

Ms Mary Porter AM MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People
ACT Legislative Assembly
Civic Square, London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Porter

Thank you for your letter of 24 April 2007 regarding the maintenance of the electoral rolls, particularly in relation to the possible enrolment of 16 and 17 year olds.

You asked in your letter if there are currently any specific inclusions or exclusions required under the joint roll arrangement when certified lists are being prepared for ACT Legislative Assembly elections.

The joint electoral roll for the ACT is maintained by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) under the ACT Joint Roll Arrangement, which is an inter-governmental agreement. In practice, the joint roll is kept in a database by the AEC. The joint roll mostly contains data that is jointly owned and used, but it also contains some data that is specifically relevant to ACT elections, and some data that is specifically relevant to Commonwealth elections. For example, the ACT roll includes an indication for eligible overseas electors of whether they intend to return to reside in the ACT (as eligible overseas electors are entitled to vote for Commonwealth elections but not ACT elections if they do not state that they are intending to return to live in the ACT). With the recent Commonwealth change to the enrolment and voting entitlements of prisoners, the roll also flags prisoners on the roll, who are eligible to vote for ACT elections but not Commonwealth elections. The Commonwealth ACT roll also includes some electors who are eligible to vote for Commonwealth elections but not ACT elections, such as residents of Jervis Bay, Wreck Bay or Norfolk Island.

Selecting the details of electors entitled to vote for ACT elections from the joint roll and printing the certified lists used for marking off names of voters in polling places is a straightforward computer programming process.

When the certified lists for an election are printed, the AEC only extracts the names, addresses and electorate details of those electors eligible to vote for ACT Legislative Assembly elections. Therefore, any electors on the joint ACT roll who are not eligible to vote for ACT elections, such as eligible overseas electors who are not intending to return to live in the ACT, and residents of Jervis Bay, Wreck Bay or Norfolk Island, are not included. Similarly, provisional electors who have enrolled at 17 but who will not turn 18 on or before polling day are not included on certified lists. The certified lists also contain only the names, but not the addresses, of silent, eligible overseas, Antarctic and itinerant electors.

You also asked for some indication of the percentage increase cost to the budget of the Commission to maintain the roll should it include 16 and 17 year olds. I am assuming you are seeking the cost for full enrolment of 16 and 17 year olds.

The cost of the joint roll is currently 129.28 cents per elector per year with the ACT and the Commonwealth each contributing half this amount. It is estimated that there are roughly 4,000 16 year olds and 4,000 17 year olds who would be eligible to enrol in the ACT. As at 16 May 2007, there were 1,757 17 year olds provisionally enrolled.

If the ACT was to introduce compulsory enrolment and voting for 17 year olds, I would expect the Commonwealth to continue to fund half the cost of enrolling these electors, as they would also be enrolled as Commonwealth provisional electors. If an additional, say, 2,200 17 year olds enrolled, this could cost the ACT roughly an additional \$1,400 per year.

If the ACT was to introduce compulsory enrolment and voting for 16 year olds, these electors would be enrolled to vote only for the ACT, so the total cost per elector in this age group would probably need to be borne by the ACT. If, say, 4000 electors in this age group enrolled, the cost to the ACT would be approximately \$5,200 per year.

Taken together, the cost of providing for compulsory enrolment for 16 and 17 year olds is estimated to be around \$6,600 per year. The joint roll presently costs the ACT around \$147,000 per year, so providing for compulsory enrolment for 16 and 17 year olds would represent a 4.5% increase in the ACT's share of maintaining the roll.

I hope this information answers your questions. Please contact me again if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Green
Electoral Commissioner

16 May 2007