

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Australian Electoral Commission

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Supplementary Estimates Hearing – October 2010

Outcome 1, Program 1.2

Topic: Voting facilities at Victorian ski resorts.

Question reference number: F98

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 3 December 2010

Number of Pages: 2

Senator Fifield asked:

- a) Why did the AEC decide not to have a voting booth available for staff and visitors at the ski resorts?

- b) What action did the AEC take in response to the letter of 30 July flagging these concerns from Mr Tony Nutt, State Director of the Liberal Party's Victorian Division?

Answer:

- a) On the basis of extensive investigation by an AEC officer, no premises of a suitable size with safe access could be identified that would cater for the number of anticipated voters at the ski resorts.

Furthermore accommodation for the number of staff required was not available in the snowfields. Staff would need to have been accommodated off the mountains and transport arranged. This may have been an option, however the roads are often closed early in the day and staff needed to be at polling stations by 7:00 am to set up. In addition, they could well have been stranded on the mountain at the end of counting if the weather did not allow departure from the mountain.

Staff from local communities were not available as they were largely employed in the snow industry.

- b) In response to the lack of facilities at the snowfields, the AEC took a proactive and multi-pronged approach in encouraging electors to vote early. Initiatives included the provision of additional declaration voting facilities and materials at a significant number of places in the region, the establishment of pre-poll centres at Benalla, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Harrietville, Mt Beauty and Merrijig.

Resort contacts at Mt Buller and Mt Hotham agreed to use their own website and e-mail lists to promote early voting. These activities were also suggested to the Falls Creek contact.

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Advertisements appeared in major metropolitan and regional newspapers encouraging electors to vote before going to the snow. Additionally, early voting pointer advertisements appeared in major metropolitan newspapers.

Visual messaging boards were also placed on the highways leading to the snow with 'vote early' message.

A detailed response, including photographs, was provided to Mr Nutt on 13 August 2010.