

ROLL DIVERGENCE

Issue

What is roll divergence?

Headline Statement

- Divergence occurs where an elector has an enrolment on either the federal or state/territory roll; and no enrolment, or an enrolment at another address, on another roll.

Key Points

- The integrity of the electoral roll is critical to our electoral system. Divergence, particularly where enrolments are for different addresses, or where they are eligible, but are not enrolled for a particular jurisdiction, can cause considerable confusion for affected electors with regard to their enrolment status for forthcoming electoral events.
- As at 31 December 2014, there were just over half a million electors with differences in enrolment for federal and state purposes, and continues to trend upwards. These differences are predominantly focussed in NSW, Victoria and, to a lesser extent, WA.
- Divergence is caused when there is either a difference in legislation or a difference in practice between the Commonwealth and a state/territory. The differences in legislation can be confined to small groups, or affect the population more generally.
- I am advised that the Australian Electoral Commission is undertaking a range of investigations on the roll divergence issue, with a view to identifying further strategies to address this matter. They are also preparing a detailed submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on the topic. I will provide further advice at a later point in time.

Policy Commitments

- N/A.

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Background

The causes of divergence include differences in legislation in relation to the direct enrolment programs run by the Commonwealth and those run by the Victorian and NSW electoral commissions, differences in witnessing requirements for enrolment, particularly in Victoria and WA, and differing legislation for prisoners, other territories (such as Norfolk Island), British Subjects and overseas electors.

Released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

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