

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2009

Australian Electoral Commission

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Outcome 2, Program 2.1.5

Topic: Industrial Elections and Protected Action Ballots

Question reference number: F66

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 10 July 2009

Number of Pages: 2

Senator Ryan asked:

- a) What is the expected total cost in the 2008-09 financial year of conducting the regular internal officer and delegate elections for employee associations registered under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* by:
 - a. Each national employee association
 - b. Each state/territory or other sub-branch of the national employee association
- b) What is the expected total cost in the 2008-09 financial year of conducting the regular internal officer and delegate election for employer associations registered under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* by:
 - a. Each national employer association
 - b. Each state/territory or other sub-branch of a national employer association
- c) What is the estimate of the total cost of elections for the 2009-10 financial year for:
 - a. Employee associations
 - b. Employer associations
- d) What is the expected total cost in the 2008-09 financial year of administering protected action ballots under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*?
- e) How much of this cost was met by
 - a. Taxpayers
 - b. Registered employer associations
 - c. Registered employee associations
 - d. Other organisations (eg employers)
- f) What is the estimate of the cost in the 2009-10 financial year for protected action ballots?
- g) Is the Commission projecting a change in the number of protected action ballots to be conducted in the 2009-10 financial year compared to the 2008-09 financial year?
 - a. If so, what is its forecast?
 - b. How does this differ from the expected number and cost of ballots in 2008-09 and the actual number and cost in 2007-08?

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Answer:

- a) The AEC accounts for expenditure at the output/program level required for annual financial statements and portfolio budget statements. The financial data is not recorded at each employee association level. The year to date total cost for all industrial elections (as at 31 May 2009) is \$3.96m. The AEC does not expect a significant increase by 30 June 2009.
- b) As above.
- c) The total estimated cost of elections for the 2009-10 financial year is \$5.73m.
- d) The total cost of protected action ballots is expected to be \$432,000 (GST exclusive) in 2008-09.
- e) The Fair Work Act 2009 commenced on 1 July 2009, which makes the Commonwealth 100% liable for the costs of protected action ballots administered through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Prior to 1 July, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations met 80% of the cost of protected action ballots. The other 20% was borne by the applicant (normally the union).
- f) The AEC has no reason to expect the level of activity and therefore the cost to be significantly different in 2009-10, apart from increased costs of salaries and consumables.
- g) No.