

**Submission
No 2**

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2015 NSW STATE ELECTION

Organisation: Australian Electoral Commission
Name: Mr Tom Rogers
Position: Acting Electoral Commissioner
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Electoral Commissioner

Our Ref: 10/1106

Gareth Ward MP
Committee Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Ward,

NSW Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' Inquiry into Preparations for the 2015 NSW State Election

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the NSW Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters' Inquiry into Preparations for the 2015 NSW State Election.

Following the recount conducted for the 2013 half-Senate election in Western Australia, the then Australian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Ed Killesteyn, appointed Mr Mick Keelty AO to undertake an investigation into the circumstances which led to the loss of 1 370 Senate ballot papers. Mr Keelty's findings were produced in the report *Inquiry into the 2013 WA Senate Election* (the Keelty Report) [available here: http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/Reports_On_Federal_Electoral_Events/2013/files/inquiry-into-the-2013-wa-senate-election.pdf]. In this report, Mr Keelty outlined significant failures in some of the processes and procedures for the handling, movement and storage of WA Senate ballot papers. The Keelty Report made 32 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the three-person Electoral Commission.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is currently focusing on a number of whole-of-operation and long term initiatives in response to issues that were articulated in the Keelty Report and Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) reports. Specifically, the AEC is:

- conducting a broad-scale examination of our policies and procedures to identify areas that may be vulnerable to operational strain;
- considering advice provided by external logistics experts to improve the transportation and storage of election materials with a specific focus on sensitive materials such as ballot papers;
- investigating the feasibility of how we publicise ballot paper anomalies and election incidents at future elections; and
- reviewing polling official training and implementing a new learning and development system.

All initiatives are ongoing as the AEC works to rebuild the agency's capacity to deliver an accurate, transparent and credible election result.

The AEC established the Keelty Implementation Team (KIT) in December 2013 to drive and lead the implementation of new measures addressing the Keelty Report recommendations trialled at the 2014 Griffith by-election and the 2014 WA half-Senate election. These measures included:

- new and revised guidelines, standards, directions and ballot paper security forms;
- secure labels and seals for ballot paper parcels; and
- enhanced duties and training of staff.

The AEC provided to the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) an evaluation report on the Griffith by-election implementation of interim measures as part of the JSCEM's *inquiry into and report on all aspects of the conduct of the 2013 Federal Election and matters related thereto* (2013 Inquiry). The evaluation report detailed the implementation of improved measures for the security, handling and storage of ballot papers resulting from the Keelty Report recommendations. The evaluation report is publicly available as Submission 20.2 on the JSCEM's website:

[\[http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=d302505f-0aba-4b04-8548-ee8539b8e5f7\]](http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=d302505f-0aba-4b04-8548-ee8539b8e5f7).

To support the JSCEM's 2013 Inquiry, the AEC has provided documentation on the implementation of the Keelty Report recommendations at the 2014 WA half-Senate election. This has been published by the JSCEM as Submission 20.6: [\[http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=9528a557-978b-4c22-8f0e-d384ed0879fa\]](http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=9528a557-978b-4c22-8f0e-d384ed0879fa). Submission 20.6 also contains at Attachment B, a status report of the Keelty Report recommendations and AEC measures implemented by the KIT at the Griffith by-election and WA half-Senate election. The evaluation of implementation of new measures for the WA half-Senate election is available in Attachment C. Demonstrable changes in practice are viewable in the photographs of ballot paper packages in storage for the 2014 WA half-Senate election in Attachment D.

The Hansard for the JSCEM's public hearings are available from the JSCEM's website: [\[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral Matters/2013 General Election/Public Hearings\]](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral_Matters/2013_General_Election/Public_Hearings). The Hansard contains discussion on both the 2013 federal election and [REDACTED] half-Senate election.

I hope that this [REDACTED] the Committee in its inquiry.

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Tom Rogers

Acting Electoral Commissioner

7 October 2014

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