



AEC CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

Prepared for the Australian Electoral Commission
June 2006



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary	1
Research context	5
2.1 Background	5
2.2 Research objectives	6
Research design	9
3.1 Qualitative methodology	9
Research findings	12
4.1 The election landscape	12
4.2 Segment issues	19
4.3 Communications	24
4.5 Reactions to advertisements	31
4.6 Influencers, touchpoints and the media	33
Strategic considerations and conclusions	35
Appendix A	39
Discussion guide	39

This section provides a brief overview of the research context, key findings and conclusions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The AEC is an independent statutory authority responsible for the administration of federal elections and referendums. The Electoral Act requires that the AEC must do its best to ensure that every adult Australian is given an equal opportunity to participate in the Federal Election. Targeted research and communication are used to help the AEC achieve this aim. Eureka was commissioned to conduct strategic research to assist in the development of communication in the lead up to the 2007 Federal Election advertising campaign.

The research had a particular focus on some new communication challenges for the AEC as a result of prospective changes to the enrolment and close of rolls process. This research aimed to help the AEC and its communications agencies to identify attitudes to key election and enrolment issues, particularly for young voters, and to determine how best to target key population segments through the 2007 Election advertising campaign.

Methodology

The research was carried out using a qualitative methodology. Sixteen group discussions and four in-depth interviews were conducted between 23 May and 6 June 2006. All participants were eligible to be enrolled. Group discussions were conducted in various parts of Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Rockhampton, Launceston and Goulburn. Group discussions were of mixed gender and were structured according to age groups, enrolment attitudes (proactive v ambivalent) and status (enrolled v non-enrolled) and, and, for younger people, living situation (with parents/living independently). Depth interviews were conducted by telephone with people who had recently moved house, located in Sydney and in regional NSW.

Key findings

- The concept of 'democracy' is regarded almost universally as a positive and valuable feature of Australian life, although one that is often taken for granted. In contrast, 'elections' are seen as a necessary but often annoying consequence of living in a democracy. No action is needed by the AEC to build trust in Australia's democratic system of government, which is already high.
- Updating enrolment and initiating enrolment, on the other hand, are in urgent need of attention. Many members of the population are still unaware of many of the fundamental requirements and procedures of enrolment, a situation that will become critical, given the foreshadowed truncated close of rolls, unless addressed prior to the next federal election.

Among key audiences of interest to the AEC:

- The research suggests that **young people** in particular need to be jolted into action. The main barrier to their enrolling is inertia, not negativity or disengagement or any great ideological disagreement with the process. Anything that can make the enrolment task easier (for example, enrolling online, being posted the enrolment form or enrolling en masse at school) is likely to be welcomed as simplifying and facilitating the process. So, generating enrolment among young people is both a communications and a systems challenge. Communications are required that harness the already generally positive disposition to participation in elections and create a sense of urgency. Likewise, the AEC needs to have the mechanisms in place to harvest enrolments continuously through schools and other key touch points for young people. The research suggests that young people are likely to value enrolment/voting more if they are made aware that this right could be taken away.
- Among **'the other 80%'** (represented in the research by 30–50 year olds) the AEC's primary task is to maintain existing goodwill and reinforce desired behaviours. Communication channels used for this audience to date are acknowledged to be working well, although there are still knowledge deficits about the electoral system. However, despite variable knowledge levels, most of this group still expect to be told/reminded of the 'why', 'when', 'how' and 'where' of electoral and voting procedures at election time, especially in those jurisdictions that use different preference systems in their own elections. Those that may need to cast pre-poll or absentee votes may also warrant some attention from the AEC. There is generally less confidence from this target group in knowing what to do or how to find out what to do in order to cast an early vote.
- **Parents** generally see educating their children about enrolling, voting and indeed politics as part of a broader responsibility to equip them with 'life skills'. The majority do not see any need for a drugs-style approach to educating their children about elections and voting,

but feel that some material to guide or facilitate these discussions would be useful. Further, they would welcome some reassurance that children place considerable store in their expertise, a point supported by this research. Ultimately, though, parents would like schools to play the primary role in civics education, but are happy to supplement this at home.

- Although there is a general awareness among **those who change addresses** that enrolment details must be updated when moving, this is not a priority for most. In terms of raising this as a priority, the actual moving period is seen as far too hectic for any enrolment messages to cut through, with most believing any efforts to raise this is an issue should wait until two weeks to a month after the move. Many did not see a failure to update their details as a barrier to voting, with a belief that 'one way or another' they would be able to vote (either through an absentee vote or, if still within the same electorate, voting via their previous (or parents') address.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- For the youth segment, the AEC needs to promote the value of what young people have, and possibly take for granted (i.e. the right to enrol and vote), and to emphasise that this is now at risk unless they enrol in a timely fashion. A part of this process may be to promote the idea that they will attain 'full citizenship' upon enrolment. The AEC also needs to acknowledge and counter arguments that younger people will only be ready to enrol and vote in the future, when they are paying taxes, having children or other perceived markers of 'adulthood' and full integration into 'adult society'.
- For 'the other 80%', any messages need to reflect they take care to do the right thing. Communication channels used for this audience to date are acknowledged to be working well and should be continued. Indeed, voters expect that they will be told all relevant information at election time, when their interest in electoral matters will be heightened. Those that may need to cast pre-poll or absentee votes may warrant some attention from the AEC. Despite the increasing numbers of such votes being lodged, knowledge of these options appears limited.
- Among parents, classes focussing on citizenship, democracy and the electoral process for their children at school are strongly supported and fit in well with the AEC's long-term strategy of educating voters. Opportunities to further such opportunities should be explored to shape the next generation of voters, with a view to achieving informed votes, from citizens who understand the electoral system, rather than simply formal votes.
- Movers should be targeted around a month after they have settled into their new address. Utility bills would be the best channel to reach and remind movers of their responsibilities (apart from AEC direct mail, which was recalled by some following a move), followed by

providing information at real estate agents or with real estate communications. There is a pressing need to work closely with other government agencies that may become aware of a change of address sooner than the AEC (such as Centrelink, motor registries or the HIC) to identify targets for update letters. Indeed, some voters expect that government agencies would cooperate in this way.

This section outlines the background to the project, and specifies the research objectives

RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1 Background

AEC electoral advertising

The AEC is an independent statutory authority responsible for the administration of federal elections and referendums. Advertising is an integral component of the AEC's public awareness strategy, which aims to promote community awareness and participation in the electoral process through key messages. While most Australians exercise their right to enrol and vote, even small fluctuations in enrolment, turnout and formality rates will be observed, scrutinised and publicly discussed, especially in the context of traditionally close elections in Australia. The AEC must do its best to ensure that every adult Australian is given an equal opportunity to participate in the Federal Election: targeted research and advertising is an important way to help achieve this aim.

The need for research

Given the importance of the AEC's role in promoting and conducting Australian Federal Elections, it was important to conduct strategic research before moving into creative development for the 2007 Federal Election advertising campaign.

In May 2006, the AEC engaged Eureka to conduct qualitative research to inform the development of an advertising campaign in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election. A number of target groups were identified for the research by the AEC and its communications agency BMF. A set of hypotheses was examined across these groups.

The research had a particular focus on some new communication challenges for the AEC as a result of (what were then) prospective changes to the enrolment process. These changes involve:

- the shortening of the close of rolls time; and
- the introduction of proof of identify requirements.

Awareness of these issues was suspected to be low among the general population. Research was required to identify awareness of, and attitudes to, these and other enrolment and voting issues. The findings will be used to help identify the best method for communicating to the public (and important key audience segments) the heightened importance of enrolling, and of maintaining an up-to-date enrolment profile in light of the reforms. This research will enable the AEC to identify attitudes to key election and enrolment issues, particularly for young voters, and how best to target key population segments through this campaign. The research objectives are presented in further detail below.

2.2 Research objectives

Overall, the aims of this project were to:

- identify key target groups;
- explore attitudes towards 'big picture' concepts involved with voting and elections and the concept of democracy';
- explore participants' understanding and knowledge of procedural matters such as enrolment and the voting process;
- investigate key target audiences' attitudes to potential campaign themes or 'territories'
- inform the development of a relevant and motivating brand positioning for the enrolment and election processes;
- uncover relevant 'touch-points' for specific target groups.

Key target groups

The following diagram outlines key target audience segments, their significance, and important hypotheses for each:

Youth

At the 2004 electoral roll close, approximately 82% of young Australians (17-25 years of age) were enrolled (compared with 95% of other Australians). The under-enrolment of eligible young people may be exacerbated by the earlier close of rolls ... or by possible disenchantment with the electoral process.

Movers

People who have moved often overlook the need to change their enrolment details. The research investigated the priority movers place on changing their details and how they can best be targeted to maintain correct enrolment.

Other 80%

'The other 80%' (30-50 years) of voters are those that enrol, lodge a vote and do so formally. It is hypothesised that they know enough about the electoral system not to warrant as much education as other segments. The research sought to check this belief.

Parents

It is believed that parents have a significant responsibility for initiating action for young people to enrol. It is also believed that they are a key source of information about the electoral process for young people.

Particular issues explored within each target groups included:

Youth

- democracy
- enrolment
- elections and voting
- communications
- methods to encourage enrolment

Movers

- attitudes towards changing enrolment details
- opportunities to communicate the enrolment update message

Other 80%

- democracy
- enrolment
- elections and voting

- communications
- testing the assumption that because they 'got things right' last time, they will continue to do so in future with minimal communication

Parents

- influence on children in electoral matters (and the best methods with which to make the most of this influence)

The research program undertaken to meet the research objectives and explore these issues of interest is outlined in the following section.

This section provides details of the qualitative methodology adopted for this research project

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Qualitative methodology

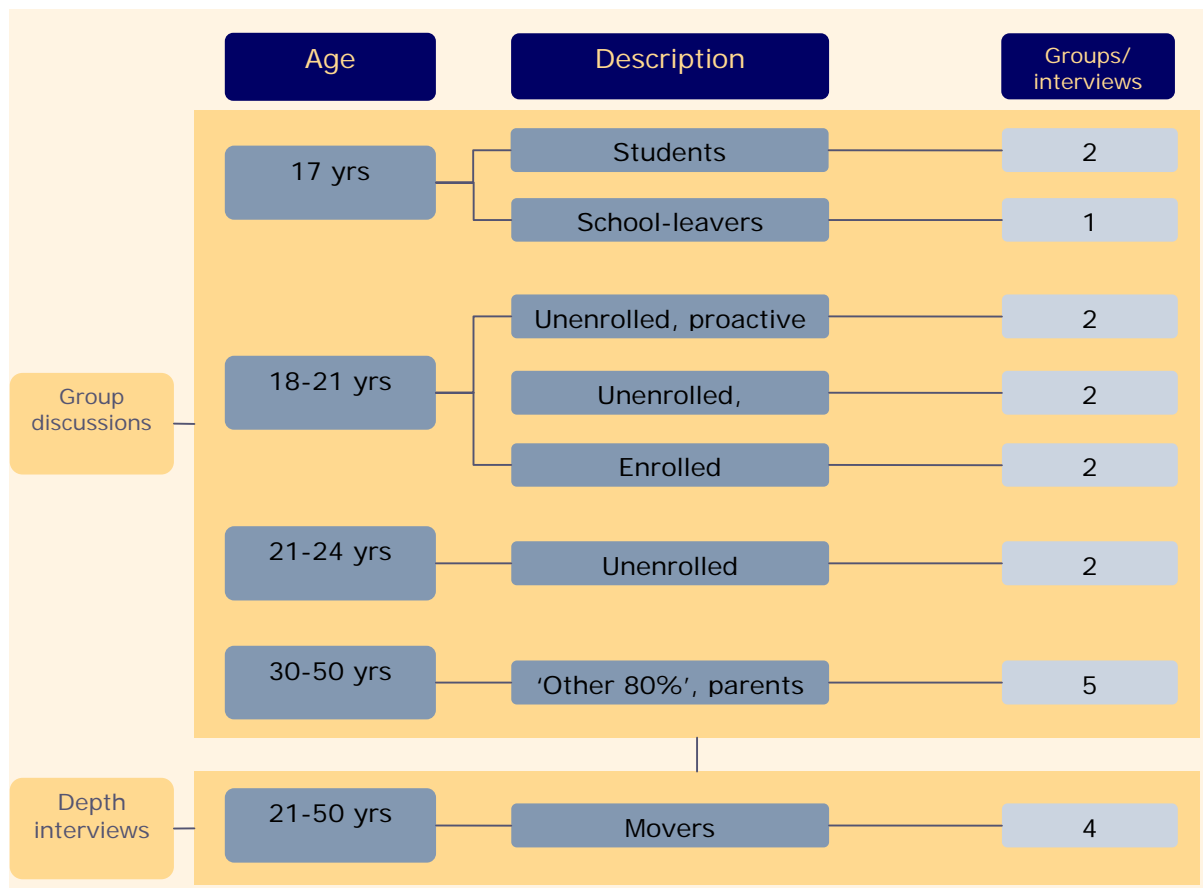
The research was carried out using a qualitative methodology.

- Sixteen group discussions (typically involving eight participants but ranging from five to nine participants) and four in-depth interviews were conducted between 23 May and 6 June 2006.
 - Group discussions were conducted in various locations within Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Rockhampton, Launceston and Goulburn, taking into account a mix of electorate types, state voting systems and recentness of state elections.
 - Depth interviews were conducted by telephone with movers located in Sydney and in regional NSW.
- Group discussions were structured according to age (17 year-olds; 18-21 year-olds; 21-24 year-olds; and 30-50 year-old parents).
- Group discussions were also structured along enrolment lines:
 - all were Australian citizens
 - with enrolled and non-enrolled participants;

- with those 'ambivalent' and 'proactive' about voting, and, for 17 year-olds, between high-school leavers and those still at school
- All groups were of mixed gender.
- Group discussions with younger people included an even mix of those living with their parents and those living away from home.
- Respondents received an incentive of \$60 each.
- Group discussions ran for approximately one and three-quarter hours, in-depth interviews ran for approximately half an hour.

Group structure and demographics

The group discussion structure is summarised in the following diagram:



It should be noted that:

- two of the fifteen participants in 'Students' groups were enrolled

- none of the 'School leavers' were enrolled
- all participants from 'the other 80%' segment were enrolled
- One participant in the 'Unenrolled, proactive' group actually proved to have enrolled since having been invited to participate. (Participants in all other groups were in accordance with the enrolment specifications outlined above).
- All in-depth interview participants were enrolled.
- No-one in the research reported having lapsed and then re-enrolled.

Participants varied in terms of their work status. The table below details the composition of each group discussion by participants' work status.

Group discussion	F/T	P/T	Self-emp	Unemp	Home dut	Student	Retired
17, students						7	
17, students						8	
17, school leavers	2	3				2	
18-21, unenrolled, proac	1	1		2		3	
18-21, unenrolled, proac	1		1			6	
18-21, unenrolled, ambiv	3	1				2	
18-21, unenrolled, ambiv		3				2	
18-21, enrolled			1			5	
18-21, enrolled	2					6	
21-24, unenrolled	3	1				1	
21-24, unenrolled	6					1	
30-50, parents	6	1					
30-50, parents	8	1					
30-50, parents	1	1			3		1
30-50, parents	4	1	3				
30-50, parents	1	3	1		1		

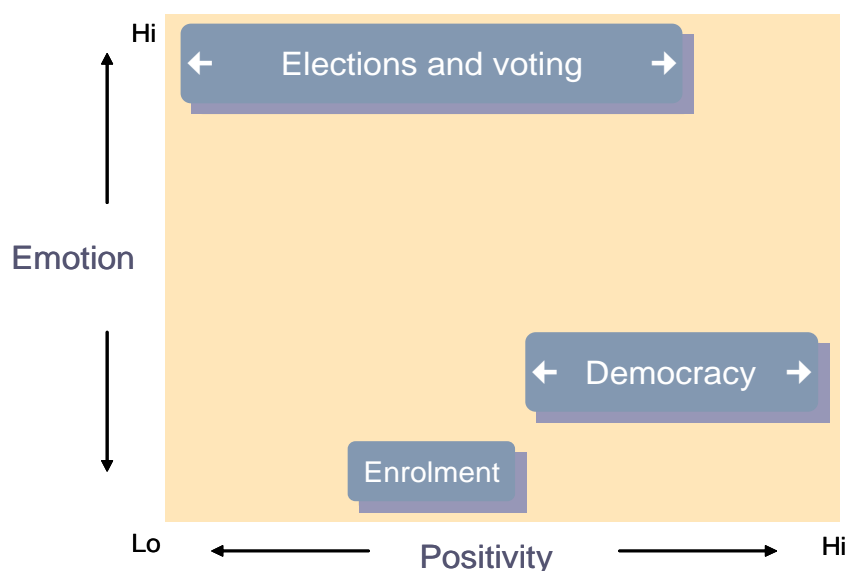
The following section reports detailed findings of the research.

This section reports the findings of the research, discussing key awareness, attitude and knowledge issues for each segment of the target audience

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 The election landscape

Three key 'brand components' were presented to the target audiences: 'democracy', 'elections and voting', and 'enrolment'. The components were found to vary markedly both in their power to engage participants' emotions and in the associations and attitudes they evoked. The following diagram provides an indication of the relative positioning of these brand components according to the degree of 'emotion' and 'positive reaction' they elicited.



Elections and voting

The topic of 'elections and voting' proved to be a polarising conversation-starter. Of the three components, it provoked the liveliest discussion and most directly engaged the emotions of participants.

At the more positive end of the spectrum, a few participants shared a sense of excitement at taking part in an event fundamentally linked to the life of a democracy.

'I see it a bit like the Melbourne Cup... I like to go and vote, then go home and watch the count on TV to see if I've backed a winner!'

Others associated elections and voting with the comforting familiarity of a cyclical routine; with primary schools and polling booths.

More common, however, was a chain of less favourable associations, many of them linked to the disagreeable political behaviour perceived to surround elections. 'Politicians', 'parties', 'propaganda' and 'mudslinging' were all spoken of with varying degrees of cynicism, irritation and disapproval.

'It's a bit frustrating because you just get bombarded with information on the candidates'

A further cluster of negative reactions focussed on the process itself, which was described as ineffectual by some (the most extreme view spoke of the disconnect between voters' intention and the actual policies implemented by an elected government), and by others merely as 'an annoyance'. Many were simply indifferent. Among first-time voters in particular, there was also some anxiety associated with Election Day.

'I find it a bit of a hassle on the day to find time to go and vote, particularly if I'm working'

Among some groups, more contentious issues (such as the compulsory nature of voting, and the 'two-party' system) proved to be a significant 'sidetrack' to debate, with people naturally disagreeing with each other. Discussion often had to be 'steered' back towards the functional aspects of voting and elections and away from issues such as mandates and policy implementation through the workings of government.

State and Federal elections were seen as distinct by most participants, with the exception of some younger participants who found it difficult to distinguish between State and Federal governments and their roles.

Democracy

The concept of democracy was **strongly supported**, but participants **discussed it in abstract and relatively detached terms**. There was a general sense that democracy is very much taken for granted, particularly among the younger participants. That said, however, there were very few *negative* attitudes towards democracy – where they did exist, they tended to relate more to politics than to the framework within which politics takes place. Participants widely accepted democracy as the best possible system of government and did not question its primacy.

'I've never lived under anything but a democracy so it's hard to imagine life a different way.'

Participants tended to discuss the concept of democracy in rather vague, idealised terms. Other than associating the word with 'elections' and their own voting experience, they did not readily relate democracy to historical events or to concrete institutions. Common associations included 'equality', 'fairness' and 'freedom'. This last notion was typically linked to the idea of 'freedom of speech' or 'the right to disagree'.

Democracy was also thought to be about 'the people', although there was little spontaneous discussion of 'the people' as a source of authority and legitimacy. Although the concept of 'rights' was mentioned by a minority, there was little appreciation of the processes by which 'the people' are represented in parliament, nor was there discussion of the precise meaning of the word 'democracy'. A typical comment (both for the sentiment expressed, and the vagueness with which it was expressed) was that, in a democracy, 'the people have the power to change things'.

'With our system, we have the chance to throw someone out after three years if they are not doing a good job. In a dictatorship, you're stuck with them for life.'

'Fortunate' was a word commonly used to describe citizens living under a democracy, but there was a general feeling that democracy is nevertheless taken for granted. Some participants also felt that 'democracy' was a much abused or misused word, particularly in international relations.

Australia was seen to be among the top tier of democratic countries, although participants noted that there exists a degree of complacency, and that to a large extent the workings of the Australian system of government were not understood by voters as well as they could be.

All in all, **'democracy' did not emerge as an inspiring or motivating term** – as an abstract concept it evoked little emotional attachment, especially among those aged 17 to 24, for whom

there was very much a sense that things 'have always been, and always will be', the way they are. Older participants were quicker to acknowledge (albeit indistinctly) that sacrifices have been made by past generations to acquire privileges which are today all too easily taken for granted. It was also felt that 'democracy' is not a natural 'end state' and needs to be maintained and preserved.

Enrolment

Enrolment proved to be the **least engaging** of the three 'brand components' discussed. It had a muted emotional impact, and conjured up, at best, only neutral attitudes. For older participants, the enrolment process was a more or less dim memory (vague recollections of lodging a form at the post office); few had actually considered the question of how and when to enrol. In contrast, among younger participants (aged 17 to 21) the majority of those who had enrolled could remember when and how they enrolled. The enrolment process was described by those who remembered it as 'easy', and the task *per se* did not emerge as a significant barrier among the non-enrolled.

It is fair to say that across all segments, there was a general appreciation of the value of enrolling, and of maintaining an up-to-date enrolment profile. There emerged, however, a notable **shortfall** between *perceived* importance and *actual* importance (in terms of such importance translating into action on the part of an individual), particularly in light of forthcoming reforms. The centrality of enrolment to the electoral process, and the role that it plays in guaranteeing one's opportunity to cast a vote, does appear to need reinforcement among all segments of the target audience. There is a common attitude that 'election time' is the appropriate period to concern oneself with the mechanics of enrolment and voting. With the demise of the seven-day 'period of grace', there would appear to be a genuine need for timely information.

A range of issues were explored to gauge participants understanding of the enrolment process.

- **Compulsory enrolment:** There was some confusion about whether or not enrolment is compulsory (despite nearly universal understanding that voting is compulsory) with many participants uncertain whether or not there are mechanisms to find out who is and who is not enrolled.
- **Age:** Eighteen was generally understood to be the earliest age at which one could enrol. A minority of parents and young people were aware that seventeen-year-olds can provisionally enrol, having typically gained this knowledge through a letter from the AEC or through civics education courses in school.
- **Enrolment 'triggers' and opportunities:** Enrolment was closely associated with household letters from the AEC, and with school-based enrolment. Letters emerged as the

most salient communication channel to encourage enrolment. It was felt that the AEC letterhead, and the high degree of formality associated with 'traditional' mail added significant weight and provided impetus to enrol. Younger voters spoke of mass enrolment with their school cohort – this also proved to be a critically important enrolment channel. Non-enrolled participants had typically missed these two opportunities.

- **How to enrol or change details** proved to be a grey area for most. The post office was mentioned by some (although awareness of this possibility was lower among those aged 17 to 21). Most were uncertain whether or not online enrolment was possible. While some felt that online enrolment would be convenient, it was not clear that the provision of such a channel would result in greater levels of enrolment than currently observed through traditional channels.
- **Role and profile of the AEC:** Findings suggest that the AEC is generally recognised as the authority responsible for enrolment, and that there is an expectation that information about enrolment would be received from the Commission (but far more so among older participants). The AEC's profile is lowest among youth, resting largely on recall of letters from the AEC (e.g. the letter informing young people about provisional enrolment). For 30-50 year olds, the AEC is a distant, relatively passive – but impartial and mildly familiar – overseer of elections.

On the whole, a high level of **passivity** was evident – those who are not enrolled, and those who should update their details – will generally wait to be told when, where and how they should enrol, rather than find out for themselves. Realistically, most said they would only be attuned to such messages closer to a federal election.

Forthcoming changes

There was **very little awareness** of forthcoming changes to the electoral system, with a general expectation that the enrolment process would remain constant over time, and no general sense that change is either warranted or required. Reactions were mixed, with possible changes to the timing electoral roll closure poorly received, but new proof of identity requirements largely welcomed.

Most participants were aware that electoral rolls do close at some point between the announcement and conduct of an election – this was seen to be necessary to ensure that rolls can be 'finalised' before election day. Few, however, were able to say exactly at what point rolls close, although most expected there would be a 'period of grace' after an election is announced.

'They need to print the roll for election day don't they? So I guess there has to be a cut off point at some stage but I wouldn't know the details.'

Changes to the status quo were not foreseen by participants and provoked much **incredulity and scepticism** when discussed. The prospect of a 72-hour cut-off for changes to enrolment details was thought to be insufficient, and participants were unable to see cogent reasons for bringing forward the deadline for new enrolments to the day on which writs are issued. This was thought (by older voters) to be particularly harsh for younger people, who were imagined to be less likely to keep abreast of current affairs, and therefore less likely to enrol or to update their enrolment in time to vote.

'What earthly purpose could such draconian laws have?'

'They're taking away the democratic right of young people'

Participants tended to view changes to the close of rolls as an impingement on the fundamental right to vote, rather than simply a curtailment justified by administrative necessity or by a concern for the accuracy of rolls. Despite resistance to the proposed changes, few people inferred a heightened need to keep their own enrolment details up-to-date. There was not a sense of urgency in this regard.

More stringent **proof of identity** requirements, on the other hand, were generally supported and greeted with modest approval. There was no belief that the system is currently being undermined by widespread 'rotting', but the potential to flout current arrangements was recognised. All the same, it was thought unlikely that individuals would actually contravene the system:

'I guess if someone really wanted to they could run around from polling place to polling place, but realistically, who could be bothered?'

Requiring a drivers licence, passport or similar proof of identity was thought to be a reasonable expectation given that many familiar situations also require proof of identity for administrative reasons: voting is not seen as any different. Younger participants noted that they are accustomed to showing proof of identity in a wide range of situations (including on entry to bars and nightclubs). In fact, many aged 17 and 18 assumed that it is already mandatory to provide proof of identity at a polling place.

Some practical barriers were identified, including the risk that people unaware of the need to show adequate proof of identity may be turned away from the polling place, or that certain groups, such as the elderly, will find it more difficult than others to meet proof of identity requirements (if they no longer have a drivers licence, for example). On the whole, however, proof of identity requirements were seen to confirm the importance of voting and reassure voters of the integrity of the electoral system.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In order to better understand how knowledge of elections and voting is formed among the target audience, sources of knowledge were discussed. Several knowledge gaps were also identified.

The post office was commonly mentioned as a 'contact point' for changing enrolment details, although this fact was far from universally known. Younger participants mentioned an 'unexpected letter' in the mail for 17 and 18-21 year-olds. They also spoke of parents (or grandparents, some of whom were stridently partisan) and their role both in discussing politics and relating their polling day experiences. School was also spoken of as a source of information, although there was some discussion of a lack of receptiveness to this information in a school context, and the extent to which participants could remember what they had learned at school varied, being on the most part limited.

Frequent mention was made of letters from 'a local member'. It was acknowledged that such letters were a familiar source of information about political events and the electoral cycle, and that for many they represented one of the few interactions with the political system, even if it was a passive interaction, and one coloured by partisan politics.

Pre-election advertising was also mentioned – both the campaign advertising conducted by political parties themselves (often described as strident and aggressive), and the familiar informative commercials run by the Electoral Commission explaining 'how to vote' details.

Some significant **knowledge gaps** were revealed:

- The existence, nature and extent of penalties for failing to enrol – and the likelihood of actually incurring such penalties – were not well understood. In particular, there was a degree of uncertainty surrounding the notion of 'cumulative loading' for those who fail to enrol at successive elections. Participants did feel, however, that they had a better understanding of penalties for 'failing to vote'.
- There was little awareness of provisional enrolment for 17 year-olds
- There was a high degree of uncertainty about online facilities to enrol and change enrolment details – participants questioned what can and can't be done online.
- Pre-poll voting was a relatively vague concept even among some aged 30 to 50, apart from those who had actually voted in this manner (the minority).
- While there is general (though vague) awareness of postal and absentee voting, many think they will be 'ok on the day' (at least fulfilling their obligation to turn up to vote).

- Electoral roll listing at their current address was not seen by some participants as necessary to be able to vote. This was especially the case for those who moved within the electorate.

4.2 Segment issues

Youth

While younger participants appreciated the right to vote, democracy as a concept did not resonate strongly. As was the case for all audience segments, it was a concept firmly supported, little understood in practical terms, and taken as an important but rarely considered 'given'. Some important points emerged that were specific to young people:

- There was a common view that youth issues are not often taken into consideration
- Young people expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of their vote, doubting the effect it will have on 'government' decisions and policies
- There is often deeper interest and greater focus on local issues young people see as directly affecting them:

'My mate runs skate parks - He's always having to deal with councils to get the relevant approvals and stuff'

There was a prevalent feeling of ill-preparedness among young people (both enrolled and non-enrolled). Many felt that they were simply not ready to cast a meaningful vote, lacking the necessary knowledge or maturity to make informed voting decisions. Even 21- 24 year-olds admitted feeling this way, highlighting that voting is seen as a skill to be acquired over time, as one becomes more familiar with 'adult' concepts and realities.

'Why would I vote when I know nothing about it. It would be a useless vote. At 21, I don't know anything about how the country is run'

For those who are enrolled, school-based enrolment and education efforts have played a significant role, not only in initial enrolment but in encouraging a sense of 'readiness' to vote. The role of parents was also acknowledged, but it was often noted that this tended to focus more narrowly on political party support.

Some young participants expressed a general 'disconnect' between their lives and elections, and bewilderment or indifference at the way politics and governments work. This was, again, a sentiment expressed both by non-enrolled and enrolled youth:

'The whole thing (elections and politics) just bores me.'

'Trade deficits and all that jazz – that has nothing to do with us.'

More than attitudinal or ideological differences, active avoidance, or even ambivalence, the main drivers of non-enrolment among young people appear to be inertia and circumstances. It was common for non-enrolled 21-24-year-olds to ascribe their failure to enrol to 'forgetting' or 'just not getting around to it'. Among young people generally, electoral enrolment emerged as a low priority. Coupled with a lack of urgency, or sense that there is 'plenty of time to enrol', (with elections occurring only every few years), there was a view that enrolling and voting were responsibilities that could 'harmlessly' be deferred.

There was good general awareness that to vote one must be enrolled, and general knowledge of voting processes was reasonable among most young participants (resting largely on the personal experience gained in accompanying parents to polling places on election day).

Some young people were aware that fines existed for failing to enrol or failing to vote, while others were unsure but assumed nonetheless that there would be fines. There was very little knowledge, however, of the size of fines or when, and indeed whether, they are applied. Despite the general belief that fines exist, they did not appear to be a significant spur to enrolment, with participants noting that even a \$100 fine would be unlikely to motivate them to act. The comment was made that a fine is only motivating 'after you've been stung once'.

For the majority of young participants, the influence most likely to cause them to think about their enrolment status is the announcement of an election. While this may be true for all segments, it is particularly true for 18-24 year olds, who feel that their lives are already filled with other more important concerns: friends, study, work and good times. Young participants themselves admitted that they spent little time reflecting on the broader community or their own role in shaping it.

A minority placed little value on their right to vote, seeing it as something that will always be there – a right that may be important in theory, but is devalued in fact.

Movers

Movers were aware that enrolment details do need to be changed when moving, and that this does not happen 'automatically'. However, changing enrolment details was not seen to be a priority in the way that banking, utilities, and drivers licence details are.

'You can't live without these things, but if you don't update your details on the electoral roll, it's not really going to affect you.'

'It's just not a priority. I'd probably think about it more at election time.'

Absentee voting in one's previous electorate was thought to be a valid option for some - especially for younger people and those who expect to move again soon. Younger voters commented that it may be more convenient to stick with the address of their parental home:

'I could just say I live at home still.'

Voters aged 30 to 50 years displayed reasonable knowledge of how to change their enrolment details, most often mentioning the post office as a convenient and readily accessible option. Younger voters were unsure, and expressed a preference for online channel.

'Can you do it online? If you could do it online then I'd do it pretty much straight away. Then you wouldn't have to worry about office hours or anything like you do if you need to pick up a form.'

The optimal time to receive a reminder notice was thought to be not before but *after* settling into a new address, allowing time for other important issues to be settled and for movers to 'acclimatise' themselves to their new environment. This would also coincide with the one-month time-period that must elapse before voters can change their enrolment details.

'You just have so much else to be worrying about when you actually move'

Important 'touch points' considered by movers included:

- Utility bills (this emerged as the preferred channel)
 - Gas, electricity and (to a less universal extent) phone connection seen to be a priority for all movers
 - Both buyers and renters would be reached in this way

- An opportunity for AEC to reach movers in conjunction with an existing communication channel
- Bi-annual ads in newspapers – this was not seen by participants as overly efficient
- Real estate offices (posters/brochures or enrolment forms on reception desk)
- Universities (including enrolment forms in student orientation packs)
- The suggestion of packing boxes was not thought to be effective – many admitted that they ‘beg, borrow or steal’ these or even an alternative (milk crates etc.).

Findings suggest that there is real potential for ‘movers’ to be caught off guard by legislative changes. Voting at one’s old address (providing they hadn’t moved interstate or a long way away from their previous residence) was seen to be a viable alternative by many.

The other 80 per cent (30-50 year olds)

On the whole, enrolled voters aged 30 to 50 (described for the purposes of campaign development as ‘the other 80%’) take voting seriously and enjoy having their say:

‘If you don’t vote, you really don’t have any right to whinge about any of the decisions that are taken by government’

‘I guess you could join a political party, but when you work and have kids and a busy life already, then voting is often the only practical way a person can be involved’

Participants in this age group tended to believe that they know the voting process very well, having voted in numerous elections. There were, however, several areas in which their knowledge appeared to be far from comprehensive:

- In major cities, there was patchy knowledge of electorate boundaries and names, with some participants also unable to name their local member.
- Knowledge of how the electoral system functions was tenuous for some. There was limited understanding of preferential voting and the differences between voting for the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Almost all were aware of the terms ‘absentee voting’ and ‘pre-poll voting’, but knowledge of how this is done was relatively weak (except among the minority that has voted in this way before).

Despite admitting that there are some gaps in their knowledge, this audience segment showed little desire to receive additional information in the period *between* elections – there was a general expectation that all the information they need to know about enrolling and voting will be communicated to them *at election time*. Voting knowledge was thought of by participants primarily as applied knowledge that for the most part lies dormant – a set of skills closely related to a specific event (the election). In the interim, it is only felt necessary to know that one will be reminded of, or have the chance to access, up-to-date knowledge closer to the time when it will need to be employed. Familiarity with past elections leads these voters to expect that the AEC, and political parties, will remind them how, when and where to vote.

Parents

While many parents had discussed enrolment and voting with their children, this was not the case for all participants. Some expect that young people simply will not take voting seriously, associating voting with a certain degree of maturity that parents do not expect all 18-year-olds to have attained.

As soon as I saw 'Nigel Marijuana' on the ballot sheet, I knew who was getting my 18 year old son's vote

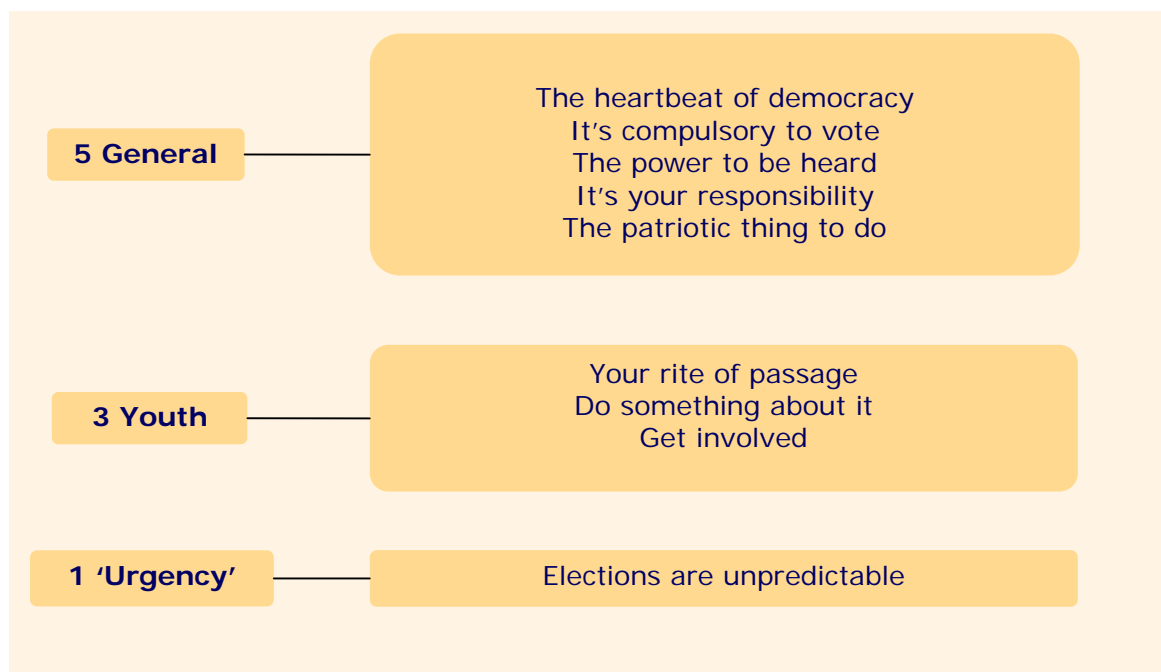
Some admitted that they themselves failed to take voting seriously when younger, and there was a common belief that maturing attitudes to voting it is an inevitable part of 'growing up'. Responsible participation was thought to be linked to developing a 'stake' in the community through taking on other responsibilities such as paying tax, or acquiring a mortgage.

Parents were not averse to raising the issue of enrolment and voting with their children. Education about, and exposure to, voting was seen an important step on the path to maturity. Some reported that their children had learned about democracy through 'citizenship' or 'civics' classes at school, which had in turn generated discussion at home. Participants pointed to the success of other Commonwealth Government campaigns (those targeting tobacco use, for instance), which were seen to have given parents both a welcome opportunity, and greater confidence, to raise and discuss important issues with their children. Compared to 'thorny' issues such as drugs, enrolment and voting are seen as relatively easy to discuss in the home.

All in all, findings suggest that parents are an important but 'underutilised' channel. There is scope to encourage and assist parents to communicate important election-related messages to their children – parents do express a willingness in this regard. Apart from barriers raised by their own lack of knowledge, however, there appears to be a need for reassurance that their children do value their experience and knowledge on these issues.

4.3 Communications

Nine positioning statements were tested, representing key communication themes or 'territories'. These statements were divided into five general statements (tested across all age groups) three youth-specific statements, and one 'urgency' statement (developed on the basis of insights gained in early group discussions, and tested in the final three group discussions).



Reactions to each positioning are described below.

GENERAL STATEMENTS

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.'

While this statement worked for some, it alienated others. Personal levels of scepticism played a large role in whether participants were prepared to accept the message. As one participant put it:

'People, no matter who they are, should have an equal right in saying who runs their country'

Some, particularly younger participants, felt that the language was too 'corny' or 'soft' objecting especially to the word 'heartbeat'. Young people expressed an instinctively negative reaction to what they perceived to be sentiments better suited to their parents or older generations:

'It's a bit too soft and cuddly and mushy'

Overall, however, the message was generally liked for its positive tone and for portraying democracy as a 'living thing', rather than merely a static background setting. Participants welcomed the idea that democracy could be an organic and evolving system 'nurtured' through the electoral process.

It was noted by some that 'voting is a chance to have one's say' is a more realistic claim than the proposition that 'an individual vote will influence the outcome'. This positioning was seen to be less open to scepticism than those which were seen to make 'bolder claims'.

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'.

This was seen as an essential message by a significant number of participants, who interpreted it to mean that society regards enrolment as an important civic duty. As such, the *normative* effect of this statement appeared to be more important than the *punitive* message.

Many participants, particularly enrolled participants, expressed a strong opinion that this positioning could come across as unnecessarily harsh or threatening depending on the context in which it was delivered. It was noted that this would risk alienating the audience and be uncharacteristic of the way Australians think about democracy:

'I don't like being threatened to make me do something. It is not really very Australian.'

The risk also emerged that this statement could actually reinforce barriers to enrolment. As noted earlier in this report, the fine for failing to vote is widely understood, but the fine for failing to enrol is less well-known. For many, this statement would reinforce the view that it is more sensible to remain unenrolled and 'under the radar' than to risk being fined for failing to vote.

Participants who favoured this statement tended to think that it would work well on 'others' in need of coercion, rather than influencing their own attitudes or behaviours:

'Many would not bother without this rule. By enforcing the policy, it creates a truly democratic vote.'

In summary, strong feelings were generated both for and against this statement, yet overall the reaction tended towards the negative. An extreme view dismissed it altogether:

'What the?!?! Why should you be telling me what to do and waste my time if I don't care what happens?'

One way of increasing the effectiveness of messages about fines and the compulsory nature of enrolment and voting, would be to provide an 'amnesty' (i.e. say that previously non-enrolled Australians will not be punished for failing to enrol in the past). This would soften the impact of the message and help encourage desired behaviours.

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.'

This statement was well received by the majority of participants. It was understood to mean that individuals can make a difference by expressing their preferences. The statement resonated well because it was seen to emphasise individual and collective empowerment. Furthermore, love of country was seen to be implied unemotionally and subtly in this message, avoiding negative associations which are generated for many by messages communicating overt patriotism.

'Most of us feel the need to be important and not just a pawn'

As with all statements, this was also greeted with scepticism by a few participants, who pointed out that the 'individual voice' risks being 'drowned out' by majority views:

'Your opinion is governed by the majority and individual opinions are not heard or considered'

It's your responsibility

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

There was a widespread feeling among participants that this positioning was 'hectoring', overly patriotic and even, paradoxically, 'un-Australian':

'Another big stick approach. I don't need to be told it is my responsibility'

Some, however, felt this approach was justified:

'I like the pressure put on people re. letting the country down.'

The majority were reluctant to embrace the way in which patriotic sentiments were communicated by this message. Those who do not participate in elections reacted poorly to the what they took as an 'accusation' that they had 'let their country down', and most prefer to be told that they *are* doing their part for the country. It was also felt that *the nation owes the citizen* a vote, a relationship which was felt to be inappropriately reversed in this statement.

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.'

Participants did not react well to perceived 'jingoism' in this campaign message (as in others). It proved to be disagreeable to many. It was noted that overt patriotism is more of an American value, and one which Australians on the whole resent:

'It tries to make you feel guilty if you don't vote; un-Australian if you don't'

'There are other ways to be patriotic – sport, family etc.'

'I don't see how voting is patriotic'

Participants reacted negatively to the 'guilt' implied in this message. Some voters felt that it was possible to show one cared by *not* voting, because they did not feel that they are ready to make an informed or mature decision. Furthermore, participants felt they were deeply patriotic even though, in what they saw to be a typically Australian manner, they do not verbalise this sentiment outside of specific contexts (such as the sporting arena).

YOUTH STATEMENTS

Your rite of passage

- 'Just like getting your driver's licence, voting in the Federal Election is part of your rite of passage, because it's an important step in your transition to adulthood.'

Many young people did not welcome this message, especially those who are soon to turn 18, or have recently done so. Some did not accept the analogy because they saw other coming-of-age activities or concepts as more exciting than enrolling to vote. Young people commented that a compulsory act (enrolling to vote) is in no way analogous to an enjoyable and much-anticipated privilege closely related to their social lives (buying alcohol).

That said, some young people (especially the enrolled) did like this message, agreeing that enrolment is as significant as gaining one's driver's licence.

'Being able to vote, like getting your driver's licence, has a sense of empowerment.'

For some, there was confusion over the use of the expression 'rite of passage' - it was not a universally understood, with many confusing 'rite' with 'right'.

While this was a successful positioning for some, the wording requires further precision to avoid misfiring with the sensitive youth demographic. It may be better to stress the transition to *full citizenship* (rather than adulthood) when becoming enrolled, and to make a direct appeal to young people rather than employing analogies.

Do something about it

- 'Voting in the Federal Election allows you to express your view on how this country is run. So, if you believe in something, make sure you do something about it.'

This positioning was greeted by young participants with a strongly positive response:

'It made me think about how I want our country to be run'

Young people also responded to the direct language, the 'aspirational' sentiment of the statement, and the suggestion of empowerment involved in 'doing something':

'I thought, yes, I do believe in something – that's why it appealed to me'

'It's positive and it kind of reminded me of the Nike ad 'just do it'. It's the sort of thing that young people would pay attention to.'

'If you don't vote, don't complain when the government does something you don't like'

There was, again, some scepticism that one vote can make a significant impact. Given that elections are seen to be about 'deciding who runs the country', 'Do something about it' also risks being interpreted as a message inappropriately critical of the incumbent government.

Get involved

- 'The Federal Election is the opportunity for every young Australian to get involved in the running of this country, because little will change if you sit back and do nothing.'

Young people identified with this statement, expressing the view that it would work well with others in their age group:

'The younger society believe that there is nothing for them so being able to get involved and have a voice I think would make a difference'

'If you live in Australia, and you are Australian, then by getting involved you will be making the place that you live in a better place'

The specific appeal to 'young people' proved to be popular. There was a strong identification with the notion of getting involved and having your say even though you are 'only young'. Many young participants also liked the 'gentle push' of the message, which avoids 'haranguing' and attempts to speak to young people in their own language. The message is fundamentally, strong and the sentiment was thought to be believable, particularly the call to action in 'get involved'. Again, however, finessing will be required to avoid inadvertently creating a message unfavourable towards an incumbent government.

'URGENCY' STATEMENT

Early group discussions revealed the need for a message emphasising the urgency of enrolment in light of the shortened closing of the rolls. A statement emphasising this message was introduced in the final three group discussions.

Elections are unpredictable

- 'The Federal Election can be called at any time. Make sure you are enrolled now to avoid missing out.'

This proved to be a powerful statement for the majority of participants. It took on particular salience given proposed changes to legislation. The urgency of the message was apparent to most and it was understood as a timely reminder to enrol now, rather than waiting for an election to be called, lifting enrolment from an occasional thought (closely tied to the election itself) to an ongoing concern, or 'state of readiness':

'It gives enrolling a matter of urgency'

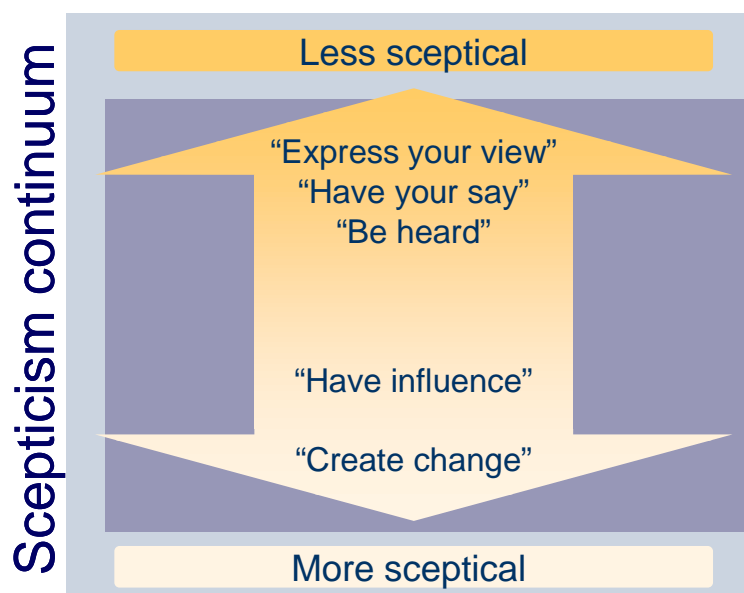
'If you wish to vote or have some desire, make sure you do so it doesn't pop up before you can't'

Some participants noted and liked the double-meaning of 'unpredictable' in this statement (i.e. the result as well as the timing of the election are both unpredictable).

There were, however, some problematic aspects to this positioning. It is undermined somewhat by the belief held by some that there exist fixed terms at both federal and state levels. Furthermore, positioning elections as 'frequent' instead of 'unpredictable' may be a two-edged sword –some will be motivated to enrol as soon as possible, while others will feel that there is no harm in missing out on 'this' election because there will be another one soon enough.

SYNTHESISING THE RESULTS

As detailed in the preceding sections, some statements did trigger a degree of scepticism (particularly 'The heartbeat of democracy', 'The power to be heard', 'Do something about it' and 'Get involved'). This scepticism centred on the belief that individuals are unable to make a difference or to effect meaningful change through voting. The diagram below provides an indicative ranking of messages according to the degree of scepticism they were found to evoke. As can be seen, there is a very fine line between language that motivates and that which discourages the potential voter.



- **The other 80%** (30-50 yrs) generally reject 'commanding' or 'threatening' messages such as the 'It's compulsory to vote' positioning. They are already doing the right thing (or believe that they are), and expect this to be recognised. They also express a desire to be spoken to in adult-to-adult tones, without condescension. Taking all of this into account, 'The heartbeat of democracy' and 'The power to be heard' were the most preferred for this target audience, and are the most likely to resonate.
- For **youth**, 'Elections are unpredictable' worked well, but benefited from the roll changes having been discussed – it may not strike such a chord if this background information is not known. In the context of group discussions, the message was seen as new, fresh and relevant.
- Among the other potential positionings, 'Do something about it' and 'Get involved' did 'cut through' to some degree.
- 'Rite of passage' has risks, especially with 17 and 18-21 year olds who are most sensitive to comparisons to other 'coming of age' signposts. In the end, this statement was rejected by most.
- For **all participants**, compulsion and a fine are important as socially normative signals, but are essentially secondary considerations and were not seen to be a valid focus for an overall campaign message.
- There is the potential to include an **amnesty** message within any campaign positioning. Many people feel that, if they have delayed enrolment for some time, they will get a bigger fine when they do eventually enrol. It needs to be emphasised that this is not the case, and that each and every vote is valued and appreciated, regardless of whether the voter has delayed taking up their civic responsibility or not.

4.5 Reactions to advertisements

New South Wales

Interestingly, this advertisement, featuring the lyrics 'It's your day to have your say' prompted thoughts from young people that it was 'not for me', despite the fact that older people felt it was 'for the young'. It was generally felt to be 'trying a bit too hard' with an unremarkable jingle and an overly cheery tone, although it was acknowledged that this could be memorable. The message was generally well understood and it was felt that instructions on how to find further information were reasonably clear.

New Zealand

Participants described the New Zealand advertisement, featuring a polymorphic animated orange character, as 'busy', 'hyperactive' and, for some, 'annoying', although the underlying message was thought to be easy to infer. Mostly due to the fast pace and 'busy' execution, it was disliked less by younger people.

South Australia

This advertisement was thought to be 'easy to process', and to contain a strong, clear message. The execution, involving an indecisive man suffering through having failed to exercise his choice of airline seat, was praised by many. Those who were ambivalent towards the electoral process saw themselves strongly reflected in the advertisement and were able to relate to the central character.

While the brevity of the advertisement was seen as a strength by most, it caused some participants to miss the message.

Victoria

The Victorian advertisement was seen as clever and 'creatively rational', but nonetheless somewhat bland or unexciting for many. It was generally described as 'nice' but failed to inspire or engage. That said, some younger participants preferred this advertisement ahead of the others, because it showed that a difference could be made in many 'local' ways. The use of different skin tone on the hands, as well as the different city and rural 'plastiscapes', were appreciated as an attempt to include all Australians.

Western Australia

While in its humour and message, this advertisement was found to be similar to the South Australian advertisement, it was less favourably received due to its execution – it was felt by many to be 'complex to process'. Many felt that they would need to 'watch more closely' to understand it. Those who did understand the message tended to have a more positive reaction to it. It was particularly appealing to males, who could relate to the horror wedding depicted, in which the central character had left the key decisions in the hands of his fiancée.

Conclusion

The South Australian advertisement emerged as the 'people's choice'. It was seen as elegantly simple, dramatic, sharp and containing an easily understood message. Participants enjoyed the use of humour and noted that Australians are not averse to 'laughing at themselves'.

While the South Australian advertisement was strongly preferred, some noted that key information (website and phone number) was displayed for less time than in the NSW

advertisement. Any call-to-action advertisement would benefit from clearly showing appropriate channels for further information.

While they were often liked, it is important to note that these advertisements, being tailored to local conditions, were not designed create the kind of urgency required by the AEC's proposed campaign, which will benefit from an element of 'direct-response' advertising.

4.6 Influencers, touchpoints and the media

Influence and intervention

Whether it be through schools, parents, or direct communication, enrolment 'enablers and influencers' were viewed positively by young participants.

The openness of young people to enrol at school cannot be overstated. Many commented that they had enrolled at school because 'everyone did it'. The 'sign here now' strategy through schools is generally welcomed. In fact, many of those 18-24 year olds who were unenrolled noted that they were so simply because they had been absent from school on the day on which everyone else had enrolled.

Findings suggest that failure to enrol is rarely a considered or ideologically-based decision. Young people admit that, if they are required actively to seek an opportunity to enrol on their own behalf, they are unlikely to do so, since it does not occur to them to do so unless they are reminded, encouraged or assisted.

Parents are also key facilitators who require encouragement by the AEC to assist in informing young people about the electoral process and their obligations. Official AEC letters also appear to be a powerful and influential method of promoting enrolment, or at the very least raising awareness. They are well received and taken seriously. Compliance rates (of around 30%), though they may not appear to be high, are high in comparison to 'direct-approach' letters from other sources (from businesses, for example). In addition, such figures may not adequately reflect the longer-term influence of AEC letters.

Key media

There are a number of key points to note about the use of media for electoral or voting information:

- participants equally favoured TV, radio and newspapers as preferred avenues for receiving information. The internet was not as highly endorsed

- information from political parties was familiar to many participants, who mentioned receiving party-prepared election and candidate brochures in the mail
- Board of Studies, RTA and UAC (or equivalent) websites were mentioned by young people as useful places to put info about enrolling
- there was little knowledge of, or inclination to visit, the AEC website (across all audience segments), although online enrolment was supported by the majority of participants
- Younger participants were not enthusiastic about the idea of a youth-specific website. They mentioned they could look elsewhere for enrolment/voting info, and do not wish to be treated differently from 'adult' voters.

This section provides strategic recommendations to inform the further development of the AEC campaign

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Key brand components

Based on research findings, election-related concepts and processes can be ordered in terms of the extent to which they were found to engage the target audience. 'Democracy' and 'elections' are in reasonably good shape and, while they will remain central concerns, do not appear to be priority areas of focus for the AEC campaign.

'Updating enrolment' and 'initiating enrolment', on the other hand, are in greater need of attention. The majority of participants were found to be unaware of many of the fundamental regulations and procedures involved with the current enrolment process. New legislation will find many enrolled voters unprepared, and may be expected to make it more difficult to initiate enrolment among younger Australians.

Youth

Young people need to be jolted into action. The main barrier to their enrolling is inertia, not negativity or disengagement or any great ideological disagreement with the electoral system or its processes. As such, anything that can make the enrolment task easier is likely to be welcomed (for example – enrolling online, being posted the enrolment form or enrolling en masse at school). In particular, the importance of catching at school 17 year-olds (and younger students) cannot be overstated.

A campaign would benefit from promoting the value of the democratic rights and benefits young people enjoy, yet take for granted, and emphasising the fact that they must take responsibility themselves and ensure they are in a position to exercise their voting rights. An

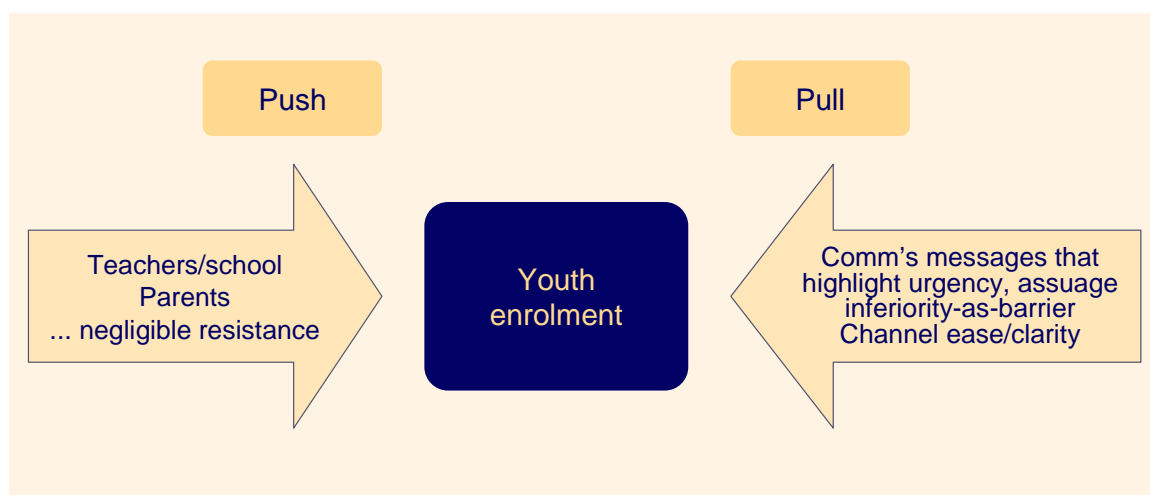
effective related message would be to promote the idea that 'mature citizenship' is achieved upon enrolment. This is one 'rite of passage' argument that did appear to strike a chord with the younger generation.

Disaffection with their own ability to 'make a difference', or lack of confidence in their ability to make an informed and mature vote emerged as significant concerns among young people. Many commented that they would be ready 'in the future', when they were paying taxes. accumulating superannuation, having children or engaging in other 'adult behaviours' A campaign will benefit from remaining sensitive to, and perhaps countering these arguments.

In general, young people preferred the positioning statements specifically aimed at them over general statements (though they were reluctant to express a preference for 'youth-focussed' statements as a 'category', preferring not to be distinguished from other adults.). 'Do something about it' and 'Get involved' were the statements most likely to resonate with this target group. Of the general positionings, 'The power to be heard' was generally preferred over 'The heartbeat of democracy'. While some form of 'compulsion' is important for young people, however, this approach is not as well received as more 'motivational' messages.

In summary, there were no 'killer' communication channels for this audience segment. There are diverse tastes and preferences and communication would benefit from using a range of access points.

The diagram below serves to demonstrate the relative 'push' and 'pull' forces involved in youth enrolment. Communications that harness the virtuous push-pull forces are most likely to succeed.



Other 80 per cent (30-50 year olds)

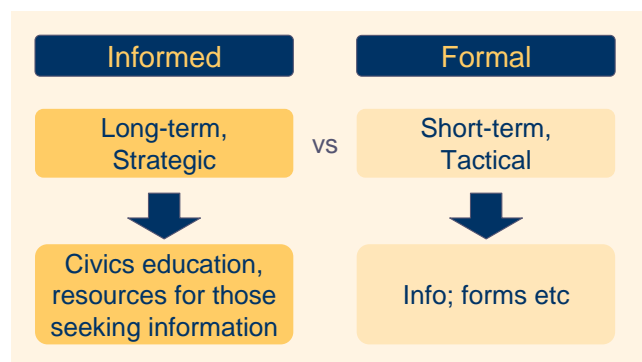
The AEC's primary task with this group is to maintain existing voter goodwill and reinforce desired behaviours. Any messages would benefit from acknowledging that most people are already 'doing the right thing', with coercive or commanding messages likely to have a negative effect.

Communication channels used for this audience to date were acknowledged by participants to be working well. Most of 'the other 80%' expected to be reminded of the 'what, why, when, how and where' of electoral and voting procedures at election time. While they may not store such information between elections, they believe they know how and where to access it when they need to.

Those who may need to cast pre-poll or absentee votes may warrant particular attention from the AEC. There is generally less confidence from this target group in knowing what to do or how to find out what to do with these types of votes. Communications could be directed through the same channels as the general communications for this group.

A limited understanding of the preference system by this group of voters has the potential to reduce the 'quality' of their vote and to lead to reliance on party handouts. It also has the potential to contribute to informality. In the absence of communication from the AEC, this segment is likely to rely on information from political parties.

There appear to be two priorities for the AEC in terms of 'the other 80%' – facilitating informed voting, which can be viewed as the strategic longer term objective; and facilitating formal voting, which is the tactical short-term objective. Raising the level of informed voting will require investment in civics education and developing the appropriate resources for those seeking to expand their knowledge of the electoral system (particularly in relation to preference voting), while maximising the level of formal voting can be achieved through far more basic 'how to' information.



Parents

Parents generally see educating their children about enrolling and voting as part of a broader responsibility to equip them with 'life skills'. Correspondingly, teenage and adult children already cite their parents as their primary source of information, so this would appear to be a natural communication route for the AEC to utilise. Parents expressed a preference for material to guide or facilitate these discussion (such as that provided in a mass media campaign).

Parents would like schools to play the primary role in civics education, but are happy to supplement this at home. Classes focussing on citizenship, democracy and the electoral process at school are strongly supported and fit in well with the AEC's long-term strategy of educating voters.

Movers

Although there is a general awareness among movers that enrolment details must be updated when changing addresses, this is not a priority for most.

17-24 year old movers noted that they often prefer to remain enrolled at a stable address such as their parents' house.

Utility bills would be the best channel to reach movers (apart from AEC direct mail, which was recalled by some following a move), followed by providing information at real estate agents or with real estate communications.

The actual moving period is felt to be far too busy to successfully process information about enrolment details. The ideal time would be two to three weeks after the move, for example at the time of the first utility bill. This would accord well with the requirement that one can only enrol at a new address after having resided there for a month.

As a complementary measure, offering change of enrolment forms at polling places would also provide an opportunity to 'clean' rolls in future.

A

APPENDIX A

Discussion guide

#3265 AEC Campaign development – Discussion guide

Introduction

- Thank for coming along
- Introduction to market research / group discussions
- Facilitator's role: to raise topics and issues and then for you to tell me what you think
- No right or wrong answers, your opinion that counts. Please be honest
- Group rules: one person speaks at a time / feel free to disagree
- Audio / video taping, mirror. Reassure confidentiality, anonymity
- Session will take an hour and a half
- Topic: Enrolment to vote in elections in Australia
- Hand out incentives (sign and check contents of envelope)
- Refreshments, toilet facilities, please turn off mobile phones
- Participants introduce themselves

Warm up exercise

- Go around the room and get people to introduce themselves:

- Name

- Age

- Job?

- Last time they voted for something – online poll, school elections, big brother etc

- Why they voted for this?

- ONCE EACH RESPONDENT HAS SPOKEN, BRIEFLY DISCUSS THESE VOTES WITHIN THE GROUP

Notepad exercise 1

To begin the group, I have a short written exercise I'd like you all to complete. [HAND OUT WRITTEN EXERCISE 1]. You don't need to write too much – just tick the appropriate box and then provide a few short sentences where you are asked to provide written answers.

[ALLOW TIME TO COMPLETE – 4/5 MINUTES. COLLECT RESPONSES]

Thanks. We'll now begin the discussion.

1. Election

- What words, images or people spring to mind when I say 'election'? Probe – give examples if the group is struggling.

- ◆ MODERATOR TO CAPTURE THESE ON LARGE NOTE PAD SO RESPONDENTS CAN VIEW AND ADD TO THE LIST. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE MODERATOR TO PUSH RESPONDENTS IN THIS SECTION

- (Probe) Why is that?
- Does the term 'election' generate positive or negative thoughts and feelings for you? Why is that? IDENTIFY THE CAUSE OF THE FEELINGS
- Why do we need elections? Probe – what broader role do they play in society?
 - ◆ IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE LADDER UP TO THE HIGHER ORDER ROLE THAT ELECTIONS PLAY IN SOCIETY. Give examples if the group is struggling.
- What about the term 'federal election' versus 'state election'? Are your reactions the same or different to these terms? Why is that?

2. Democracy (for 30 – 50 year old groups only)

- What words, images or people come to mind when I say democracy? Probe – give examples if they are struggling:
 - MODERATOR TO CAPTURE ON LARGE NOTE PADS AS IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS.
- (Probe) Why is that?
- Is there any connection between your concept of democracy and elections? Why?

- PROBE - What is the difference between the concept of an election and democracy? Is there any difference? Probe and push to identify the key differences.
- What features make a country democratic? What characteristics does a country have to have before you can call it a 'democracy'?
 - Can people give examples of a democracy? Which countries are truly democratic? Why is that?
- Thinking of your everyday life, how important is it to live in a democratic country? Is life under a democratic system any better or worse than under other systems of government?
 - What are the advantages of living in a democracy?
 - Are there any negative aspects of life in a democracy?
 - How would your life be different if Australia wasn't a democracy? What things would change?
 - Apart from living in a democracy, what other things unite Australians as a nation?
 - Are these things and voting linked? Why/why not?
 - And is voting more or less important to you than these other things? Why is that?

3. Enrolment – knowledge and attitudes

- Are you enrolled to vote? Why/why not?
 - Is it important to you (not) to be enrolled?
- **[FOR THOSE ENROLLED]** What was the main reason you enrolled to vote? *(Probe as to whether motivated by altruistic reasons such as democracy and civil responsibility, or to avoid being fined, or any other reasons)*
 - Do you think it is important to the country as a whole that people enrol?
 - Is it compulsory to be enrolled on the electoral roll? Should it be compulsory? If it wasn't compulsory, who wouldn't be enrolled?
 - Are there penalties for not enrolling? What about for not updating your details? What are the penalties? *(Answer if the matter goes to court – fine is \$50 plus court costs)*

- Is the fact that it is compulsory and there are fines an important reason you are on the roll?
- Do you think it is important to the country as a whole that people enrol?
- How long have you been enrolled for? Did anyone not enrol until relatively recently? (IF YES) Why did you wait so long before enrolling? And what motivated you to enrol when you did?
- **[FOR THOSE NOT ENROLLED]** Were you ever enrolled to vote in the past but then dropped off the roll, or have you simply never been enrolled?
 - **[IF PREVIOUSLY BUT NOT CURRENTLY ENROLLED]** What was the reason you dropped off the roll? (*Probe the reason – could have gone overseas and not advised the AEC so were taken off the roll when the person’s Australian address was last checked, could have moved house and not updated enrolment records with the AEC*)
 - **[FOR THOSE NEVER OR NOT ENROLLED]** Is there any particular reason you are not enrolled to vote? Have you deliberately not enrolled, or is it something you plan to do in future? If so, when?
 - What might motivate you to enrol to vote (if anything)?
 - Do you think it is important to the country as a whole that people enrol?
 - Is it compulsory to be enrolled on the electoral roll? Should it be compulsory?
 - Are there penalties for not enrolling? What about for not updating your details? What are the penalties? (*Answer if the matter goes to court – fine is \$50 plus court costs*)
 - **[FOR THOSE NOT ENROLLED AND DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT THE \$50 FINE]** Is this fine something that will motivate you to enrol now? Why/Why not? (*Probe as to impact of \$50 fine on them –is this seen as a large, small or insignificant amount?*)
 - If you were to enrol tomorrow, do you think you would be fined? How much? Would they backdate the fines to when you were 18 (and should have been enrolled)? Is this a reason any of you have not enrolled yet?
 - What if you were assured of an amnesty (that is, you wouldn’t be fined if you enrolled, even if you should have been enrolled for many years)? Would you enrol then? Why/why not?
 - Given your ages, most of you would have been eligible to vote at the last federal election. Did anyone vote (or attempt to vote) in the last election?

➤ (FOR THOSE THAT DID NOT VOTE) Do you regret not voting in the last election? Why/why not? If you had your time again, would you vote? Why/why not?

◆ Is it fair to say that you don't value your right to vote? Why/why not?

◆ Is your vote worth less than others who do vote? If so, why is that?

• LIKELY CHANGES TO LAW ON ELECTORAL ROLL CLOSURE

○ Has anyone heard about any changes likely to be made soon to the laws governing the electoral roll and the ability of people to enrol to vote? (IF YES) – What have you heard? How did you react to this?

○ FOR THOSE THAT HAVEN'T HEARD OF THE LIKELY CHANGES – The law governing electoral rolls might change soon if the Senate votes for it in Parliament. Previously, when an election was called, people had about seven days to enrol to vote if they weren't already enrolled, or to update their address details if they had moved and fallen off the roll.

Under the proposed change to the law, once an election is called this time period would be reduced to nothing for first time enrollers, and to just three days for people whose enrolment details needed updating, for example, for a change of address

▪ Does this concern any of you? Why?

▪ Knowing this, are you now more likely to enrol to vote at an earlier point in time? Why/why not?

▪ Putting it another way, maybe this change in law could deny you your chance to enrol and vote at the next election if you don't do something. What is your reaction to this? Does knowing the laws regarding the electoral roll might soon change, does this leave any of you with a sense of urgency about enrolling to ensure you don't miss out? Why is that?

ASK ALL:

• Who is eligible to enrol? Who is ineligible?

• How do you enrol?

➤ [FOR THOSE ENROLLED] Would you describe enrolling as an easy or difficult process? Why is that? Do you recall how you enrolled?

- How can you change your enrolment details if you need to? When do you need to? [*Probe for when moving, going overseas, moving to a different electorate, moving to an address but remaining within your electorate*]
- Are electoral rolls always open or can they close? When do they close and for how long? What about at election time?
 - **LIKELY CHANGES TO LAW ON ELECTORAL ROLL CLOSURE (FOR ENROLLED GROUPS)**
 - Has anyone heard about likely changes to the laws governing the electoral roll and the ability of people to enrol to vote? (IF YES) – What have you heard? How did you react to this?
 - FOR THOSE THAT HAVEN'T HEARD OF THE CHANGES – The law governing electoral rolls may soon change if the Senate votes for it in Parliament. Previously, when an election was called, people had around seven days to enrol to vote if they weren't already enrolled, or to update their address details if they had moved and fallen off the roll. Now, this time period has been reduced to nothing for first time enrollers and to a maximum of three days for people needing to update their address.
 - Does this concern any of you? Why?
 - Knowing these changes might be made to the laws governing electoral rolls, does this generate a greater sense of urgency among any of you to ensure your details are correct on the electoral roll before an election is called? Why/why not?
- Is your enrolment something you think about only at election times?
 - [IF NO] What other times do you think about your enrolment details?

4. Voting and elections- knowledge, experience and intentions

ASK ALL ENROLLED GROUPS:

- Do you know when the next federal election is?
 - Do you intend to vote in it? Why/why not?
- Is the chance to vote something you look forward to on the day/before the election, or is it a hassle that you have to factor into your Saturday? (*Probe as to whether voters regard the day with a 'sense of occasion' – is traveling to a polling place a rewarding experience or a pain in the neck?*)

- Has anyone ever been confused between the different state and federal voting systems? What caused this? What did you do to resolve this?

[ASK ONLY 30 – 50 YEAR OLD GROUPS. OTHERS GO TO NOTEPAD EXERCISE 2 BELOW]

- How do you find out where to vote? Do you know beforehand or do you have to look it up? Where would you look?
 - And would you say it is easy or difficult to find out where to vote? Why is that?
- Do you know about pre-poll voting? Would you consider lodging a pre-poll vote? Why/why not?
- What do you do if you're out of your electoral area on the day? Do you still have to vote? Do you know where to vote/how to vote in these circumstances? Has this happened to anyone here?
- What happens to someone who has moved and doesn't update their details if they try to vote on election day? Are they allowed to vote? And is that vote counted?
- Has anyone here ever been fined for not being enrolled, not voting or not updating their details?
 - *(If yes)* What were the circumstances?
 - And what lessons *(if any)* would you share with others in terms of avoiding such a fine?

ASK ALL

Notepad exercise 2

PLEASE NOTE: It is important to bear in mind that these are positioning statements, therefore, we should not set them up as ads to the group. (Ad testing is to be carried out during the quantitative phase of campaign development, not in this strategic research.

PLEASE NOTE: THE ROLE OF THIS SECTION IS NOT TO FIND OUT WHICH STATEMENT THEY LIKE BEST, BUT TO:

- UNDERSTAND WHAT EACH STATEMENT SAYS ABOUT THE ELECTION
- THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EACH STATEMENT
- THE LONGEVITY IN EACH AS A POSITIONING
- HOW DOES EACH STATEMENT PERFORM IN CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF ELECTIONS

- Moderator - OK. I'm now going to show you a series of statements that people have used to describe elections. [HAND OUT WRITTEN EXERCISE 2]. Exercise 2 includes a series of six statements about elections. For each one, please circle whether you think the statement is 'good' or 'bad'. Can you then note down why you have given your good or bad ranking. In the final column, please note down the key message that this statement is making about the election.

MODERATOR TO TALK THROUGH EACH POSITIONING STATEMENT AFTER RESPONDENTS HAVE ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS:

- What does this statement say about the election?
- Why is it saying this?
- How is this statement different from the others? How and why?
- Do you think this is something we can keep saying into the future? PROBE - Or would it be only a short-term message?
- How does this statement change or reinforce what you think/feel about the election? Prove – how and why?
 - Which of the statements do you feel is most likely to appeal to the greatest number of people in your age group?
 - Why is that
 - Could any of these statements be improved? How so?
 - Do you think a campaign using one of more of your most preferred messages would encourage people to enrol and to vote? Why/why not?

[COLLECT WRITTEN EXERCISES]

5. Sources of information/influence

- What sources of information, if any, do you use to inform you about voting/enrolling [*probe for parents, traditional media (tv, radio, newspapers), internet, teachers/school, siblings, books, religious groups*]?
- Which of these sources are the most important?
- Have you used the internet to find out information about voting/enrolling? Have you ever used the AEC website for information on voting/enrolling? Would you use this website?
- [FOR 17, 18-21 AND 22-24 YEAR OLD GROUPS] Would you be more inclined to look at a website aimed specifically at young people?

- Would the ability to enrol/change your details online be attractive to you?
6. Role of parents [ask groups of 17 year olds, 18-21 and 22-24 year olds]
- Do you talk with your family about enrolling/voting/elections?
 - At what age did you first talk to you family about these things?
 - Do you live with your family?
 - If not, do you still talk with your family about these things?
 - Do you regard them as an important source of information? Would you rely on them for help/info?
 - How would you react if your parents or family talked to you about enrolling? Would you listen to them or take their advice? Why/why not?

7. Ads from comparable jurisdictions

[Play ads one at a time (6 in total). Rotate order across groups. Repeat below for each ad]

BEFORE ASKING IF THEY LIKE THE AD, PLEASE ASK FOR THE CORE MESSAGE.

- What is this ad trying to tell you?
- Why is this ad telling you this?
- Who are they talking to?
 - What did you think of the ad?
 - Are there any things that you like about the ad? What? Why?
 - Are there any things that you dislike about the ad / annoy you? What? Why?
- [IF RELEVANT] Do you like or dislike the slogan or do you feel indifferent towards it? Why do you say that? What is it trying to say?
- Do you think the ad is relevant to you and your situation? Why/why not? If not relevant, who are they relevant for? Why?
- Are there any terms or phrases that you aren't familiar with/that you wouldn't use? What words/phrases would you use instead?

8. Movers

- Has anyone moved house within the last 12 months?
- [IF SO] What happens to your listing on the electoral roll when you move house?

➤ Is this updated automatically? Or do you need update your enrolment details yourself?

- When you move house, do you automatically update your enrolment details when you change your details for your driver's licence/bank/etc? Or do you wait until an election is coming up to change them?
- Is changing your enrolment details a priority? Is it something that would come to mind at the time?
- When is the best time to be reminded to change your enrolment details? [*probe for before they move, during the move, after the move, how soon after/ before etc*]
- What would be the best way to be reminded and by whom? (eg. Something at real estate/bank/on moving boxes/video store etc)

9. POI (proof of identity) - Gauge their feelings towards the new POI rules [Audience 6 & 7]

- Do you currently need to show a proof of identity when you're enrolling and voting?
- Do you think you should have to show this? Why/why not? [*probe for whether it would overly complicate the process/be a hassle or whether it should be required to guard against rorting etc*]

10. Closing

- This research is being conducted on behalf of the Australian Electoral Commission. The findings will be used to help them ensure people are made aware of their rights and responsibilities with regards to voting and to ensure people have sufficient information and support to vote formally.

