

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Australian Electoral Commission

Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2007

Question: F46

Outcome 1, Output 1.1.1

Topic: How target for an increase in roll figures reached.

Hansard page: F&PA 30

Senator Wong asked:

Senator Wong – Is there anything you can provide me with which explains in greater detail how you came up with that target [for an increase in roll figures]?

Mr Campbell – We can do that.

Mr Moyes – We can take that on notice.

Answer:

As there is no definitive measure of the number of people who are eligible to be enrolled to vote, the AEC uses adjusted population figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to derive an estimate. The most immediately available Census data is from the 2001 Census, although the AEC is currently preparing a revised estimate based on the 2006 census preliminary population data. Roll numbers are expected to increase each year in line with an increase in the number of eligible electors.

The estimate of eligible population is derived by taking the ABS estimate of Australian citizens 18 years of age and over, then adding the known number of British subjects on the roll, and subtracting an estimate of the number of otherwise eligible prisoners who are serving a sentence of 3 years or longer, the net difference in the number of people who have left for or returned from overseas, and the number of unsound mind within the meaning of the commonwealth electoral law. As the adjustments are made on estimates, the final result is by default also an estimate, and therefore must be used with some caution.

The AEC then compares this estimate to the number of people actually enrolled to determine a “participation rate” – that is, the percentage of eligible people enrolled. The target for enrolment provided is based on applying the participation rate at the 2004 federal election to the current estimated number of people eligible to enrol.

Comparing the estimate to the number enrolled at the close of rolls in 2004, the participation rate was estimated to be 92.6%. At 30 June 2006 it was estimated to be 91.1 per cent. The estimate of enrolment that would be the minimum that the AEC would like at the 2007 close of rolls, for it to be equivalent to the participation rate at the close of rolls for 2004 is 13.4 million.