PROGRAM 1.3:
EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

Informed Australians through the provision of information services on electoral matters
Program 1.3 overview

Structure

In 2010–11, Program 1.3 comprised three deliverables, as shown in Table 27.

Performance

New initiatives among the AEC’s education and communications activities in 2010–11 included:

- the AEC’s first targeted digital advertising campaign,
- a redeveloped Internet home page with entry points and customised information for the needs of various users,
- a pilot of the conduct of ‘parallel elections’ in two secondary schools, and
- a pilot program of workshops for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups in the 10 electorates that had high rates of informal voting at the 2007 federal election.

The bulk of the AEC’s communication activities related to the 2010 federal election. The main elements were the election time advertising campaign, media and public relations activities, the website (including the Virtual Tally Room), and call centre and email information services.

The AEC also delivered ongoing activities such as the School and Community Visits Program, the National Electoral Education Centre, public enquiry services and information materials. Support was also given to reinforcing the AEC’s enrolment messages, for example through the enhancement of Continuous Roll Update letters and the delivery of documents under the communications framework to encourage people to enrol or update their enrolment address details when moving house (discussed in more detail in the report on performance for Program 1.1).

Table 27 Objective and deliverables of Program 1.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Informed Australians through the provision of information services on electoral matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliverables</td>
<td>Electoral education Continue to deliver a variety of electoral education services. Greater use of online technology to deliver supporting resource material. Collaborate and partner with other government and non-government instrumentalities in the delivery of quality civics education. Communication strategies and services Develop the AEC’s communication strategy to support its conduct of the next federal election. Make greater use of contemporary technology to deliver modern products and services in line with community preferences for more online services. Community strategies Implementation of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance report</td>
<td>Pages 82–87 Pages 88–94 Pages 95–99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outlook

To support Program 1.3 in 2011–12, the AEC will continue to deliver education activities through the National Electoral Education Centre and Your Vote Counts teacher development program, and to develop new education materials.

Planned work includes changing the focus of the School and Community Visits Program, to deliver:

- authentic elections in schools, for example through the conduct of student representative council elections – this will incorporate strategies to develop skills within schools so that schools can independently conduct authentic elections; and
- tailored community education workshops, to address high rates of informal voting in CALD communities.

The AEC will also:

- develop learning modules for teachers rolling out the national curriculum in history, focusing on electoral history,
- develop and deliver a program of activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the introduction of compulsory enrolment and the fiftieth anniversary of the entitlement of all Indigenous Australians to enrol to vote at federal elections and referendums, and
- maintain capacity of communication services in preparation for federal elections and referendums.
Electoral education

Continue to deliver a variety of electoral education services.
Greater use of online technology to deliver supporting resource material.
Collaborate and partner with other government and non government instrumentalities in the delivery of quality civics education.

Overview

The AEC’s electoral education program aims to raise the level of participation in electoral events among members of the Australian community through various programs, workshops and education sessions.

While the AEC considers all electors and future electors to be part of its audience, the electoral education program targets two sectors of the community that have the lowest rates of participation in elections:

- young people – because research shows that early experience of sound electoral processes helps young people to form the ‘voting habit’, the AEC focuses on educating and engaging the interest of primary and secondary school students; and
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – because electorates with a large proportion of electors from such backgrounds tend to have high rates of informal voting, the AEC helps such voters to understand the mechanisms of voting and the importance of making their votes count.

Performance

Table 28 summarises the AEC’s results against performance information set out for electoral education in the 2010–11 Portfolio Budget Statements.

National Electoral Education Centre

School students, new citizens and community groups visit the National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC) in Canberra. By participating in a simulated election or referendum, visitors gain experience of voting and learn about the electoral process, the concept of democracy, and the history of Australia’s federal system of representative government. The AEC’s website provides a range of resources for follow-up learning.

The NEEC operated at full capacity during most of 2010–11. Demand exceeded the AEC’s ability to supply sessions.

Feedback from NEEC visitors in 2010–11 was very positive. The NEEC ranked highly in a comparison of visiting school groups’ experiences of educational attractions in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding region, as detailed in a case study on page 99.

Figure 12 shows trends in visitor numbers over the past 10 years, while Table 29 provides details of the numbers for the past three years.
Table 28 Key performance results for electoral education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicators</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78 000 visitors to National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC) per annum.</td>
<td>87 245 visitors attended sessions at the NEEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 000 NEEC sessions delivered per annum.</td>
<td>2 463 sessions were delivered at the NEEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 000 participants in AEC education outreach services.</td>
<td>102 894 school and community members participated in outreach programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 200 participants in teacher professional development sessions.</td>
<td>2 678 students from 17 universities participated in teacher professional development sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New service delivery options, including partnerships that promote public awareness of electoral matters.</td>
<td>Two new programs were trialled: parallel elections for high school students and formality workshops for CALD communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New online education resource material that responds to curriculum needs.</td>
<td>The procurement process to develop online learning modules related to the national history curriculum was completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant feedback indicates 90% satisfaction with AEC education services.</td>
<td>More than 98% of participants are satisfied with NEEC programs. More than 98% of participants are satisfied with professional development sessions. 85% of participants are satisfied with education sessions delivered by AEC staff in schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CALD = culturally and linguistically diverse.

Figure 12 Trends in National Electoral Education Centre visitor numbers, 2001–02 to 2010–11
Table 29 Visitors to the National Electoral Education Centre, 2008–09 to 2010–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor group</th>
<th>No. of visitors</th>
<th>No. of sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary students</td>
<td>67 002</td>
<td>72 602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior secondary students</td>
<td>4 602</td>
<td>6 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior secondary students</td>
<td>3 862</td>
<td>3 764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult participants</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompanying adults</td>
<td>6 951</td>
<td>7 403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82 631</td>
<td>90 130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education outreach services

For those who cannot make it to the NEEC, the AEC provides education in schools and tertiary institutions, to community groups, and by taking part in community events.

A major component of the AEC’s outreach services is the School and Community Visits Program (SCVP). During 2010–11, outreach activities under the SCVP reached 104 541 participants. The number decreased by 54.06 per cent, from 227 567 in 2009–10, because for a portion of the year AEC staff were focused on conducting the 2010 federal election.

Parallel election pilot

Immediately prior to the 2010 federal election, the AEC piloted ‘parallel elections’ in two secondary schools: St Mary Mackillop College, Canberra, and St Aidan’s Anglican Girls’ School, Brisbane. As described in the following case study on page 86, a parallel election replicates a real election, with the students voting for the candidates who are contesting the actual election in the electorate in which the school is located. The pilot was based on research showing that students who ‘practise’ voting in their formative years are more likely to engage in elections as adults.

Participating students approached the activity with interest and maturity and enthusiastically took on the roles of electoral officials and voters. Feedback from participating students and teachers was positive, and many lessons were learned from the pilot. The pilot will inform the AEC’s national education policy for schools and community groups.

Formal voting workshops

The AEC conducted a pilot program of workshops for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups in electorates that had high rates of informal voting at the 2007 federal election, to increase knowledge of the importance of casting a formal vote. The workshops were held in 10 electorates in western Sydney.

Consultants were engaged to provide access to the network of established CALD community groups and to presenters fluent in community languages, as well as venues for the workshops. The AEC planned the session content, provided resources for the workshops and trained the presenters. AEC staff provided ‘technical’ advice in most sessions. Overall, 1 772 CALD community members participated in 90 workshops for 13 main language groups, including Arabic, Cantonese, Greek and Vietnamese.
The program was well attended. Feedback was positive and showed that participants felt the program was educative and worthwhile. Demand for the workshops far exceeded expectations and could not be met.

A new program to address the high rate of informal voting in CALD communities will be developed, drawing on useful learnings from the 2010 pilot program.

**Teacher professional development sessions**

The AEC provides resources for teachers to use in delivering civics education in schools or tertiary institutions. This includes:

- responding to requests for printed product made via a dedicated AEC email information service (450 requests were received in 2010–11),
- making materials available for download from the education section of the AEC website, and
- maintaining a subscriber list for teachers and educators, to disseminate AEC publications and provide information about AEC initiatives in electoral education.

The *Your Vote Counts* program aims to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skill to deliver civics education to their classes. During 2010–11, 2,678 tertiary students took part in *Your Vote Counts* sessions, an 85.3 per cent increase from 1,445 in 2009–10. The rise can be explained by increases in both the number of tertiary institutions visited and the numbers of students enrolled in education courses in those institutions.

Participants in 2010–11 benefitted from improvements to workshops and content that were made in response to previous participants’ feedback. Participants were encouraged to evaluate *Your Vote Counts* sessions. Of those who provided feedback, 98.0 per cent stated that they were satisfied with the program’s curriculum relevance, and the same proportion indicated satisfaction with the session overall.

**Education sector activities**

The AEC continued to contribute to the national agenda for civics education, through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). ACARA was established in 2008 to develop and administer a national school curriculum. The AEC aims to help shape the future of civics education through its ongoing interaction with ACARA and reviews of ACARA activities.

The AEC is a founding member of the newly created National Capital Civics Education Group (NCCEG), which had its inaugural meeting on 4 February 2011. The National Archives of Australia, National Portrait Gallery, Museum of Australian Democracy, High Court of Australia, National Capital Authority and National Capital Education Tourism Project are also members.

The NCCEG’s purpose is to share ideas and information, and to collaborate on projects that capitalise on the many connections between member agencies and their stories, to enhance the civics education experience for visitors, including school students, family groups and adults.

Current projects of the NCCEG include the development of a walking tour, based on new technologies, to link the various attractions in the parliamentary triangle. The AEC is driving an NCCEG working group to make submissions to ACARA to contribute to the shaping of the new national civics and citizenship curriculum.

The AEC also helped to facilitate the annual schools constitutional conventions held at state and national levels in 2010–11.
Case study: Parallel elections

Research, including the AEC’s *Mobilise the franchise report*, indicates that people who practise voting while they are young are more likely to be active voters as adults. In several countries with parliamentary democracies similar to Australia’s, such as Canada, New Zealand and the United States, this knowledge has informed the development of ‘parallel elections’ as an educational tool for high school students.

Parallel elections are run in conjunction with actual elections (federal, state or local). The voting is usually held around a week before the actual electoral event.

A suitable place in the school is converted into a polling place, with voting screens, issuing tables, signage and a ballot box. The school roll is printed to resemble a certified list, and realistic ballot papers are prepared, listing the candidates for the electorate in which the school is located.

On polling day for the school, the activity within the venue closely resembles that in an actual polling place. Student volunteers are trained as polling officials and wear badges and bibs to identify their roles. Appointed queue controllers ensure that the process is orderly as student voters line up at the issuing tables, and a ballot box guard is in attendance.

Once the voting is complete, the ballot box is sealed and secured until the scrutiny takes place. Due to sensitivities surrounding release of results prior to the actual election, the scrutiny is best conducted soon after the real event. Student polling officials conduct the scrutiny, under the supervision of electoral officers, who then compile the results and draw up a comparison between the results of the parallel election and the actual result in that electorate.

During the 2010 federal election, the AEC conducted a pilot to test the potential benefits of ‘parallel elections’ in Australia. Because preparation time was limited, only two schools were selected to take part: St Aidan’s Anglican Girls’ School in Brisbane (Division of Moreton) and St Mary Mackillop College in Canberra (Division of Canberra).

The pilot exercise was well supported by teachers and students at both schools. Students were enthusiastic about taking on
the roles of polling officials, and voter turnout was strong:

- At the Brisbane school, which adopted compulsory voting for year 12 students, 70 students voted (81 per cent of those eligible and 100 per cent of those in attendance), with 100 per cent formality.
- At the Canberra school, which made voting an optional lunchtime activity for students in years 10 and 11, 218 students voted (42 per cent of those eligible), with 80 per cent formality.

Students reported that they had enjoyed the election, and were particularly interested in the comparisons between their election outcomes and the results of the federal election. In both cases, distinct differences between the voting patterns within the school and across the electorate helped students to appreciate the role of young people in influencing election outcomes.

In terms of the value of the exercise, the students considered that:

- Students who are soon to be eligible electors have little idea of the process, so they benefit from this ‘run through’.
- The parallel election should be compulsory for students in participating classes. Otherwise, the most disengaged students will be the ones who opt out.

Teachers reported that the exercise had been conducted smoothly and professionally, and was valuable in preparing students for civic responsibilities. Both schools commented that they would be willing to repeat the activity. One school also indicated that it would be willing to run the activity on its own, if staff received appropriate training and the AEC provided the election materials.

The AEC learned several important lessons about conducting parallel elections effectively, including:

- The AEC could provide more materials to help teachers and students discuss the issues surrounding the election, so that students can relate the process of voting to having their say about an issue.
- Voting should be compulsory for students in participating classes.
- The delivery of election results and comparison of voting patterns could be managed by teachers trained to use data from the Virtual Tally Room.

The results of the pilot project confirm the potential for parallel elections to play a valuable part in the AEC’s multifaceted strategy to raise the level of electoral participation in Australia.
Communication strategies and services

Develop the AEC’s communication strategy to support its conduct of the next federal election.

Make greater use of contemporary technology to deliver modern products and services in line with community preferences for more online services.

Overview

To promote knowledge of and participation in Australia’s electoral processes, as required by the Electoral Act, the AEC:

- conducts communication activities before and during federal elections, and
- provides a range of information services, including the AEC website, telephone and email enquiry services, translating and interpreting services, publications, the federal election call centre and Virtual Tally Room.

Performance

Table 30 summarises the AEC’s results against the performance information set out for communication strategies and services in the 2010–11 Portfolio Budget Statements.

Election-specific communication activities

The 2010 federal election was a primary focus of AEC communication strategies and services in 2010–11. The AEC’s federal election communication activities aim to increase elector understanding of and participation in the electoral process, focusing on three key issues: close of rolls, voter services and formality. They included:

- an advertising campaign
- media and public relations activities
- the AEC website and Virtual Tally Room
- publications
- call centre and email information services.

Table 30 Key performance results for communication strategies and services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicators</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience feedback is positive for effectiveness of specific advertising campaigns and public awareness activities through surveys, market research, and stakeholder consultation.</td>
<td>Advertising campaign market research showed high levels (98%) of awareness of the obligation to enrol and vote as well as high levels of confidence in the AEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support materials developed and field work program commenced for the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program.</td>
<td>Program designed, staff selected and trained, support materials developed and field work commenced. Achievements measured against the timeframes and outcomes listed in the new policy proposal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advertising campaign

Pre-election advertising consisted of online advertising only. The objective was to prompt people to visit the AEC website to update their enrolment details before the close of rolls. The advertising continued the theme of ‘three easy steps’ which had been developed for letters used in the Continuous Roll Update program.

The election time advertising campaign commenced on the announcement of the election on 17 July and ran through to election day on 21 August 2011. This campaign was an update of the 2007 federal election campaign, which had been developed with the intention of using it for at least two elections. The campaign theme ‘Your vote is a valuable thing’ was rolled out in three phases, focusing on:

- close of rolls – to promote awareness of the deadlines for enrolling to vote and updating enrolment,
- voter services – to raise awareness of the availability of early voting services for those unable to vote on election day, including the availability of remote mobile polling, and
- formality – to inform and remind voters how to cast a formal vote.

The online advertising campaign operated in two ways:

- digital – placing advertisements on websites chosen for their high reach into the target audience (mainly young people or movers); and
- search – promoting the AEC website by increasing the visibility of the AEC in search engine results. When people used search engines to look for information about moving house or anything election-related, the results screens would include timely, relevant reminders about enrolling to vote and/or updating address details, with links to the AEC website.

Ipsos–Eureka Strategic Research evaluated the effectiveness of the 2010 advertising campaign through a number of telephone-based surveys, each involving a national sample of more than a thousand electors. The surveys found that the advertising campaign and messaging were effective.

The research found that the majority of the Australian electorate are well served by the AEC. They have a positive perception of the electoral process, are knowledgeable about what they are required to do, and believe the AEC operates in a fair and impartial manner. This suggests that most AEC communications and activities are broadly on track and are successfully meeting their stated objectives.

Beyond the core group of voters, the findings identified distinct groups of people for whom further steps need to be taken to engage them so that they successfully vote in future elections. The groups were people aged under 25; people who have recently moved house; people from non-English speaking backgrounds; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Media and public relations activities

Extensive media and public relations activities were implemented for the election, starting well before the issuing of the writs. Consistent with the practice adopted at the 2004 and 2007 federal elections, the AEC engaged a service provider to establish a national network of public relations affiliates in capital cities, to boost the dissemination of key election information and messages.

In the lead-up to the election, the Electoral Commissioner and senior AEC staff conducted media briefings for senior editors and political reporters in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The purpose of the briefings was to provide senior press staff with an overview of the AEC’s pre-election and election period messages. Background information was provided on the state of the electoral roll and the range of factors that affect the speed of the vote counting, including the differences between ordinary votes and declaration votes.

After the election was called, the AEC worked with the contractor to provide media releases
and other information materials; audio releases; photo and filming opportunities; pitching of specific story angles; pitching of interview opportunities for AEC spokespersons; and proactive contact with media outlets and journalists. In addition, the AEC’s website provided comprehensive information for the media, including all national media releases, fact sheets, media contacts, information backgrounders and photographic images.

In total, during the election period:

- More than 50 national media releases were distributed, supported by state, territory and divisional media releases and radio releases.
- AEC spokespeople appeared on radio and local and national news and current affairs television programs to discuss the close of rolls deadlines, the conduct of the election and counting arrangements.
- Information accessibility issues, particularly voting arrangements for people who are blind or have low vision, was promoted through RPH Australia’s radio network, with assistance from Vision Australia.

Media interest continued after polling day, because of the closeness of election results. The volume of election-related media enquiries to the AEC was noticeably higher in 2010 than in 2007.

**Targeted initiatives**

The AEC’s communication strategy for the 2010 federal election included targeted initiatives to maximise the electoral participation of members of groups with particular needs, as summarised in Table 31.

**AEC website**

The AEC website played an integral role in the election communications campaign. It was the main referral point for information about enrolling and voting, and assisted people to check their enrolment status, fill in enrolment or postal voting forms, or find polling place locations.

To enhance self service through the website, the www.aec.gov.au home page was redeveloped and organised into user streams. By the time of the announcement of the 2010 federal election, the site had specific, easily identified entry points and customised information for members of the media and for people who:

- needed to enrol or update their enrolment
- would be overseas during the election
- wanted to work on the election
- wanted to nominate as candidates.

During the 2010 federal election period, www.aec.gov.au had approximately 30.2 million page views and almost 4.2 million visitors.

**Publications**

The *Official guide to the 2010 federal election* was produced and delivered to approximately 9.5 million Australian households before election day, and made available online in 22 languages (including English). Other publications to assist electors to vote correctly included coloured press advertisements, fact sheets, and A2 sized posters for polling place display. A *How to vote* booklet was produced in 22 languages and distributed for use in polling places across Australia.

**Virtual Tally Room**

Part of the AEC website, the Virtual Tally Room (VTR) publishes election results as they occur.

On the evening of the 2010 federal election, the VTR received approximately 6.3 million page views and 151 000 visitors, providing rapid access to approximately 300 unique results screens. Almost 11 million House of Representatives votes were counted, and the results published on the VTR, on that night alone.
### Table 31. Election communication activities for special target groups, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Targeted activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous electors</td>
<td>General press and radio advertising was adapted and placed in Indigenous media; the radio advertising was translated into seven languages. Field visits to Indigenous communities by staff of the AEC’s Indigenous Electoral Participation Program were supported by a targeted media relations program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally and linguistically diverse electors</td>
<td>Advertisements were translated into 21 languages for ethnic press, 24 languages for ethnic radio and six languages for ethnic television. Publications and media releases were adapted and translated into more than 20 languages, made available on the AEC website and included in packages distributed to 600 migrant resource centres, community organisations and media organisations. The AEC offers interpreter services for telephone enquiries, through VITS LanguageLink (VITS). A total of 16,399 calls were handled by VITS in the 35-day period from the announcement of the election to election day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Electors with disabilities                       | A version of *Your official guide to the 2010 federal election* including additional information on accessibility issues was:  
  - distributed in accessible formats to individuals and to approximately 110 disability organisations (17,340 copies were distributed this way),  
  - made available through the AEC website in HTML, audio MP3 or CD, e text and large-print PDF formats, and  
  - provided in braille on request.  
  
  Election information was available in accessible formats (e text, large print and HTML, and audio or braille on request) via a dedicated section of the website. Information on accessibility issues, particularly voting arrangements for people who are blind or have low vision, was broadcast through RPH Australia’s radio network, with assistance from Vision Australia. Advertising and announcements were also broadcast by RPH Australia. |
| Electors in rural and remote areas, including those who ‘fly in and fly out’ for work | Advertisements promoting specific voting services in rural and remote areas were placed in regional press, television and radio channels where available, and supported by media releases and radio interviews.                                                                                                                                                  |
| Electors who had moved house                     | Advertising targeting ‘movers’ who had changed address since the 2007 federal election was run online, from before the election was announced until the close of rolls.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Electors who would be overseas during the election | Information for eligible electors who live overseas was provided through online advertising and the AEC website. An advertising campaign for travellers was linked to relevant forms and information on the AEC website, both directly and through other sites commonly accessed by Australian travellers. The AEC website linked to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website and listed more than a hundred diplomatic missions and embassies that provided details of overseas voting arrangements. |
Media organisations and interested third parties also had access to a media feed system from the VTR on polling night. The feed delivered uninterrupted, real-time election information and enabled media organisations to analyse and present the information according to their format and production requirements.

The VTR for the 2010 federal election was finalised in mid-October 2010 and remains accessible online as a detailed record of election results.

As was the case for the 2007 election, in 2010 the VTR proved to be robust and reliable in handling the large volume of traffic it received during the election period. The system and infrastructure which support both the VTR web pages and the media feed had been extensively tested to ensure that they would have enough capacity to meet expected demand.

The media coverage of the close outcome of the 2010 federal election brought to light some ambiguity in the terminology and labelling of information on the VTR, and revealed that the processes by which information on the VTR is updated and finalised were open to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The AEC will review the appropriateness of some VTR screens in an effort to provide clarity to users about the information being viewed.

The VTR was a finalist in the service delivery category of the 2011 Excellence in eGovernment Awards.

**Mobilise the Franchise**

The Mobilise the Franchise project, which commenced in 2009–10, provides a fresh approach to the challenge of improving electoral participation. This approach aligns with the AEC’s strategic planning priorities of modernisation, collaboration and investment in our people. In 2010–11 the AEC established small teams to identify activities to implement the strategies of the project.

One team explored the potential to engage with corporations and large employers to promote electoral enrolment to their staff, through a collaboration with Optus, the AEC’s supplier of telephonic equipment. As described in a case study on page 94, the collaboration included a range of communications activities and a three-day visit by AEC staff to Optus’s Sydney campus. The event achieved its objectives and received positive feedback from Optus employees.

Mobilise the Franchise approaches community engagement from the perspective of engaging with people ‘in their space, language, format and time’. It is believed that this approach will help reduce barriers to participation and facilitate the active engagement of all eligible Australians in the electoral process. Work to embed Mobilise the Franchise principles and approaches in the AEC’s ongoing business activities is continuing, with a particular focus on staff at all levels using Mobilise the Franchise philosophies to think about how they conduct, review and approach their work.

**Information services**

The AEC’s interaction with the public by telephone and email continued to increase.

Calls to the AEC’s general enquiry number (13 23 26) are diverted to the caller’s nearest divisional office, and emails are sent to the nearest divisional office or to the general enquiry mailbox managed by National Office. The AEC responds in accordance with the AEC Service Charter.

VITS LanguageLink (VITS) provided 16 language-specific telephone lines, and a line catering for a range of other languages, for the AEC. VITS handled a total of 16 399 calls to the AEC lines during the year, a more than threelfold increase compared to the 4 455 calls in the previous financial year. The number of calls taken in 2007–08, when the 2007 election was held, was 15 309.
The AEC received more than 57,600 emails to the general enquiry mailbox (info@aec.gov.au). This was a significant increase compared to fewer than 20,000 emails received in each of the two preceding financial years, but is comparable to the approximately 60,000 emails received in 2007–08, the previous financial year that included a federal election. The subject matter of emails ranged from the receipt of enrolment forms and overseas notification forms to requests for information on electoral matters.

Other communication activities

In the periods between federal elections, the AEC’s communications activities focus on promoting electoral enrolment. In 2010–11, these activities included:

- support for the Continuous Roll Update direct mail program,
- online advertising,
- Famous People Vote Too – a campaign which used well-known Australians as ambassadors to promote enrolling to vote, and
- partnerships with government agencies to provide enrolment forms and information.

The AEC also produced information briefings and media releases about the redistribution of electoral boundaries in Victoria and South Australia, and the annual release of financial disclosure returns.
Case study: Mobilise the Franchise Optus Event

The AEC’s Mobilise the Franchise project is a strategic response to the challenges of addressing the decline in electoral participation. Drawing on a detailed report presented in 2009–10, the project uses social marketing principles to identify ideas and actions that may encourage eligible Australians to enrol to vote and make their votes count.

One of the five overarching strategies identified in the report is to ‘appeal to the social responsibility of corporate and other big employers’. In 2010–11, the AEC put this strategy into action, in partnership with Optus, its supplier of telephonic equipment.

The collaboration with Optus began in November 2010. AEC state and divisional office staff in New South Wales:

- approached Optus and invited the company to consider how it could support the goals of mobilising the franchise as part of its corporate responsibility program,
- worked closely with Optus to design and decide the location, timing and staging of an event to promote enrolment, and
- in accordance with Optus’s specifications, developed communication products and services to support the event and extend messages about electoral participation to Optus employees.

The resulting Mobilise the Franchise Optus Event was held in March 2011. The centrepiece was a stall held at Optus’s campus at Macquarie Park in Sydney, which employs around 6 000 members of Optus’s younger workforce. Communications included:

- images and messages displayed on screen via the media kiosks located on all floors of the Macquarie Park campus and in Optus offices across Australia,
- a short article promoting the stall, published in the campus newsletter, and
- a short article promoting enrolment, published in Optus’s national newsletter, which reaches around 10 000 employees.

Over three days, the AEC staff at the stall received 330 enquiries, including 33 hard copy enrolment forms and 83 online updates of enrolment information. Fifty-two people used AEC laptops to check their enrolment details.

The event was well received by Optus employees, who described the stall as ‘a great initiative’. Many stated that they had already visited the AEC website to update their details or to enrol.

The AEC’s review of the event produced a number of detailed recommendations to streamline the delivery and evaluation of such activities in future. Overall, the Mobilise the Franchise Optus Event confirmed the potential for collaborations with large employers to help the AEC achieve its goals for increasing enrolment and electoral participation.
Community strategies

Implementation of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program.

Overview
Through the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP), the AEC is working to:

- increase electoral knowledge, enrolment and participation in the democratic and electoral process among Indigenous people, and
- decrease levels of informal voting among Indigenous electors.

Performance
Table 32 summarises the AEC’s results against the performance information set out for community strategies in the 2010–11 Portfolio Budget Statements.

Indigenous Electoral Participation Program
In 2009–10, the Australian Government announced a four-year program to close the gap in areas of Indigenous disadvantage by improving the participation of Indigenous Australians in Australia’s electoral and democratic processes. That program, the IEPP, is the first since 1996 that the AEC has run specifically for Indigenous people.

After a period of extensive consultation and program design, the IEPP field program commenced in May 2010, three months before the federal election. Twenty three field staff were recruited and trained, augmenting four staff based in the National Office. Eighteen of the current 23 IEPP staff are Indigenous.

During the first 12 months of implementation, the field program established and developed strong relationships with Indigenous communities and organisations around Australia, including community elders, land councils, community organisations, non-government organisations and government agencies. The strength of those relationships has seen demand for the field program grow rapidly. The program has ready and supported access to most Indigenous communities across the country, allowing it to conduct enrolment and education activities.

Table 32 Key performance results for community strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key performance indicators</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to implement the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, focusing on identifying and overcoming barriers to participation.</td>
<td>The program design, staff and relationships are in place to provide a firm foundation for the implementation of the program’s strategies and activities. Field work commenced in 2010–11 and contributed to an increase in electoral enrolments and more effective participation among Indigenous voters at the 2010 federal election.</td>
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</table>
In addition to the field program, the IEPP includes:
- a communications and media strategy,
- co-sponsorships and collaborations with government and non-government organisations,
- an ambassador program of community influencers, and
- strategies to increase Indigenous participation in the administration of elections.

The program’s outreach activities include delivering education sessions in schools, TAFEs and prisons, and providing electoral information at events such as football carnivals, music festivals, agricultural shows and trade and employment expos.

Specifically coded enrolment forms were created for the program to assist the AEC to broadly track the number of enrolments generated by the program. The code does not identify whether the elector is Indigenous or not, but rather indicates where they received their enrolment form. The number of coded forms returned to the AEC has increased on a monthly basis since field work commenced. For example, total enrolment activity for IEPP coded enrolment forms (changes of enrolments, new enrolments and re-enrolments) in May 2010, before any field work was undertaken, was 49 transactions. The number of returned forms rose to 321 in June and to 568 in July prior to the federal election in August. It is important to note that 53 coded enrolment forms were not used consistently by IEPP staff until after the election period. It is also important to note that Indigenous Australians can also enrol using forms obtained from any number of locations, including the Internet.

A trial of electoral awareness officers was undertaken in Queensland in the lead up to and during the 2010 federal election. To expand the reach of the program across the state, 150 community-based electoral awareness officers were recruited, on a casual and temporary basis. A further trial was undertaken at the 2011 New South Wales state election, for which 59 electoral awareness officers were employed. Indications suggest that the officers have had a positive effect, increasing enrolments, increasing participation and reducing informal voting.

Indications of the positive impacts that the IEPP is having in overcoming the barriers to participation include:
- the continuing growth of enrolments of Indigenous people,
- the strengthening of the integrity of the roll, particularly in remote communities,
- an increase in the number of Indigenous people working as polling officials, demonstrated during the 2010 federal election and the New South Wales state election, and
- an increased number of requests for fee-for-service elections by Indigenous organisations.

Other community programs

As a supplement to the national program of public awareness and education, staff in state and divisional offices deliver local activities to help improve levels of understanding and participation in electoral processes by targeted audiences.

Education sector

Around Australia, AEC staff seek ongoing engagement with the education sector through attendance at relevant education forums, conferences and expos. For example, AEC staff attended the Business Educators’ Association of Queensland Expo and the Queensland History Teachers’ Association conference in 2010–11.

Young people

AEC staff from divisional offices promote youth enrolment and provide information about electoral and voting processes for
young people, by attending university open and orientation days, market days, tertiary and career expos and festivals. For example, in 2010–11 AEC staff in Queensland attended:

- a tertiary studies expo in Brisbane,
- careers expos held at the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, and in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Gympie, Ipswich, Maryborough, Mount Isa, the Sunshine Coast, Townsville and Toowoomba, and
- the Dalby Career, Transition and Health Expo.

In Victoria, an initiative called the ‘roving enroller’ was trialled. It was designed to promote enrolment to people aged 18–30 years, and provided information relating to voting rights and responsibilities.

In South Australia, staff provided information about citizenship responsibilities to students in the Hyde Street Program social skills program for ‘at risk’ young people of high school age.

**People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**

AEC staff provide electoral information sessions to people from CALD backgrounds, and participate in local expos and meetings to engage with CALD community groups and service providers. In 2010–11, education sessions were delivered in migrant information and education sessions and to electors through TAFEs, targeting CALD students attending English courses and workforce preparatory courses.

AEC staff, in partnership with the New South Wales Electoral Commission, conducted electoral information sessions at the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre in the three weeks preceding the 2011 New South Wales state election, across a range of languages groups including Arabic, Dari, Mandarin and Spanish. The purpose of the presentations was to provide education and information to community groups to increase understanding and reduce the level of informal voting.

In the lead-up to the 2010 federal election, an AEC representative participated in two live SBS radio interviews conducted in Arabic for the Arabic-speaking community. The interviews covered election information and invited questions from the public.

In Queensland, AEC staff attended the Multicultural Festival in Brisbane and the Multicultural Learning and Skilling Expos at Yeronga.

In South Australia, an electoral education program was established with the Adelaide Secondary School of English, which works with students entering the education system as new migrants. During the 2010 federal election, a former child refugee from Sierra Leone worked closely with the AEC’s staff in South Australia to promote the importance of enrolment and voting for people from CALD backgrounds.

**People in rural and remote areas**

AEC staff delivered targeted public awareness activities for Indigenous Australians and people in rural and remote areas. Targeted mail-outs were conducted to people living on remote stations, police and teachers. In cooperation with IEPP staff, electoral education sessions were presented to Indigenous and rural and remote communities such as:

- Wimmera and Northern Mallee, Victoria
- Karcultaby, Miltaburra, Kangaroo Island, Cummins, and Port Lincoln, South Australia
- Islands of Bass Strait, Tasmania.

**Groups with special requirements**

The AEC conducted activities to raise awareness of electoral matters and AEC services among a range of other groups with special requirements. For example:

- Electoral education information sessions were provided to the Endeavour Foundation, the largest disability service provider in Australia.
In Western Australia, the AEC was an active participant in the 2010 Homeless Connect expo.

In South Australia, an education and information session was delivered to civil servants from Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, through a program run by the University of Adelaide English Language Centre.

Two information sessions were conducted at the Australian Antarctic Division, where enrolment and voting procedures were explained to expeditioners and contractors before they deployed.
Case study: National Electoral Education Centre

At the AEC’s National Electoral Education Centre (NEEC), located in Old Parliament House, a team of professional educators conducts fully facilitated electoral education sessions.

School students are the major audience for the centre, which also provides sessions for migrants and new citizens, seniors, and community groups. The NEEC offers a selection of structured sessions to cater for a range of groups:

- House of Representatives (for all age groups) – highlights preferential voting and explores the concept of representation in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Participants vote and count the votes in a House of Representatives election scenario.
- Referendum (for all age groups, especially people who have prior electoral knowledge) – explores the concept of constitutional change; participants vote and count the votes in a referendum scenario.
- Senate (for senior secondary, tertiary and adult groups) – highlights proportional representation and explores representation in the Senate and House of Representatives. Participants vote and count the votes in a Senate election scenario.
- Eligible Elector (for senior secondary, tertiary and adult groups, especially people who are soon to be eligible voters) – explores representation in the Senate and House of Representatives and the voting process and scrutiny for both houses.
- Personalised Election (for all ages, subject to conditions) – provides for a ‘real’ election, for example for a Student Representative Council, emphasising the House of Representatives voting process and using a personalised election scenario.

The learning tools used in the sessions include a multimedia presentation in a purpose-built theatrette and interactive displays. Each visiting group receives an electoral education resources pack, and other information complementing the sessions is available from the AEC website.

Demand for the NEEC’s programs is very high. More than 80 000 students take part each year. In other sectors, participation is growing: for example, an employment services provider now includes a visit to the NEEC in its work experience support program for migrants. In total, visitor numbers have reached the limits of the centre’s capacity, exceeding 90 000, with a waiting list of around 6 000.

Recent research by the University of Canberra’s Centre for Tourism Research, published in Size and effect of school excursions to the national capital, 2010 in May 2011, confirmed that the NEEC’s many visitors are happy with the services they receive, and that the centre plays an important role among educational tourist attractions in the Australian Capital Territory and the surrounding region. For example:

- Of all school students who visited the Australian Capital Territory and region, 56.1 per cent attended the NEEC.
- In a comparison of levels of satisfaction with attractions for school excursions in Canberra the NEEC was ranked:
  - second in terms of the proportion of teachers who were satisfied or very satisfied with their visit, at 98.1 per cent of respondents, and
  - equal first in terms of how satisfied participants were, with a rating of 4.83 out of a possible 5.
- Teachers who participated in the survey said that:
  - ‘The Electoral Education Centre made it easy for the students to understand how an election is run.’
  - ‘The Electoral Education Centre was brilliant and the guide was great at connecting with the kids and making it incredibly interesting.’
  - ‘The Electoral Centre visit was great. The instructions were very explicit and well explained.’
- Of all the school groups that visited the Australian Capital Territory and region, 12.4 per cent named the NEEC as a standout component of their visit.