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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Inquiry into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2016 Federal Election and matters related thereto

Issue date: 21 June 2017

Modernising the Australian Electoral Commission

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in its third interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2016 Federal election has recommended the Australian Electoral Commission be modernised.

Committee Chair Senator Linda Reynolds said the size and scale of Federal elections had increasingly posed greater complexities and challenges, which the AEC has at times struggled to meet, despite the dedication and commitment of its staff.

“The AEC has a legislated mandate to maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active roll management, efficient delivery of polling services and targeted public awareness programs,” Senator Reynolds said.

“Evidence to the Committee indicates public confidence in the ability of the AEC to effectively deliver this mandate has been weakened over recent Federal elections. This hasn’t happened because of fraud or corruption, but through technological and legislative impediments.

“Recent events domestically and overseas, including the denial of service attack on the Australian Bureau of Statistics and speculation on attempts to influence last year’s US election, indicate cyber security threats to Australian electoral processes must be effectively identified and mitigated.”

Senator Reynolds said modernising the AEC would require significant process, technological and cultural reforms.

“The third interim report provides a range of recommendations for reform to assist the AEC to address some of the most urgent impediments to its ability to implement organisational change,” she said.

“However, the task of transforming the AEC into an organisation capable of continuously adapting to meet its mandate in a rapidly evolving world will take ongoing bipartisan political support and oversight.

“I sincerely thank all the committee and participating members for their ongoing engagement, goodwill and genuine commitment to ensuring the integrity of our national electoral processes.”



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The report makes five recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the *Commonwealth Electoral Act (1918)* and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act (1984)* be amended, based upon the Australian Electoral Commission's proposals contained in Appendix A of this report.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider additional funding for the Australian Electoral Commission to invest in modernisation for future federal elections, including:

- Planning and expert advice on upgrading the AEC's information technology and business systems.
- Additional training for temporary staff who are likely to remain engaged over multiple elections.
- The deployment of additional electronic certified lists at polling stations.
- A trial to test the scanning and electronic counting of House of Representatives ballot papers.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the AEC consider specific operational systems and training to accommodate the particular challenges associated with the conduct of elections in rural and regional areas, hospitals and aged care facilities.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends the Australian Electoral Commission extend the deployment of electronic certified lists at the next federal election to ensure all polling places (including all absentee voting points) and mobile teams are equipped with at least one electronic certified list, or as a minimum an electronic roll lookup facility.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Australian Electoral Commission provide updates to the Committee every six months on priorities and progress towards modernisation for future elections, in order for the Committee to review this activity on an ongoing basis.

A copy of the report is available from the [Committee website](#).

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