

## CASE STUDY

# Establishment of the Electoral Integrity Unit

An important aspect of the AEC's work in contributing to impartial, accurate and transparent electoral outcomes is the principle of electoral integrity. As noted in the AEC's 2013–14 Annual Report, one aspect of the agency's renewed commitment to high standards of electoral integrity involved establishing the Electoral Integrity Unit (EIU) in July 2014.

The EIU works to ensure the Australian community has confidence in the integrity of the practices, processes and policies underpinning the electoral system.

The scope of the EIU is to examine both enrolment and elections, with enrolment being the primary focus over the course of the 2014–15 financial year. Working with the Roll Management Branch and other AEC business areas, the EIU:

- reviewed the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update (FDEU) program
- reviewed the integrity of the Online Enrolment Service (OES)
- examined a range of apparent anomalies and matters relating to allegedly fraudulent enrolments and liaised with internal and external stakeholders as necessary
- examined the characteristics of electors with divergent Commonwealth/state enrolment as part of developing strategies to minimise current and future roll divergence
- undertook assurance checks during the close of rolls period for several electoral events
- conducted the 2015 Sample Audit Fieldwork event.

### **The Electoral Integrity Framework**

The EIU developed the [Electoral Integrity Framework](#), which is published on the AEC website. A key document for the AEC, the framework was developed to inform program and operational policy development, support policy assessment and enable the systematic and consistent measurement of electoral integrity.

The Framework is guided by the AEC's values of electoral integrity through professionalism, quality and agility. It is a way for the AEC staff working on elections and enrolment activities to ensure every task is consistent with electoral integrity, as every task matters.

The Framework explicitly acknowledges that the AEC must not only be capable and operate with quality and agility but it must also demonstrate that it is operating with high integrity and continuous improvement in indicators of electoral integrity.

Focusing on enrolment and elections, the Electoral Integrity Framework has three components:

1. four elements of electoral integrity (accuracy, completeness, entitlement and capability)
2. principles that give effect to the elements in two of the AEC's program outcomes – enrolment and elections
3. indicators that serve as a way of measuring how well the AEC meets each of the principles.

### **Future work of the Electoral Integrity Unit**

In addition to progressing a range of enrolment-related projects, the EIU will continue to identify areas for review and assessment, and respond to organisational priorities as they arise.



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# 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.



## CASE STUDY

# AEC develops new election materials and operating procedures

A federal election involves a vast array of complex and interdependent activities to ensure that more than 15 million Australians throughout 150 electoral divisions have the opportunity to vote. One of the AEC's responsibilities in managing election services is the provision of election staff, materials and related procedures.

The range and scale of materials required and the related security and logistic arrangements is significant. During the 2013 federal election, more than 43 million ballot papers were printed, more than 50 000 ballot boxes produced, 140 km of string used and more than 150 000 cardboard voting screens distributed.

A key component of the AEC's Electoral Reform Programme has been the development and enhancement of new and existing policies, procedures, election materials and resources. Designed to improve the effectiveness of a number of logistic and security procedures, these initiatives will further support the safety of electoral materials and the integrity of the electoral process.

During 2014–15, the Electoral Reform Programme has reached a number of key milestones.

### **Policy and procedures**

Four new policies have been developed to strengthen the processes and standards relating to the handling of ballot papers, the management of waste during an electoral event, the identification of election staff and scrutineers and minimum requirements to be met by venues temporarily hired by the AEC to undertake key election activities.

New standard operating procedures have also been developed to accompany key election activities. These include the fresh scrutiny (or second count) of votes and managing the return of election materials from approximately 7 500 polling places to the AEC on election night.

## Materials

New and enhanced forms and materials have been developed to support the new policies and procedures. One such example is a new series of ballot paper tracking forms which support the ballot paper handling policy by recording the chain of custody at every stage of a ballot paper's movement.

Other new materials include:

- ballot paper parcel bags and transport containers
- election material packaging labels
- tamper-evident tape
- specially-made screens for use as a ballot paper secure zone in polling locations
- boxes for final storage of ballot papers (which are black in colour to prevent non-compliant hand-written labelling)
- new posters to mark specific areas within AEC offices and out-posted venues (e.g. ballot paper secure zones that are out-of-bounds except to authorised staff).

A range of vests and bibs which identify staff roles and responsibilities as supervisors, AEC management and visitors have also been introduced. These vests and bibs, designed to clearly signal personnel status, access and responsibilities, provide a consistent voter experience in each polling place. Lanyards have also been introduced and will be worn by scrutineers at AEC out-posted premises, to enable them to be easily identified.

## Resourcing

Election staffing has been adjusted to ensure the new policies and procedures are successfully implemented. For example, a new Divisional Materials Manager role will oversee activities pertaining to ballot papers and election materials with a particular focus on the accountability and security of ballot papers.

Another measure to enhance the security of ballot papers is the placement of a dedicated ballot box guard at every polling place. The existing Polling Place Liaison Officer role has also been refined to provide greater support to polling staff.

To assist with the development of staffing plans, new standard operating procedures clearly identify staffing requirements for particular key activities.

These changes will be implemented at the next federal election.



## CASE STUDY

# Supporting Bougainville's independent elections

In January 2015, the AEC worked in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC) to support the development of a 'needs based' project plan for the May 2015 elections.

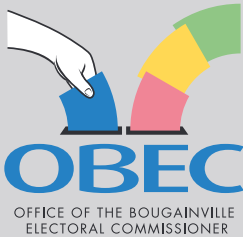
The program, funded by DFAT, operated as an adjunct to a broader Australian electoral assistance program conducted in PNG, with the AEC working collaboratively with New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (PNG) counterparts as part of an international support team. A small number of AEC staff worked alongside the OBEC, providing advisory assistance in a range of election planning, communications and execution activities. Assistance provided included:

- consultative planning to support the OBEC
- provision of operations advice to support the OBEC in its management of the overall planning and implementation of the election
- procurement and logistics advice to the electoral logistics office
- support in the strategic planning, implementation and evaluation of a community focused electoral awareness program, and
- IT support to assist the OBEC with its operation of the electoral roll system.

Bougainville's terrain – featuring islands, steep mountain ranges, remote villages, offshore atolls, river crossings and even crocodile-infested waters – presented a unique challenge for the delivery of the elections. Polling was conducted over a two-week period, largely through mobile teams to minimise transportation and logistics difficulties that would otherwise affect the movement of polling schedules and voters' access to polling places.

"One of the key challenges we faced was the transportation infrastructure," said logistics advisor Mark McLoughlin. "Moving materials by truck was challenging with 80 per cent of the main roads unsealed and adversely affected by heavy rainfall and river crossings which presented hazardous driving conditions."

The OBEC's polling teams predominantly used four-wheel-drives to provide polling to villages. When such access was not possible, polling equipment was carried by porters to inaccessible villages. In the absence of jetties, polling equipment was also carried from boat to shore where materials were required to be transported



Count centre procedures at the North Count Centre in Buka.

to the outer islands. Taking into consideration these local conditions, the AEC recommended the use of waterproof packaging and sealed plastic bags for the transportation of ballot papers.

The AEC also provided public awareness support in the lead up to the elections to encourage voter participation and formality under Bougainville's voluntary voting system. Relevant considerations included Bougainville's widely dispersed population, remote geography, diversity of local languages and literacy levels, and availability of telecommunications and print media networks. Face-to-face communications were essential to the distribution of electoral information and were adopted through the recruitment and training of local awareness officers and formal collaborations with key community groups.

AEC awareness advisor Jennifer Burgess noted, "in the May 2015 elections formality of votes was at 99 per cent, which is a real testament to the work the awareness staff undertook to inform and educate the community. A key focus for our team was to minimise existing confusion around voting procedures and to inspire electors to participate. An average of 60 per cent of electors participated, which represents a fantastic result."

This electoral event resulted in the election of a president and 39 members of the House of Representatives, including regional and constituency seats, via four separate elections.





## CASE STUDY

# Enhancing WHS due diligence

In response to obligations to implement the harmonised *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) the AEC has, during the course of the year, progressively implemented a model of due diligence with a particular focus on a proactive approach. This means responsible officers must be personally engaged with, and responsive to, WHS issues.

The core elements of due diligence implemented by the AEC are directed at:

- acquiring and updating knowledge of WHS matters
- gaining an understanding of the hazards and risks of the operations/business of the AEC
- ensuring the AEC has the appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety
- ensuring that appropriate processes have been implemented for receiving, considering and responding to information regarding incidents, hazards and risks
- ensuring the AEC has, and implements, processes for complying with any duty or obligation of the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) under the WHS Act
- verifying the provision and use of relevant resources and processes.

In July 2014, the Electoral Commissioner commissioned a project for the development and implementation of a manual to assist officers in exercising their WHS due diligence obligations. The manual's purpose was to ensure that any officer within the AEC who has the ability to make, or participate in making, decisions that affect the whole or a substantial part of AEC business, exercises WHS due diligence in making such decisions. The project was conducted between mid-July and late October 2014, leading to the implementation of the AEC Due Diligence Framework (the Framework). Implementation briefings were conducted across the AEC network, between August and September 2014. These briefings coincided with the first round of quarterly reporting, therefore providing the opportunity for immediate application.

The Framework provides the necessary platform for WHS reform within the AEC. Building on the existing WHS Management System, the Framework supports the WHS Act's intent to protect workers against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination or minimisation of risks arising from work.

Officers may ask themselves the following questions in making resource decisions:

- Are there any impacts upon health and safety arising from this resource decision?
- If so, what are the impacts upon health and safety?
- In the event that there is a potentially detrimental effect upon health and safety arising from the decision, how can we eliminate or minimise the impact on health and safety?
- What resources do we need to allocate to eliminate or minimise such impacts upon health and safety?

The Framework, built on a robust quarterly reporting structure, touches each work area within the AEC. Each manager provides data on their area's level of WHS 'readiness', including data on:

- WHS representation (including First Aid Officers, plus Health and Safety Representatives)
- incidents and investigations
- WHS inspections
- unscheduled absences
- rehabilitation
- WHS training
- WHS initiatives conducted over the reporting period.

This data is captured on reporting templates and cascades up to the next level of management until a final report on the AEC's WHS 'readiness' is delivered to the Operational Compliance Group (OCG).

Since implementation, the AEC has conducted three consecutive WHS reporting cycles and experienced an improvement in a number of areas. This has included:

- a decrease in the rates of unscheduled absences
- a decrease in the AEC worker's compensation rate
- a 300 per cent increase in WHS inspections
- an increase in WHS training undertaken
- and an increase in investigations into WHS incidents.

In the 2015–16 financial year, the AEC will focus on aligning the AEC's WHS Management System to enable delivery of the Due Diligence Framework. With the focus of the reporting data being on proactive prevention, it is reasonable to think there will be a positive effect on the capability of the workforce through raised awareness and focus on responsibilities, while reducing unscheduled absence rates and worker's compensation claim costs.

