



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024–25

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Ed Cocks MLA

Addressed to: Mr Damian Cantwell AM CSC

In relation to: Population projections used for electorate redistribution, impact on election results

Hearing: 10 November 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript p 10

Transcript provided: 12 November 2025

Answer Due: 19 November 2025

Mr Cantwell took on notice the following question(s):

THE CHAIR: [...] And do you know how much of an impact that large variation of quota had on the final result of elected MLAs?

Mr Cantwell: I cannot comment directly at hand. I am not sure if we ...(indistinct)... [11.43.12] going back and taking it on notice to be able to give you a more detailed response as to what impact that may have had.

ACT Electoral Commission: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Background

The principle of “*one vote, one value*” underpins the ACT's electoral framework and is reflected in the redistribution provisions of the *Electoral Act 1992* and the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988*. This principle requires that, as far as practicable, each elector's vote carries equal weight. Redistribution aims to achieve this by ensuring electorates are within statutory tolerances of the quota at the time of the next election.

The 2023 redistribution projected Kurrajong's enrolment at 61,340 electors (–2.61% below the projected quota of 62,986), within the ±5% tolerance. At the 2024 election, Kurrajong's actual enrolment was 59,904 electors, –6.90% below the actual quota of 64,344, a shortfall of approximately 1,223 electors from the ±5% tolerance. By contrast, Brindabella ended up +5.00% above quota, Ginninderra +2.31%, Murrumbidgee +0.21%, and Yerrabi –0.58%.

Alternative boundary scenario: Retaining Forrest in Kurrajong

One way Kurrajong could have been brought within the acceptable $\pm 5\%$ tolerance would have been by not transferring the suburb of Forrest to Murrumbidgee during the 2023 redistribution. Forrest's actual enrolment for October 2024 was 1,559 electors.

If Forrest had remained in Kurrajong:

- Kurrajong's enrolment would have increased to 61,463, reducing its variation from the actual quota to -4.50% , within tolerance.
- Murrumbidgee's enrolment would have decreased to 62,920, shifting its variation from $+0.21\%$ to -2.20% , still well within tolerance.

This demonstrates that the redistribution decision to move Forrest was pivotal in Kurrajong falling outside the tolerance range. However, the decision to move Forrest was based on projected data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which ultimately overestimated Kurrajong's growth between August 2023 and October 2024 and underestimated the growth across the ACT.

It is important to note that the redistribution process relies on enrolment projections prepared by the ABS using the cohort-component method, which applies assumptions about fertility, mortality, migration, and dwelling occupancy, data that at the time was impacted by the effects of COVID. These projections are inherently uncertain, particularly at suburb level, where local development patterns and population movements can diverge from forecasts, adding the impacts of COVID upon recent migration levels into and out of the ACT further complicated the forecasting.

The outcome of the 2023 redistribution, where a single electorate fell outside tolerance, is not isolated. While the 2019 redistribution successfully achieved the desired aim of ensuring enrolments in all five electorates were within tolerance at the 2020 election, the 2015 redistribution resulted in a similar occurrence at the 2016 election in the electorate of Brindabella. These examples underscore the difficulty of projecting enrolments two years ahead of an election and balancing statutory requirements with demographic uncertainty and a framework ideally structured around the inclusion of full suburbs within electorates.

Turnout and quota impact

Kurrajong recorded 83% turnout (49,672 votes) and a formality rate of 98.49%, giving 48,922 formal votes. Under Hare-Clark, the quota for election was 8,154 votes.

If the Forrest enrolment numbers of 1,559 electors had been present and voted at the same rates, this would have added about 1,274 formal votes, increasing the quota to 8,367 (213 votes additional votes would have been required to be successfully elected).

However, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this hypothetical analysis. It is not possible to determine how each one of those additional 1,390 votes would have been distributed across the final count and how this variation would have impacted the final result of elected MLAs.

The enrolment shortfall meant that Kurrajong voters had slightly greater representational weight compared to the other electorates and in particular Brindabella which was $+5\%$ above the actual quota.

Conclusion

It is not possible to determine any impact of variation from projected enrolment figures provided by ABS on the result of the 2024 election. All legislative requirements of the related redistribution process were met by the Electoral Commission.

Kurrajong's deviation from the projected quota resulted in a modest breach of the "*one vote, one value*" principle, as its voters had slightly more weight than those in larger electorates owing to a slight overestimation by ABS of the electorate's growth between the end of the redistribution process and time of the 2024 election. While the Hare-Clark system continued to ensure proportional representation within Kurrajong based upon the actual votes lodged, the variation from quota underscores the importance of accurate projections to maintain enrolment equality across electorates. The Commission will continue to do everything possible to ensure the accuracy of projections provided by ABS underpinning redistributions.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders



Signature:

Date: 18 November 2025

By the ACT Electoral Commissioner, Mr Damian Cantwell AM CSC