

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES 2013-2014

Finance Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Electoral Commission

Outcome/Program: General

Topic: WA Changes as a result of the Keelty Review

Senator: Smith

Question reference number: F49

Type of question: Hansard with F&PA Committee, Page 121, 25 February 2014

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Number of pages: 4

Question:

Senator Smith: As a Western Australian Senator I am keen to understand in what areas the experience of Western Australian voters will be significantly different at the Senate poll that has yet to be announced, if I am correct, than at the Senate poll that they participated in on 7 September.

Mr Rogers: I have a list of things, and perhaps I could read out the headlines. I am happy to table the detail, which might also be of use, rather than reading through that.

Answer:

Response was not tabled, but has now been responded to in this Question on Notice. Refer attached.

WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR WA AS A RESULT OF THE KEELTY REVIEW?

Ballot Paper Security

- Extensive measures addressing the culture of ballot paper security – see ‘culture’ (below).
- Ballot secure zones that are only accessible to authorised staff will be established in every polling place and out-posted centre (including scrutiny centres). All ballot materials will remain in the ballot secure zone until they are required (e.g. for voting or scrutiny), and then returned to the ballot secure zone as soon as the relevant task has been completed.
- Ballot paper movements will be documented at every point from production until they are placed in long term storage. This will include a requirement for transport contractors to complete consignment documentation for each transfer. The intention is that we will know where our ballot papers are at any given point in time and who is responsible for their custody.
- Ballot box guards have been assigned to every polling venue (approximately 200 new staff for WA).

Culture

- Communication from national and state management to encourage a culture of ballot paper sanctity and compliance.
- Developed and mandated the display of a ballot paper principles poster in all AEC offices, including out-posted centres in WA.
- Updates to the existing Election Procedures Handbook to include key messages, including ballot paper handling.
- Engagement of WA staff in a number of sessions focussing on the implementation of Keelty initiatives, including ballot paper handling principles.
- All senior polling staff will be directed in writing to perform their duties in a manner that ensures the security, integrity and accountability of all ballot papers that are in their possession. All must acknowledge the direction in writing – this is a legal direction under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* and the *Public Service Act 1999*. A similar direction and acknowledgement will also be implemented for non-polling staff.
- Online and face-to-face training materials have been developed to contain a new module explaining the Keelty recommendations, particularly ballot

paper security, materials management and the impact on polling operations.

- All polling staff will receive an emailed advice that reminds them of their obligation to maintain the integrity of ballot materials (including reporting any breaches), complete their training and follow instructions.
- All polling staff will be required to wear AEC branded vests to immediately identify AEC staff inside the polling place and in out-posted scrutiny centres.

Logistics and Materials Management

- Improved logistical and material handling policies and procedures, including guidance for OICs on ballot paper transport and storage.
- Creation of a Divisional Materials Manager role for the election period, who will have the responsibility of maintaining control of ballot paper movements and ensuring that all movements are documented. A job profile and briefing material has been developed in relation to this role. It will be supplemented by an election period State Materials Manager, who will provide coordination and consistency in practice across sites, and ensure compliance with new policies in conjunction with operations managers.
- Post-election activities must be planned in a way that minimises ballot paper movements, which has necessitated larger out-posted centres for some divisions. An additional checklist has been prepared to assist in the procurement of suitable out-posted centres.
- Ballot paper movements will be documented at every point from production until they are placed in long term storage. This will include a requirement for transport contractors to complete consignment documentation for each transfer. The intention is that we will know where our ballot papers are at any given point in time and who is responsible for their custody.
- Documentation will be required for all movements of all ballot materials, whether by transport contractors or staff.
- Enhanced rubbish and recycling policies require that rubbish must be kept in a quarantined area that is physically separated from any ballot papers, separation and retention of clean waste and recycling, and that no rubbish can be disposed of without the DRO's approval. Training and process guides have been compiled, and colour-coded bin liners, waste area labels and layout maps provided to relevant staff.

Transport and Storage of Ballot Materials

- The AEC is currently working toward a “request for information” from the transport and storage industries that will inform a decision about how and where we store our ballot papers in the longer term.
- The AEC has met with and been briefed by, a number of leading transport and storage providers as part of this process.
- The AEC will continue to assess whether it should operate warehousing facilities in-house in the long term.

Packaging and Parcelling

- Improved guidance around the parcelling and packaging of ballot papers from polling places and greater rigour around the reconciliation of materials receipt on polling weekend. New materials for packing and securing materials, including better quality plastic bags, labels and boxes.
- Improved tamper-evident labels on ballot paper packages. All parcels of ballot papers returning from polling places will be individually sealed with tape and labels. Sealed parcels of ballot papers will be packaged into boxes or other containers for transport, with the containers sealed with tamper evident labels.
- More comprehensive and enhanced labelling. For example, packages and containers for transport from polling places will be labelled with standardised labels with information including division, polling place, and a description of the contents; these labels will be signed and witnessed.

Contract Management

- All relevant contracts have undergone a high level quality assurance review, and the Legal, Parliamentary and Procurement Branch are working with the WA State Office to ensure improved rigour around management and enforcement of contracts.
- Selected contractors have been asked to complete a deed of confidentiality, which includes a declaration of political neutrality, as an extra assurance.
- Cleaners will be excluded from ballot secure zones.