



3

PERFORMANCE REPORTING

2 517 National Electoral
Education Centre
**EDUCATION SESSIONS
THIS FINANCIAL YEAR**

2 19 September 2015 Canning
5 December 2015 North Sydney
**BY-ELECTIONS HELD
THIS FINANCIAL YEAR**

1
**FEDERAL ELECTION HELD
SHORTLY AFTER 2015–16**

In this section: Performance against agency directions **16**
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We report on our performance against the five agency directions specified in the 2015–19 AEC Corporate Plan. We also report against the Regulator Performance Framework, and provide additional information to complete the AEC’s performance story for 2015–16.

Performance against agency directions

This section provides performance reporting on the AEC's activities against the five agency directions specified in the 2015–19 AEC Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Plan agency directions both draw from and contribute to the AEC performance criteria set out for 2015–16 under 'AEC Program 1.1 – Deliver electoral events', available in *Budget 2016–17 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS)*, *Budget Related Paper No. 1.8 (Finance Portfolio)*, page 83 (available at www.finance.gov.au/publications/portfolio-budget-statements/16-17).

A matrix chart mapping the PBS performance criteria to the Corporate Plan agency directions is shown [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Mapping of PBS Performance Criteria for 2015–16 to Corporate Plan Agency Directions (Purposes) 2015–19

PBS PERFORMANCE CRITERIA	AEC CORPORATE PLAN AGENCY DIRECTIONS (PURPOSES)				
	Deliver a changed model for electoral events	Govern the organisation for quality and assurance	Professionalise the workforce	Re-establish the reputation of the AEC	Build an agile and responsive organisation
Federal Elections, By-elections and Referendums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal electoral events are successfully delivered. Maintain ability to conduct a federal electoral event within the timeframe determined by the Electoral Commissioner. 	✓	✓	✓		✓
Electoral Roll Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of confidence in the Electoral Roll. 		✓		✓	✓
Support Services for Electoral Redistributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective and timely conduct of redistribution activities. 		✓	✓		
Party Registrations and Financial Disclosure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Party registration processed in accordance with the Electoral Act. Financial disclosures obtained and placed on the public record in accordance with the Electoral Act. 		✓	✓		
Industrial and Commercial Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial elections are delivered in accordance with the <i>Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009</i> and each organisation's rules. Protected Action Ballots are delivered in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i> and the orders issued by the Fair Work Commission. Torres Strait Regional Authority elections are delivered in accordance with the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005</i>. 	✓				
Public Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electoral education is provided to Australian schools through the operation of the National Electoral Education Centre, conduct of teacher professional development workshops and provision of education resources. Information is timely and accurate, uses appropriate technology and channels, and meets accessibility standards. Provide targeted and culturally appropriate electoral services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the delivery of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program. 			✓	✓	✓

Statement by the Electoral Commissioner

I, as the accountable authority of the Australian Electoral Commission, present the 2015–16 annual performance statements of the Australian Electoral Commission, as required under paragraph 39(1)(a) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). In my opinion these annual performance statements are based on properly maintained records, accurately reflect the performance of the entity, and comply with subsection 39(2) of the PGPA Act.

Tom Rogers
Electoral Commissioner
4 October 2016

Our performance against the agency directions is as follows.

AGENCY DIRECTION 1

Deliver a changed model for electoral events

Performance criteria	Source	Result
1.1 Federal electoral events are successfully delivered	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Partly met
1.2 Maintain ability to conduct a federal electoral event within the timeframe determined by the Electoral Commissioner	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met

Explanation

Criterion 1.1 was partly met. Assessment of the service plans of the two federal by-elections, Canning, WA (September 2015) and North Sydney, New South Wales (December 2015) identified minor aspects that were not achieved according to the plans.

Criterion 1.2 was met with the development and refinement of an election readiness framework – specifically the introduction of the 2016 Election Ready Road Map. At the issue of writs, inputs were ready to conduct both the Canning and North Sydney by-elections, and the 2016 federal election.

What we did

In April 2015, the AEC introduced the Election Ready Road Map (ERRM), a key component of the election readiness framework.

The ERRM sets out the sequence of actions over three phases that need to be completed between the return of writs from the previous election and the issue of the writs for the next election. It also connects the lessons learned from the last electoral event with the actions the AEC needs to take in preparing for, and delivering, the next electoral event. The ERRM influences all layers of the AEC.

The elements (or ‘inputs’) that must be ready before the AEC as a whole can be ‘election ready’ have been categorised on the ERRM under the following headings (summarised by the AEC as ‘POLITE’):

Personnel, **O**rganisation, **L**egislation, **I**nformation, **T**raining, **E**quipment, support and facilities.

The POLITE inputs: provide a foundation for adapting to changing circumstances; guide the conduct of the right tasks at the right time; and coordinate work across different (but interconnected) areas of the AEC. This framework was applied in the delivery of the two by-elections.

Recommendations from the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the Keelty Report and the Australian National Audit Office were considered in planning the delivery of the 2016 federal election.

Areas for further improvement

A revised framework was introduced to assess lessons learned from conducting the Canning and North Sydney by-elections. This framework is a more efficient and effective way of evaluating federal elections, and will be used to assess the 2016 federal election.

AGENCY DIRECTION 2

Govern the organisation for quality and assurance

Performance criteria	Source	Result
2.1 Assurance framework is implemented	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met
2.2 An enterprise performance and reporting framework is implemented	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met
2.3 High level of confidence in the accuracy of the electoral roll	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met

Explanation

Criterion 2.1 was met with implementation of a documented assurance framework, together with a complementary operational compliance plan, that were endorsed by the Business Assurance Committee at its June 2016 meeting.

Criterion 2.2 was met with the introduction of a performance and reporting framework underpinned by the Accountable Authority Instructions and regular reporting to the AEC Executive.

Criterion 2.3 was met with an increase in roll completeness, with almost one million people added to the roll since the 2013 federal election. There has also been an improvement in the core component of roll integrity through more sophisticated quality controls that give greater confidence in the accuracy of the roll.

What we did

Throughout the year the AEC’s focus has been on electoral integrity through the AEC values of quality, agility and professionalism. The AEC upholds the sanctity of the ballot paper in all its forms and at all times, supported by the ballot paper handling principles and the concept of ‘every task matters’.

A new planning, performance and reporting framework was implemented throughout 2015–16. It supports staff involved in planning, delivering outcomes, and managing resources and finances. This was integral to the structures, processes, controls and behaviours that support sections of the PGPA Act. In addition, an assurance framework was implemented that outlines how the Executive Leadership Team will gain assurance that the agency is operating efficiently and effectively, and meeting agency objectives.

The AEC has also focused on improving the foundations that support the organisation with not only the introduction of the performance and reporting framework, but also enhancements to the project management and risk management frameworks to ensure more accountability, and

alignment of the AEC’s Internal Audit Plan with the risk profile.



A range of measures were implemented via the Roll Program, based on the Electoral Integrity Framework, to improve roll completeness and accuracy, and reduce state and federal electoral roll divergence. The measures included streamlining workflows and workloads nationally to assist in updating the roll within required timeframes.

Areas for further improvement

The implementation of the performance, planning and reporting framework, together with the assurance framework, has led to improved Executive decision-making throughout the agency and supports the established continual improvement platform. The implementation of an electronic document and records management system will further enhance availability of the right information to support risk-based decision-making.

AGENCY DIRECTION 3

Professionalise the workforce

Performance criteria	Source	Result
3.1 An election workforce planning strategy is implemented	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met 
3.2 The election workforce is 'match fit' before the anticipated 2016 election	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Not met
3.3 Management capability of key cohorts addressed in development plans and delivered with 90 per cent participating in courses where appropriate	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Partly met 

Explanation

Criterion 3.1 was met with the finalisation of the AEC Workforce Plan, in line with the AEC's Directed Level of Election Readiness. The Workforce Plan informed the staffing model and training requirements for the 2016 federal election.

Criterion 3.2 was not met as the strategy was not operationalised and therefore could not be measured.

Criterion 3.3 was partly met. Due to the election preparations this program was put on hold.

What we did

The AEC developed and began to implement a core skills and capability training program designed to ensure that AEC staff at all levels could do their jobs competently. Further to this, a Coaching Program was piloted with selected staff, and project management and performance management courses were delivered throughout the States and Territories. This was part of a broader program aimed at becoming a learning organisation to support cultural change, and attract, retain and develop a more professional and agile workforce.

New workforce plans covering election-critical ongoing and non-ongoing job roles at divisional and state levels were implemented; these plans were aimed at delivering a 'match fit' workforce in accordance with the election readiness framework.




Areas for further improvement

With preparations for the 2016 federal election, the highest importance was placed on ensuring the temporary election workforce were trained and capable of undertaking their electoral roles. Consequently, implementation of the newly developed AEC staff core skills and capability training program was only partly achieved. Implementation will continue after the 2016 federal election.

Further work will continue on an appropriate model to manage staff 'match fitness' contingencies and redundancy gaps ahead of future electoral events.

AGENCY DIRECTION 4

Re-establish the reputation of the AEC

Performance criteria	Source	Result
4.1 Productive relationship is maintained with the Minister, Parliament, key agencies and other stakeholders	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met 
4.2 High quality services delivered with effective management of issues in line with relevant legislation and agreements	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Partly met 
4.3 Information is timely and accurate, uses appropriate technology and channels, and meets accessibility standards	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met 

Explanation

Criterion 4.1 was met with the AEC continuing to meet the commitments made to key stakeholders, including the Minister and the Parliament. The Commissioner met regularly with key external stakeholders throughout the year.

Criterion 4.2 was partly met. While the AEC continues to provide high quality services in line with our values of quality, agility and professionalism, there were instances where the conduct of other electoral services, particularly industrial and commercial elections, were not completed in line with complex legislation.

Criterion 4.3 was met with the delivery of engaging and informative education and communication products to the Australian public.

What we did

Throughout 2015–16 the AEC continued to maintain a productive working relationship with the Minister and the Minister's Office through timely and informative responses to questions, as well as by keeping the Minister appropriately informed.

The AEC contributed to seven Parliamentary inquiries related to electoral matters, through submissions and letters, and appearances. Other high quality services were provided to state Electoral Commissions, political parties and the public through the supply of electoral roll products, party registration and financial disclosure support.

In 2015–16, outside of the federal election period, the AEC received and responded to over 43 000 phone calls, 30 000 emails and 10 000 in-person contacts from the public. In the period 2 May to 30 June 2016, the election contact service centre (in partnership with the Department of Human Services) responded to over 560 000 telephone enquiries, 56 000 email enquiries and 35 000 requests for products. The


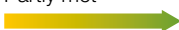
AEC's *Your official guide to the 2016 federal election* was delivered to over 10 million households. A new publication, *Voting in Australia*, was distributed to over 90 000 students in over 9 500 schools, as well as being made available to schools and the public on the AEC's website.

Areas for further improvement

In accord with our values of professionalism, quality and agility, the AEC will continue to build on and further improve external-facing services, as well as our international services, funding and disclosure services, and the provision of roll products.

AGENCY DIRECTION 5

Build an agile and responsive organisation

Performance criteria	Source	Result
5.1 Develop an established and efficient election evaluation model	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Met 
5.2 Create an environment to encourage innovative practices to support the AEC and the conduct of electoral events	AEC 2015–19 Corporate Plan, p. 9	Partly met 

Explanation

Criterion 5.1 was met with the implementation of the AEC's lessons-learned framework approved by the Electoral Commissioner.

Criterion 5.2 was partly met with the AEC developing innovative solutions to enhance the electoral process, which was supported by implementation of a new IT Strategic Plan.

What we did

In the lead-up to the 2016 federal election, programs and systems were either developed or enhanced to support the electoral reform program, as well as election readiness and delivery. These were underpinned by the IT Strategic Plan, which was developed to support key business initiatives and program development. The new or enhanced systems delivered more efficient administration of the AEC that better met the expectations of internal stakeholders.

The introduction of the lessons-learned framework was to ensure that observations made at elections are sufficiently captured and reviewed in order to learn from actions that were implemented. 'Lessons learned' is designed to foster innovation within the agency, and enhance the way we operate. This process will be conducted internally by an independent area within the AEC. This will provide sufficient information for timely decision-making and responsiveness in the lead-up to the next electoral event.

The AEC is on a journey to create a new environment that supports innovation and agility. The Senate Reform Program is an example of how the AEC, in a short time frame of 12 weeks, reprioritised and reallocated resources to produce a new system of counting Senate ballot papers using scanning technology.

Areas for further improvement

The AEC, in line with the three phases of the electoral cycle, will continue taking a more strategic approach to developing and delivering better services both externally and internally. A scoping exercise will be undertaken in the coming year to identify appropriate opportunities for this.

Performance against Regulator Performance Framework

The Australian Government has committed to reducing the cost of unnecessary or inefficient regulation imposed on individuals, business and community organisations, and has developed a framework to measure the performance of regulators.

As a regulatory body, the AEC aims to reduce the regulatory burden imposed on electors through enrolment and voting activities, and is committed to reporting annually against the Framework's six mandatory key performance indicators. Our performance for 2015–16 is shown in Table 3, cross-referenced to our performance under the AEC's five agency directions (see previous section).

Additional performance information

This section presents additional information on achievements for the year to give a more complete performance story for the AEC for 2015–16.

Brief descriptions are organised according to the six AEC performance areas for 2015–16 listed in the 2016–17 Portfolio Budget Statements, namely:

- Federal elections, by-elections and referendums
- Electoral roll management
- Support services for electoral redistributions
- Party registrations and financial disclosure
- Industrial and commercial elections
- Public awareness.

Table 3: AEC Performance against Regulator Performance Framework, 2015–16

Mandatory key performance indicators	Performance criteria	Result
Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities	High quality services delivered to clients with effective management of issues in line with the legislation and agreements	Partly met. See performance under Agency Direction 4.2.
Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted and effective	Information is timely and accurate, uses appropriate technology and channels, and meets accessibility standards	Met. See performance under Agency Direction 4.3.
Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed	Maintain ability to conduct a federal electoral event within the timeframe determined by the Electoral Commissioner	Met. See performance under Agency Direction 1.2.
Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated	An enterprise performance and reporting framework is implemented	Met. See performance under Agency Direction 2.2.
Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities	Productive relationship is maintained with the Minister, Parliament, key agencies and other stakeholders	Met. See performance under Agency Direction 4.1.
Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks	An efficient election evaluation model is implemented Create an environment to encourage innovative practices to support the AEC and the conduct of electoral events	Met. See performance under Agency Direction 5.1. Partly met. See performance under Agency Direction 5.2.

Federal elections, by-elections and referendums

In 2015–16, the AEC prepared for and delivered two federal by-elections, and prepared for the 2016 federal election, including delivery of early voting services before the 2 July 2016 election day.

2015 Canning by-election (WA)

This by-election was triggered by the death of the former Member for Canning, Mr Don Randall MP, on 21 July 2015. The writ for a by-election was issued on Monday 17 August 2015, and the by-election was held on Saturday 19 September 2015. [Table 4](#) shows the key dates for this by-election.

Nominations

The AEC received nominations from 12 candidates. Nominations were formally declared and the draw for positions on the ballot paper was conducted in accordance with the Electoral Act at noon on Friday 28 August 2015.

Provision of voting services

The facilities for voting included:

- 45 ordinary polling places on election day
- early voting facilities operating at eight pre-poll voting centres and AEC divisional offices (including one for blind and low vision voting, and four airport centres for fly-in fly-out workers) for up to three weeks before by-election day
- three mobile polling teams.

Types of votes cast

The AEC provided voting services to 89 717 people in the by-election. [Table 5](#) shows the number and percentage of each type of vote counted.

As is usual with AEC electoral events, the Virtual Tally Room and media feed were used to communicate the results on election night and in the post-election night period.

Full details of the official House of Representatives by-election results for the Division of Canning are available in the AEC Tally Room at results.aec.gov.au.

2015 North Sydney by-election (NSW)

This by-election was triggered by the resignation of the former Member for North Sydney, the Hon. Joe Hockey MP on 23 October 2015. The writ for a by-election was issued on Monday 26 October 2015, and the by-election was held on Saturday 5 December 2015. [Table 6](#) shows the key dates for this by-election.

Nominations

The AEC received nominations from 13 candidates. Nominations were formally declared and the draw for positions on the ballot paper was conducted in accordance with the Electoral Act at noon on Friday 13 November 2015.

Provision of voting services

The facilities for voting included:

- 36 ordinary polling places on election day
- early voting facilities operating at four pre-poll voting centres and AEC divisional offices (including one for blind and low vision voting) for up to three weeks before election day
- three mobile polling teams.

Types of votes cast

The AEC provided voting services to 81 779 people in the by-election. [Table 7](#) shows the number and percentage of each type of vote counted.

As is usual with AEC electoral events, the Virtual Tally Room and media feed were used to communicate the results on election night and in the post-election night period.

Full details of the official House of Representatives by-election results for the Division of North Sydney are available in the AEC Tally Room at results.aec.gov.au.

Table 4: Canning by-election timeline

Event	Day	Date (2015)	Time
Issue of writ	Monday	17 August	6 pm
Close of rolls	Monday	24 August	8 pm
Close of nominations	Thursday	27 August	12 pm
Declaration of nominations	Friday	28 August	12 pm
Election day	Saturday	19 September	8 am – 6 pm
Writ returned	Wednesday	30 September	

Table 5: Canning by-election – first preferences by vote type

Vote type	Number of votes	Votes (%)
Ordinary	78 881	87.92
Provisional	444	0.49
Early Vote (pre-poll declaration)	801	0.89
Postal	9 591	10.69
Total	89 717	79.52^a

a. This represents the turnout, i.e. the proportion of voters on the electoral roll at the time who voted. Other percentages are proportions of total votes by type (whether formal or informal).

Table 6: North Sydney by-election timeline

Event	Day	Date (2015)	Time
Issue of writ	Monday	26 October	6 pm
Close of rolls	Monday	2 November	8 pm
Close of nominations	Thursday	12 November	12 pm
Declaration of nominations	Friday	13 November	12 pm
Election day	Saturday	5 December	8 am – 6 pm
Writ returned	Wednesday	23 December	

Table 7: North Sydney by-election – first preferences by vote type

Vote type	Number of votes	Votes (%)
Ordinary	72 427	88.56
Provisional	367	0.45
Early Vote (pre-poll declaration)	211	0.26
Postal	8 774	10.73
Total	81 779	78.41^a

a. This represents the turnout, i.e. the proportion of voters on the electoral roll at the time who voted. Other percentages are proportions of total votes by type (whether formal or informal).

Apparent non-voting and multiple voting at the by-elections

The Electoral Act provides that it is an offence to fail to vote without a valid and sufficient reason, and to vote more than once in an election.

Non-voting

The AEC is proceeding with prosecuting non-voters in the Canning by-election whose excuse was found to be not valid and sufficient, and who have not paid the \$20 penalty.

The AEC is proceeding with the process of identifying and investigating apparent non-voters at the North Sydney by-election. Initial letters to electors who appeared to have failed to vote were sent in the week commencing 15 February 2016 (inside the three-month timeframe specified in the Electoral Act). Prosecutions are planned for late 2016, following the 2016 federal election.

Voting more than once

The follow-up of apparent multiple voting is an important electoral integrity measure.

Following the conduct of the 2015 Canning by-election, the AEC investigated 39 cases of multiple marks (all dual marks) occurring. Twenty-three cases were subsequently referred to the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

The AEC reviewed and investigated 39 cases of multiple marks (all dual marks) occurring at the North Sydney by-election. Further investigations involving the AFP are planned to occur in late 2016.

Service plans for the Canning and North Sydney by-elections

The introduction of service plans for the two by-elections was a new AEC initiative in 2015–16. The plans outlined the key election services and standards underpinning delivery of the by-elections. This commitment to services embodied the AEC values of upholding electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism. In line with our commitment

to continuous evaluation and improvement, we measured and reported on our performance based on the standards in each plan.

Electoral Reform Program

Implementation of the Electoral Reform Program continued throughout 2015–16 in preparation for the 2016 federal election, including the implementation of a significant range of recommended reforms arising from the *Inquiry into the 2013 WA Senate Election* (the Keelty Report) and reports of the Australian National Audit Office.

The Program focused on:

- enhancing ballot paper handling practices
- ensuring greater electoral integrity
- achieving national consistency in AEC policies and procedures
- developing new materials and forms
- implementing more robust compliance and assurance mechanisms
- introducing greater rigour in transport and logistics contracts.

The Canning and North Sydney by-elections provided two opportunities to test these measures, particularly in the areas of ballot paper handling and security, visual identification of AEC staff, visitors and scrutineers in polling places, use of out-posted centres (for election activities), and the management of election waste.

The changes to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* passed by the Parliament on Friday 18 March 2016 were another significant milestone in terms of the AEC's Electoral Reform Program. As outlined elsewhere in this report, these changes principally related to voting in the Senate, counting of Senate ballot papers, and handling of declaration votes. This resulted in a number of significant organisational and operational changes, and changes in the management of, preparations for, and delivery of, the 2016 federal election.

Election planning and mobilisation for the 2016 federal election included the implementation and operationalisation of a range of new and updated policies, standard operating procedures, and supporting guidance, including (but not limited to):

- ballot paper handling (to address security, storage, packaging, labelling, transport and tracking)
- election waste
- out-posted centres
- Divisional Returning Officer Senate count
- Central Senate Scrutiny.

After the 2016 federal election all policies and procedures will be reviewed for efficacy, with implementation of reforms continuing through to the next federal election, anticipated for 2019.

Election readiness

Election Readiness Framework

Following the introduction of the Election Readiness Framework in 2015, throughout 2015–16 the AEC adopted and implemented the various initiatives developed under this framework to better synchronise planning efforts across all levels of the agency.

Innovations included:

- creating an Election Ready Road Map (ERRM) for the organisation to set a clear path to being ready for the 2016 federal election
- the federal election event picture, which provided a vision of the key policies, practices, training and systems to be in place for the 2016 federal election
- adopting an Election Readiness Assessment Framework (ERAF) and the concept of condition statements
- conducting a series of readiness assessments to measure the agency's actual state of election readiness along the way

- an ERRM readiness check involving Election Planning, Systems and Services (EPSS) Branch staff, in collaboration with staff from other business areas, and coinciding with the first Directed Level of Election Readiness (DLER) set by the Electoral Commissioner for the AEC to be 'writ ready minus 100 days' on 31 March 2016.

The AEC also developed a set of election delivery principles to create common understanding across the organisation and standardise the way polling staff approach their work, including a consistent approach to the agency's risk management framework.

The principles are numbered to reflect priority, and are underpinned by the core AEC values of electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism. In addition, they are supported by our organisational commitment to the ballot paper principles and the 'every task matters' principle.

The election delivery principles are:

1. Integrity of the result
 - a. safety, custody and handling of ballot papers
 - b. maintaining the integrity of a person's right to vote (prevention of voter disenfranchisement)
 - c. ballot paper formality.
2. Efficient processes and procedures.
3. Good customer service and positive customer experience.

Governance arrangements

To support election readiness, a National Election Manager (NEM) was appointed. This role is performed by the First Assistant Commissioner, Election Operations and Reform. The NEM is responsible for managing electoral events on behalf of the Electoral Commissioner. This role includes responsibility for both election preparation and election delivery.

The National Election Delivery Committee (NEDC), comprising the NEM, state and territory managers, and key Assistant Commissioners, operated throughout 2015–16 to provide national oversight of the AEC's election planning, preparation, and coordination of activities in line with the ERRM. During the election delivery phase the committee membership was augmented to include all First Assistant Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners. From the Issue of Writ for the

2016 federal election the NEDC met daily to monitor and manage election delivery.

Senate Reform Program

On 18 March 2016, the biggest electoral reform in 30 years was passed by the Parliament following a marathon 40-hour debate – the longest continuous Senate consideration of a single bill in 26 years.

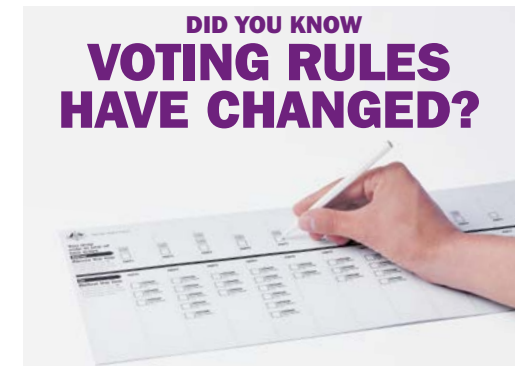
The changes to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* were:

- abolishing group voting tickets
- requiring voters to nominate a minimum of six preferences above or 12 preferences below the line on the Senate ballot paper
- allowing registered party logos to appear on ballot papers
- amending provisions to save informal votes

- precluding a person from being a registered officer for more than one political party at a time
- requiring declaration-vote ballot boxes to remain sealed at the polling place for transport to the divisional out-posted centre.

To implement the changes for the 2016 double dissolution federal election, the AEC developed:

- a national, integrated, multi-media public education campaign for voters on how to mark their Senate ballot papers
- a solution for counting Senate votes
- a register for authorised party logos
- new procedures for handling declaration votes
- revised election policies, procedures, training modules, publications, forms and materials.



Counting Senate votes

The changes to Senate voting substantially increased the complexity of the Senate count. At the 2013 federal election, most people voted by marking a '1' above the line, next to the group of their choice. The group voting ticket determined the flow of preferences.

Previously, only preferences expressed below the line, about 4 per cent of votes, needed to be recorded and entered individually into the count system.

The changes to Senate voting required voters to express group preferences (at least 1 to 6) above the line, or individual preferences (at least 1 to 12) below the line. Consequently, preferences had to be entered into the count system for 100 per cent of Senate ballot papers – whether the ballot paper was marked above or below the line.

New semi-automated solution

To ensure a workable count solution for a 2 July election, the AEC developed two potential solutions in parallel: (1) a semi-automated vote scanning and new counting system; and (2) an enhanced EasyCount solution, using the AEC's existing count application.

Developed in partnership with Fuji Xerox Document Management Solutions, the semi-automated process was considered more robust, efficient and technically superior, and was adopted for the 2016 federal election.

SPOTLIGHT

Implementing election reforms in the North Sydney by-election

With Lisa Warwar, Operations Manager, AEC, New South Wales.

A by-election for the federal House of Representatives seat of North Sydney (NSW) was held on 5 December 2015. The trigger for the by-election was the resignation of the sitting member, the Hon. Joe Hockey MP.

The North Sydney by-election was the first opportunity for staff in New South Wales to implement new policies and trial new Standard Operating Procedures developed to support the conduct of elections.

Operations Manager Lisa Warwar said, 'The first tangible sign that things would be different this time was when the ballot papers arrived in new security packaging and labelling.'

'Then came new bollards and tape for delineating secure zones at polling places, followed by new coloured vests and badges for identifying AEC staff and their various roles. In addition there was an increased security presence, and Early Voting Polling Place Liaison Officers at the pre-poll voting centres. Then having to guard the ballot papers at all times, including overnight, and having a documented chain of custody for all ballot papers, including the need for two people to move ballot papers, and so on.'

'I really think the vests had a unifying effect on all of our staff at polling places', Lisa said. 'I know it seems a very simple innovation, but with upwards of 80 people present at some polling places at times, the vests were a nice

way to unify the AEC staff – it gave us a real sense of "team".'

'Trialling the Standard Operating Procedures gave the Election Reform Program Branch the chance to see all their planning work in action, at the coalface. The importance of every single physical and administrative process was top of mind for all of us. It was a true "every task matters" principle in action. We were so aware of where all the things we did fitted in.'

'In the end it was very rewarding educating and passing on knowledge to our team members, and what was a lot to cope with became a big success – and hopefully a sign of good things to come with the 2016 election.'

Central Senate Scrutiny

Each state and territory established a dedicated Central Senate Scrutiny (CSS) site in their capital city. At the CSS, batches of Senate ballot papers were scanned using Kodak i5650 scanning hardware and entered into imaging software.

Optical character recognition technology captured voter preferences, with manual verification by a human operator. Candidate scrutineers were free to observe the verification process and raise challenges for adjudication by the Australian Electoral Officer. Images of potentially informal ballot papers, and those with unusual markings, were visually checked by a human operator and assessed as formal or informal by AEC staff.

Once verified, a record, representing the preferences on the ballot paper, was generated and a cryptographic digital signature applied to protect each preference record from modification. The AEC then imported the preference record into the AEC EasyCount system for the distribution of preferences.

System integrity

To ensure the integrity of the count, the CSS process was reviewed by IBM, and the Senate count system was certified by the National Association of Testing Authorities. It was independently reviewed for security vulnerabilities by a specialist agency and accredited under the Australian Information Security Registered Assessors Program.

2016 federal election

On Sunday 8 May 2016, the Prime Minister announced a double dissolution federal election for Saturday 2 July 2016. The writs for this election were issued on Monday 16 May 2016. Table 8 shows the key dates for this election.

Nominations

Nominations were received from 994 House of Representatives candidates and 631 Senate candidates. All nominations were officially declared, and draws for positions on the ballot papers were conducted at noon on Friday 10 June 2016, in line with legislative requirements. Table 9 and Table 10 show the breakdown of nominations by state and territory.

Distribution of ballot papers

Changes to the Electoral Act allowed – for the first time in the history of federal elections – the inclusion of logos approved by the AEC on ballot papers. Political parties were able to have their party logo appear adjacent to their candidate's names on the House of Representatives ballot paper, and have no more than two logos appear adjacent to their party or group name above the line on the Senate ballot paper.

For the 2016 election, 33 parties registered a logo, 941 different variations of ballot papers were designed and typeset, and over 45 million ballot papers were printed and distributed securely for use across Australia and the world.

Immediately after the declaration of nominations, the AEC began to print and distribute ballot papers in time for early voting to commence on Tuesday 14 June 2016.

Provision of early voting services

There was significant uptake of early voting services for the 2016 federal election.

Postal voting

Following the announcement of the election on Sunday 8 May 2016, postal vote applications opened (for eligible voters unable to vote on election day). As required under the Electoral Act, the deadline for receipt by the AEC of postal vote applications was three days before polling day – by 6 pm on Wednesday 29 June. More than 1.5 million postal vote applications were processed.

Early voting

Early voting services became available for eligible voters (to vote in person) from Tuesday 14 June 2016. There were 649 early voting centres operating across Australia in the weeks leading up to election day.

More than three million pre-poll votes were cast at early voting centres and AEC divisional

offices during the early voting period (which ended at 6 pm Friday 1 July).

Mobile polling

Mobile polling commenced from Monday 20 June 2016, with 557 mobile polling teams established for the election (including special hospital, remote and other mobile teams).

Table 8: 2016 federal election timeline

Event	Day	Date (2016)	Time
Announcement of the election	Sunday	8 May	–
Postal vote applications opened	Sunday	8 May	–
Issue of writs	Monday	16 May	–
Close of rolls	Monday	23 May	8.00 pm
Close of candidate nominations	Tuesday	7 June	12.00 pm
Declaration of nominations	Friday	8 June	12.00 pm
Early voting commenced	Tuesday	14 June	–
Mobile polling commenced	Monday	20 June	–
Close of postal vote applications	Wednesday	29 June	6.00 pm
Election day	Saturday	2 July	8.00 am – 6.00 pm
Writs returned	Wednesday	By 8 August	–

Table 9: House of Representatives nominations by state and territory

State/territory	Seats	2016 nominations
New South Wales ^a	47	314
Victoria	37	259
Queensland	30	204
Western Australia ^b	16	86
South Australia	11	72
Tasmania	5	30
Australian Capital Territory	2	9
Northern Territory	2	20
Australia	150	994

a. New South Wales was entitled to 48 seats at the 2013 federal election. This was reduced to 47 seats for the 2016 election.

b. Western Australia was entitled to 15 seats at the 2013 federal election. This was increased to 16 seats for the 2016 election.

Table 10: Senate nominations by state and territory

State/territory	No. of vacancies ^a	2016 nominations
New South Wales	12	151
Victoria	12	116
Queensland	12	122
Western Australia	12	79
South Australia	12	64
Tasmania	12	58
Australian Capital Territory	2	22
Northern Territory	2	19
Australia	76	631

a. The 2016 federal election was a double dissolution election, so all 76 Senate seats were vacant. For the 2013 federal election there were 40 Senate vacancies (half Senate for the six states, elected for six-year terms, plus two ACT Senators and two NT Senators, the Territory Senators always being elected for terms that coincide with House of Representatives terms).

Of these teams, 41 remote mobile voting teams visited more than 400 remote locations across Australia by land, air and sea.

Blind and low vision voting

A telephone voting service was provided for voters who are blind or experience low vision, via a two-step process of registration and voting. This service allows eligible voters to

cast their vote in secret and with a degree of independence.

Registrations opened on Monday 13 June 2016 and closed at 12 pm on 2 July 2016. During this period 2 175 people registered.

Voting via this service commenced on Tuesday 14 June 2016, and was available until 6 pm on election day. During this period 1 998 people used the service to cast their vote.

SPOTLIGHT

New Senate count solution in 12 weeks

In February 2016, the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Bill 2016* was introduced into Parliament. It proposed changes to the Senate voting system, removing group voting tickets, and introducing optional preferential voting and party logos on ballot papers.

The AEC established the Senate Reform Program to scope potential requirements, with the possibility of an early election in mind. If passed, the AEC would likely need to operationalise these changes into new policies, procedures and systems extremely quickly.

On 18 March 2016 the legislation was passed, and the Senate Reform Program set to prepare and implement a solution to assist in the count of Senate ballot papers and registration of party logos which would appear on ballot papers. On 9 May 2016, the Parliament was dissolved and a double dissolution election announced for 2 July 2016.

In 12 weeks a new end-to-end solution was developed, tested and made operational. Integrity, accuracy and timeliness guided the work of the Senate Reform Program.

The solution involved scanning and image recognition technology to capture preferences which were then visually validated by a human operator before being imported to the AEC EasyCount system for the distribution of preferences and declaration of results.

Notable features of the solution included:

- a continual, trackable chain of custody for ballot papers
- human verification of every ballot paper
- full access for candidate scrutineers
- IT architecture and security standards to industry best practice.

The counting solution required the movement of approximately 14 million ballot papers from over 7 000 polling places to a Central Senate Scrutiny (CSS) site in each state or territory. At these sites, over 800 staff scanned and verified preferences for 631 candidates.

From Tuesday 5 July, eight CSS sites operated five days a week, over two shifts. The AEC, with the assistance of the counting solution, successfully declared the eight state and territory senate results and returned the writs by 8 August 2016.

This was an incredible achievement given the short time provided in which to implement the changes.

Polling places on election day

In addition to the early voting services described above, the AEC provided services at over 7 000 static polling places across Australia on election day. Overseas voting was available to eligible voters at over 95 locations outside Australia.

Electoral roll management

The state of the electoral roll

The Commonwealth electoral roll is the list of voters eligible to vote at federal elections. The completeness of the electoral roll is measured by the enrolment rate, which is the percentage of eligible Australian electors who are enrolled.

The AEC maintains multiple streams of contact with eligible electors to encourage them to enrol and keep their enrolment up to date, including the Online Enrolment Service (OES), the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update (FDEU) process, and the New Citizens Enrolment Program.

In 2015–16, the enrolment rate increased by 1.9 percentage points – from 93.2 per cent at 30 June 2015 to 95.1 per cent at 30 June 2016. This represented an increase of 501 857 Australians to 15 696 874 enrolled out of an estimated eligible population of 16 504 325. Over the same period there was a corresponding decline in the number of eligible Australians who were not enrolled – from 1.1 million to 807 000.

These positive outcomes have been driven by increasing take-up of the OES and the FDEU process. Combined, online and direct enrolment now represent almost 80 per cent of all enrolment activity, with only 20 per cent of electors submitting a claim for enrolment using a paper form.

The enrolment rate and growth of the electoral roll since 2007 are shown in [Figure 3](#). The target is enrolment of 95 per cent of eligible

Australians. More detailed data on enrolment, including monthly and quarterly enrolment statistics, are available from the AEC website at www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Enrolment_stats/index.htm.

Targeted enrolment programs

Youth enrolment

Youth enrolment remains a challenge for the AEC as Australians aged 18 to 24 years have lower levels of enrolment than that of the general population. Despite this trend the AEC has achieved increased enrolment rates for this demographic, year on year, since 2012.

In 2015–16 the youth enrolment rate increased from 79.3 per cent of eligible electors aged 18 to 24 at 30 June 2015 to 87.4 per cent at 30 June 2016, above the target rate of 80 per cent.

New citizen enrolment

Another important target group for AEC enrolment activity is new Australian citizens. In 2015–16, AEC officers attended 1 128 citizenship ceremonies and collected 100 978 enrolment applications from new citizens enrolling for the first time.

Around 92.5 per cent of new citizens enrolled within three months of attendance at a citizenship ceremony, compared with just under 94 per cent the previous year.

Electoral roll integrity

Enrolment quality assurance

The Enrolment Quality Assurance Program (EQAP) is designed to improve the accuracy of the electoral roll by measuring the ongoing integrity of the AEC's enrolment transactions.

EQAP involves scrutinising a sample of enrolment transactions from every electoral division on a monthly basis to measure their accuracy, completeness and timeliness.

EQAP results up to December 2015 indicate that 97.8 per cent of essential data fields

(relating directly to voter entitlements) were processed without error, and 96.9 per cent of non-essential fields were processed without error. In 2015–16, 92.7 per cent of claims for enrolment were processed within five business days and 97.0 per cent of claims were processed within 30 days.

Sample Audit Fieldwork

Sample Audit Fieldwork (SAF) is a component of the AEC's roll integrity program that audits the enrolments of eligible electors at a random sample of addresses. SAF 2015 included performance targets of 95 per cent for the enrolment rate (proportion of electors enrolled), 95 per cent for enrolment completeness (proportion of electors enrolled for the correct division) and 90 per cent for enrolment accuracy (proportion of electors enrolled for the correct address).

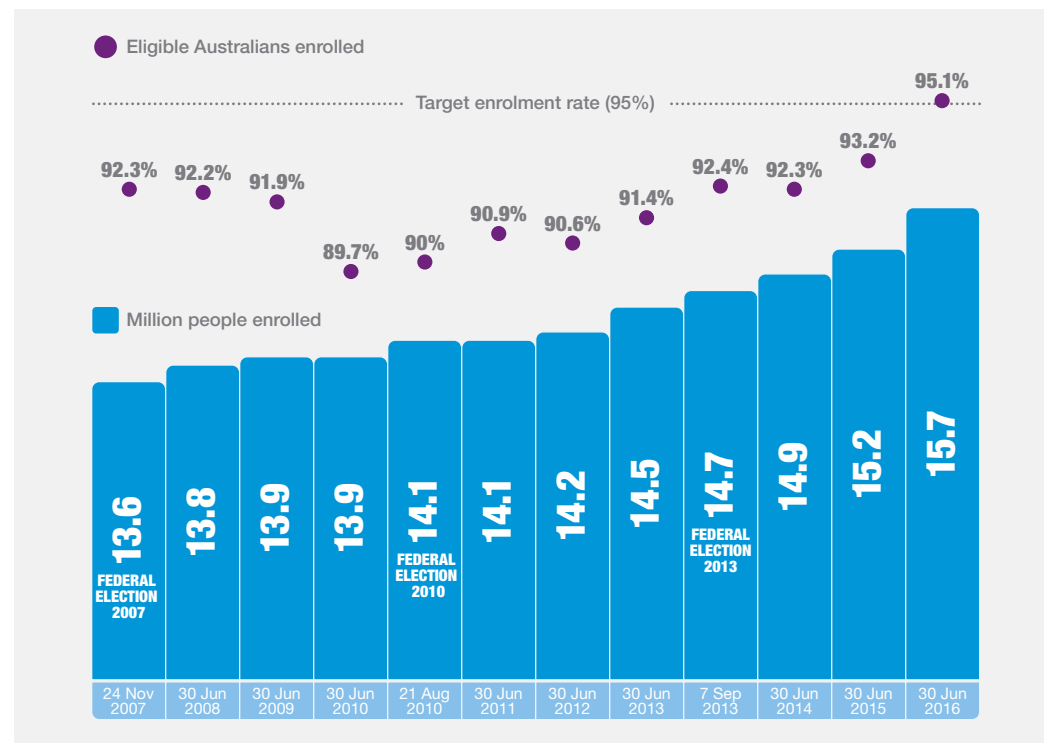
A random sample of approximately 30 000 addresses across Australia were selected for doorknocking in May 2015. This sample spanned 74 electoral divisions and included approximately 48 000 voters.

Results for the 2015 SAF are presented in Table 11, and are consistent with results from previous SAF activities.

Table 11: 2015 SAF average national results against performance measures

Indicator	Target	2015 SAF result
Enrolment rate	95%	98.7%
Enrolment completeness	95%	93.8%
Enrolment accuracy	90%	89.2%

Figure 3: Enrolment rate and enrolled population 24 November 2007 to 30 June 2016



SPOTLIGHT

Electronic premises inspection tool boosts polling place accessibility information for voters with disability

Prior to a federal election the AEC inspects thousands of premises across Australia, with around 7 000 subsequently being used as polling places.

For people with disability, information on the accessibility of various polling places – for example wheelchair accessible, or wheelchair accessible with assistance – can be crucial.

Ahead of the 2016 federal election we introduced 'EPIT' – the electronic premises inspection tool – to improve the collection, storage and publication of information on premises used as polling places, and, for the first time, provided detailed accessibility information for voters.

EPIT captures data from up to 150 accessibility questions aligned with Australian accessibility standards. The data are then assessed to determine the accessible and non-accessible features of the premises, and to assign an accessibility rating. This then flows through to the AEC website, where voters can find accessibility information for polling places across Australia.



The enhanced information became available on the AEC website from Sunday 12 June 2016, to coincide with the opening of early voting services for the 2 July 2016 federal election.

While premises are primarily inspected for wheelchair accessibility, the information can also be highly relevant to people with other forms of disability.

Compared to the previous entirely paper-based process, EPIT has resulted in benefits beyond enhanced premises information for voters. It also fulfils recommendations made by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) for centralised assessment and retention of data on polling premises which can then be used for future elections.

Enrolment processing integrity checks

During the close of rolls process for major electoral events, including the 2016 federal election, the AEC conducts a series of checks to ensure the integrity of claims for enrolment.

These integrity checks on claims for enrolment include:

- verifying ‘evidence of identity’ documents in instances where a document is used for more than one claim for enrolment
- confirming the number of voters enrolled at a residential address
- scrutinising unusual patterns of enrolment.

The AEC takes any allegation or suspicion of enrolment fraud very seriously (see ‘Federal elections, by-elections and referendums’ earlier in this chapter).

Electoral roll products and services

The AEC provides a wide range of roll products and services to state and territory electoral authorities, other government departments and agencies, federal parliamentarians, political parties and researchers. These services are provided in accordance with the Electoral Act, under agreement and for an authorised purpose.

In 2015–16, roll products provided by the AEC included support for the two federal by-elections and 1 782 extracts of roll information.

State and territory electoral roll products and services

The AEC manages and maintains the electoral roll on behalf of states and territories under agreements referred to as joint roll

arrangements. In 2015–16 the AEC provided states and territories with 909 roll information products, known as extracts, supporting 51 state, territory and local government elections.

Other electoral roll products and services

Under section 90B of the Electoral Act the AEC is permitted to provide certain roll information to various legislated recipients for authorised purposes.

Members and Senators

Subsection 90B(1) of the Electoral Act allows Members of Parliament, Senators and House of Representatives candidates to receive electoral roll information. The AEC provided 611 roll extracts in 2015–16. A full breakdown of roll information provided to Members and Senators is available in [Appendix B](#).

Political parties

Federally registered political parties are entitled to receive electoral roll information in accordance with subsection 90B(1) of the Electoral Act. In 2015–16, the AEC provided 204 roll extracts to registered political parties. A full breakdown of roll information provided to registered political parties is available in [Appendix C](#).

Government departments and agencies

Government departments and agencies are entitled to receive electoral roll information if they are a ‘prescribed authority’, under item 4 of subsection 90B(4) of the Electoral Act.

The AEC provided 39 roll extracts to 13 government departments and agencies in 2015–16. Each department and agency provided justification for access by reference to its statutory functions and the *Privacy Act 1988*. A full breakdown of roll information provided to government departments and agencies is available in [Table 36](#) in [Appendix D](#).

Researchers

Medical and electoral researchers are permitted access to electoral roll information under

item 2 of subsection 90B(4) of the Electoral Act. This information is commonly used to identify participants for research projects and mail surveys. Before they can access roll data, researchers must undergo an approval process. This includes scrutiny by a human research ethics committee and agreement on how the data will be used and protected.

In 2015–16 seven medical researchers and one electoral researcher received electoral roll information. A full breakdown of roll information provided to researchers is provided in [Table 37](#) in [Appendix D](#).

SPOTLIGHT

Scanning postal vote applications

For the 2016 federal election the AEC introduced scanning of paper postal vote applications (PVAs) to capture essential data to feed into the AEC’s Automated Postal Vote Issuing System (APVIS) for streamlined processing and despatching of relevant postal vote packs and ballot papers.

This represents a significant improvement to the way the AEC manages paper-based postal vote applications. Previously, manual processing of paper applications was required, which took up valuable time during a critical period in the lead-up to election day.

The new process builds on the introduction of online lodgement and processing of PVAs at the 2013 federal election. Despite the introduction of online postal vote

applications, the AEC still received around 715 000 paper postal vote applications – hence the introduction of scanning of PVAs.

For the 2016 federal election, eligible voters were able to apply for PVAs from the election announcement on Sunday 8 May until 6pm Wednesday 29 June 2016 (7.5 weeks).

During this period we received over 1.5 million PVAs via the following methods:

- around 530 000 lodged online
- over 700 000 submitted by paper form
- over 260 000 pre-approved postal voters not required to submit a PVA each election.

The AEC will review all processes associated with postal voting as part of our evaluation of the 2016 federal election. This will include PVA scanning, to find where further improvements and efficiencies can be made.

SPOTLIGHT

Partnership with DHS to deliver election services

As occurred for the 2013 federal election, the AEC again partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to deliver election services at the 2016 federal election. Election services delivered included:

- contact centres
- election service centres
- blind and low vision registration and voting
- enrolment and polling services in remote areas.

The AEC strategic partnership with DHS exemplifies a whole-of-government approach to service delivery, delivering an efficient business solution for providing election services to the Australian public.

SPOTLIGHT

All Norfolk Islanders to vote in future federal elections

In March 2016, the Australian Government made changes to arrangements for enrolment and voting for Norfolk Islanders.

The effect of the changes was that from after the 2016 federal election, it will be compulsory for Norfolk Islanders to enrol to vote in federal elections, in the Division of Canberra.

Prior to the 2013 federal election, enrolment was optional for Norfolk Islanders, and they could be enrolled in almost any electorate in Australia, depending on their individual circumstances. If enrolled, voting was compulsory.

In brief:

- The legislative changes commenced on 1 July 2016.
- From 6 May 2016 (8 weeks before commencement of the changes), Norfolk

Island electors making a claim (e.g. for new enrolment, or change of address) were enrolled in or transferred to the Division of Canberra.

- From 1 July 2016, Norfolk Island electors enrolled in Divisions other than Canberra were to be transferred into Canberra – however the transfer could not occur between the close of rolls and close of poll for an election – so as the 2016 federal election was on 2 July, the transfer occurred after this time.
- In the months leading up to the changeover, the AEC worked with local authorities and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development to overcome communication challenges to inform electors about the changes. The AEC also distributed flyers on the island outlining the changes and effects. Specific information was also available on the AEC's website.
- At the beginning of the changes, 231 Norfolk Islanders were enrolled. By 30 June 2016, 653 Norfolk Islanders were enrolled.

Private sector organisations

Under items 5, 6 and 7 of subsection 90B(4) of the Electoral Act, private sector organisations may receive roll information for identity verification processes related to the *Financial Transactions Reports Act 1988* and the *Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006*. The AEC provided 12 roll extracts to private sector organisations. A full breakdown of roll information provided to private sector organisations is available in [Table 38](#) in [Appendix D](#).

Support services for electoral redistributions

Electoral divisions are periodically 'redistributed' (that is, redrawn) in accordance with Part IV of the Electoral Act. The purpose of an electoral redistribution is to ensure that, as nearly as practicable, there are an equal number of voters in each electoral division for a given state or territory.

Redistributions concluded in 2015–16

As a result of three redistributions that concluded in 2015–16, changes were made to the names and boundaries of some electoral divisions in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. [Table 12](#) sets out the milestones in each of these three redistribution processes.

More information on these redistributions and associated name changes is available in the 'Redistributions in 2015–16' Spotlight on [page 44](#).

Table 12: Summary of electoral redistributions concluded in 2015–16

	New South Wales	Western Australia	Australian Capital Territory
Basis for Electoral Commission's determination triggering a redistribution	Decreased entitlement to House of Representatives electoral divisions (from 48 to 47)	Increased entitlement to House of Representatives electoral divisions (from 15 to 16)	More than seven years had elapsed since the last redistribution was determined. The ACT retained its entitlement to two members of the House of Representatives
Direction to commence redistribution	1 December 2014	1 December 2014	1 December 2014
Release of Redistribution Committee's proposed redistribution	16 October 2015	21 August 2015	11 September 2015
Public input relating to the proposed redistribution	791 written objections were received between 16 October and 13 November 2015 26 written comments on objections were received between 16 November and 27 November 2015	28 written objections were received between 21 August and 18 September 2015 10 written comments on objections were received between 21 September and 2 October 2015	29 written objections were received between 11 September and 9 October 2015 Five written comments on objections were received between 12 October and 23 October 2015
Augmented Electoral Commission activities	Inquiries held: 30 submissions were made at the inquiry held in Sydney and 18 submissions were made at the inquiry held in Port Macquarie Decision: Adopt the proposed redistribution, with changes Announcement of decision: 14 January 2016	Inquiries held: Six submissions were made at the inquiry held in Perth Decision: Adopt the proposed redistribution, with changes Announcement of decision: 5 November 2015	Inquiries held: Seven submissions were made at the inquiry held in Canberra Decision: Adopt the proposed redistribution Announcement of decision: 24 November 2015
Gazettal of determination of names and boundaries of electoral divisions	25 February 2016	19 January 2016	28 January 2016

Redistributions begun in 2015–16

The redistribution of federal electoral divisions in the Northern Territory commenced on 15 October 2015 because seven years had elapsed since the previous redistribution was determined. The Northern Territory retained its entitlement to two members of the House of Representatives.

The Redistribution Committee for the Northern Territory received six suggestions to the redistribution and one comment on suggestions. It will release a report detailing its proposed redistribution of the Northern Territory in 2016–17.

Deferral of redistribution

A redistribution of Tasmania was due to start within 30 days of 16 February 2016, as seven years had elapsed since the last redistribution of Tasmania was determined. However, the Electoral Act prevents redistributions from commencing in the 12 months before the expiry of the House of Representatives. The redistribution of Tasmania will commence

within 30 days of the first sitting day of the new House of Representatives following the 2016 federal election.

Assistance provided by the AEC

The AEC provides administrative assistance to the two bodies established to conduct each redistribution:

- The **Redistribution Committee**, which is responsible for making a proposed redistribution, is comprised of the Electoral Commissioner, the relevant Australian Electoral Officer, and the Surveyor-General (or equivalent officer) and the Auditor-General of the relevant state or territory.
- The **augmented Electoral Commission**, which considers any objections to a proposed redistribution, and makes a final determination of the names and boundaries of the redistributed electoral divisions. It is comprised of the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, the non-judicial member of the Electoral Commission and the members of the Redistribution Committee.

The AEC assisted the Redistribution Committees for New South Wales, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, and the augmented Electoral Commissions for New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, by:

- analysing demographic and enrolment data
- facilitating the public consultation process
- providing support for committee meetings
- producing and publishing (including on the AEC website) information about the redistribution process
- preparing legal instruments, background research papers, analysis of public submissions and material for publication in the *Commonwealth Government Notices Gazette*.

SPOTLIGHT

Electronic Certified Lists

Electronic Certified Lists (ECLs) allow AEC staff and polling officials to, among other things, look up, in real-time, a person's electoral enrolment on an electronic database and electronically mark off their name.

Other benefits of ECLs include:

- looking up electors on a national roll to determine their correct division
- the ability to print House of Representatives ballot papers on demand rather than needing to have ballot papers for 150 divisions on hand

- providing daily statistics on ordinary voting at pre-poll centres and the issuing of declaration votes, facilitating electoral roll integrity and reducing errors
- reducing the risk of multiple voting.

At the 2013 federal election, the AEC piloted the use of ECLs in selected locations to introduce efficiencies into the process to find and mark voters off the electoral roll.

The Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) considered the use of ECLs in its inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 election (*Second interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 federal election: An assessment of electronic voting options*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2014). The Committee recommended that the AEC deploy ECLs where possible to all pre-poll voting centres and all mobile voting teams at

the next federal election. The JSCEM also recommended that ECLs be progressively implemented with a view to eventual replacement of paper lists at all polling places.

An AEC evaluation of ECL usage at the 2013 federal election pilot (and in line with the 2014 JSCEM recommendations) found that allocating ECLs by polling type rather than specific areas or divisions offered the most benefit in particular, allocating ECLs to pre-poll voting centres and mobile teams.

At both the Canning by-election (September 2015) and North Sydney by-election (December 2015) all polling places, early voting centres, and mobile polling teams used ECLs to issue ordinary votes to electors. Training was provided to all polling officials using ECLs for the by-elections. Every polling place was also provided with a contingency supply of materials required to conduct polling in case of ECL failure.

Ahead of the 2016 federal election, 1 544 ECLs were deployed (around double the number used in the 2013 election) as shown in the table.

The AEC will review its use of ECLs in delivering streamlined processes and electoral integrity as part of its evaluation of the 2016 federal election.

Deployment of Electronic Certified Lists (ECLs) for the 2016 federal election

Quantity	Location
51	Static super-booths in Sydney and Brisbane to enable ballot paper print on demand to help streamline voting
1 031	Pre-Poll Voting Centres (PPVCs) with a high estimated number of ordinary votes expected (13 500+)
149	PPVCs with a high estimated volume of declaration votes expected
78	All remote mobile teams to provide the ability to search for electors by location/establishment and immediacy of access to marks
191	Rural mobile teams (e.g. for hospitals in rural areas)
44	Spare ECLs in case of technical issues (and to further support polling activity)

During April 2016, the AEC sent letters to more than 670 000 households in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory advising that all enrolled residents at the address were now enrolled for a different electoral division as a result of the redistribution in their respective state or territory. Notices advising of changes to the names and boundaries of electoral divisions were also placed in newspapers circulating throughout New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

Party registrations and financial disclosure

Register of Political Parties

The AEC maintains the Register of Political Parties as required under Part XI of the Electoral Act and provides political parties with advice on how to apply for and maintain registration.

It also receives and processes applications for party registration, reviews political parties' eligibility to remain on the Register, and updates contact details for party officials.

Political parties are not required to register with the AEC. However, those that register can be eligible for public election funding (provided a threshold proportion of first preference votes is received), and can have the party name and logo printed on ballot papers. Benefits and obligations of party registration are outlined in the Party Registration Guide available on the AEC website.

The AEC provides updated party registration information on its website including:

- the current Register of Political Parties (including registered party names, optional abbreviations, logos, registered officer details and whether the party wishes to receive election funding)
- notices regarding party registration required under the Electoral Act
- historical information
- the Party Registration Guide
- statements of reasons for decisions on particular applications
- forms and explanations to help parties making applications.

Party-registration-related applications and requests

The number of party-registration related applications or requests in 2015–16 (Table 13) was almost double that of 2014–15. This was principally due to the March 2016 amendments to the Electoral Act which, among other things, enabled registered political parties to apply to register a logo and have it appear adjacent to their candidates' names on the House of Representatives ballot paper and adjacent to their party or group name above the line on the Senate ballot paper. Other increases were within the normal pattern of fluctuations during the electoral cycle.

The (three-person) Electoral Commission reviewed three decisions to deregister a party. Of these applications, one party registration was reinstated and two reviews were still in progress at 30 June 2016. Further details are available on the [AEC website](#).

Table 13: Party-registration-related applications and requests, 2015–16

Application/request type	Received
Register a political party	20
Voluntarily deregister political party	0
Change party details (including name, abbreviation and logo)	78
Change party abbreviation	0
Update party office holder information – change registered officer	37
Update party office holder information – change other party officials	147
Change other party details	21
Review of decision of Commissioner's delegate – refusal to change registered officer	0
Review of decision of Commissioner's delegate – party deregistration	3

SPOTLIGHT

Electoral enrolment rate hits 95 per cent

During 2015–16 the AEC achieved an enrolment rate of 95 per cent – that is, 95 per cent of all eligible electors were enrolled to vote.

The number of missing electors (electors who should be enrolled but are not) has fallen from highs of more than 1.5 million in 2012 to 807 000 at 30 June 2016.

More than 15.6 million people are now on the roll.

Youth enrolment in particular has risen since the 2013 federal election. Young people, regardless of their generation, have traditionally had lower enrolment rates than older electors.

Direct enrolment is enrolment based on information obtained from other government agencies. This is provided for in law (the Electoral Act).

Enrolling to vote, and voting, are compulsory in Australia for Australian citizens aged 18 and over.

These improvements in elector participation have resulted in higher levels of roll integrity – in other words, roll completeness and accuracy.

These positive changes have been largely due to the AEC's digital transformation, directing electors towards the online enrolment service, and the direct update and enrolment process, rather than traditional paper forms.

Almost 80 per cent of enrolments now originate from online and direct enrolment.

The AEC writes to prospective electors to inform them that they intend to add their name to the roll or update their details, while also giving the elector an opportunity to change their details if necessary.

SPOTLIGHT

Redistributions in 2015–16

Redistributions of federal electoral divisions in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory were completed in early 2016.

New South Wales

The New South Wales redistribution was required as the number of members of the House of Representatives to be chosen for New South Wales at the 2016 general election had decreased from 48 to 47. The Division of Hunter was abolished. However, as Hunter was first used as the name of a federal electoral division in 1901, the Division of Chariton was renamed as the Division of Hunter. In recognition of the former Prime Minister, the Hon. Edward Gough Whitlam AC, QC (1916–2014), the Division of Throsby was also renamed, becoming the Division of Whitlam.

Western Australia

The Western Australian redistribution was required as the number of members of the House of Representatives to be chosen for Western Australia at the 2016 general election had increased from 15 to 16. The new Division of Burt is located in the City of Armadale and the City of Gosnells area of the south-eastern Perth metropolitan region. The name honours succeeding generations of the Burt family for their significant contributions to the justice system and for their wider contributions to public service, specifically:

- Sir Archibald Burt (1810–1879), first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia

- Septimus Burt (1847–1919), whose public roles included that of Attorney-General of Western Australia at the time of colonial self-government
- Sir Francis Burt (1918–2004), who served as a judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, Chief Justice of Western Australia, and Governor of Western Australia from 1990 until 1993.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT redistribution was required as more than seven years had elapsed since the last redistribution was determined. The ACT remains entitled to two members of the House of Representatives. As well as the boundary between the two electoral divisions being altered, the Division of Fraser was renamed as 'Fenner' in recognition of Professor Frank Fenner, AC, CMG, MBE, FAA, FRS, FRACP, FRCP. Professor Fenner was an eminent scientist of national and international renown who made significant contributions to improving the wellbeing of humanity. The name 'Fraser' was retired in the ACT to provide the option in the future of naming an electoral division in Victoria after the former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. John Malcolm Fraser, AC, CH.

Transparency of political funding

The Commonwealth funding and financial disclosure scheme, established under Part XX of the Electoral Act, outlines the requirements in relation to the disclosure of detailed financial information regarding donations to political parties and election campaigns.

The disclosure scheme requires that the following groups and individuals lodge annual or election period financial disclosure returns with the AEC:

- political candidates
- political parties and their associated entities
- donors
- other participants in the electoral process.

Financial disclosure returns

During 2015–16, the AEC received 627 annual financial disclosure returns and amendments. These included:

- 525 returns and 53 amendments for the 2014–15 financial year
- 16 returns and 24 amendments for the 2013–14 financial year
- 1 return and 8 amendments relating to returns received for years prior to 2013–14.

Political party and associated entity financial disclosure returns for 2015–16 are due on 20 October 2016. Donor and third party returns for 2015–16 are due on 17 November 2016. These returns will be published on the [AEC website](#) on the first working day in February 2017. [Table 14](#) shows the number of returns lodged for the three previous financial years.

Online lodgement of returns is available through the [AEC's eReturns system](#), which is a secure portal on the AEC website. The uptake of online lodgement has continued to increase. In 2015–16, 67 per cent of returns were completed online, compared with 64 per cent in 2014–15 and 62 per cent in 2013–14.

Compliance reviews of disclosure returns

The AEC undertakes annual compliance reviews of disclosure returns lodged by political parties and associated entities under section 316(2A) of the Electoral Act.

The AEC uses a risk-based matrix to determine which parties and entities will be selected for review. The AEC may also select parties or entities for review on the basis of professional judgment if it is in receipt of information that suggests a review is warranted.

In 2015–16, the AEC completed 28 such compliance reviews.

Table 14: Financial disclosure returns lodged and published in previous financial years

Return type	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16
Political party	73	92	85
Political party – amendment	29	35	41
Associated entity	185	189	186
Associated entity – amendment	16	8	18
Donor	295	360	239
Donor – amendment	35	34	26
Political expenditure	45	35	32
Political expenditure – amendment	3	3	0
Total financial disclosure returns lodged	681	756	627

Election funding

The AEC calculates the election funding rate for each vote received by candidates and Senate groups that reached a threshold of four per cent of the formal first preference vote. Every six months the election funding rate is adjusted in line with the consumer price index and published on the AEC website.

The election funding rates during 2015–16 were:

- 259.405 cents per first preference vote for 1 July to 31 December 2015
- 262.259 cents per first preference vote for 1 January to 30 June 2016.

Two federal by-elections were held during 2015–16: Canning (WA), held on 19 September 2015, and North Sydney (NSW), held on 5 December 2015. Details of election funding payments are provided in [Table 15](#) and [Table 16](#) below.

Table 15: 2015 Canning by-election payment to political parties and candidates^a

Political party	Amount
Liberal Party of Australia	\$103 014.91
Australian Labor Party	\$78 070.53
The Greens (WA) Inc.	\$12 884.65
Total	\$193 970.09

a. No independent candidate obtained the required four per cent of the formal first preference vote in order to be eligible for payment of election funding entitlements.

Table 16: 2015 North Sydney by-election payment to political parties and candidates

Political party/candidate	Amount
Liberal Party of Australia	\$95 175.69
The Greens NSW	\$31 022.24
Dr Stephen Ruff (Independent)	\$37 102.70
Total	\$163 300.63

Industrial and commercial elections

The AEC's Industrial and Commercial Elections (ICE) program comprises three types of electoral events that support Australian workplaces:

- industrial elections** in accordance with the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*, the associated regulations and the relevant organisation's rules
- protected action ballots** in accordance with the *Fair Work Act 2009*, the associated regulations and Fair Work Commission orders
- fee-for-service** elections and ballots.

Industrial elections

Industrial elections are office bearer elections for organisations registered under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*. These organisations can be either trade unions or employer organisations.

Protected action ballots

Protected action ballots provide employees with an opportunity to formally vote on proposals for industrial action.

Fee-for-service elections and ballots

Fee-for-service elections and ballots are conducted at full cost recovery for clients who approach the AEC for such services. Authority for the AEC to perform this work is prescribed in section 7A of the Electoral Act. Authority to charge for this work is set out in section 7B.

The AEC has minimum standards that must be met before it will consider conducting fee-for-service elections or ballots. These standards are available on the AEC website. Most fee-for-service work is for the conduct of a ballot on a proposed enterprise agreement.

A total of 1 700 industrial and commercial elections (including protected action ballots) were conducted in 2015–16, compared with 1 533 the previous year. Of these elections, 273 were industrial elections, 1 303 were protected action ballots, and 124 were fee-for-service elections and ballots (including 81 certified agreement ballots) (see [Table 43](#) in [Appendix G](#) for more information).

The ICE program is guided by a specific strategic plan for 2015–2019. The key focus of this plan is to ensure that the AEC core values of electoral integrity through quality, professionalism and agility are embedded in the ICE Program.

Torres Strait Regional Authority elections

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is an Australian Government authority. The TSRA Board consists of 20 elected members who are all Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal people living in the region. They are elected every four years by their individual communities.

The AEC delivers the TSRA Elections in accordance with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* and *Torres Strait Regional Authority Rules 1996*. During the year preparations were undertaken for the next TSRA elections, gazetted to be held on 30 July 2016.

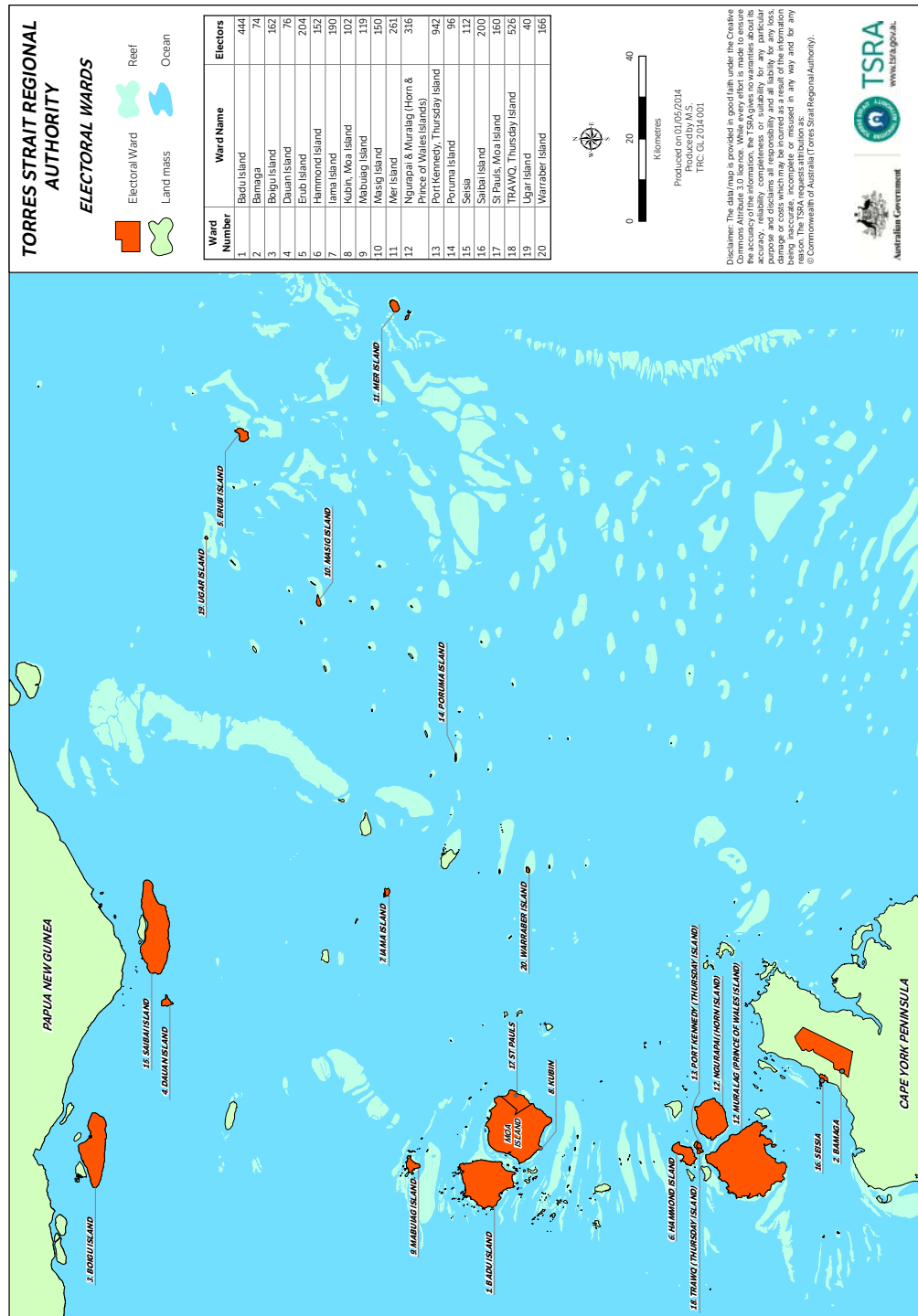
In preparing to deliver the 2016 TSRA elections the Queensland State Office project team incorporated principal elements of the AEC's reform program, and ratified delivery of the project through implementation of a memorandum of understanding with TSRA.

Key events specific to the delivery of the TSRA elections in July 2016 included:

- delivering candidate information sessions across all 20 wards
- delivering voter information sessions across all contested wards (wards are not contested if a candidate is nominated unopposed)
- producing a mobile polling schedule for visiting all contested wards
- providing three static polling places, to include sites on Thursday Island and Cape York
- post-election Board member election.

With 14 wards being contested in the 2016 elections, the AEC will be delivering mobile and static polling to the communities of Boigu, Mabuiag, Iama, Poruma, Erub, Badu, Warraber, Mer, St Pauls, Kubin, Hammond, Bamaga, Port Kennedy and TRAWQ (Communities of Tamwoy, Rosehill, Aplin, Waiben and Quarantine on Thursday Island). The following six wards will not be contested in 2016, as the nominated candidate is unopposed: Dauan Island, Masig Island, Ngurapai and Murlag, Saibai, Seisia and Ugar Island.

Figure 4: Torres Strait Regional Authority electoral wards 2016



Public awareness

The AEC conducts a range of public awareness activities to promote knowledge of, and participation in, the electoral process. These include:

- electoral education services to schools, students, teachers and the general public
- public awareness campaigns to help Australians understand and fulfil their electoral obligations
- targeted electoral services that meet the needs of people with disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- information and services that meet the needs of Indigenous Australians.
- assistance to electoral bodies overseas (with the approval of the Minister for Foreign Affairs).

Education services

Outreach and online education

In July 2015 the AEC launched its new *AEC for schools* website, which provides a range of education materials for use in classrooms. The core education outreach program is 'Get Voting', which provides materials for schools to conduct their own election, teaching students about electoral processes through participation.

Key facts for 'Get Voting' for 2015–16 were:

- 18 620 online visitors
- 430 requests for election equipment packs
- school elections for 54 893 students.

We also produced a new print publication, *Voting in Australia*, a concise and simple overview of elections for students and the public. It explores the structure and workings of Australian democracy, particularly voting, in an easy and accessible way. The publication was distributed to primary and secondary schools throughout Australia.

Professional learning for teachers

The AEC delivers training to teachers to help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to teach electoral education in primary and secondary schools. For example, in 2015–16 we held:

- 10 'Voting in the classroom' workshops – 97 participants
- 3 civic education conferences – 80 participants.

In 2016 we also developed an online course for teachers. This module will be available in 2016–17.

National Electoral Education Centre

The National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC) at Old Parliament House in Canberra provides education programs for students visiting the national capital as part of their Civics and Citizenship studies.

During the year we:

- hosted visitors from 149 electoral divisions
- held 2 517 sessions
- had 87 723 participants, of which:
 - 73 505 were primary students
 - 6 451 were secondary students
 - 228 were from other groups
- collected 231 new enrolment forms.

In response to reviews conducted in 2015, parts of the NEEC were updated to modernise its presentation and educational practice. We also added new information to reflect the March 2016 changes to Senate voting.

Community engagement

Community Electoral Education Kit

A new Community Electoral Education Kit was published on the AEC website on 10 May 2016, and received over 2 500 page views in the ensuing two months.

Library voter information sessions

A new pilot voter information program was introduced during the year, in partnership with the Australian Libraries and Information Association, using the Community Electoral Education Kit. The program involved delivering voter information sessions in local libraries. In total 116 sessions were delivered in 64 libraries, in 18 languages.

Voter Information Officers

As part of the public awareness campaign surrounding the March 2016 changes to Senate voting, additional staff (Voting Information Officers) were allocated to each polling place for the 2 July 2016 federal election. Around 9 000 Voter Information Officer kits, including translated materials, were produced and despatched.

Public awareness of electoral obligations

In 2015–16 the AEC's advertising, communication and public relations strategies focused on the 2016 federal election and the 2015 by-elections in Canning and North Sydney.

Leading up to the federal election, AEC public awareness activities were concentrated on the need to inform electors about the significant changes to Senate voting that were passed by Parliament in March 2016.

In addition to the need to inform voters about the reforms to Senate voting, the AEC also delivered phased public awareness activities to ensure that eligible electors were correctly enrolled, understood their voting obligations and were able to cast a formal vote.

In addition a tailored *Our Vote Our Future* campaign was conducted to encourage Indigenous electoral participation (see 'Services for Indigenous Australians' section later in this chapter).

Senate reform and the 2016 federal election

In the months ahead of election day, the AEC conducted a national communication campaign to educate Australian electors on the changes to the Senate voting system.

The Senate campaign combined with the election time communication campaign to provide an integrated approach to all facets of communication with electors about the 2016 federal election.

The campaign was implemented in five phases, incorporating mass media advertising, public relations, media liaison and a national mail-out to all Australians in the weeks prior to election day.

Phase 1: Pre-election education on Senate reform (26 April – 10 May 2016)

The AEC commenced its new advertising campaign, *Your vote will help shape Australia*, on Tuesday 26 April with mass media advertising including television, radio, digital and press placements. The first phase focused on raising awareness of the reforms to Senate voting ahead of the formal election period.

Phases 2–5: Close of Rolls, education on Senate reform, Voter Services and Formality (May–July 2016)

With the announcement of the election on Sunday 8 May, the Close of Rolls phase began, reminding voters of the need to enrol or update their enrolment details by the 23 May deadline.

Following the conclusion of the formal Close of Rolls period, the AEC's campaign swung back to awareness of the Senate voting changes, providing an opportunity to reinforce the importance of this message within the formal electoral period. This phase ran from 29 May – 11 June 2016.

The Voter Services phase began on 15 June following the start of the early voting period, and concluded on 1 July 2016. This phase of the campaign provided information for voters who would be unable to attend a polling place on election day and needed to access alternative voting options.

The final phase of the campaign – Formality – ran in the two weeks prior to election day and focused on providing instructional information to voters on how to complete their House of Representatives and Senate ballot papers to ensure their vote would be counted. The phase also reinforced the importance of understanding the new changes to the Senate voting system.

All campaign phases used a mixture of communication channels and methods, ranging from television, radio, online and press advertising, to community based activities, social media messaging and a national mailout of election material. Advertising materials were also translated in up to 28 languages and 13 Indigenous languages.

Official guide to the 2016 federal election

Delivered to around 10 million households in the weeks prior to election day, the *Official guide to the 2016 federal election* was designed to provide specific information for voters on where, when and how they could vote. Expanded in 2016 to accommodate critical information on the Senate voting changes, the guide was also translated into 27 languages and available in braille, large print, audio and e-text versions.

Public relations and promotions

In 2015–16 the AEC implemented its national media and public relations plan for the 2016 federal election, with activities taking place in all states and territories. A highlight of the period was coverage of the remote mobile polling program. Several film crews and journalists attended a media opportunity organised by the AEC at the remote location of Bulman in the Northern Territory.

Public awareness campaign outcomes

The AEC commissioned market researcher the Wallis Consulting Group to conduct benchmarking and tracking research after each phase of campaign, to ensure the campaign was meeting its objectives.

The research recorded significant increases in understanding how to vote correctly above and below the line on the Senate ballot paper. Understanding for voting above the line increased from 45 per cent awareness before the campaign to 90 per cent after the campaign. The research also confirmed that people who recalled the AEC's communication campaign were more likely to recall the correct way to vote.

By-elections

The AEC implemented an integrated communication approach to the by-elections in Canning and North Sydney in 2015–16. At both events, the AEC provided communication products and services ranging from newspaper advertising to online search facilities, media releases and an official guide addressed and delivered to all voters in each division.

AEC website

The AEC website, www.aec.gov.au, continues to be the main external communication platform of the agency and employs a responsive design to ensure it is usable on a wide range of devices (e.g. desktop computer, tablet and mobile phone).

To support the election, the website's homepage was focused on helping users with enrolment, and in providing information about voting changes. The site complemented the new public awareness campaign (see previous section) and reflected and responded to trending issues from the election contact centre. Visitors could customise the homepage by entering a postcode. The website was also used to update the public on the progress of the count after polling day.

In 2015–16, the website had 9.5 million users, with 70 per cent of these users visiting after the election announcement.

Text-to-speech software was available on all AEC web pages via a 'Listen' button to create an audio version of the content. This new feature enhanced the experience of users with reading difficulties, English as a second language, or a disability.

AEC social media

Social media plays an integral role in the AEC's external communication activities, allowing the agency to quickly distribute messages to the public and respond to enquiries. In 2015–16 the AEC's social media presence included Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

At 30 June 2016 the AEC Facebook page had over 26 000 page likes, the Twitter account over 8 500 followers and the AEC YouTube account over 1 500 subscribers.

The AEC's Twitter account (@AusElectoralCom) was used throughout the 2015–16 financial year to communicate with what is primarily an engaged media audience. In total, we posted 163 tweets during the year. Prior to the start of the 2016 federal election, the account was used to provide information about particularly newsworthy federal electoral matters that included party registration, redistribution processes and financial disclosure. During the 2016 federal election the level of activity on the account increased significantly to proactively communicate key election information to the broader electorate and respond to the increased number of enquiries being received through the channel. Proactive communication via Twitter during the federal election period included contributing to the education campaign on the new Senate voting system.

National online and telephone enquiry services

The agency's online enquiry platform allows members of the public to directly contact the AEC via the [AEC website](#).

The AEC's national telephone service provides information and receives queries from Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm on 13 23 26. The international call number is +61 2 6160 2600. People with hearing or speech impairment can contact the AEC via the National Relay Service, Text Telephone (TTY), Speak and Listen and Internet relay.

During the 2016 federal election the AEC established an election contact centre service which generally operated from 8 am to 8 pm local time seven days a week.

Publications and resources

A range of publications and resources are available at state, territory and local AEC offices. Those available online at the AEC website include corporate publications, handbooks, information reference publications, reports on federal electoral events, and public policy, research and evaluation reports.

A range of information materials were produced to support the changes to Senate voting, including a how-to-vote guide that was translated into 27 languages.

Media relations

Throughout the 2015–16 financial year the AEC interacted with the media both proactively and reactively regarding key electoral issues.

The AEC distributed 56 national media releases with the vast majority of proactive media messaging detailing key activities during by-elections in the divisions of Canning and North Sydney, as well as the 2016 federal election. The AEC also provided detailed information to the media on the redistribution processes underway in 2015 in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia, as well as the publication of political party financial disclosures in early 2016.

The level of regular media enquiries received by the AEC varies greatly depending on the electoral activity underway at the time. During the 2015–16 financial year, enquiries regarding financial disclosure requirements and redistribution processes were frequent. Throughout the 2016 federal election period the agency responded to an average of 120 enquiries per week on a range of election-related topics.

SPOTLIGHT

‘Your vote will help shape Australia’ (‘paper people’) campaign

The *Your vote will help shape Australia* campaign, run by the AEC in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election, showcased our ability to respond rapidly to a changing electoral landscape and to communicate with the Australian community in a timely, informative and effective way.

Before each federal election, the AEC conducts a national advertising campaign to inform voters of their obligations to enrol and vote. In 2016, the amendments to the Senate voting system made educating Australian voters even more critical.

The early election date after the passing of the Senate voting changes by the Parliament meant that the AEC had a limited time available to research and implement a new advertising campaign.

Research

We immediately commissioned formative research to determine voters’ understanding of the changes and participating in a federal election, their information needs and preferred communication channels. The research methodology included:

- a qualitative component via focus groups involving 354 people across seven states and territories in metropolitan, regional and remote locations
- a quantitative component with 1 600 people, including an online and telephone survey.

The research found:

- high awareness of the requirements to enrol to vote, but limited awareness of the deadline for enrolment and updating
- lower awareness of the range of voting options available
- limited understanding about how to vote correctly.

Only one-fifth of Australians were aware of the Senate voting changes.

A powerful piece of paper

Informed by this research, the AEC developed the *Your vote will help shape Australia* campaign, aiming to educate voters about the changes to Senate voting, and maximise enrolment and participation in the 2016 federal election.

The campaign creative theme showcased how powerful a piece of paper can be through the use of dynamic stop-motion animation techniques, and how ordinary Australians can have a voice in shaping Australia by participating in the federal election. Elaborately hand-crafted paper models were animated in-camera to bring to life the power of a humble piece of paper and the possibilities it represented on election day.

This creative approach gave the AEC an opportunity to provide integrated communication imagery and messaging on a national scale. Mass media advertising was combined with dedicated public relations and education activities, social media engagement, and direct communication with community groups. Indigenous Australians and Australians from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were targeted through translated advertising, public relations and direct communication.

Guide to the 2016 federal election

In the weeks prior to election day, every Australian household also received *Your official guide to the 2016 federal election* – a printed publication that included information on how to find your polling place, what to do if you could not make it on election day, and how to correctly complete both ballot papers.

Online presence

The AEC’s online presence was a critical element of the campaign, with all communication driving voters to seek more information on the AEC website. The website aligned with the campaign advertising and each phase of the election. Users could personalise the homepage to show information for their own electoral division.

Social media

The campaign was also implemented in social media, with information flowing through Facebook, Twitter and the AEC’s YouTube account. The campaign featured in Facebook Megaphone, which appeared in all Australian Facebook newsfeeds on election day so that people could share that they were voting and encourage their friends to do likewise.

Tracking the campaign

To track the success of the campaign, the AEC conducted benchmarking and tracking research after each advertising phase. Significant increases were recorded in community understanding of how to vote correctly in the Senate:

- correct responses for understanding of above-the-line rose from 45 per cent to 90 per cent
- correct responses for understanding of below-the-line rose from 40 per cent to 76 per cent.

People who recalled the AEC’s campaign and publicity were more likely to recall the correct way to vote.

By the end of the campaign, 93 per cent of people who had seen or heard the AEC’s campaign believed numbering at least six boxes above the line was valid, compared with 83 per cent for people who hadn’t seen or heard the AEC’s campaign.

In addition, 95 per cent of people were aware of the need to enrol.



Assisting Australians with diverse needs

As voting is compulsory in Australia, the AEC endeavours to meet the needs of a diverse range of people when managing electoral events and preparing information for the public. We use a range of education and communication initiatives for meeting the needs of Australians with disability (such as hearing, sight or communication impairments), people suffering disadvantage (such as homelessness), and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

People with disability

In addition to supporting the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, the agency uses a number of initiatives and outreach activities to improve awareness of, and access to, electoral services.

The AEC held a dedicated information briefing for representatives of peak disability organisations to provide details of the services available to support participation of Australians with disability in the election. The briefing also provided an opportunity for representatives to share and discuss other election-related matters of common interest.

Translation services

The AEC provides a translation service, which is outsourced to the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS). This service can also be accessed through the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Translating and Interpreting Service.

VITS operated 16 dedicated language-specific telephone interpreter information lines and a multilanguage information line. It handled 9 016 calls in 2015–16. A total of 6 521 callers used the translator service to speak directly to AEC staff. The top three languages used were Mandarin (2 942 calls), Cantonese (1 329 calls) and Vietnamese (831 calls).

For new citizens who speak a language other than English, we also provide translated information on our website about enrolment and voting in 26 languages.

Service for voters who have a hearing or speech impairment

The AEC also provides a service for voters who have a hearing or speech impairment. The service is operated by the National Relay Service, which is managed through the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Services for Indigenous Australians

Indigenous Electoral Participation Program

Indigenous Australians are less likely to enrol and vote than other Australians. The AEC's Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) aims to close this gap by increasing electoral knowledge, enrolment, turnout and vote formality levels.

The IEPP is delivered in urban, regional and remote areas by 19 AEC Indigenous Community Engagement Officers, the majority of whom are Indigenous. Under the program, AEC staff work directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their local communities or in partnership with other organisations to deliver electoral services in ways that meet cultural and regional needs.

In 2015–16, IEPP activities included:

- promoting election-time jobs for Indigenous Australians through print, online and face-to-face at Indigenous employment events
- delivering face-to-face training for particular categories of election staff, such as Indigenous Voter Information Officers
- drawing on the rich community knowledge of IEPP staff to support the delivery of remote mobile polling services



Participants at Indigenous Electoral Participation Program staff conference 2016

- providing electoral information sessions at key community events, meetings, conferences and forums to raise awareness of enrolment, voting, vote formality and democratic processes
- raising public awareness for federal, state, and local elections
- contributing to the AEC's Reconciliation Action Plan and cultural awareness training and development of staff.
- 1 499 page likes on the AEC's Indigenous Facebook page. Posts reached 1 440 135 people, with 10 824 people directly engaging with the information.
- Over 50 media reports on Indigenous enrolment and voting services.

Measures of success

Measures of the AEC's successful communication with Indigenous Australians in 2015–16 included:

- Around 3 000 people enrolling online said they were prompted to enrol by the Indigenous 'Our Vote Our Future' campaign. This was an increase of over 200 per cent on those who enrolled in 2014–15 as a result of an AEC Indigenous electoral participation campaign.
- 98 168 views of the AEC's Indigenous website page at www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous, an increase of 40 per cent from 2014–15.

Using technology to support service delivery

The AEC has introduced a new Community and Stakeholder Engagement system (CaSE) which will be a 'one-stop shop' to help staff effectively plan, undertake, evaluate and report on Indigenous community and stakeholder engagement activities. CaSE was completed in June 2016 and is being implemented from 1 July 2016.

A customer relationship management component of the system enables staff to build community profiles – including details of local stakeholders and government and non-government service providers – as a basis for planning and managing community engagement visits.

The system can also be used to support targeted information dissemination and election-related activities at the local level, such as Indigenous election staff recruitment.

A data collection component provides the basis for nationally consistent program reporting, review and evaluation.

Culturally suitable polling places

In 2016, the AEC introduced a new policy to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders the opportunity to give feedback about proposed polling place venues. The policy acknowledges that Indigenous Australians are more likely to attend a polling place and vote if the venue is culturally suitable.

Program staff consulted 181 Indigenous community representatives in areas with significant numbers of Indigenous voters (where 10 per cent or more of eligible electors identified as Indigenous Australians in the 2011 Census).

Feedback received from Indigenous communities was a key consideration during the polling place selection process, along with other factors such as location, size and amenities.

A total of 198 out of 201 polling places in targeted areas were confirmed as culturally suitable.

Strategic partnerships

An AEC priority is to build and foster partnerships with government and non-government agencies to extend the reach and impact of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voters. This is particularly important in remote locations.

In 2015–16, the AEC worked with 1 626 government and non-government stakeholders to improve audience coverage and increase the reach of the IEPP.

The AEC also worked closely with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's new Regional Network to draw on its community presence and resources to more effectively engage with remote communities.

Before the 2016 election the AEC contracted the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide electoral awareness information to DHS Indigenous customers in remote areas, and to help them enrol to vote or update their details in the electoral roll. These services were provided as part of the Department's regular service delivery in remote areas. DHS's capability includes interpreter services and information on client language preferences.

The initiative yielded 1 089 enrolment transactions (386 new enrolments and 703 enrolment updates) prior to the close of rolls on 23 May 2016.

Assistance to overseas electoral management bodies

The AEC undertakes international electoral work in accordance with section 7(1)(fa) of the Electoral Act, in close cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

While the majority of funding for the AEC's international work is provided by DFAT, the AEC also works closely with counterparts in the Asian, Pacific and Southern African regions, and with other providers of international electoral assistance, including the:

- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
- United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
- Commonwealth Secretariat (an intergovernmental organisation of which Australia is a member).

As a member of these five organisations, Australia is also a partner in 'BRIDGE' – the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections modular professional development program. In 2015–16 the BRIDGE partnership commenced an update and consolidation of the BRIDGE modules, which will be launched throughout 2016–17. The program is available online at www.bridge-project.org/en/.

Asia-Pacific

The AEC engages with electoral management bodies in the Asia-Pacific region through the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators network (PIANZEA).

In 2015–16, the AEC provided secretariat services to PIANZEA and provided DFAT-funded electoral support programs in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Myanmar and a number of Pacific Island countries.

Indonesia

In the first three months of 2015–16 the AEC continued to maintain its relationship with Indonesia's three electoral management bodies – the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) and the Indonesian Elections Ethics Council (DKPP) – through participation in the Australia Indonesia Electoral Support Program. The Program ended in September 2015.

In December 2015, the AEC participated in the Indonesian Head of Regional Election Visit Program at the invitation of the KPU. In April 2016, the AEC supported the delivery of BRIDGE 'Inclusion in Electoral Processes' training to KPU staff under a DFAT-funded program managed by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

Timor-Leste

The AEC worked with the electoral management bodies in Timor-Leste – the Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral (STAE) and the Comissão Nacional de Eleições (CNE) – to continue to strengthen electoral capacity.

Papua New Guinea

The AEC's work with the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) through the AEC PNGEC Twinning Program is funded by DFAT until the end of 2016. Under the program, the AEC provides targeted, short-term technical expertise, extending the long-standing arrangement that has seen the AEC assist with Papua New Guinea's electoral system since 2002. We currently provide technical assistance for electoral training.

Autonomous Bougainville Government

In 2015–16, the AEC continued to provide technical assistance to the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC) to support local level elections.

The program was funded by DFAT as part of the broader Australian electoral assistance program in Papua New Guinea.

SPOTLIGHT

Indigenous *Our Vote Our Future* campaign

In 2015–16, the AEC's Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) focused its advertising, communication and public relations activities on the 2016 federal election.

In particular, the AEC's Indigenous campaign sought to ensure that all eligible Indigenous voters were enrolled before the close-of-rolls deadline and understood the changes to the voting system.

A range of tailored Indigenous communications materials were developed around the tagline 'Our Vote Our Future' and through the use of culturally appropriate visual branding. Indigenous Community Engagement Officers distributed materials through the Indigenous press, online, through relevant stakeholder organisations, and in areas with high levels of Indigenous population.

Most notably, the campaign included a series of five video messages produced for Indigenous youth by Indigenous creative agency Carbon Media and disseminated mainly through Facebook and YouTube. The videos featured high profile Indigenous personalities, including Brisbane Broncos footballer Sam Thaiday, AFL star Lewis Jetta, international model Samantha Harris and Madelaine Madden, grand-daughter of Charlie Perkins.

In 2015–16, 3 000 Indigenous Australians enrolling online said they were prompted to enrol as a result of the 'Our Vote Our Future' campaign. This was a significant increase compared with 2014–15, when

around 1 000 said they enrolled as the result of AEC Indigenous electoral participation campaigns.

Indigenous Community Engagement Officer Murray Johnston, who works out of the AEC's Perth office, confirmed that the Indigenous population aged under 25 'is difficult to reach through conventional media'.

'Using positive role models through online communities is an effective way to get young people to pay attention. In my experience Indigenous youth are very enthusiastic about high-profile personalities, particularly when it involves AFL or NRL.'



Lewis Jetta with Murray Johnston, AEC Community Engagement Officer, Perth.

Pacific Island countries

In 2015–16, the AEC provided support to Pacific Island electoral management bodies both through bilateral assistance programs and through provision of support through the PIANZEA network. Activities included:

- providing operational support to the Tonga Electoral Commission in advance of Town and District Offices elections in 2016
- supporting DFAT's electoral observation mission for snap elections in Vanuatu in January 2016
- supporting the development of electoral trainers in the Pacific through a regional 'Train the facilitator' program in August 2015
- supporting a mentoring program for the Fijian Elections Office focused on the Queensland Local Government election in March 2016
- organising a regional conference and workshops on electoral systems and disability issues for members of the PIANZEA network.

Myanmar

The AEC supported delivery of a cascade training program for polling officials in partnership with the Union Election Commission in Myanmar, ahead of historic national elections in November 2015. Together with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), AEC provided training that ultimately reached 81 000 polling station officials running some 41 000 polling stations across the country. International observers commented positively on the quality of polling operations and performance of polling officials on election day.

AEC staff were included in official Australian Government election observation teams that observed the elections in Shan and Kayin State, as well as attending polling in a variety of locations, and observing vote receipt and counting in township offices. The teams contributed to broader international observer reports through the Australian Embassy.

Nepal

The AEC program assisting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) and staff of the Nepalese Electoral Education and Information Centre (EEIC) finished in December 2015. At this point, the EEIC had officially opened, and, with the support of AEC educators, was delivering successful education sessions to students and other visitors. Further, the accreditation of a BRIDGE Facilitator at Accrediting Level provided the ECN with internal capacity to deliver training using their own preferred training approach.

Meetings with international counterparts

In 2015–16, senior AEC staff met with a range of international counterpart organisations. These included the:

- Commonwealth Electoral Network Steering Committee
- Electoral Commission of India
- Elections Canada
- Four Countries Conference (United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia).

Hosting international visitors

In 2015–16 the AEC hosted international study programs, delegations and visitors from Bougainville, Fiji, Korea, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, the United States, Vanuatu and Vietnam.