

ESTIMATES BRIEF – Back Pocket

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
Additional Estimates – February 2015

**SUBJECT: DIVERGENCE OF THE ELECTORAL
ROLL**

ISSUE 1: What is divergence?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- **Divergence occurs where an elector has an enrolment on either the federal or state/territory roll and no enrolment, or an enrolment at a different address, on another roll.**
- Divergence can cause considerable confusion for affected electors with regard to their enrolment status for forthcoming electoral events.

ISSUE 2: What causes divergence?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- **Divergence is caused when there is either a difference in legislation or a difference in practice between the Commonwealth and a state/territory.**

Direct enrolment – NSW, Victoria and WA

- The **largest cause of divergence** is the parallel running of direct enrolment programs, run by the Commonwealth, NSW and Victoria. The Commonwealth does not recognise NSW and Victorian direct enrolment, while WA legislatively cannot recognise Commonwealth direct enrolment.

Age and witnessing – Victoria and WA

- In Victoria and WA the minimum enrolment age is 17.
- A witness is still required for electors new to the Victorian roll (Federal enrolments have not required a witness since 2006).

Other causes of divergence

- Differences in eligibility for prisoners, other territories (such as Norfolk Island), British subjects and overseas electors.
- Evidence of identity requirements in federal legislation can result in state-only enrolment for first time enrolments and re-enrolments where evidence of identity has not been provided.

- State requirements in some jurisdictions for a signature and a witness mean that voters changing their address details online will be updated for federal purposes where they are currently enrolled and if electronic signatures are not provided. That is, they will be enrolled at their new address for federal purposes and their old address for state purposes.

ISSUE 3: How much divergence is there?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- **Approximately 520 000 electors have divergent enrolments due to procedural reasons (see Table 1).**
- The **highest numbers** of divergent enrolments are concentrated in NSW, Victoria and WA.
- NSW and Victoria have the **highest levels of divergence**, due mostly to different state direct enrolment processes.
- WA has the next largest divergence, as WA legislation does not recognise changes made via the Commonwealth's direct enrolment and update process.
- The remaining states have comparatively lower levels of divergence which primarily relate to **differing entitlements** for particular groups.
- The number of electors who have divergent enrolments due to entitlement is 18 981 nationally (17 727 federal only and 1 254 state only) and these are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Approximate procedural divergence as at 31 January 2015 ^(a)

	Single enrolment		Dual enrolment ^(b)		Total
	Federal only	State only	Federal leading	State leading	
NSW	0	136 976	80	93 289	230 345
VIC	33 293	47 782	5 672	108 644	195 391
QLD	0	0	1	0	1
WA	31 662	725	60 785	337	93 509
SA	8	920	68	366	1 362
TAS	0	0	0	0	0
ACT	0	0	0	0	0
NT	1	0	0	0	1
Total	64 964	186 403	66 606	202 636	520 609

^(a) Includes enrolments of 16 and 17 year olds

^(b) Excludes electors who have dual enrolments at the same address

Table 2: Approximate entitlement divergence as at 31 January 2015 ^(a)

	Single enrolment	
	Federal only	State only
NSW	244	131
VIC	9 666	89
QLD	147	532
WA	6 989	255
SA	167	247
TAS	49	0
ACT	465	0
NT	0	0
Total	17 727	1 254

^(a) Includes enrolments of 16 and 17 year olds

ISSUE 4: What data sources do the direct enrolment programs use?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE:

- **Table 2 outlines the data sources currently, previously and considered for use by the three direct enrolment programs in operation in Australia.**

Table 2: Data sources used in direct enrolment and update processes in Australia

	AEC	NSWEC	VEC
<i>Current</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver's licence data obtained from NEVDIS • Centrelink 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver's licence data obtained from NSW Roads and Maritime Services • Board of Studies NSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver's licence data obtained from VicRoads • Year 12 students from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority – used once a year
<i>Previously used</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSWEC SmartRoll data • Victorian direct enrolment data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW TAFE • 1st Home Owners grant information 	
<i>Under consideration</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Bonds 	

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Consultation: Nil