THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION (AEC)

CALD CONSUMER RESEARCH RESULTS

Final Report

CULTURAL & INDIGENOUS RESEARCH
CENTRE AUSTRALIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is the independent authority responsible for the administration of federal elections and referendums. Even small fluctuations in voting participation/formality are observed and publicly discussed. It is the AEC's role to ensure all Australians are given an equal opportunity to participate in election the process.

Following legislative reform to the Australian electoral system, various changes will be implemented at the next federal election. For example, the need to provide proof of identity (POI) when enrolling to vote and changes in the time Australian citizens will have to update their enrolment details when an election is called.

To educate the Australian public about these changes, advertising will form an integral part of the AEC's public awareness campaign. It is therefore important for the AEC to conduct strategic market research prior to creative development for the 2007 federal election.

Within this, the specific need for research with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) audiences was also identified. This report details the outcomes from this research.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

A total of 8 focus groups were conducted in this research with CALD communities. The following communities were consulted:

- Iraqi (Arabic speakers);
- Lebanese (Arabic speakers);
- Sudanese (Arabic speakers);
- Indonesian;
- Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese);
- Vietnamese;
- Greek; and,
- Italian.

The rationale for conducting three groups with Arabic-speakers of different countries of origin was that it was hypothesised that each group would have different experiences with voting from these countries that they could draw upon.

The Iraqi and Sudanese groups were comprised of recent arrivals (i.e. had arrived in the last 5 years), while the Lebanese group consisted of longer term arrivals (i.e. had been in Australia for more than 5 years). The Indonesian group was also made up of recent arrivals, while the Chinese and Vietnamese groups consisted of both recent and longer term arrivals. The Greek and Italian groups were similar in that all participants were classified as longer terms arrivals.

All participants recruited were more comfortable conversing in-language rather than English. Participants in each group were a range of ages and mixed gender. All were Australian citizens.

It should be noted that instead of conducting a single Chinese group with either Mandarin or Cantonese-speakers, two separate mini-groups were conducted (one with each language group). The rationale for this was that the experiences of each language group would most likely be vastly different and therefore should be captured separately.

The focus groups were conducted between 25 May and 4 June, 2006, with 8 to 10 participants recruited within each group. Bilingual researchers facilitated all groups.

1.3 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Community	***Profile***
Iraqi	• Aged between 18 and 64 years • Mix of full time and part time workers and those occupied by 'home duties' • 9 enrolled, 1 unsure; 9 had 'always' been on the electoral roll, 1 unsure • 5 could speak/read 'a bit' of English; 5 speak/read 'well'
Lebanese	• Aged between 40 and 65+ years • Mix of full time workers, retirees and those occupied by 'home duties' • All enrolled; All had 'always' been on the electoral roll • 1 illiterate in English; 2 could speak/read 'a bit' of English and half speak/read 'well'
Sudanese	• Younger group, aged between 18 and 44 years • Most working part time and/or studying • All enrolled; 3 claimed to have been off the roll for a period of time • 1 speaks/read English 'a bit', 7 speaks/read 'well'

Indonesian	• Aged between 18 and 64 years • Mix of full time students, home duties and those employed full time • All enrolled; 8 had 'always' been on the electoral roll with the remainder unsure • 3 could speak/read English 'a bit' while 7 could 'well'
Chinese	• Mix of Mandarin and Cantonese speakers aged 35 to 65+ years • Either working part or full time; 2 participants retired and 2 home duties • All enrolled; All had 'always' been on the electoral roll • Cantonese-speakers more comfortable with English; Mandarin-speakers more likely to speak/read 'a bit' or 'not at all'
Vietnamese	• Aged between 25 and 54 years • All employed in home duties or working • All enrolled; All had 'always' been on the electoral roll • Most speak/read English 'a bit', followed by 'well'
Greek	• Aged between 45 and 65+ years • All retired or employed in home duties • All enrolled; All had 'always' been on the electoral roll • 2 could not speak/read English at all; Remainder comfortable with English 'a bit' or 'well'
Italian	• Aged 18 to 64 years • All working full or part-time • All enrolled; 7 always on the electoral roll with 1 not • 7 could speak/read English 'well'; 1 'a bit'

1.4 CALD RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research sought to explore, across range of CALD groups, the following research objectives:

- The influence one's 'back home' experience plays in Australian electoral process;
- Awareness and understanding of the current electoral system;
- Specific knowledge about the current system (including the need to enrol);
- Community attitudes towards providing POI when enrolling and casting a vote;
- The response to the notion of 'democracy';
- Current sources of information about elections;

- Key information opportunities for the AEC; and,
- Messages of relevance about the federal election and voting to facilitate CALD communication strategy development.

Where relevant, comparisons were made across the CALD communities by key variables such as country of origin, recency of migration to Australia and the level of an individual's English Language Proficiency (ELP).

1.5 CONTEXT: THE OVERSEAS VERSUS THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

There were a wide variety of experiences around voting that participants drew upon from their country of origin, many of which were negative. Those who did have experiences from their country of origin to draw upon, tended to talk about the negative aspects of this experience. Sudanese, Indonesian and Iraqi participants were more vocal about these negative experiences. Though this was less the case for the Greek community.

The following outlines some of the examples given by communities regarding these differences:

- **Greece** – While relatively similar to the Australian system, Greek elections also differed markedly as uniformed army personnel patrolled polling booths;
- **Italy** – Elections were described as highly disorganised and a *"mess"* that were prone to corruption: *"You may be able to control the outside, but not the inside"*;
- **Sudan** – Some participants spoke of intimidation back home forcing some people not to vote: *"Security forces loyal to military rulers were spying on voters and the election process as a whole. This was intimidating and discouraging and I chose not to vote"*;
- **Vietnam** –Voting in Vietnam was described as compulsory though there were many positions sought by only relatively small group of candidates, therefore there was an assumption that the voting process was not necessarily fair;
- **Lebanon** – Few people had voted in their country of birth due to the perceived lack of democracy here;
- **China** - Cantonese-speakers reported being more experienced voters 'back home' compared with Mandarin-speakers;
- **Indonesia** – Participants described a similar system to the Australian system of there being two 'houses'. A few participants described being 'told' how to vote by their local mayor or employee, which meant there was little incentive to participate; and,
- **Iraq** – Kurds in Iraq were not allowed to vote and others were forced to vote for Saddam Hussein, with much fear of persecution if they did not: *"In Australia if I don't vote, I get a fine. In Iraq, if I didn't vote, I get killed"*.

One of the major differences in the ‘at home’ versus the ‘Australian’ voting experience was the perceived lack of fairness in the electoral system in one’s country of origin. For a number of participants this perception highlighted the fairness of the Australian system in comparison.

Not all participants were able to talk about their experiences with voting in their country of birth as they were too young to vote or had not had the opportunity to do so. This was more the case for those who had arrived from countries where political turmoil was high (Indonesia or Iraq, for example).

2. VOTING, ELECTIONS AND ENROLLING: ATTITUDES

2.1 OVERVIEW

Not surprisingly, many participants warmly welcomed the Australian electoral system. The benefits of the Australian system were felt to be numerous with the following types of attitudes apparent:

- That the system helped to create a sense of 'democracy', which a number of participants loved about living here (e.g. Indonesian and Mandarin-speakers);
- It gave individuals a voice and *"a chance to have a say"* (Sudanese speaker);
- The system encouraged individuals to take up citizenship (which was the case for a number of people in the Vietnamese, Lebanese and Italian communities); and,
- It symbolised freedom, particularly those who had come from countries where freedom was not a right all citizens shared.

Other participants expressed that the Australian electoral system, and the ability to participate in it, was actually a driver for them seeking citizenship in the first place. Iraqi participants especially welcomed the possibility of participating in the Australian electoral system. It represented very emotional territory for some in this community as it was a true symbol of freedom:

> *This is something special for me, from my heart. I always wish I could vote for the person that I wanted and now I have this opportunity in Australia. I am happy" (Shiite from Iraq)*

These types of views helped shape what were generally enormously positive views towards the Australian electoral system.

2.2 COMPULSORY NATURE OF VOTING

The fact that voting in Australia was compulsory was not a hindrance. Rather, this was viewed as an important and perhaps unique aspect of the Australian electoral system that the majority agreed with. Compulsory voting was felt to help legitimise the electoral process overall and helped give it credibility. Further, political parties chosen to lead the country would truly represent the views of the Australian population. The United States of America was given as an example of what can happen when voting was not made compulsory. This distinction was certainly not discussed favourably:

> *"Like America where there are 300 million people but only 100 million vote! Now they are stuck with a president that the majority doesn't want but they don't exercise their right…it's important for people to be made to vote" (Greek)*

There were only a few participants who challenged the compulsory idea because of its perceived 'lack of democracy' (an individual in the Indonesian group and another in the Lebanese group).

2.3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SYSTEM

Some participants found the preferential and two-party preferred nature of the current Australian system confusing. This was mostly an issue for more well established communities like the Italian, Greek, Lebanese communities. But there was also some mention by (a quite vocal) Iraqi community, for example *"What happens to my vote? How does it get used?"*

Attitudinally, there was also some annoyance from the Italian community about the lack of automation in enrolling in the electoral system. This was felt to be 'a bit backward' in light of the plethora of technological platforms available to the community these days (particularly the internet).

2.4 WHEN PEOPLE HEARD AN ELECTION WAS BEING CALLED…

When federal elections were called, most participants mentioned that one of the first actions they took was to *"start thinking about"* how their vote should be used. This was especially the case for more recently-arrived communities. Some of the responses given in this regard are shown below:

"I feel I should make sure that I compare the current government policy with that of the opposition and decide who to vote for" (Sudanese participant)

"I have to get to know each political party and what they are going to do … what they stand for" (Iraqi participant - Shiite)

"I feel very proud that the government recognised me through my voice … here the government counts my voice " (Indonesian participant)

Other practical issues such as where to vote and on what day were also top of mind thoughts for CALD voters at this stage. Participants mentioned that any reminders that could be provided to them containing these details were welcome.

There was however some cynicism from a few CALD voters who (again) expressed concern about how their vote would be used. These issues with the preferential system represent potential opportunities for the AEC to promote greater clarity here among CALD voters.

"You will be voting for someone based on the information that you get, but the deals that go on with preferences are not made clear, so your vote could actually be going to someone who you didn't vote for!" (Greek participant)

3. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Most CALD groups consulted held some basic, general knowledge about the Australian electoral system. As mentioned earlier, all participants knew that voting was compulsory and that one needed to be enrolled before being able to vote. Citizenship ceremonies, letters from the AEC and ethnic media were important in educating CALD voters about this. Only a few women in the Sudanese group were unsure about exactly who was required to vote.

Where to vote and how to vote were known by CALD participants, but not by others. How to vote was considered more challenging for participants who had poor English Language Proficiency (ELP). As a result, a number of voters felt the 'how to vote' flyers handed out at polling booths on election day were critical in helping them 'do the right thing'.

Specific details about the Australian electoral system were less known. In particular, the difference between the state and federal system; how the two-ballot paper system worked and what options were available to voters not able to reach a booth on polling day. For example, *"Are there two in case you lose one? So you don't cheat?"* (Iraqi participant).

These knowledge gaps were more pronounced for those with poor ELP.

Participants with some knowledge about voting options tended to have heard about what to do from others in their community who had been a part of this process. For example, those who had voted in an Australian embassy overseas.

As mentioned previously, knowledge around the need to enrol before being allowed to vote was high. All participants claimed that they were enrolled, except for one recently arrived participant from Iraq who was unsure. A number of individuals could distinctly recall being given this information at their citizenship ceremony.

In terms of whether participants had ever been taken off the electoral roll for a brief period of time, several individuals did believe this had happened to them. However it should be noted that this was not a particularly important variable in terms of shaping voter attitudes and/or knowledge towards the electoral process.

Therefore it is not surprising that there was little, if any, knowledge about re-enrolling.

4. MOVING HOUSE

Compared with re-enrolling, knowledge around the need to update enrolment details upon moving house was reasonably well known within some communities (namely among Greek, Italian, Vietnamese and Cantonese participants). The remainder of participants in other groups had 'heard of' the need to do this, but weren't sure of how to specifically go about it.

The exception to this was within the Iraqi community, where knowledge about what to do was low. For example:

> *"I know I should update my details but I am not sure where to get the forms, phone etc. if the AEC didn't write to me"* (Sudanese participant)

The nature of the discussion in this group about the importance of voting however, emphasises that this group are likely to be quite responsive to new information about changing one's enrolment details.

4.1 WAYS TO REMIND THE COMMUNITY

A number of information channels were suggested as being useful ways to provide information about how to update one's enrolment details when moving.

Local post offices, Medicare and council offices were suggested as being useful portals for the community. Real estate agents and removalists were felt to offer a more direct marketing opportunity for how to go about updating enrolment details - reminders could be given to their customers as a part of their service overall. Local clubs and community groups were also mentioned.

5. GENERAL BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

In the process of speaking to CALD communities about elections and voting, a number of barriers and enablers were apparent in terms of one's level of participation in the electoral process.

5.1 BARRIERS

ELP was a key variable in determining how some CALD participants engaged with the electoral system. For some longer term arrivals with poor ELP, navigating their way through ballot papers was a real challenge.

Most barriers that had the potential to hinder participation in the electoral process were, to some extent, able to be overcome by providing these communities with further information and detail about voting (preferably in-language). Some of the barriers mentioned included:

- Gender – as some women experienced a lack of adequate education in their country of birth, for example within the Sudanese community;
- A perceived lack of information in-language;
- Health issues, namely for older CALD community members, for example, within the Italian community; and,
- The relatively complicated electoral system - *"I still get confused between them (ballot papers) … I fill them in whichever way I understand them"* (Lebanese woman with poor ELP).

Variables that helped to stimulate involvement and participation in the electoral process included the love towards Australia that a number of participants felt. There was also some feeling that the length of time one lived in Australia may lead to more involvement in the electoral process. However this was more to do with the fact that this would allow more time for an individual to navigate and 'get used to' the current system. Regardless of length of time in Australia, most CALD voters already felt the current electoral system was important and needed to be taken seriously.

6. ROLE OF OTHERS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The hypothesis that CALD voters use family and friends to help them engage with and navigate through the electoral process was reinforced in this research. In most groups participants were able to draw on their own experiences here or gave examples from family and/or friends, which demonstrated that for those with low ELP, others were important in educating them. For example, *"Whenever there is mail or anything, my brother translates it for us"* (Sudanese participant).

Except for a few participants in the Italian group, all felt that this type of help was a logical and to be expected in such a diverse nation.

There was also some evidence that 'how to vote' cards and flyers given out at polling booths were helpful in ensuring votes were cast correctly.

7. RESPONSE TO PROOF OF IDENTITY (POI)

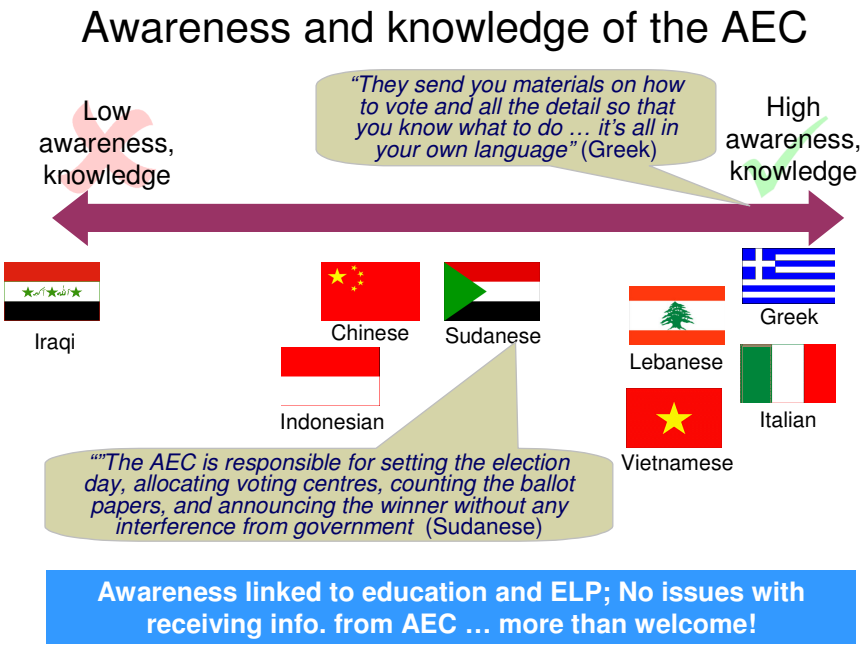
The idea of providing proof of identity (POI) before casting a vote at a polling booth was welcomed by the vast majority of participants. Only one Lebanese voter felt this may be *"a breach of privacy"*.

The fact that providing POI was familiar practice in one's country of origin drove this lack of concern. This was the case for some Italian, Indonesian, Greek, Iraqi and Lebanese participants. Some participants in the Sudanese community were currently engaging in this behaviour anyway to simplify things for the electoral officer finding them on the roll.

Providing POI was also felt to further legitimise the electoral system and reinforced the transparent and fair way in which elections were run in Australia: *"You can't trick them'; 'The government isn't trying to hide anything'*.

8. THE AEC AND CALD COMMUNITIES

Awareness and knowledge of the AEC's role was mixed. This is summarised in the chart below:



When prompted, no Iraqi participants had heard of the AEC. Some Chinese, Indonesian and Sudanese participants knew of the AEC while others did not. Lebanese, Vietnamese and certainly Greek and Italian voters were the most savvy with regards to who was responsible for running elections and what they specifically looked after.

Voter awareness/knowledge tended to be a function of ELP.

Attitudes towards the AEC were skewed towards ambivalence. This was driven by a lack of awareness/knowledge in some communities, though was also a function of individuals not having heard any 'bad news' (or 'good news') about the AEC.

When prompted about whether it was appropriate to receive information from the AEC, there were no major issues from participants around this. This information was generally welcomed and could act as a piece of information that could be shared with others in their community.

9. COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO DEMOCRACY

Democracy was mentioned spontaneously and quite early on in most groups. This was especially the case for participants who hailed from terribly undemocratic countries of origin.

Many CALD participants were extremely passionate about living in a democratic country, most notably those from Iraq. 'Democracy' was felt to be the overarching benefit to living here and drive the decision for a number to settle in Australia in the first place.

The response to the notion of democracy was not all overwhelmingly positive, as a few participants expressed some cynicism about whether it truly existed in Australia. This sentiment was more prominent with the more established Italian and Greek communities.

Issues around the preferential system were discussed in the context of 'democracy' as some felt that within a true democracy, an individual's vote would only be used for their first preference. For example*, "I voted for one party last time and my votes went to the Green party. I didn't want the Green party to have my vote"* (Iraqi participant).

9.1 DEFINITIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Some of the definitions given by CALD participants regarding what constitutes a democracy are:

- *"Freedom of speech, opinion and choice"*
- *"People having a voice; Equal rights with peace and prosperity"*
- *"Expressing your opinion in a free and fair environment";*
- *"A chance to vote for the person we believe is best for us"*

9.2 IMAGES OF A NON-DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Images used to describe a world without democracy tended to be quite dark and confronting and represented scenarios where the power dynamic moved away from an individual to an authoritative body (for example, a government).

A number of participants drew upon their real life experiences in their country of origin here. Some of the images describes are shown in the chart below:

A world **without** Democracy is…

Silent

Restrictive

Aggressive

Like Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan

"Without democracy, it is scary" (Indonesian)

Quite confronting imagery mentioned in some groups

10. REACTION TO CAMPAIGN TERRITORIES

A total of five potential campaign territories were explored in the CALD focus groups. For each territory, participants were asked to respond to the given theme, particularly in terms of its personal relevance.

10.1 OVERALL RESPONSE TO 'HEARTBEAT OF DEMOCRACY'

A summary of the CALD response to this territory is outlined below:

"The heartbeat of democracy"

The Federal Election is the heartbeat of democracy, because it gives every person the opportunity to have their say on how this country is run

– "Too American" (Lebanese) and "too trusting" (Cantonese, Greek)

– "Too complicated" (Mandarin)

"Is it truly democratic? What about corruption in the political system?" (Greek)

– Rang true for Iraqi, Vietnamese, Sudanese and Italian groups

- Highlighted value they placed on voting

Mixed response … resonates but also open to cynicism

Specifically, responses to this territory by each CALD community group are outlined below:

- Iraqi - Not chosen by any participants as the favourite, though the 'have a say' message resonated positively;
- Chinese - Cantonese-speakers weren't entirely trusting of democracy. Mandarin-speakers connected more with the spirit of 'democracy'. Though there was some feeling that the language in this concept could be simplified further;
- Vietnamese - A positive response from entire group, with all participants in agreement;
- Sudanese - Democracy was a motivating and relevant construct for this group - *"It is through elections that a real democracy is realised in a country"*;
- Lebanese - Some in the group felt this concept was *"very emotional"*, but for others there was very little meaning to be taken from this platform; *"it doesn't mean anything to me"*. There were also some calls from the group that the concept's feel was *"too American"*;

- Italian - All participants felt this was an important statement that resonated strongly. It was in keeping with the value they placed on voting as a 'democratic right';
- Indonesian - Liked the sentiment expressed by this territory and could relate to it; and,
- Greek – A very cynical response from this group. For example, *"What democracy? Voting is not the heartbeat of anything!"* There were some issues with trusting government among this group as *"there is corruption in the political system".*

10.2 OVERALL RESPONSE TO 'THE POWER TO BE HEARD'

A summary of the CALD response to this territory is outlined below:

"The power to be heard"

The Federal Election is the power to be heard, because it gives everybody a voice in deciding how their country is run

– Relayed how many felt

"When you vote…you have an influence" (Sudanese)

"Before in Iraq, I never had a voice, so I choose this message because I want my voice to be heard" (Iraqi - Kurd)

– Highlights empowerment living here brings
– **Implies** democracy + reinforces benefits emotively (vs. 'heartbeat')
– Cantonese and Italian – more literal msg takeout
  - *'You're not always heard'*
  - 'Power' = ??? (preferential system)

Received the most consistent, positive responses

Specifically, responses to this territory by each CALD community group are outlined below:

- Iraqi - For a number of participants, this territory explored feelings they already held;
- Chinese - Cantonese-speakers didn't necessarily link 'voting' with 'being heard'. Mandarin-speakers liked the simplicity of the message and felt it expressed the essence of democracy;
- Vietnamese - Again, another positive response from entire group, with all participants in agreement. 'Being heard' was felt to be a part of what democracy was all about;
- Sudanese - This concept spoke about what many believed: that elections do give the public the ability to be heard;

- Lebanese - All in the group agreed that living here empowered people and gave them an opportunity to express their true beliefs (esp. compared to the Middle East). Voting was definitely felt to be a part of this;
- Italian - There were mixed reactions within the group. The notion of power was questionable, especially given that the results of elections may not reflect the views of the community;
- Indonesian – Participants felt this spoke of one of the major benefits of living in Australia – *"We don't have this in Indonesia and we like it"*;
- Greek - All in the group agreed that voting did have the power to make a difference to the end result of an election – *"No matter what the outcome, and even if all politicians are the same, a vote or even many votes collectively have the power to change governments"*.

10.3 OVERALL RESPONSE TO 'COMPULSORY TO VOTE'

A summary of the CALD response to this territory is outlined below:

"It's compulsory to vote"

It's compulsory for every Australian to vote in the Federal Election. Make sure you vote to avoid being fined

- Simple and reminds me to do it (Iraqi, Indonesian)
- True - *'Who wants to get a fine!'* (Vietnamese, Chinese)
- Less relevant for others
  - 'Compulsory' doesn't = 'democracy'
  - 'Threat' to Italians → wouldn't vote to spite govt.!
- Greek community less sensitive to this (> that we make it compulsory!)

"If I'm forced, that means it's like living in an Arabic country" (Lebanese)

The winner in terms of clarity … but sentiment is polarising

Specifically, responses to this territory by each CALD community group are outlined below:

- Iraqi - This was the one message that all participants understood, though some did have issues with the fact that a democratic system handed out fines to those who chose not to engage - *"I love this country and it's my home now. But why should I get a fine if I don't vote? "*

- Chinese – This was the most salient concept for Cantonese-speakers as it tapped to their fear of being fined. This was less the case among the Mandarin-speaking group;
- Vietnamese - Again, all agreed with this statement. Talking about voting in this way would help make sure people in the community did the right thing as *"no-one wants to pay a fine"*;
- Sudanese - Told the community something they already knew, so was generally of less interest – *"(we know) it's already a person's responsibility"*;
- Lebanese - This statement was felt to lack democracy that many appreciated by 'forcing' people into doing the right thing. Some likened the tone to one that may be prevalent in undemocratic nations – *"it's a disgusting statement";*
- Italian - Italians responded very negatively to this concept as saw it as 'a threat'. A number of participants said if these messages were promoted, there may be community backlash and people may not vote to spite the government;
- Indonesian - Agreed with and accepted the sentiment given here;
- Greek - Also agreed with the sentiment of 'compulsory' as *"it makes citizens contribute, even in a small way, to the political system"*.

10.4 OVERALL RESPONSE TO 'IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY'

A summary of the CALD response to this territory is outlined below:

"It's your responsibility"

Participation in the Federal Election is the responsibility of every Australian. Don't let your country down

– 'Lecturing' for some (Mandarin)
– Some sense that it 'guilts' community into voting

"I chose this one because I love Australia and I want what's best for this country" (Iraqi – Shiite)

– Taps into:
  - Obligation some felt when becoming citizens
  - Human truth that many CALD participants felt a 'sense of duty' about voting

CALD participants can relate … but not the 'favourite' in any group

Specifically, responses to this territory by each CALD community group are outlined below:

- Iraqi - Some participants could relate to the 'do the right thing;' aspect of this concept easily; *"I chose this one because I love Australia and I want what's best for this country"* (Shiite);
- Chinese - Was felt to sound too much like 'lecturing';
- Vietnamese - Less positive response than other concepts as it could make some people feel guilty if *"they forgot to vote, because of their hectic lifestyle"*;
- Sudanese - There was consensus within the group that voting was a personal responsibility;
- Lebanese - All agreed that voting was a part of one's duties to their country;
- Italian - Participants were generally negative about being persuaded to vote in this way to *"not let Australia down"*. Only a few could relate to this construct;
- Indonesian and Greek - Participants in both groups agreed that it was fair to consider voting an obligation for citizens of a country; *"you've got to respect that process"* (Greek).

10.5 OVERALL RESPONSE TO 'IT'S THE PATRIOTIC THING TO DO'

A summary of the CALD response to this territory is outlined below:

"The patriotic thing to do"

Voting in the Federal Election is the patriotic thing for all Australians to do. It shows that you care about your country

- 'Patriotism' overstating what's a basic right (Greek)
- Reminiscent of communism (Mandarin)
- Relating to patriotism difficult (Cantonese)
- But resonates with others

"I feel that I was born again when I came to this country and I respect this country and feel respected here as a human being"

(Indonesian, Lebanese, Vietnamese)
– Emotional response (Iraqi group)

Another polarising territory … contentious for some, evokes strong emotion for others

Specifically, responses to this territory by each CALD community group are outlined below:

- Iraqi - This concept was popular among some participants as they too 'loved' Australia – *"This has become my new country and I love and respect it"*;

- Chinese - Chinese participants generally found it difficult to relate to patriotism. Cantonese-speakers felt as though they hadn't been in Australia for long enough while Mandarin-speakers were reminded of communism;
- Vietnamese & Lebanese - Both communities were able to relate to patriotism;
- Sudanese - Patriotism was a less relevant message compared to the others presented, but still some general positivity from the group;
- Italian - Patriotism was not a strong, motivating factor for the bulk of the group. Some acknowledged that many Italians currently have dual citizenship (i.e. Australian and Italian) so this message may serve to confuse them;
- Indonesian and Greek - The Indonesian could relate to this territory, however the Greek community struggled with it – *"voting isn't a patriotic act at all … it's got nothing to do with patriotism. It's a civic duty and responsibility"*.

11. KEY INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

11.1 KEY INSIGHTS

One's country of origin experience in CALD communities does not shape how these communities navigate through the Australian electoral system. Rather, these experiences do shape the emotional connection CALD voters have with the Australian system.

CALD communities see voting as an important and valuable process and rarely view it as a drudgery. It is a significant symbol for what is loved about Australia.

There was a real desire for participants to know more about the process too, as it was such a respected aspect of the nation.

Certainly this research highlighted that the specific details about the electoral process were not so clear for the majority of CALD participants. For example, participants needed some more detail on:

- How to vote;
- The two ballot system;
- The preferential system; and,
- What voting options were available to them.

This was less the case for Greek and Italian communities, who were certainly more knowledgeable about the process. The communities with real knowledge gaps tended to be those where ELP was low.

Friends and family were certainly important with regards to helping CALD voters navigate the Australian electoral system and this behaviour needs to be acknowledged in the AEC's communications development.

Further, providing POI was welcomed by the bulk of CALD voters. This requirement, if implemented, would provide a positive 'halos' onto the current electoral system.

11.2 COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES

There are certainly important opportunities for the AEC and any campaign activity scheduled for mid 2006 onwards to educate permanent CALD residents around the specifics of the Australian electoral process.

As the electoral process can be seen as being quite complicated, both from a CALD and from a mainstream perspective, it is important that the AEC ensures that communication or campaign activity be presented on more of a 'need to know' basis rather than bombarding communities with too much detailed information that may, or may not be relevant.

A communication strategy using intermediaries, friends and family is very important for CALD communities and should be taken on board in the development of any CALD-specific components of the brief.

Within the AEC's communications, the notion of democracy is a positive concept to reinforce, particularly with communities more recently arrived. However caution may need to be taken here as more established communities (particularly the Greek and Italian communities) were less overwhelmingly positive here.

From a communication territory perspective, all potential platforms received some positive response from participants. This reinforces the emotionally rich territory in which the AEC will be communicating within, from a CALD perspective.

Specifically, while messages around the 'compulsory' nature of voting were popular in terms of their simplicity and clarity, those focussed on the message of 'empowerment' were more in-synch with the positive, emotional sentiment expressed around the issue of voting apparent from this research.