

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2006

Question: F66

Outcome 2, Output 2.1.1

Topic: Electronic Voting Trial

Written Question on Notice

Senator Faulkner asked:

- (1) Has the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) been able to advance the implementation of the electronic voting trial?
- (2) What will take place at the next election?

Answer:

- (1) The AEC is well advanced in implementing the electronic voting trials.

The Government's response to the JSCEM Report supported the implementation of a trial for electronic voting for the Blind and Vision Impaired (BVI) at a limited number of pre-poll sites nationally and for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel deployed overseas.

Legislation has been introduced into Parliament, and has been passed in the House of Representatives, to enable the trials to be implemented.

The AEC has released a tender for the BVI trial and will shortly release a tender for the ADF trial. The AEC is working with the appropriate peak bodies for the BVI trial to determine the most appropriate locations for the pre-poll centres where electronic voting will be available. The peak body reference group consists of:

- Vision Australia;
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission;
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; and
- Blind Citizens of Australia.

The AEC is in ongoing consultation with the Department of Defence on systems and associated security issues and development of the statement of requirements.

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(2) Electronically Assisted Voting for Blind and Vision Impaired

Blind and vision impaired electors will be able to cast an electronically assisted vote at selected pre-poll centres, and the vote will be treated as a pre-poll vote. The voter's preferences will be encoded within a barcode and printed in the pre-poll location. The barcode will be placed in the pre-poll declaration envelope and then proceed through normal scrutiny processes.

Remote Electronic Voting for Overseas ADF Personnel

Remote electronic voting will be made available to Defence personnel in specified overseas areas. These personnel will complete an application to become a Remote Electronic Voter (REV) in advance of the election.

REVs will use a password to access the voting system. Once the REV has logged in they will be presented with ballot information for the Division for which they are enrolled and the appropriate Senate ballot information.

House of Representatives votes will be printed following the close of poll and sent securely to Divisional Returning Officers, and Senate votes will be uploaded into the Central Senate Scrutiny System.