

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.
- The *Electoral Amendment Act 2016* (WA) was passed on 29 June 2016 and includes the update of Western Australia state records to align with the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update (FDEU) program. This has reduced divergence between the Commonwealth and Western Australia state rolls.
- As at 21 August 2016, the number of electors nationally, with a different Federal and State enrolment was 287,420.
- I am advised that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is continuing to actively address this matter. In recent months the numbers of divergent elector records has been substantially reduced.

Policy Commitments

- N/A

ROLL DIVERGENCE

Background

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

The AEC has been working with the Western Australia Electoral Commission and has retrospectively aligned electors whose enrolment had diverged from their federal enrolment due to FDEU.

As at 21 August, of the 287,420 divergent electors, 93,823 are in New South Wales, 180,490 in Victoria and 11,918 in Western Australia. The remainder of divergent electors are spread over the other states and the ACT.

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 21 August 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	5,131,324	5,179,566	State	-48,242	-0.9%
VIC	4,002,733	3,962,536	Federal	40,197	1.0%
Qld	3,088,230	3,087,697	Federal	533	0.0%
WA	1,587,322	1,585,045	Federal	2,277	0.1%
SA	1,186,290	1,187,233	State	-943	-0.1%
Tas	375,210	375,155	Federal	55	0.0%
ACT	283,597	283,141	Federal	456	0.2%
NT	136,524	136,524	Federal	0	0.0%
Australia	15,791,230	15,796,897	State	-5,667	0.0%