur through better use of available technology; to pre-populate enrolment forms using available data and by improving enrolment via the Internet.
- 4.77 Pre-population of enrolment forms already occurs in some situations but there are opportunities to expand this practice in the medium term. The most common pre-populated form used is that prepared by DIAC for participants at citizenship ceremonies. These forms have been used for several years, contain basic information on the new citizen, including the important data of the citizen number and date of grant, and only require the person check that the printed information is correct, fill in any missing information, including their driver's licence number or undertake another POI option and sign the form. These forms are successful, with enrolments from citizenship ceremonies being of the order of 85 per cent plus in most jurisdictions.
- 4.78 In response to receiving defective forms, a more limited use of pre-populated enrolment forms occurs in some Divisions. In these instances DO staff manually pre-populate enrolment forms on the basis of the information provided and send these to the relevant electors with tags showing what needs to be corrected. DROs report a very good response, with return rates far above those for any CRU activity.

- 4.79 The New Zealand authorities allow citizens to “apply” for enrolment over the Internet. This is not direct enrolment but rather the information provided is entered onto the enrolment form, which is then sent to the elector for signing and return to the electoral authority.
- 4.80 A similar approach might be possible within the existing mail-based activities, with information gleaned from external data matching being used to pre-populate the enrolment form sent to those identified as potential transactions. Privacy concerns would be overcome by sending individually addressed forms rather than all forms to an apparent 'head of household'. A suitably worded letter would advise the elector that the AEC identified the change (it should be possible to extend this initiative also to new enrolments - after all the majority of new citizens enrol via pre-populated forms, albeit produced by a trusted agency), requesting the recipient check that the information is correct, provide their driver's licence number or undertake another POI option, and sign and return the form.
- 4.81 There would need to be robust business rules and procedures to avoid a significant number of inappropriate forms being generated. For example, pre-populated forms might be restricted to those already enrolled, or with a previous history of enrolment, to avoid (as is the case already) sending an invitation to enrol to the ineligible. Similarly, to ensure the integrity of required POI aspects pre-populated forms sourced from motor transport data would not include the driver's licence number - the elector would still be required to enter this information. Finally, any pre-population of enrolment forms sent to the newly eligible electors would occur only from trusted-source data, where the AEC had confidence a robust POI checking regime existed.

Increased public awareness about enrolment

- 4.82 Whilst there might be a number of reasons why some people are not enrolling, research²⁶ indicates that one of the reasons might be a lack of understanding of the basic system. That is, some people appear not to be aware that they need to update their enrolment whenever they change address.
- 4.83 Similarly, some people appear to assume that enrolment or updating of enrolment details after changing address occurs automatically, through the sharing of information amongst agencies.
- 4.84 These misunderstandings and assumptions highlight that there should be a greater emphasis on the obligation of electors for maintaining enrolment information, as discussed earlier in the report.
- 4.85 Strategies to turn the focus of obligation back towards the elector might include:
- specific and regular awareness campaigns on basic electoral requirements including to advise electors that they can be removed from the rolls if they do not update their information in a timely manner; and

²⁶ Eureka Strategic Research. *Campaign Development*. June 2006.

- greater use of AEC mailouts, such as CRU letters and acknowledgement cards, to reinforce the message that every change of circumstances should be notified.

Linking enrolment stimulation activities to the electoral cycle

- 4.86 The final component of the suggested ‘mainstream program’ is to align enrolment stimulation activities with the electoral cycle, by increasing activities in the lead-up to electoral events. It is not that people necessarily are refusing to enrol but rather enrolment outside of an imminent election appears to have lesser importance.
- 4.87 Existing activities, such as mailouts and fieldwork, might be increased in the ramp-up period, say in the nine months before an expected event. Additional strategies such as the use of reminder letters, undertaking fieldwork if a response was not received within one month, telephone contact, increased local presence at shopping centres, community activities and the like, could also occur.
- 4.88 These activities could be complemented by heightened advertising campaigns to help make people aware that an election was coming and the AEC was undertaking an ‘enrolment drive’. This could largely occur at a local level as well as having a concerted national campaign. This might include:
- inserts and/or advertisements in local newspapers,
 - short messages on drive-time radio; and
 - possibly, outdoor advertisements along side important roads and freeway overpasses, and at busy bus and train stations.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 10

Ensure that State Offices and Divisions have the flexibility to supplement the national enrolment stimulation program with activities tailored to identified local demographic characteristics, requirements and target groups and allow some controlled experimentation and trial as necessary, in developing local enrolment stimulation strategies.

Recommendation 11

A formal process of identifying, evaluating and disseminating innovation in regards to roll management and enrolment stimulation be introduced, with State Managers and management teams actively facilitating this process at relevant state and national fora.

Recommendation 12

While encouraging local innovation, ensure, wherever possible, that performance monitoring occurs.

Recommendation 13

Implement the following modifications to existing CRU practices:

- objection batches to be matched to external data sets to attempt to identify current addresses for electors facing removal from the rolls;
- the suspension of:
 - reminder letters in most circumstances;
 - the review of addresses under the ‘two-year rule’;
 - mailings to ‘from’ addresses;
- activities to be undertaken more frequently (even by manual methods, if this is necessary) for people identified as potential electors;
- not using old data, for example when the program is suspended for an electoral event, unless these data have been checked for currency;
- the data source be included on all CRU-generated enrolment stimulation letters,
- divisional staff be provided with the facility to cull as well as amend records from matched and unmatched batches; and
- any unmatched records remaining after being divisional staff have made corrections to allow mail to be delivered, be discarded..

In addition, consideration will need to be given to the need to continue the background review process should the suspension of the review of addresses under the 2 year rule be adopted.

Recommendation 14

Improve the documentation on business rules so that they are clearly documented, comprehensive, accessible, recognisable, correct and relevant. As part of this process, prepare simple checklists for use by Divisional staff.

Recommendation 15

Improve business rules management and monitoring involving:

- more effective involvement of operational staff in maintaining business rules;
- introducing a more formal process for instigating and prioritising requests for business rule changes, including approval by an appropriate manager within the Roll Management Branch;
- implementation of a program of systematic review of business rules to ensure they are meeting their intended purpose. This activity to be undertaken jointly by IT programmers and suitably experienced operational staff; and
- allocation of consistent, appropriate resources for scoping, developing and testing of business rules prior to systems being released into production.

Recommendation 16

Return some culling abilities to Divisions when investigating unmatched addresses for CRU mailouts but with the strict understanding that State Offices will monitor performance and Divisions will, if required, need to justify their performance. Further, investigate the benefit in continuing to review unmatched addresses at all and abandon this activity if the returns are not commensurate with the time and effort expended.

Recommendation 17

Progress the current review of correspondence (especially that related to enrolment stimulation activities) as a high priority. Investigate the feasibility of introducing a suitable message on the front CRU-mailout envelopes, especially in the period leading up to electoral events.

Recommendation 18

Introduce a continuing program of public awareness into the basic requirements for enrolment, with the aim in the long-term of increasing the number of people taking responsibility for maintaining their own enrolment information without the need for continual active prompting by electoral authorities.

Recommendation 19

Align enrolment stimulation activities closely with the electoral cycle and increase efforts in the months preceding an electoral event. In the case of state/territory events, these efforts should be determined and implemented in consultation with, and complement efforts by, the relevant State or Territory Electoral Authority.

5. Engaging the minorities²⁷

Issues relating to engaging the groups that form minorities in the electoral context have not been considered in detail as part of this review. The issues are complex and more difficult to remedy than for the mainstream electoral population. This chapter will explore some of the issues for these groups.

Introduction

- 5.1 Consistency in encouraging enrolment and processing applications for enrolment, and providing a comparable service to all eligible persons is important in ensuring that one group is not favoured unreasonably over another. Nevertheless, there are groups of potential electors for whom the strategies and activities considered appropriate for the mainstream population are not effective for geographic, demographic and socio-economic reasons. For these groups separate strategies are required, in addition to those required for the mainstream CRU program, to adequately service the identified target populations.
- 5.2 These groups have been identified as young people and indigenous peoples, the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), the homeless, the socio-economically disadvantaged and people with disabilities. In the enrolment context it has been the first two groups that have been the main target groups for which electoral authorities have faced additional challenges in maintaining enrolment numbers. However, there is often an interrelationship of factors and it is rare for any group to present singular characteristics. For example, mobility is a common factor for the mainstream population including some target groups such as youth, indigenous and the homeless.
- 5.3 Further, it is identified that there is a need for specific enrolment stimulation strategies for rural and remote communities, for which the mainstream CRU program, based largely as it is on reliable mail delivery, cannot service adequately.

Young people

Demographic Profile

- 5.4 Young people are one of the most mobile population groups and the probability of electors moving location is highest during the peak mobility years of around 20–35. Most moves for young people are within their local region, with only about 11 per cent moving interstate. However, it should be noted that between 1996 and 2001 almost three times as many young people left country areas than arrived. Nearly two-thirds of the net outflow of these young people was to capital cities.

²⁷ Minorities is referred to in the electoral context.

Current enrolment activities and outcomes

- 5.5 For many years the AEC and SEAs have recognised that young people require particular effort to encourage their electoral participation. The AEC’s attempts to increase youth enrolment rely, to some degree, on its public awareness and education programs, in particular its program of school visits with an emphasis on secondary schools.
- 5.6 In addition, young people are captured by mainstream CRU activities. National activities are augmented by various local enrolment initiatives undertaken by SOs, sometimes in conjunction with state/territory electoral authorities. However, the extent of implementation of such initiatives varies depending on the individual jurisdiction.
- 5.7 The AEC and Electoral Council of Australia have established a performance measure to enrol 80 per cent of 18 to 25 year olds. Nevertheless, as shown in the following table younger people are not well represented on the roll, despite the AEC’s and SEAs’ efforts over many years.

Table 4: Enrolment 18-25 year olds – percentage of the eligible population

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust.
30 Jun 2006	74.30	82.09	71.58	77.36	80.33	86.40	81.93	61.14	76.69
30 Jun 2005	78.56	85.95	77.34	83.44	80.83	87.52	86.58	67.00	81.01
30 Jun 2004	80.79	84.45	81.15	75.95	76.79	85.88	82.66	61.94	80.90

- 5.8 At the national level youth enrolment has declined. Jurisdictions other than Queensland and New South Wales saw a peak period around the time of the 2004 Federal Election however this rate was not sustained post election. This trend may be partly related to the increase in public awareness and fieldwork activities in the lead up to an election.
- 5.9 In addition, results vary with individual ages. For 18 year olds the national result consistently hovers around that achieved at 30 June 2006 of 48.72 per cent – in no jurisdiction is the performance target met for 18 year olds. The target is met in some jurisdictions for the 19 and 20 year olds. The 21–25 years cohort exceeds the performance target but is well below the general population target of 95 per cent.
- 5.10 It appears that existing external data sources are effective to a point in identifying potential youth electors and their movements. However, a significant proportion of the youth population is either not being picked up by the external data sources or, when they are, the recipients are not responding to the CRU mail despite the AEC’s public awareness and education efforts. However, the AEC sees merit in enrolment drives continuing to focus on secondary schools and the birthday card initiative, as well as introducing an “enrol to vote” week aimed particularly at schools. In addition, O-week drives on university campuses have had some success and should continue.

Studies into young people's behaviour

- 5.11 AEC, and other research, has examined elector habits and attitudes including why young people are not readily enrolling or updating their enrolment.^{28 29} The following reasons consistently arise:
- inertia and apathy (eg young people indicated that they are likely to wait to be told to enrol rather than take the initiative);
 - other 'life' priorities more important;
 - disenchantment with the political system;
 - a sense of disempowerment and disconnection, including scepticism about their ability to have impact on outcomes and policies;
 - lack of understanding about the enrolment process (for example, assumptions that enrolment is automatic or that you can enrol on-line, and not realising that enrolment was a prerequisite to voting and that address details need to be kept up to date);
 - perceptions about the 'hassle' of enrolling (such as the fact that it can't be done electronically);
 - awareness of enrolling at 17 years of age is low; and
 - electronic means of communication favoured amongst the young rather than the more traditional methods of posted mail.
- 5.12 These findings support the importance of the AEC's public awareness and education initiatives to stimulating enrolment. It also suggests that public awareness programs should not only encourage enrolment, but also explain how to enrol and when to change enrolment details. In this context the AEC is implementing a national scheme whereby a birthday card will be sent to 17 and 18 year olds, and organised an 'enrol to vote' week, which commenced on 28 May, with the involvement of over 1,700 secondary schools across the country.
- 5.13 The AEC's existing youth enrolment programs are achieving some success, however enrolment rates for young people are still relatively low. The AEC's primary strategies – using CRU mail outs and secondary school visit programs – do not reach all potential electors. Those who are reached are not responding to the CRU mail in high numbers. Others who initially enrol appear to be moving (eg: leaving home) and not refreshing their enrolments, and therefore do not remain on the roll.
- 5.14 Overall, the findings of the AEC's research emphasise the need for the AEC to use a range of innovative strategies that will engage the interest of young people and provide various easily accessible avenues to enrol and update their details. While the legal framework does not, for example, permit online enrolment, there may be other avenues for making enrolment more accessible. Electoral awareness programs for secondary schools could be influential in

²⁸ For example, *Youth Electoral Study* and pre 1998 Federal Election focus groups.

²⁹ Eureka Strategic Research. *Campaign Development*. June 2006.

developing positive attitudes to enrolling and AEC activities being undertaken should be continued.

- 5.15 Of note is the generally held belief that under-enrolment is contained to the 18-25yr age bracket. Whilst this was so in the past however, analysis indicates that under-enrolment is extending to older age brackets. For example, there is under-enrolment through to the age of 39.

Indigenous populations

Demographic Profile

- 5.16 The number of people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) has been increasing each census and for the 2001 Census, 410,000 people identified as being of ATSI origin. While the largest proportion of indigenous peoples lived in major cities (31 per cent), almost half (49 per cent) lived in outer regional, remote and very remote areas combined, compared with 13 per cent of the total Australian population.³⁰
- 5.17 Indigenous people represent very small proportions of the total population in metropolitan regions. However, in remote regions, they represent a larger proportion of small total populations and generally live in small, dispersed communities. The indigenous population is much more widely spread across Australia than the total population. These differences have implications for the way enrolment services are delivered and the cost of providing those services.
- 5.18 A Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) report in 1991 observed that many indigenous people were electorally disadvantaged for a range of reasons including restricted access to electoral information, remoteness, and low levels of general education.³¹
- 5.19 The indigenous population itself is not homogeneous, but as a group exhibit several characteristics that singularly and in combination present challenges to electoral authorities in encouraging and maintaining enrolment. These include mobility rate, age profile, education and literacy, geographic isolation, the manner of urbanisation, cultural issues, language and communication, economic circumstances.

Current enrolment activities and outcomes

- 5.20 The AEC employs casual Community Education and Information Officers (CEIOs) to conduct pre-election public awareness programs and enrolment update work in indigenous communities in remote and some rural locations during the lead up to Federal Elections.
- 5.21 The CEIO program relies largely upon the CEIO employee having local contacts on which to build, or the skills and credibility to establish, good

³⁰ *Population Distribution: Population characteristics and remoteness*, Australian Social Trends, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003.

³¹ *Aboriginal and Islander Electoral Information Service*, Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. September 1991.

relationships. A face-to-face approach has almost universally been identified as the best way to work with indigenous communities. This activity results in an enrolment snapshot at a point in time, however longer-term benefits can be accrued.

- 5.22 The AEC is currently developing a national communications strategy targeting indigenous Australians, and is seeking to improve the reach and effectiveness of the CEIO program as well as ensuring the effective integration the three key areas of focus being public awareness, enrolment and voting. For example national public awareness materials may be too generic and not necessarily representing the diversity amongst indigenous peoples, such as the different needs of urban and remote people.
- 5.23 More generally, AEC staff attend key indigenous events and festivals, such as NAIDOC week and *Croc fest*. Also there are some targeted mail-outs (eg to indigenous organisations, school presentations and enrolment stalls at community stores. Further, there is networking with indigenous community groups, peak bodies and community representatives in other government agencies, and undertaking of field visits and the development of partnerships with other government agencies to help deliver services to indigenous clients.
- 5.24 It is not possible to measure the participation rate of indigenous people as they are not identified as such on the electoral roll. However, inferences might be drawn from looking at the available statistics for Divisions such Lingiari, which has a high proportion of indigenous people but also has a lower enrolment participation rate.
- 5.25 A 2001 survey³² of indigenous people in regional and remote locations found that indigenous respondents were less likely to be enrolled than non-indigenous respondents. However, in these locations there are likely to be a series of interwoven factors that affect enrolment rates, such as distance from services, socio-economic circumstances, and mobility.
- 5.26 Factors influencing the participation of indigenous people in democratic processes have been categorised as follows:
- historical
 - cultural
 - degree of understanding of political and government processes
 - concern about being fined when they finally enrol
 - apathy/disillusionment with the political process
 - the importance of voting
 - other 'life' priorities being more important

³² *indigenous people's response to the Australian Electoral Commission's 2001 Federal Election Advertising Campaign*, ARTD Management and Research Consultants, December 2001.

- education/literacy levels.³³

5.27 There have been various research reports in recent years that discuss these issues.³⁴

Conclusions for indigenous populations

5.28 Analysis has shown that the CRU mail/non response fieldwork program is not an effective way of reaching indigenous people, particularly in remote and rural areas.

5.29 The Northern and Central Australian Remote Area Strategy (NACARAS) working group, established by the AEC, has responsibility for developing more effective models for conducting roll review activities in rural and remote Australia.

5.30 More broadly, the working Group will ensure a consistent electoral service by:

- Developing a national policy and framework on regional/remote electoral service delivery across Northern and Central Australia, including Western New South Wales.
- Developing service standards for the delivery of electoral services across regional/remote Northern and Central Australia, including Western New South Wales.

Other groups

5.31 Other groups that the AEC has identified that require specific strategies to address enrolment participation include: the homeless, the culturally and linguistically diverse, people with disabilities, people living in rural and remote areas of Australia, people living in a CBD, and people who are highly mobile.

5.32 The issues for all of these groups of people relate mainly to one of access: this access is two-way - both the AEC getting access to these groups of people as well as those groups accessing the AEC and the electoral process.

5.33 While not presenting any specific recommendations for the electoral minority groups, there are a number of issues that deserve detailed consideration and discussion. Some of these issues reflect those raised in the report on the majority, but may require tailoring to suit the relevant target group. These issues have been identified in research already footnoted in this report and are the subject of remedial strategies introduced or scheduled for introduction in

³³ *Hands on Parliament – A parliamentary committee inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation in Queensland's democratic processes*, Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, Legislative Assembly of Queensland, September 2003.

³⁴ *Investigation of remote area enrolment*, Australian Electoral Commission and Roger James and Associates. Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, October 1995.

³⁴ *Australian Electoral Commission – Indigenous Research Informing the AEC 2007 Election Campaign*, Winangali P/L, 2006.

³⁴ *Political Exclusion and Electronic Conduits to Civic (Re) Engagement in Australia*, Alport K and Hill L, Paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Newcastle, September 2006.

the near future. For completeness, the issues identified in the review are listed below:

- Development of individual Divisional client profiles specifying demographic, geographic, logistical and electoral characteristics and enrolment data (work has commenced on such profiles). These profiles could be used to identify issues and develop enrolment programs for target groups. Divisions will require tools, support and time to be able to effectively contribute to and interpret the profiles.
- Design and conduct focus group/client survey studies and other research with a focus on achieving improved enrolment outcomes for identified target groups and their sub-groups.
- Improvement in accountability for, and monitoring and reporting of, enrolment activities and outcomes for target groups.
- Divisions (or groups of Divisions with similar client bases) having more scope to tailor enrolment programs to meet the unique characteristics and needs of their area of responsibility. (eg: develop a process whereby they can submit business plans for resourcing.)
- Exploration of options to work cooperatively and develop partnerships with other government agencies, especially to reach remote areas and indigenous people (currently underway).
- Introduction of more frequent and structured 'face to face' activities with target audiences in urban, rural and remote locations, including fieldwork, promotional events, and presentations to community organisations (currently underway in some areas).
- An increase in Divisional and State Office efforts to establish and maintain relationships with community organisations representing target groups (currently underway).
- Examination of improved use of technology to make enrolment easier, including change of address and enrolment by Internet, and use of email, telephone/text (SMS) (SMS to be trialled) and facsimile.
- Proactive pursuit of electors who have been taken off the roll to attempt to identify their new location and encourage re-enrolment.
- Implementation of ongoing and innovative public awareness, education and advertising programs for different geographical areas and target groups (and their sub-groups) based on their individual needs (currently underway).
- Conduct of analysis of 2006 Census Data and comparing with the 2001 demographic results to identify potential enrolment related issues for further investigation. Exploration of other opportunities for improving the AEC's ability to analyse its client base and enrolment status.

6. The need for follow-up activities

Despite the best efforts of electoral authorities there are going to be some people who continue to ignore letters seeking their enrolment, who will not be aware or not understand the messages from education and public awareness initiative or who are just not engaged.

Although mentioned elsewhere in this report, this chapter comments specifically on follow-up activities, particularly the benefits or otherwise of undertaking various types of fieldwork.

Introduction

- 6.1 For 2005-06, response rates for CRU mail activities averaged 35 per cent and gained 760,000 enrolment forms from a total mailout of 4.5 million addresses (this figure includes reminder letters) – an overall ‘enrolment form rate’ of one in six, and therefore non-respondents represent one of two significant groups of potential enrolment. The other group is formerly enrolled people who have never re-enrolled after being removed from the rolls (there is likely to be some overlap between these two groups).
- 6.2 Therefore, some consideration is necessary on appropriate responses to those who fail to enrol, or update their enrolment, when requested to do so.

Current follow-up activities

- 6.3 The primary follow-up activity the AEC undertakes currently is fieldwork and generally this is one of two types:
- Non-Response, where Review Officers visit people who have not responded to previous AEC correspondence asking them to enrol. This type of fieldwork concentrates efforts in visiting only addresses already identified by other means as potential enrolment transactions – those mentioned in paragraph 6.1; and
 - Growth/GDB, which is similar to the former full habitation reviews. Its objective is to identify areas of high growth or turnover and review all addresses in those selected areas instead of only specific addresses identified as potential transactions.
- 6.4 In addition, in response to the decline in enrolment during 2005-06 and because 2007 will be a federal election year, the AEC commenced a national targeted review of residences. This review is described in more detail in the Postscript to this report.
- 6.5 At present the AEC’s National Standard for CRU Activities requires that Non-Response Fieldwork occur in each jurisdiction at least once per year – in the last couple of years this requirement has not been met in some states. Growth/GDB Fieldwork also is mentioned in the National Standard but ‘only as required or as funds permit’; when Growth Fieldwork is proposed it is generally considered on a case-by-case basis.

- 6.6 Few other follow-up activities have occurred but one of note was a 2000 trial undertaken in Queensland of telephoning those who did not respond to CRU letters. Aside from the difficulties in identifying a current telephone number for many people, the main issues identified were the high number of addresses with ineligible people and the low return rate for enrolment forms. Although the reaction from the public to this initiative was overwhelmingly positive, only 269 enrolment forms from 1,701 sent (16.1 per cent) were returned – this was despite, in many cases, the person asking that the AEC send further forms.³⁵
- 6.7 Although acknowledging that public attitudes to receiving telephone calls from the AEC might be less favourable than in 2000, telephone reviews could be worth examining further to address gaps in CRU, especially in areas of challenge such as rural and secure access buildings.

The case for and against fieldwork

- 6.8 The main concern identified in relation to undertaking follow-up activities is the level of resourcing that is required. Analysis shows that the direct cost of obtaining an enrolment form can average as little as \$1.93 for an AP change of address sourced letter.³⁶ However, the direct cost of an enrolment form from Non-Response Fieldwork, for example, can vary from \$8 to \$26 depending on the jurisdiction, with the national average for this type of fieldwork in 2005-06 being \$14 per enrolment form. Based on the generally poorer results obtained, the direct cost per enrolment form for other fieldwork, such as Growth/GDB, is likely to be higher than the cost for Non-Response Fieldwork. Clearly from a resourcing aspect follow-up action involving fieldwork needs to be carefully considered.
- 6.9 In operational terms it was identified that, aside from the quality of CRU letters, fieldwork is the next most problematic issue, particularly Non-response fieldwork with respect to pay rates for field staff and response rates.
- 6.10 In contrast, there was some strong support for a limited return to full habitation reviews in certain targeted areas; that is, for Growth/GDB Fieldwork. It has been suggested that the results would be more effective for the effort entailed and it would be easier to recruit Review Officers to do a whole area rather than one or two addresses in a street.
- 6.11 However, analysis of Growth Fieldwork generally does not support claims of increased effectiveness. For example, for Growth Fieldwork undertaken in Victoria in May 2006, the enrolment form collection rate was around one for every 10 addresses.³⁷

³⁵ *CRU Telephone Investigation Report*, Queensland State Office, 2000.

³⁶ Perversely, analysis identified the lowest direct cost, at 76 cents per enrolment form, for 'enrolment limit' mailings. However, as mentioned at paragraph 4.35, this activity a 'roll accuracy' pursuit and so is extremely effective at removing people from the rolls.

³⁷ Statistics sources from RMANS printout dated 18 August 2006. No inference should be taken from the Review presenting Victorian Growth Fieldwork data rather than any other state; it was chosen only for the fact that more reliable data were available on this activity because the RMANS SAF facility had been used to record results.

- 6.12 Non-Response Fieldwork gains better outcomes, with the national result for 2005-06 being estimated at 166,500 enrolment forms collected from 525,000 addresses; a return of around 32 per cent. However, of the 525,000 addresses identified for review only 117,000 generated enrolment forms; that is, less than 25 per cent. Some investigation is warranted into the 408,000 addresses identified as potential transactions but for which no enrolment resulted. For example, are the residents ineligible, tardy or recalcitrant; or are there problems with the quality or currency of the data used?
- 6.13 While further analysis would be beneficial, some existing statistical information shows that many non-respondents are not avoiding enrolment per se but rather are just tardy. For example, analysis of Close of Rolls enrolments for the 2004 Federal Election show that over 60 per cent of electors enrolling at this time had been contacted by CRU in the previous 12 months. Similarly, analysis of Declaration Votes for the 2006 SA Election shows that of the people presenting themselves at a polling place but who were not enrolled, 1,577 (of 9,656 records matched to RMANS) were known to CRU; for the addresses claimed by declaration voters, and 5,342 (of 9,656 records) were known to CRU. This enrolment during the election suggests that a sizeable proportion of non-respondents are willing to enrol or keep their enrolment details up to date but need more information or assistance than the catalyst of an election, in complying with enrolment requirements, or in fact require more immediate pressure to do so.
- 6.14 Non-Response Fieldwork appears to be useful to capture at least some particular demographics. For example, Non-Response Fieldwork in areas with low socio-demographic characteristics is successful in enrolling people with low literacy, suggesting that such people are eager to enrol but that they do not relate to AEC correspondence-based activities.
- 6.15 While problems might exist in undertaking fieldwork, results are being achieved in some areas. Fieldwork is not of consistent difficulty in all areas and success or otherwise can be dependent on the individual review officer.
- 6.16 This issue needs to be addressed through increased monitoring of activities and outcomes and more support and encouragement to address genuine difficulties in undertaking fieldwork.
- 6.17 Similarly, strategies to counter access issues need to be considered and trialled, for example making telephone contact with residents and contact through the body corporate, managing agents, obtaining ratepayer listings from councils as is undertaken in some places.
- 6.18 Although acknowledging that there might be issues with the quality of external data, nevertheless Non-Response Fieldwork does provide a list of potential enrolment transactions that should not be ignored. But leaving these to accumulate until a size that makes fieldwork economical is not effective, as the people identified as potential transactions might have moved again by the time the AEC field review occurs.

- 6.19 There are clear indications that whatever stimulation activity is to occur, mail or fieldwork, it needs to be done in a timely fashion after the potential transactions are identified. By the time delays by external agencies providing data, the application of AEC business rules and matching and mailout occurs, the information might be quite “old”. Add many weeks, or months, before fieldwork commences and much time and resources may be wasted. It is for this reason that further analysis into the characteristics of the 408,000 targeted addresses for which no enrolment form was forthcoming should be undertaken. Further, in regards to Non-Response Fieldwork, it should be possible to match data obtained subsequently to people being put into the batch to see if any later address is identified, to improve the potential effectiveness of the activity.
- 6.20 An alternative to current practice would be to adopt the concept of a small number of full time Review Officers being engaged to undertake continuously some form of fieldwork. It might be possible to share permanent Review Offices amongst adjoining Divisions. Under this concept, a more ongoing program of fieldwork (whether Non-Response or Growth) could be developed to:
- increase the presence of the AEC in its environment and assist to ‘sell’ the message that enrolment, and maintaining enrolment, is important;
 - overcome the present difficulties in data becoming stale by the time an annual fieldwork program commences; and
 - encourage the recruitment, training and retainment of experienced Review Officers through more ongoing and certain employment.
- 6.21 The abandonment of Non-Response Fieldwork is not supported but some latitude on what is done is required at the local level in determining what activities will occur within their areas of responsibility, with the ability to substitute reviews of growth areas in lieu of Non-Response Fieldwork, if better outcomes are achievable. In this respect, activities need to be outcomes-focussed.
- 6.22 However any follow-up activities must be based on identified target characteristics, whether these are specific non-response addresses or areas of high turnover and/or growth. This will require DOs and SOs having access to demographic and social information on their Division(s).

Fieldwork in rural and remote areas

- 6.23 Many addresses are not investigated further if no reply is received in response to CRU mail outs, particularly outside main town areas.
- 6.24 Mail delivery arrangements in a number of rural areas are such that CRU mail will not be received. These and some other areas have been placed in Exclusion Tables³⁸ so CRU mail will not be sent. However, these same areas are also not included in fieldwork, usually for logistical or resource reasons.

³⁸ Placing localities in these exclusion tables allows automatic removal of any letters from being sent to those areas. The tables are part of the automated roll management system.

- 6.25 Fieldwork for rural and remote areas should be considered as a special case, unlikely to generate the quantity of outcomes that would occur in a more populous area, but nevertheless addressing specific needs to provide service to this particular demographic. In remote areas with little or no reliable mail delivery services, fieldwork may be the only viable strategy available that is likely to generate reasonable returns.
- 6.26 To be effective in the long term such fieldwork must be undertaken on a regular basis. One strategy for doing this is through partner arrangements with other agencies servicing similar populations.

The 'true' recalcitrants

- 6.27 There is little empirical data to confirm the number of people who consistently ignore AEC efforts to encourage them to enrol or who explicitly refuse to enrol, that is, the true recalcitrants. As mentioned earlier, it appears that many non-respondents are simply tardy. Some specific cases of refusal to enrol are known, for example those people that refuse publicly to enrol because they oppose compulsory enrolment. However, this known group is generally small.
- 6.28 The extent of this problem should be quantified. However, there is also a need for a review of the AEC's policy and procedures for enforcement of enrolment provisions, especially with respect to the true recalcitrants.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 20

Undertake some form of fieldwork continuously and consider allowing Divisions to engage a small number of full time Review Officers to undertake this work. To contain costs and provide better continuity of work for staff it might be possible to share permanent Review Offices amongst adjoining Divisions.

Recommendation 21

State Offices and Divisions have the flexibility to determine what follow-up activities will occur within their areas of responsibility, with the ability to substitute reviews of growth areas in lieu of Non-Response Fieldwork, if better outcomes are achievable.

Promulgate instructions that activities other than Non-Response Fieldwork must be based on identified target characteristics, whether these are non-response addresses or areas of high turnover and/or growth, and achieve identified outcomes.

Recommendation 22

Review the policy and procedures with respect to enforcement of compulsory enrolment provisions, particularly with respect to the true recalcitrants.

7. Roll Review into the future

The majority of this report focuses on improving existing procedures and processes to gain effectiveness and better outcomes. In this chapter the options for the longer-term are presented, some of which might be possible to implement sooner rather than later, if stakeholder agreement can be gained and legislative change occur.

Introduction

- 7.1 In the longer term those responsible for electoral administration should be more responsive to the changes in society, technology and their environment, and the AEC and SEAs be positioning themselves to move from a paper-based system to an all-electronic enrolment solution in the future. The twin environmental aspects of not enrolling or updating enrolment until some catalyst occurs to prompt that interest and the perception and expectation that the process of changing information will occur automatically, need to be addressed.
- 7.2 There are many legislative, procedural and technical changes necessary to move the current CRU mail-based system to the next generation methodology, which on current indications appears to be direct enrolment change from data supplied by trusted agencies. However, New Zealand presents a potential model that can be used to generate a medium-term solution. Further, while Canada is facing challenges with direct enrolment, there are clear benefits to the elector with simpler interaction with government. In this context, a possible solution for Australia would be linking updates to client information (name, residential and postal address, date of birth) under the “smart card” system to updates to electoral enrolment.

The enrolment form

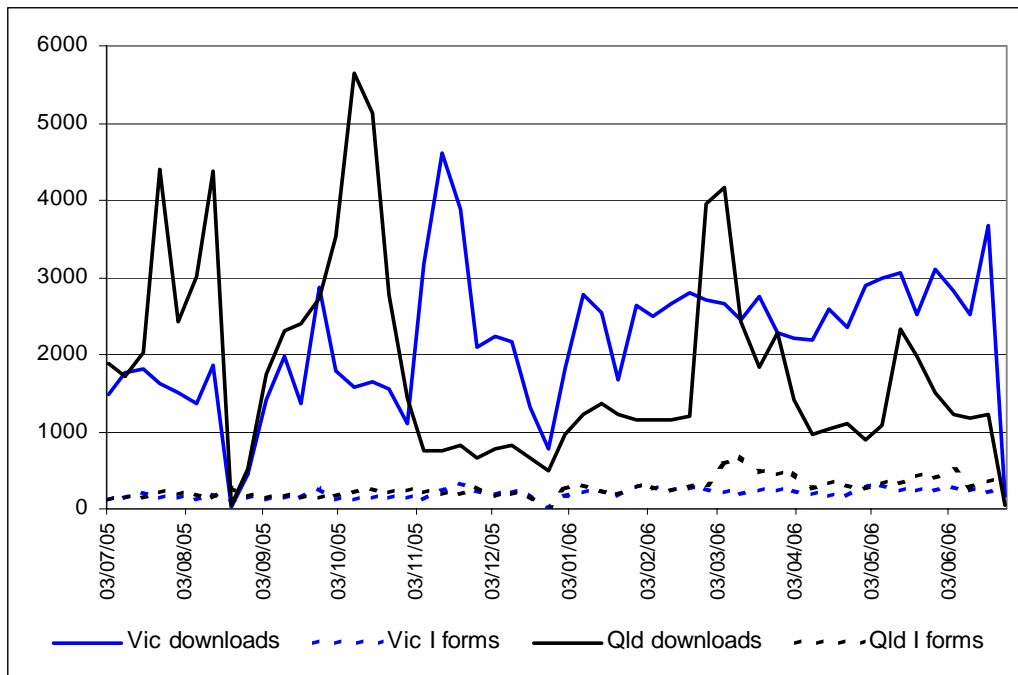
- 7.3 Generally current legislation requires a properly completed enrolment form before a change can be made to electors' information. This requirement was strengthened by recent changes to the Electoral Act, which preclude written advice that allowed staff to make changes to the address of an elector within a Division. With the introduction of POI provisions, the requirement for an enrolment form becomes more firmly entrenched.
- 7.4 There is evidence that people when confronted with an enrolment form find it daunting and prefer to delay completion. In the case of fieldwork, when Review Officers find potential electors, these people often are willing to enrol but ask that the enrolment form be left. Many of these forms never get returned.
- 7.5 In the short-term there are opportunities (albeit other than in the case of the paper form) to make the enrolment form more user-friendly to the average elector. This can occur through better use of available technology; to pre-populate enrolment forms using available data and by improving enrolment via the Internet.

More intelligent Internet forms

- 7.6 Electors have the ability to access enrolment forms for their particular state/territory from the AEC website, with most SEAs providing a link from their website to the AEC site for state-enrolment purposes.³⁹ However, these forms are merely 'dumb' portable document file – PDF – versions of the paper form. They can be filled out electronically but then need to be printed, signed, and posted or sent to the AEC by some other means.
- 7.7 The popularity of PDF enrolment forms is hard to gauge and analysis one is inconclusive. Statistics have been obtained on the number of enrolment forms that had the 'I' source code (indicating an Internet-sourced form) processed and AEC website statistics on the number of forms downloaded. However, the latter data shows some inconsistencies amongst jurisdictional results, which affects confidence in those data. Nevertheless, a correlation exists between the number of forms downloaded and the lead-up to the 2006 elections in Queensland and Victoria, which suggests that the data are not totally unreliable.
- 7.8 Results show that people, especially in the lead-up to elections, are downloading large numbers of enrolment forms but the numbers returned are minuscule in comparison. By way of example, the Figure 2 below provides figures from the period before the Close of Rolls in Queensland and Victoria in 2006; caution should be taken on the reliability of these data but note that data is nevertheless suggestive. From the low return rates, it appears that people are using the technology but might be deterred by the form.

Figure 2: Internet forms downloaded and received each week 2005-06

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) website provides access to VEC enrolment forms, which are valid for both state and federal enrolment.



- 7.9 There are opportunities to improve the use of Internet forms by making these more user-friendly than the current electronic version of the paper form. The Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) *e-Tax* income tax return as a possible model for emulation. Although based on, and requiring the same information as, the paper *Tax-Pack*, e-Tax takes taxpayers through a simple question and answer approach for each section of completing the form, at the end of which an 8 to 12 page (depending on the taxpayer's circumstances) tax return is produced.
- 7.10 The enrolment form lends itself to a similar approach. The elector could be greeted with a home page that informs of POI requirements and provides other enrolment-related information. The elector would then be asked whether they wish to proceed; if affirmative, then the elector would be asked his/her name, address and so forth until all the necessary information (that can be entered electronically) is obtained.
- 7.11 The advantage of this approach is that the remaining process can be as simple or sophisticated as is required. The simple approach would be for the elector to be given the option to print the form, sign witness and so forth, and mail it to the AEC or a SEA. More sophisticated processes could have the AEC/SEA take that information and send a pre-populated form to the elector for completion or go to the next step of updating enrolment from the information automatically (the last option is discussed further, under *Direct enrolment*). It could also be possible to check the information being input for accuracy by comparing this against RMANS, for example the street address supplied to determine whether it was known and an enrollable address.
- 7.12 The Internet is an important avenue for enrolment, especially in reaching several of the AEC's target populations including young people and those living in rural and remote communities. However, the AEC needs to identify how these groups wish to interact with it.

Direct enrolment

- 7.13 Direct enrolment, where electors' information is updated automatically using information supplied by other agencies, or the elector through a 'smart' Internet enrolment form, is the next logical step in the enrolment evolutionary process.
- 7.14 Analysis points to an argument that some people believe that updating information at one government agency, such as Centrelink or a road transport authority, will result in other agencies, including electoral authorities updating their information as well.
- 7.15 Other agencies, including Centrelink, offer the ability for clients to update their information online; in fact Centrelink encourages an online approach rather than face-to-face contact or a paper form solution. Several Commonwealth agencies are implementing online change of name and address (CONA) solutions for their clients and the Attorney-General's Department is co-ordinating a whole-of-government approach to CONA that

will enable clients of the Commonwealth Government (and eventually, it is hoped, the states and territories) to input changes of information with one agency and nominate to have that information provided to other agencies. Eventually it is envisaged that this system will be able to collect seamlessly information to meet differing business requirements of agencies.

- 7.16 In the AEC's case, current requirements preclude direct enrolment and legislative change would be necessary to identify and accept some form of identification other than a signature.
- 7.17 However, there are issues with direct enrolment. One is that the data provided can be of poor quality, making matching with existing elector information difficult at best. This has been mentioned earlier in the report. Another issue with direct enrolment relates to a person's intended place of residence. For example, people might change details with other agencies but might not want to change their enrolment – the former might represent an address of convenience. The AEC is investigating the issues surrounding direct enrolment in more detail a draft paper on the issue is under preparation.
- 7.18 As mentioned earlier, one avenue that might be explored as a possible solution would be linking updates to client information (name, residential and postal address, date of birth) under the “smart card” system to updates to electoral enrolment. It would be expected that the information held in the “smart card” system would be of a higher quality than might be the case from individual agencies at present, as they will also need to undertake the matching that the AEC now does.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 23

Investigate replacing the existing PDF Internet enrolment forms with a smart form, modelled on the Australian Taxation Office's *eTax* program; this form be have the option of the elector printing, completing and returning or nominating to receive a pre-populated form from the AEC.

Recommendation 24

Explore with Government the possibility and feasibility of linking updates of client information (name, residential and postal address and date of birth) under the “smart card” system to updates of the electoral enrolment.

Postscript

1. During the course of the review, the AEC has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at stimulating the numbers of people enrolled, and correctly enrolled, on the rolls in preparation for the next federal election, expected to be held during the latter half of 2007. Some of these initiatives have been recommended in the review report, and others, while not exactly as recommended, are not dissimilar to actions recommended.
2. This postscript sets out to describe these initiatives and to give some short analysis of the outcomes and, where not yet complete, of their progress, to assist in informing the recommendations of the review report.
3. These initiatives include:
 - A targeted review of residences at which the AEC has identified as housing electors who:
 - have been listed for removal from the roll as they have moved from their enrolled address;
 - have been removed from the roll but have not re-enrolled for their new address; and
 - have not been enrolled.
 - The advertising component of the communications strategy which commenced on 27 May 2007 with three phases (of 2 weeks each) in the first tranche; the value of the vote; the rules have changed (close of rolls); and don't wait (enrol now).
4. The targeted review of residences (targeted enrolment stimulation) used data from other agencies (in the main motor transport and Centrelink) to find a later address for those people in the categories listed above, in order to make personal visits to those addresses and urge those people to enrol. The targeted review commenced in all states except New South Wales on the weekend of 17-18 March 2007. Fieldwork commenced in New South Wales on the weekend of 26-27 April, following the finalisation of activities related to the state election.
5. This targeted fieldwork aims at reaching approximately 1.11m households, and 1.8m people. At 17 May, 488,710 residences had been visited, being 44 per cent of the total. Of these, 120,473 residences had been visited twice but contact with a resident could not be made. At that time, 158,092 enrolment applications had been either collected or returned after being left with the residents. This means 73.7 per cent of the 214,536 people identified as been required to either enrol or update their enrolled address had submitted an enrolment form by 17 May. Of the enrolment forms collected or returned from fieldwork, there were 27,886 new enrolments, 41,761 re-enrolments and 88,145 changes of enrolment. The sum of the new enrolments and re-enrolments (69,647) represents 44.1 per cent of the number of enrolment forms collected or returned from fieldwork at 17 May.

6. Comparing the ratio of forms received that give rise to a new enrolment or re-enrolment from this fieldwork exercise with the ration during the same period in 2006 (when normal roll stimulation activities occurred, together with state elections in South Australia and Tasmania), the collection of forms that give rise to new enrolments is 36 per cent higher, and re-enrolments 51 per cent higher. The marked increase in the rate of collection of enrolment that increases the number enrolled demonstrates that this targeting exercise is successful in reaching the intended audience. It also demonstrates that such targeted exercises have some benefit in the suite of activities to stimulate enrolment. However, it is too soon to consider the overall success and benefit of targeted fieldwork in comparison with other activities such as mail. Further analysis will be required that considers the relative cost of this type of stimulation activity and the rate of collection of information on electors who are no longer living at their enrolled address, as this will ultimately diminish the numbers on the roll although making the roll more accurate. All fieldwork will need to be completed and follow-up activity undertaken, before such an analysis can be conclusive.
7. This exercise in targeting specific addresses at which the AEC believed there were people that needed to enrol, re-enrol or update their enrolment is the first of its kind on this scale. Similar exercises, known as non-response fieldwork (discussed in the review report) have been undertaken on a smaller scale as resources permitted. The review report recommends that such targeted reviews should be conducted on an ongoing basis, rather than on a once or twice a year basis. The analysis of this exercise will further inform that recommendation.
8. The advertising component of the AEC's major communications strategy has just commenced at the time of writing. At this stage it is too soon to make any meaningful comment on its success. However, it is the next phase of the strategy to stimulate enrolment in the period leading to the next election. The review report recommends that a continuing public awareness program be introduced. The outcomes of the campaign just commenced will help inform this recommendation.
9. Further, the review report recommends that enrolment stimulation activities align with the electoral cycle. The two major stimulation activities currently underway have been commenced with the election later in the year firmly in focus. Again, the outcomes of the activities will inform the recommendation.
10. Other activities already undertaken and underway include:
 - enrolment to Vote week, which commenced on 28 May, involving over 1,700 schools in enrolment drives among year 12 students;
 - the roll out of a birthday card initiative for 17 and 18 year olds;
 - the trial of SMS technology for requesting an enrolment form, to commence on 10 June;
 - more extensive involvement in university O-week activities; and
 - involvement in Big Day Out and promotions.

11. These last two activities have been a success although the numbers of enrolments received are not great (approximately 7,000 and 4,000 respectively).
12. The birthday card initiative, involving the sending of a birthday card to 17 and 18 year old students, using senior secondary schools data, has been a success in Victoria over the past few years, and will be rolled out in all states and territories in mid-2007.
13. The review report recommends that the review of correspondence be progressed. The letters used in roll review activities are currently being updated and are expected to be rolled out early in the second half of 2007.
14. Lastly, some of the less productive activities under the CRU umbrella have been, or will shortly be, suspended or modified, for example, the activities listed under the first 2 points of Recommendation 13.