Formality Strategy Election 2013

Contents

Aim and Context

This Formality Strategy aims to minimise factors within the control of the AEC that lead to unintentional informality at election events.

The strategy sets out a framework which identifies national, state and divisional office interventions to address informality. It recognises that there are communication strategies as well as operational solutions to reduce informality and, as such, is a shared responsibility across business areas in the AEC. However, the Education and Communications Branch, as the area charged with responsibility for the Formality Strategy will take a leading role in shaping and coordinating the activities undertaken and will report on the outcomes.

This Formality Strategy forms one of the three main foci of the AEC's overarching Voter Participation Strategy which addresses:

- enrolment – 95% of eligible Australians are enrolled to vote
- voting – 95% of those enrolled turn out to vote
- formality – 95% of those who vote, do so formally.

The national informality rate for the House of Representatives has been approximately (or fallen well below) 5% over the last several federal elections. However, some electorates, and within them specific polling places, consistently fall well below the 95% formality target. This Strategy aims to improve the formality rate in these more challenging electorates as well as maintaining and improving the national rate.

Objectives

- To provide a clear outline to internal AEC stakeholders of appropriate interventions to address informality.
- To identify a framework for strategic delivery of these interventions to target audiences, aligning them with specific audience needs and circumstances.
- To outline underlying principles which inform formality interventions that remain consistent despite a changing environment.

Scope

An informal ballot paper may be cast by a voter either unintentionally or intentionally. While it is not possible to determine with complete accuracy the intent of the voter, the AEC uses the following to decide categories of informal ballot papers:

- Ballot papers with incomplete numbering, non-sequential numbering, ticks and crosses, and those where the voter can be identified are assumed to be *unintentionally* informal (i.e. it is assumed that all voters with ballots in these categories intended to cast a formal vote).

- All other informal ballot papers (including blank ballots and those with scribbles, slogans and other protest vote marks) are assumed to be intentionally informal (i.e. it is assumed that these voters intended to cast an informal vote).

This paper considers interventions to address the level of *unintentional* informality which, at the 2010 election accounted for a little over half of all informal ballot papers for the House of Representatives. It is known that barriers do exist that prevent some electors from casting a formal vote. If their intention is to vote formally the AEC has responsibility to 'deliver' the franchise to this group.

Strategies to reduce *intentional* informal voting are not included in this paper. Voters who choose to cast their vote in this way will not respond to the same interventions suggested for the above group. For intentional informal voters there may be issues of motivation, disillusionment with the parliamentary system, dissatisfaction with choice of candidates or other personal views that result in an informal ballot. These issues are largely outside the remit of the AEC as they are influenced by the media and public debate, and other factors such as quality of candidates and perceived effectiveness of the parliament. In this case, the individual has fulfilled their electoral responsibility by casting an informal vote, and their right to do so must be respected.

Background

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) described the impact of the current level of informality as:

> In practical terms, the rising level of informality means that more and more people (hundreds of thousands) are turning up at designated polling places (or voting by

post) and lodging ballot papers that then do not count towards the election of their representatives.[1]

Following each federal election for the House of Representatives, the AEC conducts a survey of informal ballot papers from all polling places and declaration vote counts in all divisions in each state and territory. Results from the informal ballot paper survey are publicly released via an AEC Research Report and are used to:

- Report to parliament and to the public on the types of informal voting present at each federal election for the House of Representatives,
- Inform education and communication campaigns and strategies to reduce informal voting at future electoral events, and
- Provide an evidence base to support legislative changes to the electoral system and help to ensure that voters are able to exercise their franchise effectively.

Levels of informality

The survey of informal voting after the 2010 House of Representatives election details the level, type and influences on informality during that election. Some key findings include:

- In the 2010 House of Representatives election, there was a national informality rate of 5.55 per cent. This was the highest informality rate recorded since 1984, and represents a substantial increase from 3.95 per cent recorded at the 2007 House of Representatives election.
- The 10 divisions with the highest rates of informal voting were all in Sydney. Eight of the top 10 informality divisions in 2010 were also in the top 10 for 2007, while nine were in the top 10 for 2004.
- Assumed unintentional informal voting represents a little over half of all informal ballots cast nationally, although this varies between states.
- The rate of assumed unintentional votes cast in the 2010 House of Representatives election was 2.85 per cent of all votes cast, a slight increase from 2007 when 2.47 per cent of all votes cast were assumed to be unintentionally informal. New South Wales and the Northern Territory recorded the highest assumed unintentional informality rate of 4.02 per cent and 3.39 per cent respectively.[2]

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[1]Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Inquiry into the conduct of the 2010 Federal Election and matters related thereto*, p98
[2] Australian Electoral Commission, *Analysis of informal voting House of Representatives, 2010 federal election*, Research Report Number 12, 29 March 2011

Factors affecting assumed unintentional formality rates

The impact of the following factors varies between elections and between different electorates within a single electoral event. Also it must be recognised that all voters have the potential to cast an unintentional formal vote if they are not well informed about the process. However, research over several events has identified that there is a relationship between some specific factors and rates of unintentional formality. These are:

English language proficiency

- Surveys of informal ballots consistently show a direct, statistically significant link between English language proficiency and rates of unintentional informality. Low English language proficiency refers to both native English speakers with low levels of literacy and people for whom English is not a first language.
- Generally, the impact on informality of the other factors described below is exacerbated by low English language proficiency.

Number of candidates

- Analysis of previous years' results indicated that an increase in the number of candidates was positively related to an increase in the proportion of informal votes. Against this trend, despite a decrease in the average number of candidates in 2010, there was an increase in the proportion of informal votes. There is some evidence that a *change* in the number of candidates is a predictor of a change in informality.

Differences in electoral systems

- The 2010 election delivered mixed results. NSW and Queensland who use optional preferential voting in their lower houses had above average informality rates due to incomplete numbering. This replicates the results of 2007. However Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory use partial preferential voting and had below average informality rates with incomplete numbering.
- There were also mixed results among states that allow a tick or cross as a valid first preference. Two of the four states had higher informality rates for ballots with ticks and crosses, while two states had lower rates.
- Proximity to another electoral event, particularly where there is a difference in voting systems, may lead to some confusion and may result in informal ballot being cast. However this relationship has not shown to be strong or consistent over time.

'1 only' how-to-vote (HTV) cards

- The impact of HTVs was investigated during by-elections in 2008 in the Divisions of Lyne and Mayo. A significant positive link was found between candidates who

give out '1 only' HTV cards and receive '1 only' (and therefore informal) votes. However, results are based on a small number of votes and should be treated with caution. Also, other factors may have contributed to voter behaviour during these by-elections (e.g. a major party not fielding a candidate). [3]

■ Surveys conducted to evaluate the formality wave of advertising in the 2007 federal election showed that, after instructions on the ballot paper, the next most popular source of information was how-to-vote cards.[4]

How has informality been addressed to date?

Pilot informality project, Port Adelaide 2004

In this pilot project, electors likely to vote in four identified polling places with high levels of informality received voter education letters in their first language. The results revealed a decrease of informality in targeted polling places, suggesting a positive outcome from this intervention. However the *type* of informality decreased by different amounts in different polling places indicating a need for further refinement of formality messages to target specific language groups.

Formality working party, 2006

A formality working party, chaired by the Electoral Commissioner and drawing its members from national, state/territory and divisional offices was established in mid-2006. First, it analysed AEC research on the causes and risk factors that may lead to increased rates of unintentional informal voting. The working party then determined new initiatives and developed project plans to trial several of these in the upcoming federal election (2007).

Two trial projects were developed and implemented at the 2007 election.

1. Bilingual polling places. A minimum 50% of polling staff who speak one or more of the targeted languages were to be recruited in identified polling places in certain divisions. These staff were provided with translated resource material in appropriate languages.

2. Issuing officer quality assurance. Polling officials were required to give instructions to voters when handing over ballot papers, and given additional face-to-face training on formality during the morning briefing.

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[3] Australian Electoral Commission *Report on By-election Informality Survey Lyne, Gippsland and Mayo By-elections 2008*

[4] Ipsos-Eureka *AEC advertising tracking formality report*, August 2010

A report of findings from research by the Strategic Research and Analysis section suggested a possible relationship between the level of training provided to polling place staff and the level of informality recorded as there were decreases in some of the polling places that delivered additional training. However it is not possible to assign the change in informality to any specific intervention as some polling places implemented multiple informality strategies. It is likely that there are also influences external to these strategies as there was an across-the-board reduction in informality between the 2004 and 2007 federal elections. In order to properly evaluate the benefit of any future interventions, the development of a rigorous evaluation framework is an essential part of the project development.

Despite these inconclusive outcomes for the 2007 trial, the methodology used by the working group provides a useful model for developing and implementing future interventions to address unintentional informality.

2010 formality working party

In the lead up to the 2010 federal election, it was recognised that there was a need to focus on formality strategies. Given that most of the new activities from the 2007 federal election had been incorporated into business as usual (e.g. use of multi-language flipcharts in polling places and the requirement for polling officials issuing ballot papers to provide instructions to all electors on how to complete them correctly), a small cross-branch working group was established to consider whether any new activities should be put in place for the 2010 federal election.

It was agreed to trial a targeted public awareness program directed at the high informality divisions in Western Sydney - the CALD formality workshops

CALD formality workshops 2010

Prior to the 2010 election the AEC engaged Cultural Perspectives to deliver targeted education and awareness interventions to address the high incidence of informality in identified electorates in Western Sydney. Formality workshops were piloted at the 2010 federal election but with a view to defining ongoing interventions for the reduction of informality at future federal elections. Recommendations were made based on the premise that the AEC may continue these activities in-house, rather than through a consultant at future elections.

The final report from Cultural Perspectives [5] summarizes the experience as follows:

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[5] Cultural Perspectives, *Community Education Strategy Addressing Incidence of High Informality Rates in CALD Communities Final Report*, October 2010

Without doubt, from the view of Cultural Perspectives and the targeted communities, the pilot 'how to vote' workshops were an invaluable educative and relationship building tool. Although not supported quantitatively, there would be no hesitation in reporting anecdotally that all workshop participants learnt something new through the workshop context. The vast number of workshops completed in the available time frame (and those that were refused) is testament to the level of demand in communities for this information.

Recommendations from the pilot include:

- Continue to have an AEC presence at workshops both to provide the election expertise and to demonstrate the AEC's commitment to community engagement;
- Consider extending the program to CALD communities in all areas and to mainstream (English-speaking) audiences;
- Including specific electorate information if required such as the current member of parliament, electorate boundaries, enrolment checking;
- Develop electoral education modules that can be rolled out and repeated in 12 month cycles, thereby capturing new audiences, and reinforcing messages to repeat attendees;
- Develop an election ready module that can be employed at short notice.

Communication strategies

It is generally accepted that communication interventions play a significant role in reducing unintentionally informality. After all, the main barrier to voting formally is a lack of understanding of the requirements to complete a ballot that will count. The Education & Communications Branch (and its predecessors) develops communication strategies that first dissect the target audience, develop key messages for audience segments and describe appropriate communications channels to carry these messages. The Branch also develops and distributes communication products to the divisional network, and to media outlets.

There is considerable overlap between communication strategies and operational interventions to address unintentional formality. The *Australian Electoral Commission Formality Strategy 2006-2010*, while primarily a communication strategy document did report on the work of the formality working party (described above) and acknowledged the input of this working party in refining key communication messages. However, it has not been practice in the past to incorporate both communications and operational solutions to unintentional informality into a single strategy.

Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP)

The AEC established the IEPP in 2009-10 to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage in electoral participation. The objectives of the IEPP are to increase the electoral knowledge, enrolment and participation of Indigenous people in the electoral process and decrease levels of informal voting.

Indications are that the IEPP is achieving its objective of decreasing levels of informal voting. For example, a trial of an 'Electoral Awareness Officer' (EAO) Program during the 2010 federal election in Queensland involved the recruitment of 150 temporary Indigenous staff to expand the reach of the IEPP. Informality levels for 2007 and 2010 were compared from 64 polling places where EAOs were employed. The comparison indicated increased levels of enrolment and turnout and reduced informality levels.

The IEPP has trialled a new approach to following up non-voters in the Northern Territory, with non-voters in two communities being offered education sessions. These two communities had the highest turnouts and lowest informality rates in a recent local government election compared to other communities.[6]

The changing environment

While some level of unintentional informality has been a constant feature of elections, the environment in which elections are conducted is constantly changing. Current changes that affect the way in which the AEC delivers the election which may also impact voter behaviour include:

- Moving toward larger work units. This presents an opportunity for strategic allocation of staff dedicated to functions, such as community education. It may also physically remove divisional offices from their electorate which could have a negative impact on forging community relations.
- Election readiness. The need to be 'election ready' throughout the election cycle impacts on business planning and may dictate that community education and other interventions are delivered continuously.
- The schools and community visit program. This is currently under review to encourage more targeted and purposeful community engagement;
- Federal direct update and enrolment. This will shift emphasis from enrolment activity to turnout and formality;
- Vote savings provisions. If adopted, this will reduce levels of unintentional formality without the elector being aware of the change;
- Increased use of social media and electronic technology as the channel for information exchange;

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[6] Australian Electoral Commission IEPP *The Electoral Awareness Officer Program National Strategy* May 2011

- Increased perception (especially among young voters) of irrelevance of parliamentary process.

Stakeholders

Key external stakeholders

- Electors, particularly those from target groups and in divisions with traditionally high levels of informality
- JSCEM
- Special Minister of State and Shadow Special Minister of State
- Members, Senators, candidates, political parties
- Other government agencies that are service providers
- Community groups that represent CALD groups and other target audiences
- Peak bodies representing other groups with identified high informality rates
- State/territory electoral commissions

Key internal stakeholders

- **Education and Communications Branch (ECB)**
  This branch has responsibility for program management of education and public awareness interventions to increase formality, as well as ensuring that clear internal communications are delivered about the formality strategy to the network. Currently, responsibility to develop, coordinate and report on a national formality strategy rests with ECB.

- **AEC executive and Executive Management Group (EMG)**
  The AEC executive and EMG set direction for the organisation and make critical decisions about agency priorities and therefore resource allocation.

- **State/territory managers**
  With intimate knowledge of their own jurisdiction, and responsibility for activity in it, state/territory managers are well placed to tailor the broad strategic formality framework to their specific situations. The active support of formality interventions by state/territory managers is crucial if this activity is to be given appropriate resources.

- **Operations managers**
  Operations managers play a key role in supporting activity undertaken by divisions and are able to provide feedback about grass roots implementation of formality projects.

- **Election Branch (EB)**

  This branch has responsibility for developing and implementing policies to deliver electoral events. Ongoing consultation with ESB is needed in the development of strategies to address informality so they are integrated into election planning and resourcing.

- **People Services Branch (PSB)**

  The PSB is the key contact in any staff management issues related to implementing a formality strategy. Strategies may involve the recruitment of staff with special language or community education skills. Existing roles and work level standards for polling officials may also be reassessed to implement activities directed at reducing informality

- **Strategic Research and Analysis (SRA) section**

  SRA has expertise in analysing patterns of informality and relating this information to demographic characteristics and other variables. This expertise is invaluable in developing a formality strategy that is tailored to specific audiences and circumstances.

Drivers to address informality

As outlined in the *2010–11 Portfolio Budget Statements*, the AEC has one primary outcome for which it is funded, namely:

> Maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services and targeted education and public awareness programs.

Specifically, a report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters stated

> The Committee believes that as part of a system that seeks to maximise participation in the democratic process to elect Australia's representatives, reasonable measures should be taken to help ensure that votes are not wasted. In particular, in cases where it is clear that an eligible voter has attempted to cast a formal vote, but it is informal perhaps due to confusion over what is required to make their vote count.[7]

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[7] Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, *Inquiry into the conduct of the 2010 Federal Election and matters related thereto*, p99

After the 2010 federal election, some local members specifically expressed concern over the level of informality in their electorate, or high pockets of informality in situations as in NT remote area mobile polling (RAMP). It can be expected that this concern has greater urgency when the level of informality rose in comparison to the previous election, as occurred between the 2007 and 2010 federal election.

An actual acceptable level of informality is hard to define when an aspirational target of 100% formality exists. However, 95% is considered an achievable goal. While this is reached in most elections for most electorates, the particular challenge is to achieve it also in those electorates, and in those communities, where informality is much higher. The situation is further complicated by the distinction between intentional and unintentional formality, where it is recognised that only the latter is sensitive to education/information interventions.

The AEC should ensure that electors are provided with accessible, appropriate and relevant material to enable them to cast a valid vote. It should be seeking to limit the number of electors who are 'disenfranchised' due to misunderstanding.

Principles

Some guiding principles to inform program development and delivery to reduce unintentional informality:

- 'Just in time' reinforcement of formality messages is very effective, especially for those who have language or other barriers to absorbing information;
- Sustained community education is valuable for those unfamiliar with the language or culture of our voting system;
- Some interventions are designed as a 'catch-all' with appropriate generic messages that convey a formality information to all electors;
- Other strategies need to be tailored to cater to the demographic profile of the electorate and to take account of other factors such as proximity to other elections or number of candidates;
- Some relevant demographic characteristics are not electorate based e.g. homelessness;
- Some demographic characteristics occur across all electorates and cannot be identified in informality surveys, e.g. age level. However, it can be assumed that first time voters are at risk of being unsure of how to cast a formal ballot.
- Messages to address informality also need to be tailored to cater to particular circumstances, mediums and audiences;

- In tailoring interventions, apply statistical data to the polling place level, if relevant, to ensure actions are evidence-based;
- When applying nationally developed business rules to determine interventions, local knowledge/experience is also brought to bear on decision-making;
- Products and programs developed for a target audience should be tested with that audience and/or with consultants with the appropriate expertise;
- Opportunities for collaboration with state/territory colleagues should be investigated in planning any formality interventions;

Collaboration between electoral commissions

State and territory electoral commissions experience the same underlying causes for informality during their elections. The relationship between high informality and low English language proficiency is documented in several states. The challenges in spreading formality messages to remote Indigenous electors are similar regardless of the level of government for which the election is being held. Confusion between federal, state/territory and local government elections and the different voting methods used in each impacts on formality in all jurisdictions.

In addressing informality, the various electoral bodies commission their own research (often by the same consultant) and implement similar interventions. For example, high informality in CALD communities in both NSW and Victoria is addressed through community workshops and dissemination of translated materials. This is similar to the formality interventions used by the AEC.

While collaboration and excellent relations exist between the AEC's state office staff and some of their state counterparts in community engagement, this is generally not a formalised arrangement. Sharing resources at peak times, joint development of education resources and spreading broader election messages that cover local, state and federal elections is the exception rather than the rule. However, unless a collaborative approach is the basis of community engagement activity, there is duplication of effort and confusion for the target audience.

The IEPP may be the exception to this where state/federal cooperation in some states has been integrated into the program management and delivery. This may prove to be a useful model for collaboration across all community education activity.

The Formality Strategy

Determining the interventions

As previously stated, Education and Communications Branch (ECB) is responsible for developing, coordinating the implementation of, and reporting on the formality strategy. ECB has convened the Formality Implementation Working Group with representation from most states and the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP). This group works closely with the NSW Formality Group which is active in addressing formality issues in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. Several state offices have also developed voter participation strategies for other target audiences - prisoners (Victoria), homeless people (South Australia and Tasmania) and Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) workers (WA). This expert advice has also contributed to the formality interventions described below.

The following sections of this paper consider each of the identified target audiences separately. They describe:

- The target audience description;
- Key messages appropriate for the audience;
- Interventions appropriate for the audience and responsibility for delivery;
- Business rules to trigger an intervention.

Target audience: All electors

Description

All electors have the potential to cast an unintentional informal vote if they are not sufficiently informed. In particular, we know that young people, other first time voters and those returning to voting after an absence are at higher risk of voting informally. Electors who are native English speakers but have low English proficiency also benefit from mainstream formality interventions.

Key messages

Key messages were developed by ECB[8] prior to the 2010 federal election. These are based on AEC and external research, to support the communications strategy to reduce informality prior. They are comprehensive and are tailored to a range of target audiences. They are relevant for whatever intervention is used to reduce informality - communications or operational - although they should be reviewed in the development of specific projects.

All formality messaging, whether communicated through advertising, communications products or by polling officials, needs to be delivered in plain English.

General messages

- Make sure you know how to make your vote count on election day. For information on how to fill out your ballot paper correctly, visit www.aec.gov.au or call the AEC on 13 23 26.
- If you have never voted before, or would like a refresher on how to vote correctly, you can practise voting at the AEC website. Go to www.aec.gov.au for more information.
- On election day you will receive two ballot papers: a green one for the House of Representatives and a white one for the Senate.
- When completing your ballot papers on election day, pay careful attention and read the instructions on the ballot papers on how to vote correctly.
- You can ask a polling official for assistance if you need help completing your ballot paper.
- Don't worry if you make a mistake, just ask a polling official for another ballot paper and start again.
- The AEC has information available in different languages to help you get it right
- The Australian federal voting system may be different to what you have been used to.

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[8] Australian Electoral Commission, *Draft Communication Strategy Formality 2010*, June 2010

The green House of Representatives ballot paper:

- To correctly complete the green House of Representatives ballot paper, you put a '1' in the box beside the candidate who is your first choice, a '2' in the box beside your second choice candidate and so on until you have numbered every box.
- You must number every box on the green ballot paper for your vote to count

The white Senate ballot paper:

- To correctly complete the white Senate ballot paper, you have a choice of two ways to vote, either:
  - Above the line – in the section above the line you can just place a '1' in the box for the party or group of your choice; or
  - Below the line – in the section below the line you must fill in every box in the order of your preference

Interventions

Category	Description of Activity
Campaign advertising	- Television advertising (free to air and subscription) - Online advertising including online TV, social media and website advertising - Newspaper advertising - Magazine advertising
Formality products	*Make your vote count* formality poster (A1) *How to vote* fact sheet (on AEC website) *How to vote* practice tool (on AEC website)
Operational interventions	- Formality training for OICs and through them to all polling officials stressing importance of giving information to enable electors to exercise their franchise - Voter assistance given by issuing officers and inquiry officers
Education	- National Electoral Education Centre delivers electoral education sessions in preferential voting for House of Representatives and Senate and for voting in a Referendum. Approx. 90,000 future electors attend annually *Get Voting* schools program encourages school students, as future electors, to understand and appreciate the electoral process.

Target audience: Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) electors

Description

CALD electors are scattered throughout all electorates, but there are identified pockets of high CALD areas which have a significant impact on levels of informality. CALD communities may have a lower than average English language proficiency and may lack familiarity with the Australian democratic system and how to vote at federal elections.

Key messages

Generic key messages outlined above for the 'All electors' also apply to CALD audiences. However there are additional messages relevant to this group:

- If you need help just ask, assistance is available.
- You can bring someone to help you complete your ballot, just tell a polling official when you arrive at the polling place.
- The AEC has information available in different languages to help you get it right.

Interventions

Category	Description
Voter Information Officer	Additional polling official with specific function to engage with CALD electors to reinforce formality messages at the PP. They are clearly branded as AEC polling officials, their language skills identified and they are equipped with translated materials and practice ballot papers
Bilingual polling officials	Bi-lingual polling officials are recruited to assist CALD voters in the polling place, their language skills identified.
Additional polling officials	Additional FT inquiry officer(s) (and certified lists) to assist voters in PP with high informality without a specific CALD group identified.
Additional formality products	*How to Vote* flipchart – formality message translated into 26 languages *Make your vote count* formality poster (A1) English *Make your vote count* formality poster (A1) top three CALD languages in PP *Make your vote count* formality handouts (A4) Translated - Formality messages in English plus 'top 3' CALD languages in the PP on voting screens
Advertising	- Press advertising - TV advertising
Online resources	These resources are available to all on a self-serve basis. Divisions look for local opportunities to promote their existence to CALD

Category	Description
	communities: • Translated *How to Vote* fact sheet • Translated *Official Guide*
Printed resources	Translated formality materials may be packaged up as kits for dissemination to CALD groups.
OIC training	A sheet identifying key CALD languages, the role of the VIO and translated materials available in each PP.
External stakeholder briefings	• Party worker briefing with information on formality interventions and the role of the VIO at the PP • Candidate information sessions include briefing on formality interventions and the role of the VIO at the PP
Community workshops	Bilingual community engagement officers/educators engaged to deliver formality workshops in selected high CALD/high informality electorates

Target audience: Indigenous electors

Description

Indigenous Australians in urban, rural and remote settings are the target audience. Delivered under the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) the formality interventions discussed cover both eligible and future electors. It is estimated that Indigenous Australians are three times more likely to vote informally than other electors.

Key messages

Generic key messages outlined above for the 'All electors' also apply to Indigenous audiences. However there are additional messages relevant to this group:

- If you need help just ask, assistance is available;
- You can bring someone to help you complete your ballot, just tell a polling official when you arrive at the polling place;

Interventions

Category	Description
Voter Information Officer	Additional polling official with specific function to engage with Indigenous electors to reinforce formality messages at the PP. They are clearly branded as AEC polling officials and they are equipped with translated materials and practice ballot papers.
Indigenous polling officials	Indigenous polling officials are recruited to assist Indigenous voters in the polling place.
Additional polling officials	Additional FT inquiry officer(s) (and certified lists) to assist voters in PP with high informality with significant Indigenous electors
Electoral Awareness Officers	Irregular/intermittent APS employees who work throughout the election cycle in Indigenous communities to increase voter participation, including formality.
Community electoral education workshops	Formality module is included in the curriculum for ongoing community electoral education workshops delivered to Indigenous audiences.
Additional formality products	These products are developed for Indigenous audiences and translated into Indigenous languages and are appropriate for a range of settings • *Vote. It's important* DVD • Formality loop DVD • *Make your vote count* formality handouts (A4) Translated • Formality messages in English plus relevant Indigenous languages in the PP in voting screens

Target audience: Homeless electors

Description

Three categories of homelessness are generally accepted within the sector:

- Primary homelessness – people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter;
- Secondary homelessness - people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. It covers people using emergency accommodation such as hostels, night shelters, youth refuges; people residing temporarily with other families or those using boarding houses on an occasional basis
- Tertiary homelessness – people who live in boarding houses on medium to long term basis; those who do not have security of tenure provided by a lease.

Recent changes to the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, better accommodate itinerant electors and allow for mobile polling at sites where people experiencing homelessness are supported. The changes aim to increase enrolment and turnout rates for these electors. However, formality is still a challenge as this group is more likely to have low English proficiency and less likely to have access to mainstream formality messaging.

Key messages

As for 'All Electors'

Interventions

Category	Description
Stakeholder consultation – national level	Develop a relationship with national peak bodies and cross agency reference groups that service homeless people by direct contact, attendance at national forums etc. Encourage filtering down of this relationship to state level.
Stakeholder consultation – state level	Develop relationships with state-based peak agencies and service providers. Identify key staff who can act as the intermediary between clients and the AEC
Collaboration with state electoral commissions	Understand the work that state electoral commissions are doing in this sector so there isn't duplication and confusion for the clients. Share contacts and resources.
Training package	Training kit comprising speaking notes and background materials for divisional staff to use with service providers to resource them to deliver formality messages to their clients.
Information pack	Packs of formality materials comprising posters, PowerPoint presentations and handouts that can be used by service providers to deliver formality messages to their clients. Include 'easy ready' versions of formality messages.

The interventions for this client group are delivered by an intermediary rather than by initiating contact directly with the audience. While homelessness is experienced throughout the country it is prevalent in some areas where agencies providing support services are also concentrated.

Target audience: Prisoner electors

Description

Prisoners who are serving a custodial sentence of less than three years are eligible to enrol and vote. Those who are serving a custodial sentence of more than three years stay on the roll (if already enrolled), but cannot enrol or vote.

Key messages

As for 'All Electors'

Interventions

Category	Description
Stakeholder consultation – state level	Work with relevant state/territory departments of correctional services to develop formal agreements that clearly outline the access to correctional facilities that the AEC can expect, both at election time and throughout the election cycle. Access conditions may vary between centres and these have to be detailed.
Stakeholder consultation – local level	Build local relationships with correctional service facility managers and prisoner support services e.g. Offender's Aid, Justice Action, to determine the most appropriate way to deliver formality messages.
Collaboration with state electoral commissions	Understand the work that state electoral commissions are doing in this sector so there isn't duplication and confusion for the clients. Share contacts and resources.
Training package	Training kit comprising speaking notes and background materials for divisional staff to use with service providers to resource them to deliver formality messages to their clients.
Information pack	Packs of formality materials comprising posters, PowerPoint presentations and handouts that can be used by service providers to deliver formality messages to their clients. Include 'easy ready' versions of formality messages.

The interventions for this client group may be delivered directly by the AEC or by an intermediary. Individual circumstances will determine the best approach in each situation.

Target audience: 'Fly-In, Fly-Out' (FIFO) electors

Description

The FIFO workforce is employed on a rotating roster arrangement working a specific timeframe on site, interwoven with periods back home. The workforce predominantly travels to and from site by domestic or charter aircraft. The majority of FIFO workers are employed from their home state capital although some travel interstate.

A conservative industry estimate for Western Australia puts the number of FIFO workers at 50,000 (Feb 2013).

Key messages

As for 'All Electors'

Interventions

Category	Description
Stakeholder consultation – local level	Build local relationships with mine managers and accommodation contractors to determine how to deliver formality messages to this group, e.g. formality posters in common areas, link to formality practice tool from FIFO support websites.

Reporting and evaluation

Education and Communications Branch, in consultation with others as necessary, is responsible for the timely analysis and reporting on formality outcomes. Post-election evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the AEC's usual evaluation processes.

Evaluation of any specific intervention and its impact on behaviour change is difficult as there are many factors that could cause a voter to intentionally or unintentionally cast an informal vote, including factors over which the AEC has no influence, and such factors vary from election to election. Largely, it impossible to accurately quantify or even separately identify the impact these factors might have. This makes evaluating and assigning an impact to a particular strategy very difficult. The level of informality that would have resulted from no action at all being taken can never be measured.