

Australian Electoral Commission

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

AEC RESPONSES TO JSCEM HEARINGS OF 18 NOVEMBER 1996

Canberra

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1. Preamble

1.1 This supplementary submission by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) in response to its "Inquiry into the 1996 Federal Election", as advertised on Saturday 22 June 1996 in all major newspapers. The submission is supplementary to the major AEC submission, "The Conduct of the 1996 Federal Election", presented to the JSCEM on 29 July 1996 (submission No 30).

1.2 The AEC has already presented the JSCEM with 15 submissions (Nos 30, 77, 78, 79, 80, 84, 90, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 108 and 109) and this submission is in response to queries raised at and after the JSCEM public hearing involving Mr Daryl Melham MP and the AEC on 18 November 1996.

2. Questions Arising from JSCEM Hearings of 18 November

2.1 Cwlth/Northern Territory Joint Roll Arrangements

On page EM 386 of the proof transcript Senator Conroy asked for details on the Commonwealth/Northern Territory Joint Roll Arrangement.

2.1.1 At Attachment A is copy of the 1989 Joint Roll Arrangement and the more recent 1995 Joint Roll Arrangement.

2.2 Objection Action 1993-1996

On page EM 395 of the proof transcript Senator Minchin asked for statistics on objection action between 1993 and 1996.

2.2.1 Table 1: Enrolment Transactions 1993-1996 by State/Territory (Period from Close of Rolls 1993 Federal Election to Close of Rolls 1996 Federal Election)

Transaction Type	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
New Enrolments	389 657	275 850	180 120	104 843	24 067	21 591	18 427
Reinstatements	23 559	8 455	4 297	3 963	1 216	1 894	625
Re-enrolments	154 296	62 757	56 093	25 163	10 849	7 623	7 253
Transfers In- Intrastate - Interstate	621 195 104 624	445 042 57 437	349 862 125 902	183 429 33 186	32 487 13 371	19 072 26 448	0 16 274
Objection Deletions	370 278	286 143	161 924	95 482	32 736	23 520	20 329
Death Deletions	110 758	74 114	49 880	23 835	9 803	2 768	1 863
Duplication Deletions	12 863	7 840	5 747	3 839	592	462	1 073
Transfers Out - Intrastate Interstate	490 648 99 930	349 811 72 261	302 488 58 977	155 706 21 962	25 866 12 259	15 066 22 091	0 12 687

Note: The same statistical breakup is not available for South Australia as enrolment data is processed using the South Australian EAGLE system not the AEC's Roll Management System (RMANS). The following enrolment transaction summary therefore applies:

Enrolments	122 720
Transfers	169 547
Amendments	181 621
Objections	89 825
Deaths	28 686
Miscellaneous Deletions	3 223
Interstate Transfers	26 316

2.3 Access to Roll Information by MPs

On page EM 398 of the proof transcript Senator Minchin and Mr McDougall asked for information on access by States and Territories Members of Parliament to private roll information such as date of birth, occupation and gender.

2.3.1 The following information has been provided by the relevant State/Territory electoral authorities:

New South Wales: The public roll provides **name, address, gender and occupation**, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

Victoria: The public roll provides **name and address** only, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

Queensland: The public roll provides **name and address** only. Private roll information including **date of birth, gender and occupation** is provided free to candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate, and to political parties at a fee.

Western Australia: The public roll provides **name, address, gender and occupation**, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

South Australia: The public roll provides **name and address** only, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

Tasmania: The public roll provides **name and address** only, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

Northern Territory: The public roll provides **name, address, gender and occupation**, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

Australian Capital Territory: The public roll provides **name and address** only, and this information is provided to political parties, candidates and Members of Parliament by electorate.

On 21 November the JSCEM Secretariat conveyed a further question from Mr Cobb asking for advice on the current availability, to MPs and others, of gender information collected by the AEC (or the legislative amendments needed to make such information available to MPs).

2.3.2 Section 91(9) of the CEA prohibits the release of gender, date of birth, or occupation information on electors unless specifically authorised. Section 91(10) authorises the release of such information to prescribed authorities, defined in section 91(11) as Commonwealth Government Departments and Agencies, and listed in the Electoral and Referendum Regulations.

2.3.3 Sections 91 and 91A provide generally that Members, Senators and political parties, and other organisations as considered appropriate, may receive Roll information, and this is defined in section 83 as name and address information only. The only “other organisations” which currently obtain Roll information are approved medical researchers and health screening surveyors.

2.3.4 The Electoral and Referendum Amendment Bill 1995 contained a proposed amendment to section 91 which was intended to allow the provision of gender information to Members, Senators and registered political parties, as well as to medical researchers, and for the purposes of health screening surveys. The Bill did not receive passage before the Parliament was prorogued for the 1996 federal election. A copy of the proposed amendments is at Attachment B.

2.4 Information Collection and Data-Matching

On page EM 412 Mr Cobb asked for specific recommendations on amending section 92(1) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (CEA) to empower the AEC to collect information relevant to the maintenance of the Commonwealth Electoral Roll.

2.4.1 Section 92(1) of the CEA, which has remained substantially unchanged since 1902, reads as follows:

All officers in the service of the Commonwealth, all police, statistical, and electoral officers in the service of any State, officers in the service of any local governing body, and all occupiers of habitations shall upon application furnish to the Electoral Commission or to any officer acting under its direction all such information as the Electoral Commission requires in connexion with the preparation, maintenance and revisions of the Rolls.

2.4.2 In the intervening years there have been considerable developments in the mechanics of information collection, analysis and transfer, and considerable developments in the law in relation to privacy and freedom of information, making it most unlikely that this provision would provide a sufficient legal underpinning for expanded data-matching of personal elector data with external databases.

2.4.3 At page 6 of the AEC submission No 98 of 23 October 1996, entitled "Enrolment and Voter Identification", the following was concluded:

There is merit in the expansion of matching personal elector data with external databases, provided that the relevant technical and statutory issues can be resolved.

2.4.4 However, the AEC also concluded that any substantial changes to current arrangements would have to be preceded by thorough feasibility studies. Such a feasibility study, focussed on developing an upgraded data-matching environment for the AEC, would include a comprehensive examination of legislative amendments that might be necessary in the CEA and other statutes in order to support data-matching.

It is recommended that the JSCEM endorse the conduct by the AEC, in cooperation with other relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory departments and agencies, of a feasibility study, identifying costs, benefits, modalities of implementation, and requirements for legislative amendments, of the following options for the expanded matching of enrolment data in order to enhance the integrity of the rolls:

(a) manual provision of data in response to requests for information relating to individual enrolments;

(b) bulk comparison of data held by the AEC and other departments and agencies;

(c) on-line connections between the AEC's RMANS system and the computer systems of other departments and agencies, enabling validation of data as an enrolment form is entered onto the system; and

(d) such other options as may appear as a result of the study to be viable.

2.5 Itinerant Enrolments 1993-1996 by Division

On 21 November the JSCEM Secretariat conveyed a further question from Mr Cobb asking for itinerant enrolments by Division.

2.5.1 Table 2: Itinerant Enrolments 1993-1996 by Division

New South Wales	1993	1996	Victoria	1993	1996
Banks	7	4	Aston	17	17
Barton	6	8	Ballarat	20	34
Bennelong	10	8	Batman	5	8
Berowra	6	7	Bendigo	42	53
Blaxland	0	1	Bruce	2	8
Bradfield	10	6	Burke	3	9
Calare	16	17	Calwell	1	2
Charlton	9	10	Casey	8	10
Chifley	4	7	Chisholm	10	4
Cook	9	13	Corangamite	24	22
Cowper	8	15	Corinella	13	0
Cunningham	5	6	Corio	15	12
Dobell	8	2	Deakin	12	14
Eden-Monaro	14	22	Dunkley	16	12
Farrer	9	12	Flinders	19	26
Fowler	5	4	Gellibrand	9	8
Gilmore	17	19	Gippsland	34	45
Grayndler	4	3	Goldstein	12	13
Greenaway	2	3	Higgins	17	21
Gwydir	12	16	Holt	6	8
Hughes	4	10	Hotham	12	10
Hume	15	13	Indi	8	9
Hunter	3	7	Isaacs	8	14
Kingsford Smith	3	5	Jagajaga	1	6
Lindsay	15	26	Kooyong	4	6
Lowe	3	7	Lalor	2	2
Lyne	10	13	Latrobe	20	11
MacArthur	8	7	McEwan	6	9
Mackellar	12	8	McMillan	11	16
Macquarie	11	7	Mallee	16	13
Mitchell	0	3	Maribyrnong	1	4
Newcastle	3	2	Melbourne	7	15
New England	7	8	Melbourne Ports	9	10
North Sydney	6	6	Menzies	4	6
Page	12	17	Murray	42	43
Parkes	11	16	Scullin	7	5
Parramatta	8	7	Wannon	17	19
Paterson	9	10	Wills	7	7
Prospect	1	3	STATE TOTAL	467	531
Reid	4	10			

Richmond	21	29
Riverina	3	7
Robertson	6	6
Shortland	3	0
Sydney	7	15
Throsby	7	2
Warringham	2	3
Watson	9	5
Wentworth	7	5
Werriwa	4	2
STATE TOTAL	375	442

Queensland		
Bowman	29	24
Brisbane	10	12
Capricornia	8	8
Dawson	8	15
Dickson	14	13
Fadden	12	18
Fairfax	23	25
Fisher	24	23
Forde	11	14
Griffith	6	17
Groom	9	6
Herbert	26	19
Hinkler	26	33
Kennedy	26	20
Leichhardt	14	5
Lilley	8	4
Longman	0	21
McPherson	13	24
Maranoa	18	22
Moncrief	26	33
Moreton	12	12
Oxley	14	12
Petrie	7	15
Rankin	3	5
Ryan	4	4
Wide Bay	20	37
STATE TOTAL	371	441

NT	36	45
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NATIONAL TOTAL	1734	1970

Western Australia		
Brand	7	8
Canning	13	17
Cowan	6	9
Curtin	9	6
Forrest	20	22
Fremantle	4	7
Kalgoorlie	32	36
Moore	12	13
O'Connor	12	12
Pearce	17	24
Perth	11	7
Stirling	10	12
Swan	21	16
Tangney	15	10
STATE TOTAL	189	199

South Australia		
Adelaide	5	10
Barker	31	18
Bonython	6	7
Boothby	14	14
Grey	23	27
Hindmarsh	16	11
Kingston	26	28
Makin	14	12
Mayo	17	23
Port Adelaide	7	11
Sturt	15	12
Wakefield	29	29
STATE TOTAL	203	202

ACT		
Canberra	15	24
Fraser	19	15
Namadgi	0	8
STATE TOTAL	34	47

Tasmania		
Bass	1	9
Braddon	34	16
Denison	9	12
Franklin	9	11
Lyon	6	15
STATE TOTAL	59	63

2.6 Postal Vote Envelopes Not Returned

On 21 November the JSCEM Secretariat conveyed a further question from Mr Cobb asking what procedures if any the AEC has for following up postal vote envelopes not returned.

2.6.1 The AEC has no special procedures for ensuring the return of postal vote envelopes containing ballot papers. Voters may forget or decide not to return their votes, and some envelopes may be lost in the post. However, all postal non-voters are detected through normal scanning procedures and are followed up as for any other non-voter.