

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 at the Commonwealth and state/territory level when there is either a difference in legislation or a difference in electoral roll management.
 - New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria have the highest levels of divergence. I am advised this is largely due to the direct enrolment programs run by the NSW and Victorian Electoral Commission.
 - Western Australia has the next largest divergence. I am advised this results mainly from differences between state and Commonwealth law.
- As at 31 March 2016 2016, the number of electors nationally, with a different federal and state enrolment, was 596 986.
- 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.

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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.

Of the 596 986 divergent electors, 181 626 are in New South Wales, 254 798 in Victoria and 159 438 in Western Australia.

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.

The difference in the size of the Commonwealth and State/Territory rolls is not reflective of those people with a divergent enrolment.

As at 31 March 2016, the following table shows the numbers of persons aged 18 and over 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	5,030,350	5,110,009	State	-79,659	-1.6%
VIC	3,905,268	3,866,949	Federal	38,319	1.0%
Qld	3,038,558	3,036,929	Federal	1,629	0.1%
WA	1,550,786	1,487,765	Federal	63,021	4.1%
SA	1,167,453	1,168,255	State	-802	-0.1%
Tas	369,406	369,354	Federal	52	0.0%
ACT	276,398	275,900	Federal	498	0.2%
NT	130,110	130,109	Federal	1	0.0%
Australia	15,468,329	15,445,270	Federal	23,059	0.1%

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