

DIVISION OF FORREST SENATE RECOUNT PROCESS

Neville White (Forrest APS3) and 4 temporary staff (who were senate fresh scrutiny checkers) commenced packing Forrest senate ballot papers on Monday 14 October 2013.

The packing process took place in one room of the Forrest offsite premises with the parcels of ballot papers retrieved from their allocated polling place station to the central packing area.

Packing was conducted on a polling place by polling place basis in alphabetical name order.

Ballot papers were extracted from their original labelled plastic bag parcel and packed into senate ballot paper cartons with cover cards intact. Cartons were then sealed with AEC security tape with the polling place name handwritten onto the carton along with the number of cartons for the polling place (where multiple cartons were required). A label describing the name and contents was then affixed to the carton.

The empty original plastic bag packaging was retained in a separate area of the same room.

Once the cartons were packed and completed they were stored against the wall of the packaging room.

Once all polling places had been packed and the total number of cartons established (180), the cartons were then transferred through a connecting door to the building foyer area and placed on two separate pallets and shrink wrapped by Toll Ipec staff. When this task was completed the pallets were loaded onto the truck on Wednesday 16 October 2013 for delivery to the AEC warehouse.

After collection by the courier there were no live senate ballot paper cartons remaining in the central packing area or the building foyer area.

The two shrink wrapped pallets were collected from the AEC warehouse on 24 October 2013 and delivered to the recount centre where they were stored in the receiving bay of the building.

The actual recount of the Forrest senate ballot papers commenced on Saturday 26 October 2013. Shortly after the commencement of the recount a discrepancy was identified in regard to the Bunbury East polling place wherein boxes marked 2 of 7, 3 of 7, 4 of 7, 5 of 7, 6 of 7 and 7 of 7 were located but 1 of 7 appeared to be missing. As a result ballot papers for groups H (0), J (1), K (3), L (6), M (2), N (11), O (1), P (0), Q (3), S (112), T (12) and Informal (80) were not accounted for.

It was decided to progress with the recount and continue to monitor that the polling place recount figure balanced with the anticipated vote figure stated on the tally sheet for each polling place. At the completion of the recount all polling place anticipated and recount figures were reported to have balanced out indicating that there had been no extra ballot papers inadvertently amalgamated with another polling place to warrant a sizable discrepancy.

On Sunday 27 October 2013 Ian Butcher (DRO Forrest) conducted a comprehensive search of the Forrest offsite premises building but found neither the missing 1 of 7 carton nor any individual / group senate ballot papers that may have been inadvertently left behind.

It should be noted that all empty original packaging plastic bags, rubbish and waste accumulated throughout the packing process has not been removed from the building so the notion of the missing carton and/or ballot papers being accidentally placed into a skip bin and taken away is not feasible. Indeed the DRO search on Sunday included going through every empty plastic bag, box and bin in the building.

DRO has also been advised that a search of Forrest's unused senate ballot papers and their HofR's ballot papers stored at the AEC warehouse has been undertaken and given the all clear.

In summary, my view is that there is little evidence to suggest that the missing 1 of 7 carton was not included with the 180 cartons collected by Toll Ipec. The question of how or why the carton was missing at the recount centre remains unanswered.

Ian Butcher

DRO Forrest

29 October 2013