

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2016-17**

Finance Portfolio  
28 February 2017

**Department/Agency:** AEC  
**Outcome/Program:**  
**Topic:** Delays on voting day

**Senator:** Farrell

**Question reference number:** F67

**Type of question:** Hansard Proof, F&PA Committee, Pages 118 and 119, 28 February 2017

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Thursday, 13 April 2017

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

**Senator FARRELL:** You are as aware as anybody of the complaints about the long delays on the day, and I think we have had some conversations about that before. Are you able to tell us whether there is any link between the increased level of informality and the longer delays on election day?

**Mr Rogers:** Off the top of my head, we may have that data. I am not sure we have done that check just yet. Allow me to question our experts on that to see whether that is something that we do. I am not sure there will be a causal link. I think the increase in the informality rate will be mostly linked to a new voting system despite the ad campaign that we did and the other factors that we have just mentioned before: English is a second language, the large number of candidates on the polling paper and some confusion about the process.

**Senator FARRELL:** I would appreciate if you could at least spend a little bit of time thinking about that issue. If there is a link that you discover, you may wish to provide us with some information about it. In the same vein: you talk about assistance given to people at particular polling booths. Where you provided that assistance to voters, was there a noticeable decrease in informality?

**Mr Rogers:** I think I might look at that data for you. We should be able to work out whether, in those areas where we provided voter assistance officers, that had an impact on the informality in those polling booths. We may have already done that work, but let me examine that. I will come back to you in that process.

**Answer:**

The AEC has analysed queueing times for polling places in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania (together representing almost 60 per cent of all electoral divisions) and found no statistically significant relationship between queue times and informality rates.

Given the significant changes to Senate voting rules legislated just prior to the 2016 election, the AEC allocated at least one 'inquiry officer' to every static polling place to help as many voters as possible understand the new voting rules. A total of 7,627 inquiry officer positions were filled, up from 1,806 at the 2013 federal election. However, the impact of this assistance cannot be separately identified from other factors that influenced informality, particularly because the inquiry officers were allocated to every static polling place.