

ROLL DIVERGENCE

Issue

How can electoral rolls diverge?

Headline Statement

- Electoral roll divergence occurs where an elector has a different enrolment for state and federal purposes.

Key Points

- Divergence is caused when there is either a difference in legislation or a difference in electoral roll practice between the Commonwealth and a state or territory.
 - New South Wales and Victoria have the highest levels of divergence. I am advised that this is largely due to the direct enrolment programs run by the NSW and Victorian Electoral Commissions
 - Western Australia has the next largest divergence. I am advised that this results mainly from differences between State and Commonwealth law.
- Electoral roll divergence can cause considerable confusion at election time, particularly where enrolments are for different addresses for state and federal purposes. A similar situation occurs where eligible voters are not enrolled to vote in one jurisdiction but are enrolled in the other jurisdiction.
- As at 29 February 2016, the number of electors with a different Federal and State enrolment was 560,220.
- I am advised that the Australian Electoral Commission is continuing to actively address this matter. In recent months the numbers of divergent elector records has been substantially reduced.

Background

The causes of divergence include differences in legislation in relation to direct enrolment programs (Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia); differences in witnessing requirements (particularly in Victoria); and differing legislation for the enrolment of prisoners, other territories (such as Norfolk Island), British subjects and overseas electors.

On 29 February 2016, there were 560,000 enrolments for persons aged 18 and over that were divergent due to procedural reasons.

	Single enrolment		Dual enrolment ^(a)		Total
	Federal only	State only	Federal leading	State leading	
NSW	-	69,427	95	93,260	162,782
VIC	70,452	34,012	58,520	72,358	235,342
QLD	-	-	1	-	1
WA	59,908	590	100,218	275	160,991
SA	6	808	7	281	1,102
TAS	-	-	-	-	-
ACT	-	-	1	-	1
NT	1	-	-	-	1
Total	130,367	104,837	158,842	166,174	560,220

The difference between the State/Territory rolls and the Commonwealth roll is smaller than the overall divergence because some electors are enrolled at both Commonwealth and State/Territory level, but at different addresses.

There are also some electors who are only eligible to vote in Federal elections, while others are only eligible to vote in state/territory elections.

As at 29 February 2016, the following numbers of persons aged 18 and over were respectively enrolled on the Commonwealth electoral roll and the relevant state or territory roll in relation to each of the states and territories.

	Commonwealth Roll	State Roll	Who is larger	Difference between Commonwealth over State	
				Number	%
NSW	5,029,890	5,104,327	State	-74,437	-1.5%
VIC	3,902,571	3,860,841	Federal	41,730	1.1%
Qld	3,028,883	3,027,553	Federal	1,330	0.0%
WA	1,549,959	1,486,325	Federal	63,634	4.1%
SA	1,166,818	1,167,672	State	-854	-0.1%
Tas	369,208	369,155	Federal	53	0.0%

Date Updated: 1 April 2016

Cleared by Adviser: Daniel Try

Date Last Printed:

PDR Number: QB15-000362

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ACT	275,603	275,107	Federal	496	0.2%
NT	129,922	129,921	Federal	1	0.0%
Australia	15,452,854	15,420,901	Federal	31,953	0.2%

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