

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings 2005-06 – 01 November 2005

Question: F53

Outcome: Australian Electoral Commission

Topic: Processing enrolments and resources for monitoring Government electoral advertising

Written Question on Notice

Senator Carr asked:

1. Has a plan been drawn up by the AEC to process enrolment, re-enrolment or change of enrolment details between the issuing of the writs and the closure of the rolls seven days later if proof of identity is required?
2. What would be the cost, would there need to be an increase of staffing levels and resources? Could a copy be given to the committee?
3. Has the AEC commissioned a report or undertaken any investigations to detail the level of resources required to monitor all Government advertising to ensure that it complies with the Commonwealth Electoral Act? Can a copy be provided to the Committee?
4. If not, when will be this completed and can a copy be provided to the Committee upon completion?

Answer:

1 and 2. The *Electoral and Referendum (Electoral Integrity and Other Measures) Bill 2005* (the Bill), which was introduced into the House of Representatives on 8 December 2005, contains amendments that will introduce an enrolment proof of identity requirement. The AEC has prepared implementation costings in relation to the various measures contained in the Bill.

As set out in the Financial Impact Statement of the Explanatory Memorandum for the Bill, to enable the AEC to implement all the measures contained in the Bill, the Government will provide additional funding for the AEC with a fiscal balance impact of \$26.1 million over 4 years from 2006-07. The AEC will absorb a further \$4.9 million over 3 years from 2005-06.

The estimated cost of implementing the proof of identity provisions for enrolment is \$1.6 million in 2005-06, \$8.1 million in 2006-07 and \$5.4 million in 2007-08. This is mainly comprised of advertising and public awareness expenses and systems development.

The estimated cost of implementing the requirement for third parties to lodge annual disclosure returns is \$0.03 million in 2005-06, \$0.2 million in 2006-07 and \$0.2 million in 2007-08. This primarily consists of additional staffing and advertising expenses.

3 and 4. The AEC has not commissioned a report or undertaken any investigations to detail the level of resources needed to monitor all Government advertising. However, the Electoral Commissioner is currently monitoring all major daily newspapers for compliance with section 328. Additionally, the provisions of the Bill that implement recommendation 53 of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' report on the 2004 Federal Election have been costed and include a component for staff resources, commencing in the 2006/07 financial year, to monitor newspapers to determine financial reporting obligations under the CEA. Compliance with section 328 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* will also be captured as part of this process.