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ABOUT THE AEC

# About the AEC

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) operates as an independent statutory authority, responsible for maintaining an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services and targeted education and public awareness programmes.

## Role and functions

The AEC's role is to deliver the franchise, being an Australian citizen's right to vote, as established by the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

The functions of the AEC are to:

- maintain the electoral roll
- manage federal elections and referendums
- conduct ballots for industrial and commercial organisations
- conduct public awareness and education activities
- undertake electoral research
- support electoral redistributions
- administer election funding, financial disclosure and party registration requirements
- assist with overseas elections and referendums.

## Values and principles

The AEC's values of electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism inform the agency's strategic planning and day-to-day operations.

The AEC is also guided by the Australian Public Service ICARE values of impartiality, committed to service, accountable, respectful and ethical. These values are applied by:

- conducting business with fairness
- maintaining high standards of integrity and ethical behaviour
- respecting and upholding the law
- embracing difference and being sensitive to the special needs of staff and voters
- being open, transparent and accountable
- showing respect to clients, stakeholders and colleagues.

The agency continues to strengthen its focus on electoral integrity. Over the last 12 months the agency has continued to concentrate on understanding and responding to the expectations of the public and the Parliament.

More information on the AEC's ethics and values is provided in the chapter titled Governance and Compliance.

# Outcome and programme structure

## AEC performance reporting

The AEC has one outcome: maintain an **impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services and targeted education and public awareness programmes**. This outcome is delivered via three programmes:

### Programme 1.1 Electoral roll management

#### OBJECTIVE

Provide Australian voters with access to their entitlement to vote and support for electoral events and redistributions through maintaining an accurate and up-to-date electoral roll.

#### DELIVERABLES

- Electoral roll management.
- Support services for electoral redistributions.

### Programme 1.2 Election management and support services

#### OBJECTIVE

Access to an impartial and independent electoral system through the provision of electoral services, assistance and advice.

#### DELIVERABLES

- Election management: delivery of federal elections, by-elections and referendums.
- Election support services: party registrations, funding and disclosure services, industrial elections and protected action ballots, Torres Strait Regional Authority elections, fee-for-service elections and ballots, advice and assistance for overseas elections and referendums.

### Programme 1.3 Education and communication

#### OBJECTIVE

Informed Australians through the provision of information services on electoral matters.

#### DELIVERABLES

- Electoral education.
- Communication strategies and services.
- Community strategies.

# Organisational structure

## Structure

### National office

At 30 June 2015, the National Office, located in Canberra, consisted of nine key functional areas:

- Education and Communications
- Election Planning, Systems and Services
- Election Reform Programme
- Finance and Business Services
- Funding and Disclosure
- Information Technology
- Legal and Procurement
- People Services
- Roll Management.

### State/territory offices

The AEC's state offices are located in each state capital city of Australia. The Northern Territory office is in Darwin. Divisional offices in the Australian Capital Territory office are managed by the New South Wales State Manager except during election periods, when an Australian Electoral Officer for the ACT is appointed.

### Divisional offices and electoral divisions

Divisional offices of the AEC are responsible for electoral administration within each of the 150 electoral divisions. Each division is represented by a member of the House of Representatives. Divisional offices administer the conduct of electoral events, manage the electoral roll and carry out public awareness activities. Some divisional offices stand alone, while others are co-located in the same site. [Figure 2](#) illustrates Australia's electoral divisions as at 30 June 2015.

## Leadership

### The Commission

The AEC has a three-person Commission comprising the Chairperson, who must be an active or retired judge of the Federal Court of Australia, the Electoral Commissioner and a non-judicial member.

As at 30 June 2015, the members of the Commission were:

- Chairperson: the Hon. Dennis Cowdroy OAM QC
- Electoral Commissioner: Tom Rogers
- Non-judicial member: David Kalisch.

### Executive management

Assisting the Electoral Commissioner are the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, two First Assistant Commissioners, six Assistant Commissioners, the Chief Finance Officer and the Chief Legal Officer. The First Assistant Commissioners are each responsible for a division. These are:

- the Election Operations and Reform Division, consisting of three key functional areas (in addition, the First Assistant Commissioner, Election Operations and Reform Division, performs the role of National Election Manager (NEM))
- the Capability Division consisting of five key functional areas.



Senior Executive Group 2014–15. Back row left to right: Jeff Pope, Emma Mason, Stephen Blackburn, Doug Orr, Claire Witham, Robert Pugsley, Mick Sherry, Marie Neilson, Anna Robinson, Sandra Riordan, Gabrielle Paten. Front row left to right: Andrew Gately, Lynn White, Stuart Oreo, Pablo Carpay, Kevin Kitson, Tom Rogers, Tim Courtney, Paul Pirani.

State managers, who also hold a statutory appointment as Australian Electoral Officer, for the respective state or territory, are responsible for electoral activities within their state or territory. Figure 3 shows the AEC organisational structure and leadership.

Figure 2: Australia's 150 electoral divisions

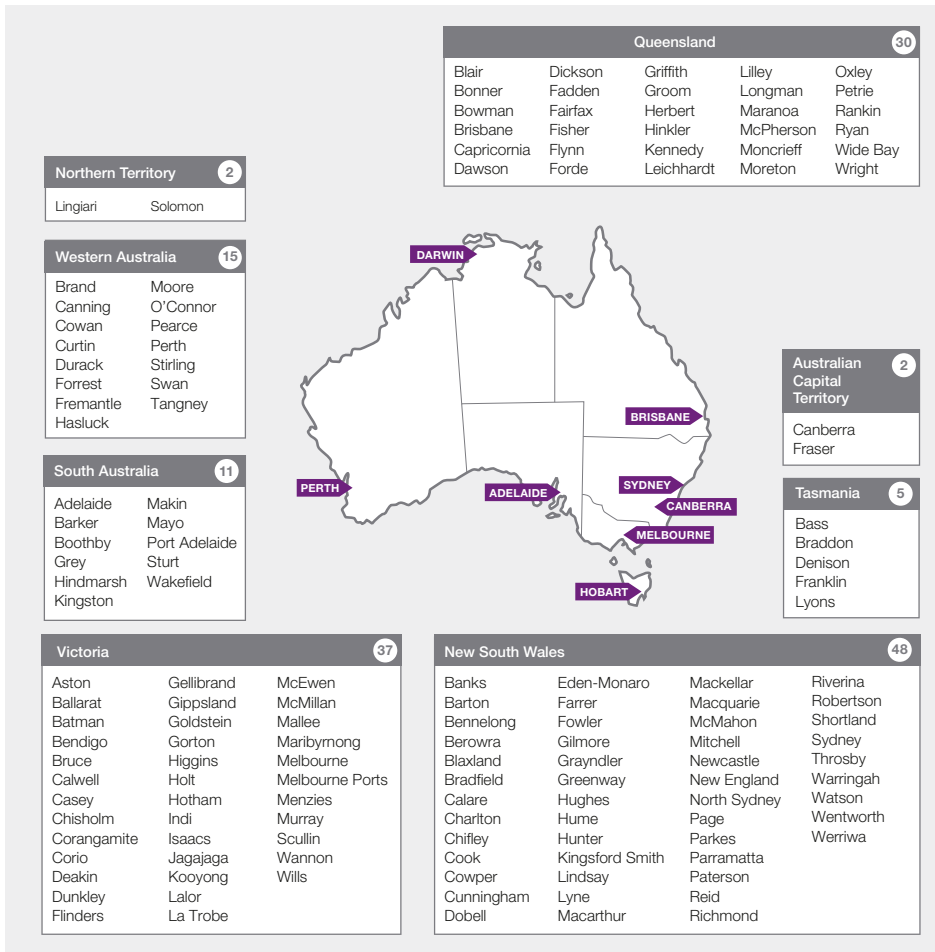
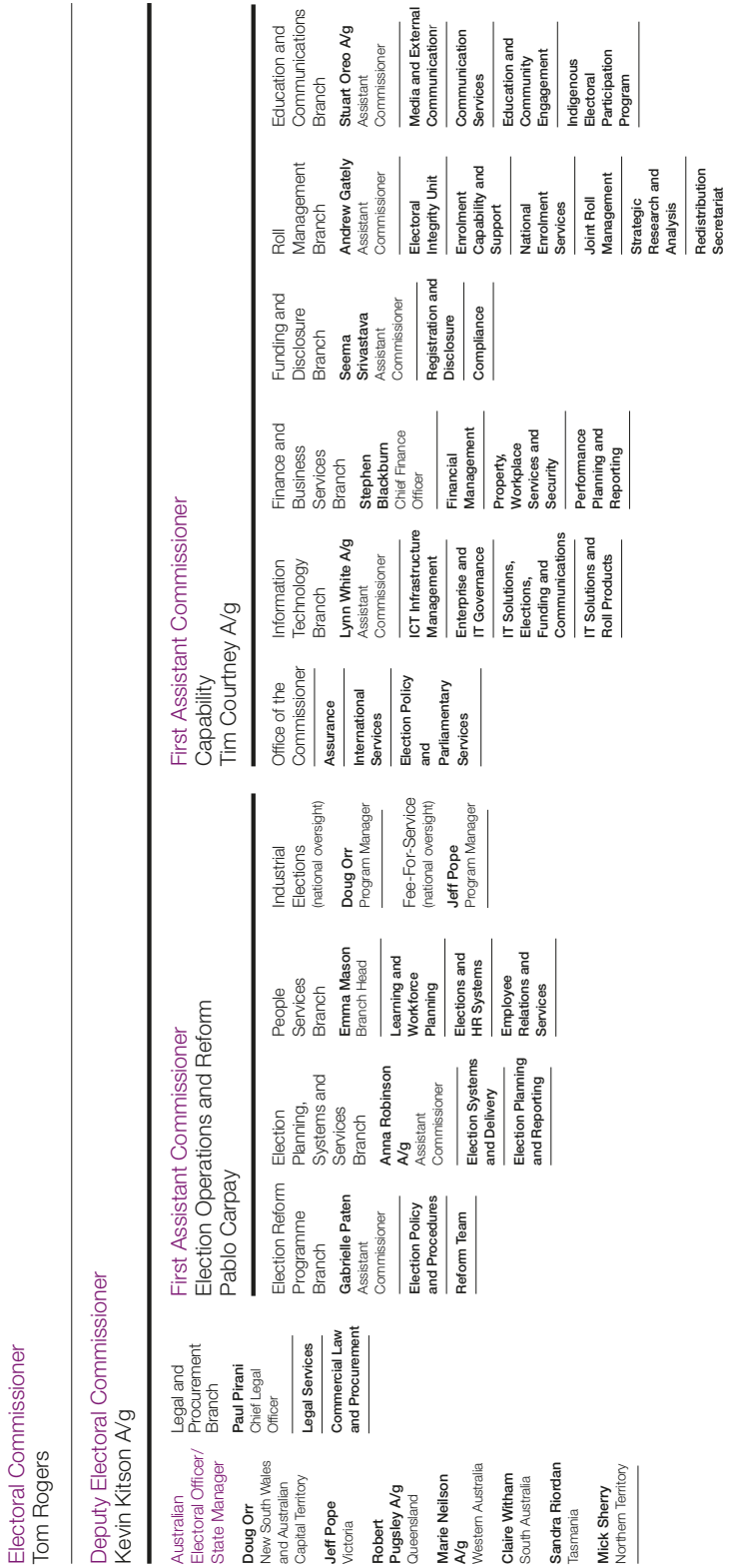


Figure 3: Organisation chart and leadership structure as at 30 June 2015



A/g = Acting

**Australian Electoral Commission**

Chairperson: the Hon. Dennis Cowdroy OAM OC  
Non-judicial member: David Kalisch  
Electoral Commissioner: Tom Rogers

## Guiding legislation

The Electoral Act establishes the roles and responsibilities of the AEC as an independent statutory authority. [Table 1](#) sets out the legislative instruments which guide the functions of the AEC.

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**Table 1: Legislative framework**

Legislative instrument	AEC function
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005</i>	Conduct Torres Strait Regional Authority elections
<i>Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918</i>	Conduct federal elections
	Maintain and update the Commonwealth electoral roll
	Promote public awareness of electoral and parliamentary matters through information and education programs
	Provide international electoral assistance in cases approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs
	Conduct and promote research into electoral matters and other matters that relate to AEC functions
	Register political parties
	Pay public funding to election candidates and parties and publish financial disclosure returns of political parties and others
<i>Electoral and Referendum Regulations 1940</i>	Provide support to the independent redistribution process that determines representation entitlements.
	Conduct federal elections and referendums and provide voter information
<i>Fair Work Act 2009</i>	Conduct protected action ballots
<i>Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009</i>	Conduct industrial elections
<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i>	Manage public money and property
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	Hold and release documents
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Store, use and disclose personal information
<i>Public Service Act 1999</i>	Ensure the effective and fair employment, management and leadership of AEC employees
<i>Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984</i>	Conduct federal referendums
<i>Representation Act 1983</i>	Set numbers for Senate elections

## CASE STUDY

# Strengthening election planning

In April 2015, the AEC introduced the Election Ready Road Map (ERRM), a key component of the election readiness framework. The ERRM is a highly visible planning tool intended to drive the effective management of key election inputs.

The ERRM sets out the sequence of actions over three phases that need to be completed between the return of the writs from the previous election and the issue of the writs for the next election. It also connects the lessons learned from the last electoral event with the actions the AEC needs to take in preparing for, and delivering, the next electoral event. The ERRM influences all layers of the AEC.

The elements (or 'inputs') that must be ready before the AEC as a whole can be 'election ready' have been categorised on the ERRM under the following headings (summarised by the AEC as POLITE): Personnel, Organisation, Legislation, Information, Training and Equipment, support and facilities. The POLITE inputs provide a foundation to adapt to changing circumstances, to guide the conduct of the right tasks at the right time and to coordinate work across the different (but interconnected) areas of the AEC. The three phases of the ERRM are:

**Phase 1: Evaluate and learn** – in this phase the focus is on reviewing the conduct of the last electoral event to gather observations on performance, identifying lessons to be learned and defining how these learnings can be best implemented. This phase also co-ordinates agreement on changes to policies, procedures and training that are necessary for the next electoral event.

**Phase 2: Implement change** – this phase involves the implementation of the learnings identified in phase one. This can include activities such as reviewing and updating procedure manuals and training packages or changes to the information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure that require longer lead times to prepare.



## The Election Ready Road Map at a glance

- A business planning tool which sets out more than 100 key inputs, to be completed between the conclusion of an electoral event and the issue of writs for the next electoral event.
- Designed to be adaptable and responsive to a number of variables, including the uncertain timing of an election date.
- Available to staff as a web-based timeline which is able to present tasks according to time allocated, due date, business area and stakeholders involved.
- Comprised of three simple, distinct phases.

**Phase 3: Mobilisation** – in this phase the AEC conducts a phased mobilisation in anticipation of the next electoral event. This includes the induction of additional election staff, executing rehearsals and exercises to confirm that changes have been implemented and to evaluate the readiness of the AEC as a whole.

While the ERRM focuses on three phases over three years, this does not presume that the AEC requires a full three-year period to prepare for a federal election. The ERRM can be adjusted to a specific directed level of election readiness (DLER), determined by the Electoral Commissioner.

The ERRM is updated and assessed regularly to ensure that milestones are being met, and progress is reported to the National Election Manager (NEM) on a monthly basis.

Implementation of the ERRM is an important first step in providing an agile planning framework, and increasing the AEC's capability to be ready to deliver trusted, reliable, high quality and high integrity electoral events and services into the future.

