



**Hon BOB KATTER MP**  
**Member for Kennedy**



Innisfail Office  
 5 May 2005



Dr Sarah Miskin  
 Inquiry Secretary  
 Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
 Parliament House  
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	
Submission No.	163
Date Received	5-5-2005
Secretary	<i>[Signature]</i>

Dear Dr Miskin

Further to my attendance at the Inquiry on Electoral Matters in Ingham on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April I enclose copies of the documents requested by members of the Committee.

To clear up any misunderstanding which may exist, I confirm that I am aware that Minter Ellison is the law firm which did the review of the postal vote administration.

As I reported to you, I had to leave the Inquiry before its completion as I had to return to work. Another staff member works until 3pm so my commitment was to be back in our Innisfail office by this time. This is 2 hours driving time north of Ingham. If my scheduled time for appearance had taken place at 9.45am instead of the 11.15am, there would have been no problem for me to stay for the full hearing, however, as you know, this did not happen.

I would like you to pass my apologies on to Mr Tony Smith MP, Chair and Mr Michael Danby MP, Deputy Chair, as I could not do this myself because the second session was already in progress.

Yours sincerely

*Helen Fuller*

Helen Fuller  
 Chief Electorate Officer  
 Office of Hon Bob KATTER MP

Enc

**west . gulf . coast . tablelands**

**Representing**

ABERGOWRIE ALICE RIVER ALLINGHAM ALMOND ACONISA ATHERTON BAEBINDA BALEFS CREEK BALGAL BEACH BAMBAROO BARTLE FRERE BELLENDEN KER BENEVSIDE BROOCHRA BURNANA SINGL BAY BLACK RIVER BLACKCROCK BLUEWATER BONLEVILLE BOOGAN BOULIA BRAMSTON BEACH BURKETOWN BUSHLAND BEACH CAMDOWAN CARDWELL CHARRINGA CHARTERS TOWERS CHILLAGOE CLOHESY RIVER CONCURRY CLUMP POINT COQUETTE POINT CORDE LA CORPFIELD COWLEY CROCODON CRYSTAL CREEK DALARRA DARADGEE DEERADUN DEERAL DUMBULLA DOGMADGEE DUCHES DUNK ISLAND EAST PALMERSTON EINALSLEIGH ELARSH ETTY BAY EURAMO FRYMONT CENTRAL EVAN FELLGA FLYING FISH POINT FORREST BEACH FORGARTH GARRADJINGA GEORGETOWN GORDONVALE GREENVALE GREGORY DOWNS GUNPOWDER GUNUNA HALFAX HERBERTON HERVEY RANGE HODGEN VALLEY HUG BARRICK ISLAND HOMESTEAD HUGHENDEN HULL HEADS INGHAM INNISFAIL KIMPTON HOT SPRINGS IVYDEAN JALLOINDA JIPPOONVALE JARRA CREEK JENSEN JIMBUN JULIA CREEK KARRI KAJABE KARAWA KENNEDY KIDSTON KURRAM BEACH KYNUNA LANNERCESS LITTLE MULLGRAVE LOWER TULLY LILCINDA MCKINLAY MACINNADIE MALANDA MARFEE MAXWELLTON MENA CREEK MIDDLETON NELLA MALLAA MILSTREAN NINGELA WIRNANA MISSION BEACH MISSION BEACH SOUTH VORESBY MORNINGTON ISLAND MOUNT GARNET MOUNT ISA MOUNT SURPRISE MOURILVAN MUNGO MURRAY UPPER MUTARNEE MUTCH-LBA NELIA NERADA NONDA NORMANTON PALLARA PERRAMON PENTLAND PETTICO PRAIRIE RAVENSHOE RAVENSWOOD RICHMOND ROLLINGSTONE RUPERTSWOOD SALMOERS BEACH SELLHEIM SELWYN SILKWOOD SUNKY OAK SILVER VALLEY SOUTH JOHNSTONE STAMFORD TARZAL TAYLORS BEACH TAMBURRA TINAROO TOLGA TOOBANNA TOOLAKEA TOOMULLA TORRENS CREEK TREDONNE TULLY TULLY HEADS YUMULIN UPPER STONE URANDANGI VICTORIA ESTATE VINE CREEK WALKAMIN WANGAN WONDECLA WONGALING BEACH YUNGABURRA

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**Local Call 1300 301 942**

**Dunn, Peter (R. Katter, MP)**

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**From:** Dunn, Peter (R. Katter, MP)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 6 October 2004 5:19 PM  
**To:** 'anne.bright@aec.gov.au'  
**Subject:** Postal votes

Anne,

Further to our telephone conversations this morning I advise that this office is still receiving advice that postal voters have not taken delivery their postal votes and are very concerned that they will not be able to vote in the election. I appreciate your advice that you have instructed that the balance of Greenvale votes not already reissued will be reissued today, and that special arrangements have been made with Australia Post to accommodate late returns. We understand that a similar situation exists at Burketown and I reiterate the request from Mr. Katter that a mobile booth be given urgent consideration. We have complaints that voters are being told, as a solution, to drive to Cairns (over 500km in one case) to vote, or to plead, when the fine arrives, that voting papers didn't arrive in time. We are gaining an impression that the number of postal votes not accounted for is significant, and we understand that an entire batch was misdirected. Mr. Katter supports the opinion of the affected voters that they should have the opportunity to vote, no matter what is required to be done to ensure that. Could you please keep this office informed of steps being taken to address this problem so that we may respond to constituents when they contact us. Thank you for your assistance.  
Peter Dunn.

# Hon Bob Katter MP

ATTACHMENT C

## Member for Kennedy



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TO: Anne Bright  
FAX NO: 3831 7223  
ATTENTION: Anne Australian Electoral Officer for Queensland  
FROM: Lynette Moyle @ Office of Hon Bob KATTER MP  
FAX NO: 07 40 616566 PH NO: 07 40616066  
DATE: 6 October 2004  
NO OF PAGES: 1

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Dear Anne

Regarding the Postal Vote Fiasco.

- Burke Shire has received very few postal ballot papers and does not have a polling booth. I have just had info from Octavian that they are driving to Burketown tomorrow.
- The NT has a mobile van travelling across the Electorate, why not Queensland?
- The folk of Gregory Downs have not received their ballot papers either and were told to drive to Cloncurry. It is a 670km round trip of seven hours.
- Seven hours to get the right to vote because they live at Gregory Downs in North West Queensland. This is 2004 and it is Australia.
- The situation in Kennedy is desperate. We have made representation to the Prime Ministers Office by phone and email.

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Toll Free 1800 810 519

How is the AEC going to provide the opportunity for all the folk who have missed out to cast their vote, or do they have to wait three years?

Thank you for your attention to this matter before Saturday 9 October 2004.

Yours sincerely

*fr.* Hon Bob KATTER MP

Member for Kennedy

Lynette Moyle



Electorate Officer

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**Moyle, Lynette (R. Katter, MP)**

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**To:** Howard, John (MP); Howard, John (MP) Electorate Office  
**Subject:** NO- Postal Votes for Kennedy

Dear Prime Minister

We petition you to allow the population of North West Queensland to be able to cast their vote in the Australian Election October 9 2004. We have further reliable information that the Burke Shire has had very few postal votes arrive for electors to cast their vote. Maybe there are not enough people in rural and remote Australia to care about but it is their right to vote in this democratic country. We have phoned your office today and the calls on this issue are consuming two thirds of our day.

What is the AEC going to do to allow the voters who have not received their postal vote ballot papers to cast their vote on Saturday. This needs immediate attention. Please do not disregard this email. We are making representation on behalf of Australians that seem to have had their rights taken from them. How would we be if we had to drive 700kms to cast a vote. This is not South Africa.

We know that you Prime Minister believe in the right for all Australians to make their own decisions concerning the Election of the next Government. In the postal vote fiasco it has been removed.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Yours sincerely

Lynette Moyle

Electorate Officer

Office of Hon Bob KATTER MP

PO Box 1638 Innisfail Qld 4860

Lynette.moyle@aph.gov.au

PH 07 40616066



## FACSIMILE MESSAGE

5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
488 Queen Street  
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GPO Box 2590  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

ABN 21 133 285 851

To: Hon Bob Katter MP  
Member for Kennedy

From: Anne Bright  
AEO Qld

Attention: Lynette Moyle

Telephone: (07) 3834 3440

Fax No: 07 4061 6566

Fax No: (07) 3831 7223

Number of Pages 1

Date: 7 October 2004

**SUBJECT: Postal Voting**  
**Ref: Q04/76**

Hon Bob Katter

I refer to your facsimile received in my office at 17:24pm this afternoon and wish to advise that revised arrangements have been put in place for an AEC officer who is travelling to Doomadgee tomorrow to detour via Gregory Downs and Burketown to deliver re-issued postal voting material to 10 electors in Gregory Downs and 94 electors in Burketown.

This arrangement will ensure that those persons will be able to cast their vote for the federal election, which will be held on Saturday 9 October.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to extend such an arrangement to other electors who may not have received their postal voting material by tomorrow.

Regards

  
Anne Bright  
Australian Electoral Officer  
for Queensland

*If all pages are not received, or are unreadable, please contact 07 3834 3439*





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The Hon Bob Katter MP  
Member for Kennedy  
PO Box 1638  
INNISFAIL FNQ 4860

Dear Mr Katter

Thank you for your letter of 22 December 2004 querying the current status of the review of postal vote administration in the 2004 federal election being undertaken for the AEC by the law firm, Minter Ellison.

Minter Ellison reported to the AEC in December 2004. On 21 December 2004, the AEC released the results of the review by posting the report's summary and recommendations on its website. I have enclosed a copy of the summary and recommendations for your information.

As the accompanying media release stated, the AEC is generally supportive of the recommendations for improvement made by Minter Ellison, and will develop a more substantive response to the issues raised once it has had the opportunity to consider the report in more detail.

The full report will not be released at this stage as it contains commercial-in-confidence and professionally privileged information. However, the AEC intends to lodge the report with the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) when it inquires into the conduct of the 2004 election.

Yours sincerely

Tim Pickering  
Acting Electoral Commissioner

7 January 2005



## Summary

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In the 2004 federal election, problems arose with the administration of the postal voting system by the Australian Electoral Commission, in particular with delays in the production and distribution of postal voting material. The AEC distributed postal voting packages to over 700,000 electors in time for them to have their vote included in the preliminary scrutiny. However, 3.9% of postal voting applicants failed to vote which represented an increase of 63% in the proportion of postal vote applicants who failed to vote in the previous election. It is not possible to ascertain the reasons from the statistics but, because of the size of the increase, it may not be unreasonable to conclude that delays in the production and distribution of postal voting material could have been a contributing factor.

This report examines how those problems arose and makes recommendations designed to ensure that they do not recur in the future.

Essentially, the problems experienced in 2004 related to the arrangements in place for the production and distribution of postal voting material under the AEC's Automated Postal Voting Issuing System (APVIS), and the operation of those arrangements. The production of postal voting material under APVIS involves the following steps:

- postal ballot papers and postal voter certificates personalised with the elector's details are printed by a contractor
- postal vote packages (PVPs), consisting of ballot papers, a postal vote certificate made into an envelope form and a How-to-Postal-Vote pamphlet, are produced either:
  - centrally at a mailing house and distributed directly to the elector using Australia Post ('Central Print') - a substantial portion of the total number of PVPs are produced this way, or
  - at the offices of Divisional Returning Officers using the printed material provided by the contractor ('Local Print').

As described in this report, the problems that arose in the 2004 election had their genesis in the Central Print production and distribution of PVPs. Briefly stated, the contractor given the task of providing PVPs through the Central Print process did not, in our view, meet its production obligations. Delays in the delivery of postal voting material to electors was the result.

The report concludes that, in the period leading up to the 2004 election, the AEC did not take sufficient action to ensure that risks with the APVIS system were identified, minimised and managed. In particular, the report concludes that there were deficiencies in the request for tender and contract processes. The contract did not sufficiently reflect the AEC's requirements relating to production capacity and spoils regeneration and the service level provisions were inadequate. These deficiencies were exacerbated by quite substantial changes to the proposed operational arrangements, some of which were an inevitable outcome of changes in circumstances, that occurred after the contract was signed.

The report concludes that, whatever the deficiencies in the contractor's performance, the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* placed responsibility on the AEC to ensure that postal voters had the opportunity to lodge a postal vote in the 2004 election.

In addition to the general issue of delays in delivery of PVPs, the report deals with each of the specific matters dealt with in the Inquiry's terms of reference, namely:

- the 'initial deluge' of postal vote applications
- the 568 postal vote certificates sent to incorrect addresses
- the delayed regeneration of 68 ACT and 2,043 Queensland spoiled postal vote certificate envelopes

- the 1,832 spoiled postal vote certificate envelopes from a central print batch lodged on 20 September 2004 that were not regenerated
- the inclusion of New South Wales Senate ballot papers in postal voting material for Queensland voters.

In relation to the first matter, the report canvasses the circumstances that might have contributed to the increase of over 25% in the number of postal vote applications in 2004. It concludes that, although the AEC factored in a likely increase from the previous election, it was insufficient given what it knew or ought to have known about those circumstances.

The cause of the 568 misaddressed postal voting packages was operator error by the contractor when the wrong data file was selected after a machine malfunction. The report concludes that this mistake may well have been avoided if better risk management procedures had been in place, in particular if the contractor had actioned an earlier request by the AEC to ensure that each elector record had a unique sequence number, and the AEC had followed up this request.

The 68 ACT spoils and 2,043 Queensland spoils referred to in the terms of reference were among the spoils created at the contractor's Sydney site in the first week of production. The failure to regenerate spoils in a timely way resulted in some postal voting material not being distributed until the beginning of the final week of the election period. The problem with spoils was a direct consequence of the failure of the contractor to put in place appropriate procedures for ensuring that spoils were identified, tracked and recorded in a way that met the AEC's requirements. This, in turn, was a consequence of the fact that the treatment of spoils in the production process was never fully agreed between the contractor and the AEC before production started.

The existence of 1,832 Queensland spoils which were created on Monday, 20 September 2004 was only discovered on 7 October, the Thursday before polling day. The AEC advised the Minister to request the Governor-General to make a proclamation under section 285 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. This allowed the 1,359 affected electors, who had not already been provided with replacement voting material, to vote (albeit after polling day).

The inclusion of New South Wales Senate ballot papers in postal voting material for Queensland voters was limited to a number of the 1,359 postal voters covered by the Governor-General's proclamation. As a result of human error within the AEC, the wrong Senate ballot paper was accidentally included in a small number of the postal voting packages. The AEC went to considerable lengths to ensure that the electors concerned were provided with the appropriate Senate ballot paper.

In terms of the management by the AEC of these issues, there is a perception among some stakeholders that it did not 'come clean' sufficiently early about the existence of the delay and its causes, and that the AEC was not sufficiently proactive in resolving issues with the contractor and taking steps to ensure that potentially affected electors were sufficiently informed about alternative voting options. The relationship between the AEC and its stakeholders remains an issue for the AEC.

Notwithstanding the problems with production and delivery of PVPs, 96% of those electors who applied to vote by post in 2004 did vote, whether by lodging a postal vote or otherwise. The action taken by the AEC to ensure that outcome once the problems with production and delivery were understood was well-organised and effective. The substantial increase in 2004 in the number of postal vote applicants who voted using alternative means may be referable to the effectiveness of the advertising and public information campaign undertaken by the AEC in the week before the election for that purpose.

As for the future, the report makes recommendations of three types:

- those designed to provide greater certainty, efficiency and effectiveness in the process by which postal voting applications are processed, and completed voting material is handled and admitted to preliminary scrutiny

- those designed to ensure that the process under which postal voting material is produced and distributed to electors operates in a timely and efficient way, and
- those designed to ensure that the AEC is in a position to keep stakeholders informed on postal voting matters.

It is recommended that a thorough planning process be undertaken in the lead up to the next election which fully examines the process by which postal voting material is produced under the APVIS system. It is also recommended that any request for tender or contract process associated with the production and delivery of postal voting material for the next election deal comprehensively with a range of specified matters designed to ensure that the AEC is in a position to know that:

- the preferred tenderer has sufficient capacity to meet the AEC's peak production requirements
- the postal voting material will be produced in a secure, well-managed and controlled environment where 'end to end' integrity and quality can be assured
- there is a common understanding of the expectations of the AEC and the contractor, and of their respective roles and responsibilities.

The report also recommends augmentation of the expertise available to the AEC to prepare and manage a contract of this kind.

# List of recommendations

(see Part 8)

## Clarifying the rules

- ✓ 1. The exemption for PVAs from s.9 of the *Electronic Transactions Act 1999* be removed so as to allow applicants for a postal vote to lodge the completed PVA electronically.
- ✓ 2. Australian electors overseas have the same opportunity to register as GPVs as those in Australia.
- ✓ 3. The rules about GPVs be clarified – an elector enrolled in a Division should not be able to apply to be registered as a GPV once an election is called (though any application made before then should continue to be processed by the AEC).
  - this would clarify which rules apply during the election period
  - as the grounds are almost identical, it would still of course be open to the elector to apply for a postal vote in that election.
- ✓ 4. A reference be included in the GPV application form to the fact that the completed form can be returned to the AEC by fax.
- ✓ 5. The AEC explore options for having other Commonwealth agencies that are located in rural areas (such as Centrelink) to accept completed PVAs on behalf of the AEC.
6. The AEC modify its PVA to:
  - either require the elector to indicate, or to give the elector the option of indicating, why they require a postal vote, and
  - ✓  if they choose to do so, to nominate a date by which the postal voting material would need, for that reason, to be received at the postal address nominated.
- ✓ 7. The AEC take up the suggestion discussed with Australia Post that a process be developed on RMANS for ensuring that matters relevant to the postal delivery schedules applicable to the delivery points at the postal address, or in the postcode area, of the applicant are available to the DRO at the time the decision is made whether an application should go to Central or Local print - this would allow the delivery points that receive only 1 or 2 deliveries a week to be flagged.
- ✓ 8. The rules about the receipt of PVAs from electors be changed so that a postal vote should be regarded as not having been made if it reaches the DRO after 6pm on the Thursday before polling day but the DRO should be required, if it is received after 6pm on the Thursday, but before 6pm on the Friday, to take reasonable steps to inform the applicant that the PVA has not been accepted.
- ✓ 9. It should be made clear that the DRO's obligation is to arrange for the delivery of the postal ballot papers to the GPV or applicant, and that it is at the DRO's discretion whether it is posted or other arrangements for its delivery are made:
  - the DRO's decision should be determined by what method is most likely to ensure that the voting material is received in time for the GPV or applicant to record their vote before the close of the poll
  - this will allow the DRO to take into account the location of the voter, Australia Post delivery times for ordinary post for that location, whether the elector has indicated that they will be away from their postal address after a certain day, how close polling day is etc.

- ✓ 10. The AEC consider making a special point in the public education campaign associated with the next election of highlighting the difficulties associated with electors leaving it to the last week in the election period to lodge a PVA.
- ✓ 11. The rules are changed so that:
  - electors can, prior to the close of the polls, return their completed PVCs, envelope and ballot papers into the possession of the AEC by any convenient means, or post the material (provided that if posted, it is received within 13 days of polling day)
  - the AEC is then responsible for ensuring it is delivered to the appropriate DRO in time for it to be included in the preliminary scrutiny.
- ✓ 12. The rules for admitting PVC envelopes into the preliminary scrutiny are changed to say that, where the PVC envelope is not in the possession of AEC before the close of the poll:
  - it should only be accepted into the preliminary scrutiny where it is received through the post within 13 days after the close of the poll and the witness signature is dated with a day or date on or before polling day
  - if there is no signature date, then irrespective of whether or not there is a legible postmark, the envelope should be rejected.
- ✓ 13. The AEC takes steps through its public education activities to ensure that the public is informed of the importance of a witness date.

#### **Planning for the next election**

- ✓ 14. APVIS, or at any rate a form of centralised, computer-based printing and production system to support the distribution by the AEC of postal voting material, be retained.
- ✓ 15. The flexibility to determine whether postal voting material should be produced centrally or through a local computer-based system in the office of DRO's be retained.
- ✓ 16. The AEC establish a planning team as soon as possible consisting of representatives of relevant areas in the AEC (ie the ESP Section, State and Territory offices Head Offices, DROs, the Public Awareness Media and Research Branch and Parliamentary and Ministerial Section) with the task, taking account of experience in the 2004 election, of:
  - mapping each stage in the postal voting process
  - identifying what needs to be done, by whom and in what timeframe, to ensure that each stage in the process is achieved effectively and efficiently
  - undertaking a comprehensive risk assessment of each part (ie identification of risks, their removal or minimisation)
  - formulating risk recovery procedures for each part of the process (identification of what would have to be done, who would do it, what resources would need to be available etc)
  - undertaking an assessment of resources needed to achieve the outcomes, where additional resources may be required and a process for securing those additional resources
  - identifying where contractors, service providers or stakeholders are involved or potentially affected, and what their roles and responsibilities would be
  - preparing a report for the AEC Executive on planning for, and the development and implementation, of
    - the RFT process for the provision of postal voting material for the next election, or

- if the AEC proposes to renew its contract with QM Technologies without a new RFT process, the negotiation of a new contract for those services
  - ensuring that, drawing on the outcome of the work outlined above, the report to the Executive deals comprehensively with all the requirements recommended for inclusion in the RFT and/or contract negotiations (see recommendation 19 below)
  - for the purpose of preparing the report, consulting with other Commonwealth agencies with similar mail processing service requirements and with expertise and experience in dealing with mail houses and involved in the provision of bulk personalised printing services (such as the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and possibly the Australian Bureau of Statistics).
17. The AEC contract the services of a person with expertise and experience in the mail house industry and in contract management, under the direction of relevant AEC officers, to:
- take responsibility for the development of relevant documentation to support
    - the RFT process for the APVIS contract
    - the tendering and contract negotiation
  - develop the QA and FRS documentation for the next election
  - manage the RFT preparation, tender evaluation, contract negotiation and implementation
  - provide training to AEC QA staff in the lead up to the election (and share supervisory responsibilities for them during the contract)
  - advise the AEC on relevant developments in new technology.
18. The AEC consider ways in which the resources available to the ESP Section can be supplemented, both during the period immediately prior to, and in the election period.
19. The RFT (if this process is relevant), and the contract for the production of postal voting material for the next election, fully set out the AEC's requirements, namely:
- the scope of the services to be provided including, at a minimum, the receipt, storage, processing and secure disposal of data, programming and development services, personalised printing, compilation of PVPs containing personalised and other material, lodgement of PVPs with Australia Post or other carriers as specified from time to time, provision and management of base stock etc
  - how those services are to be delivered, in particular, that there is sufficient printing and mail processing capacity to manage both the production of PVPs and regenerated spoils in a timely way, including if necessary a 'Local Print' option
  - management matters including, at a minimum, security of personal information, quality management systems, disaster recovery and business continuity, reconciliation and job tracking (including management and regeneration of spoils and their tracking), maintenance of job documentation, staff management
  - account management matters including, at a minimum, staff of management team – responsibilities and reporting, financial management, reporting, performance management, corporate management, identification of staff who will have managerial responsibility and the staff with 'on-the-ground' responsibility for performance under the contract
  - transition issues ie how a new contractor (or a new site of an existing contractor) would put in place processes and procedures necessary to support the performance of the contract, and post contract

- reports that the AEC would require including, at a minimum, transfer report – daily confirming receipt of all data, detailed daily progress report on PVC and PVP production and lodgement, incident reports (within a nominated time), stock report on production, use and levels of basestock, system development report, management report, assurance certificates about compliance with all the requirements of contract, certificate of destruction of data/spoils etc
  - service levels that focus on each element of the production process that is vital to the performance required by the AEC, measure the contractor's performance on that element and provides an incentive to the contractor to 'get it right' – these service levels would therefore:
    - include 'service debits' that will apply to each service level breach ie specific financial penalty for each breach of each kind of service level
    - set out the method by which the service level is to be checked eg contractor to inform AEC, AEC audit or review, problems reported by recipients or Australia Post, failure to provide reports of required content or at required time
    - include the full range of matters, strict compliance with which is an AEC requirement
  - where it is proposed that more than one production site be used, that there are arrangements in place that will assure the same level of quality and performance at each site, and that each site will be applying the same (agreed) processes and procedures
  - what arrangements are to be made with Australia Post for discounts under the Process Improvement Program, the implications for the way production is managed between sites and within a site, and the rules to apply in relation to 'virtual' lodgements
  - what Quality Assurance arrangements the AEC will want for observing the compliance by the contractor with its Quality Assurance obligations.
- ✓ 20. Any contract negotiated for the provision of postal voting material for the next election specifically cover the matters listed above
- ✓ 21. Such a contract include a requirement that:
  - each party keep the other fully informed about any material changes in circumstance between the finalisation of the contract and the time at which the contract services are to be provided, and
  - the implications of any decisions that may impact on either party's roles and responsibilities under the contract are fully discussed.
- ✓ 22. The issue of whether Central Print should be more or less 'de-centralised' (ie the number of sites to be used) should be considered in light of the circumstances that prevail at the time of the tendering process and during contract negotiation, and again before the election period if the circumstances require it.
- ✓ 23. The rules for determining whether postal voting material is produced by Central Print or Local Print at any particular election or at any particular time in an election period should be determined as part of the preparation for a particular election in light of the circumstances then prevailing, but the following may provide some guidance:
  - where files are small and require special treatment and may result in substantial downtime in order to process (eg may require a change of material to be inserted in mail processing), they should not be sent to Central Print at least in the first week (if at all) if they can be effectively and efficiently handled through Local Print

- ❑ where more than one site is to be used and the work is divided between them by reference to the State or Territory in which the recipient of the PVP is enrolled (thus only requiring the insertion of certain kinds of Senate ballot papers), serious consideration needs to be given to the risks of compromising that division in order to get postal advantages
  - ❑ every effort should be made to minimise the number of small files to be processed, particularly in the first week of production.
24. The AEC, with a view to increasing its availability, undertake a comprehensive review of pre-polling which would consider the following matters:
- ❑ its advantages over postal voting (eg security, immediate inclusion of the vote in the scrutiny etc)
  - ❑ whether it provides a genuine alternative to postal voting
  - ❑ its capacity to respond as demand requires
  - ❑ whether it is resourced appropriately
  - ❑ whether it is advertised appropriately
  - ❑ whether the CEA should be amended to remove the necessity for gazettal of the opening hours (and possibly of the place proposed to be used as a pre-poll place), provided the AEC takes appropriate steps to ensure they are appropriately advertised (including on web site etc).

#### **Keeping electors and stakeholders informed**

25. The AEC computer and data recording and retrieval systems be upgraded to allow real-time information to be extracted by DROs on the progress of the production of PVPs for individual postal voters.
26. In the lead up to the next election, the AEC:
- ❑ discuss with the Minister's office options for a establishing a process for the provision of information about emerging issues during the election period, identifying which staff are to be involved, how and to whom requests for urgent briefing are to be handled, and how issues are to be followed up, and reported on, by the AEC (this would provide an opportunity for a discussion about the kind of information that the AEC feels able to provide during an election period, and in what form, and any perceived sensitivities)
  - ❑ formulate guidelines reflecting the outcome of those discussions that would be available to all relevant staff prior to the election.
27. The AEC continue with its recent initiative of providing regular briefings to political parties and use that opportunity to explore options for protocols about the provisions of information in the period leading up to, and during, the next election period.