



SECTION 4

MANAGING THE AEC

We seek to ensure that the AEC is managed to the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability



88%
RETENTION RATE

8.5 YEARS
AVERAGE SERVICE
ONGOING STAFF

47.3 YEARS
AVERAGE AGE
REGULAR WORKFORCE

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In the same way that the AEC strives for electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism, we also seek to ensure that the organisation itself is managed to the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

We do this in the first instance through a combination of governance mechanisms combined with ethical standards and staff consultation, plus strategic and business planning and reporting, and comprehensive

risk management. These activities are the foundation of the way we manage our resources and assets.

Assurance is provided through compliance activities such as legal services, auditing and fraud control mechanisms. And ultimately what we do is subject to considerable external scrutiny – through our customers, the public, the judiciary, various audit and integrity bodies and, on occasion, parliamentary committees and inquiries.

Governance, ethics and employee consultation

The AEC’s corporate governance arrangements are the structures and processes the senior leadership uses to monitor performance, ensure accountability and steer the agency. These predominantly consist of the executive management structure (see Executive management on page 13) and a range of decision-making management committees, supported by four influential discussion forums.

Corporate governance at the AEC is underpinned by strong ethical standards

and regular consultation with employees on decisions that affect them.

Assurance activities were a focus of several management committees during 2016–17 as the agency continued to re-establish its reputation. This was particularly the case for the Business Assurance Committee, Fraud Control Committee and the Organisational Health Committee.

Table 16: AEC management committees

Committee name	Function	Members	Meeting frequency
Executive Leadership Team (ELT)	Senior management team assisting the Electoral Commissioner in the delivery of strategic leadership and operational management for the AEC.	Electoral Commissioner; Deputy Electoral Commissioner; two First Assistant Commissioners (FAC).	Weekly
Organisational Health Committee (OHC)	Monitors performance, risk management, compliance and controls. It provides advice and recommendations to the ELT, which is ultimately responsible for organisational performance.	Deputy Electoral Commissioner; FAC Capability; FAC Network and Election Operations; Assistant Commissioner (AC) People Services; Chief Finance Officer; AC Disclosure, Assurance and Engagement; State Manager New South Wales; State Manager Western Australia.	Monthly

Committee name	Function	Members	Meeting frequency
Capability Committee	Monitors organisational capability and progresses projects within the AEC to support the agency strategic direction. It monitors project outputs and significant organisational initiatives, and provides advice on the AEC's future capability requirements.	FAC Capability; FAC Network and Election Operations; Chief Finance Officer; AC Roll Management; AC Information Management; State Manager Queensland; State Manager Tasmania.	Monthly
Business Assurance Committee (BAC)	Provides independent advice on the AEC's internal audit resourcing and coverage in relation to key risks. Approves the internal audit program. Oversees operation of audit committees and fraud control under the PGPA Act.	At least three members appointed by Electoral Commissioner; majority of members from outside AEC; advisers from AEC permitted to attend. Four members and three advisers in 2016–17.	Quarterly
Fraud Control Committee (FCC)	Subcommittee of the BAC. Advises BAC on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the AEC's fraud control plans, policies and procedures.	AC Roll Management; AC Information Technology; State Manager Victoria; State Manager South Australia; Chief Legal Officer (observer); Chief Finance Officer (observer).	Quarterly
National Election Delivery Committee (NEDC)	Supports the National Election Manager (NEM) to oversee the agency's election planning, preparation, delivery and coordination of activities, as set out in the Election Ready Road Map. The NEM reports regularly on behalf of the NEDC to ELT and the Electoral Commissioner.	NEM; state and territory managers; and other senior executive employees of AEC (membership expands as election approaches).	Regularly; varies from monthly to weekly or daily in run-up to an election
Work health and safety (WHS) committees	National and state and territory WHS committees represent workers in WHS matters as well as monitoring, inspecting and inquiring into all aspects of work health and safety.	Chair; management representatives; employee representatives and advisers from People Services Branch.	Quarterly, with out-of-session meetings as required

Discussion forums

With management and employees distributed across all states and territories, the AEC needs to maintain effective internal communication to ensure agency cohesion. This is achieved at three levels of agency management via

four discussion forums that incorporate the participation and feedback of senior executives and managers. These forums have been designed to facilitate information sharing and links across the AEC's national network.

Table 17: Discussion forums

Forum name	Function	Members	Meeting frequency
Senior Executive Forum (now part of NEDC – see Table 16)	Achieving common understanding of key agency issues among all senior executives. Focus is on information sharing and clarification of the AEC’s approach. Also provides links between priority-setting and decision-making at executive level, with implementation at branch and state level.	Electoral Commissioner; Deputy Electoral Commissioner; three First Assistant Commissioners; state and territory managers; branch heads.	via NEDC
Director Operations Network	Supports NEDC and other bodies through project work, as tasked. It is a forum to discuss risk and issues facing the operational network; operational policy and procedures, and to consider implementation issues and changes; and to provide feedback to the NEDC on relevant operational or strategic issues.	All Directors of Operations.	Fortnightly via teleconference or video conference, with at least three face-to-face meetings per annum
Operations Managers Network	Encourages participation of operations managers in cultural and operational transformation. Facilitates increased collaboration, consistency and compliance across state and territory operations and the broader agency.	FAC Network and Election Operations; and operations managers from all states and territories.	Two to five times a year, as required
National Office Directors Network	Enables directors in National Office to collectively influence AEC strategy and operations, put forward new ideas and opportunities, and raise any unrecognised operational risks. Also promotes engagement with other governance entities and improves relationships across the AEC.	FAC Capability; all directors (EL2 officers) working in National Office, Canberra.	Quarterly

Ethical standards

The AEC’s ethical standards are implicit in:

- AEC values
- the AEC’s strategic planning framework
- AEC staff conduct policies (for example, attendance, dress code, conflict of interest)
- the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct (reinforced in the AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019).

The AEC’s core values of electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism inform both strategic planning and day-to-day operations.

More information on AEC values is provided on page 10.

Electoral integrity is a particularly important aspect of the AEC’s ethical standards, in accordance with our focus on understanding and responding to the expectations of both the public and the Australian Parliament.

Employee consultation

The AEC considers effective communication with employees as crucial to the achievement of its objectives. As a result, it manages a number of initiatives to ensure that employee views and opinions are heard on decisions that affect them.

Consultative forums

As established in the AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019, a number of national and state consultative forums support open communication and consultation. Elections are held to select employee representatives, who may self-nominate to participate. The AEC Consultative Forum is the national consultative body. Three employee representatives on the forum are elected by staff.

The responsibilities of the AEC Consultative Forum include:

- improving communication between employees and AEC management
- providing an opportunity for open, honest and effective communication on matters concerning the AEC nationally
- reporting to the Executive Leadership Team as necessary
- convening working parties to examine issues of interest to AEC staff and management (for example, organisational and technical change, equity, diversity, employee relations and human resource management).

New enterprise agreement

In October 2016, a successful ballot was held on the proposed AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019. There were 871 AEC staff participating in the ballot, with 471, or 66 per cent, voting in favour. The agreement was approved by the Fair Work Commission on 29 November 2016 and formally took effect from 6 December 2016.

The agreement represented the highest possible pay offer available under the Federal Government's Bargaining Policy, with an immediate salary increase of 3 per cent, to be followed by 2 per cent and 1 per cent increases in December 2017 and 2018 (6 per cent increase over the three years of the agreement). The agreement also included amendments to provisions on part-time work arrangements,

flex time and executive level time off in lieu, to strengthen the AEC's commitment to flexible working arrangements.

The enterprise agreement will take the AEC beyond the next federal election. It is a key element for building organisational capability, by setting the framework for working together through the next few years. It will also help the AEC attract, support and retain high-quality staff.

State of the Service survey

The AEC's Australian Public Service employees are invited to participate in the annual State of the Service survey conducted by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). In 2017, the survey was conducted over a one-month period during May and June 2017.

The AEC's response rate for 2017 was 76 per cent, which was above the APSC's target response rate of 65 per cent, and was an improvement on last year's response rate of 49 per cent. Each year, senior management reviews the confidential results to find out what is working well across the agency and to take action in areas that require improvement.

Other internal consultation

Other initiatives used by the AEC to address staff consultation include internal surveys, workshops, dedicated email addresses for specific queries, and online discussion forums. The intranet is the AEC's key internal communication tool and is continuously improved through analysis of usage patterns and user experiences.

INTERESTING FACT

Electronic electoral enrolment was introduced in 2010

Strategic and business planning

As a publicly accountable agency, the AEC has a statutory duty to professionally plan and report on its achievements each year, primarily to the Australian Parliament.

Statutory reporting includes the AEC Corporate Plan, Portfolio Budget Statements and (when required) Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements, and the Annual Report.

Corporate Plan

Our Corporate Plan for 2016–2020, required by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), was published in August 2016. The plan provided a focus for the agency's work from the start of the 2016–17 financial year. It is the foundation of the agency's planning and operating framework.

The plan outlines five agency directions:

- deliver a changed model for elections and referendums
- govern the organisation for quality and assurance
- professionalise the workforce
- re-establish the reputation of the AEC
- build an agile and responsive organisation.

Portfolio Budget Statements and Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements

The purpose of Portfolio Budget Statements is to inform Senators and Members of Parliament of the proposed allocation of resources within the AEC to government outcomes.

As outlined earlier in this report, 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 programs'.

This outcome is delivered via one program, Deliver Electoral Events, with six areas of performance for 2016–17:

- federal elections, by-elections and referendums
- electoral roll management
- support services for electoral redistributions
- party registrations and financial disclosure
- industrial and commercial elections
- public awareness.

The Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements inform Senators, Members of Parliament and the public of changes since the Budget to the proposed allocation of AEC resources to government outcomes. These are only issued if there are changes that the government has agreed to.

Annual Report

The primary purpose of the Annual Report is accountability, to the Parliament in particular. The Annual Report informs Parliament, the public and all stakeholders about the performance of the AEC in relation to activities undertaken, and especially in relation to the activities and directions set out in our Portfolio Budget Statements and Corporate Plan. The Annual Report is also a key reference document and historical record.

Business planning

The AEC's work is also set out in a comprehensive range of business planning documents, many of which have associated internal monitoring and reporting mechanisms. These documents are listed in Table 18.

INTERESTING FACT

The Division of McEwen grew the most in 2016–17, by 7,031 electors. The Division of Bruce reduced the most, by 1,256 electors

Table 18: Business planning documents

Document	Purpose	Reviewed
Business planning and reporting framework	Supports staff in planning and delivering outcomes specified in the AEC Corporate Plan, as well as managing resources and finances. Supports numerous sections of the PGPA Act. Progress against key performance indicators is measured and monitored regularly to ensure priorities are met in the timeframes indicated and within budget.	Annually
Branch, and state and territory business plans	Align branch, and state and territory activities with the business planning and reporting framework.	Annually
Election readiness framework	Sets out and monitors the program of activity required to maintain election readiness.	Every election cycle
Information Technology Strategic Plan	Sets out the AEC's desired information technology vision to 2020. Supported by the IT Architecture Plan.	Annually
Fraud Control Plan	Provides a tailored solution for preventing, detecting and responding to fraud in accordance with relevant Commonwealth law, fraud control policies and memorandums of understanding.	Every two years (or if significant organisational change occurs)
Strategic Risk Management Plan	Details strategic risks that affect the AEC and specifies how these risks will be managed.	Biannually
Assurance Plan	Outlines assurance activities that target the AEC's key/high-risk business processes.	Annually
Internal Audit Plan	Sets out the AEC's internal audit program for the financial year (contained within the Assurance Plan).	Annually
Business continuity plans	Ensure continuation of identified critical business functions during and following a critical incident that causes disruption to normal operations.	Annually
Disability Inclusion Strategy	Identifies relevant target outcomes from the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020.	Reported on annually
Diversity Strategy	Sets out activities to recognise and value diversity in the workplace.	Every four years
Reconciliation Action Plan	Sets out activities to recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in internal and external arrangements and activities.	Annually
Agency Multicultural Plan	Sets out engagement activities, and access and equity policies to engage those from diverse cultural backgrounds.	Every three years
Property Plan	Provides direction for long-term management of leased property.	Annually
Security Plan	Sets out strategies to protect staff, visitors, information, equipment and premises against harm, loss, interference and compromise.	Biannually

Risk management and business continuity

The AEC is committed to integrating risk management principles and practices into its business processes. A range of initiatives guide the work of the AEC in its commitment to minimising risk and ensuring business continuity.

Addressing risk

The AEC safeguards risk-related planning by regularly updating its Strategic Risk Management Plan, Risk Management Handbook and Risk Management Policy, to address changes and developments in the environment in which it operates.

The AECs approach to risk management is to:

- manage all business in a responsible manner
- understand and manage risks faced in electoral operations and the political environment
- increase the likelihood of meeting key performance indicators and delivering the outcomes required by stakeholders
- safeguard assets (people, information, property and public monies) and use them responsibly and efficiently
- create an environment in which all employees assume responsibility for proactively identifying and mitigating risk
- facilitate compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements
- adopt evidence-based, reliable decision-making processes and planning using professional risk management approaches
- ensure a shared, agency-wide approach to risk management

- improve operational effectiveness and efficiency (including use of resources)
- allocate risk owners for each specific risk to the agency.

Risk register

In 2016–17, the enterprise risk register continued to provide a central platform for employees and management to record, assess and manage risks. By providing a snapshot of identified risks and management strategies, the register helped the agency identify, resolve and mitigate both operational and strategic risks.

Business continuity

The AEC's approach to business continuity management is based on maintaining the reliability of functions critical to our operations. A range of plans and initiatives, guided by the AEC Business Continuity Management Policy and Framework, address the agency's need to respond appropriately to disruptive events, maintain reporting lines and efficiently deliver critical services.

Managing resources, assets and procurement

The AEC manages a diverse portfolio of resources and assets throughout offices at the national, state/territory and divisional level. These include human resources, for example the agency's regular and casual workforce, as well as physical assets like office equipment, and information assets such as technology services.

In managing its assets, the AEC also manages a range of procurement activities, including tenders, consultancies and contracts. About 64 per cent of procurement contracts are held with small and medium enterprises.

The AEC also manages its resources and assets in a sustainable manner that adheres to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* by minimising impact to the environment, reducing waste and conserving energy use.

Human resources

AEC employees are located throughout Australia in a network of divisional, state and territory offices, including a national office in Canberra.

As at 30 June 2017, the AEC had a regular workforce of 837 employees and a casual workforce of 783 irregular or intermittent employees.

Recruiting, developing and retaining a professional and capable workforce is a key linchpin for our agency. The AEC aims to entrench a culture of quality, agility and professionalism to support electoral integrity. This is achieved through helping employees develop core skills, and providing capability training and the necessary tools for staff to become more adaptive to change by being flexible and innovative when facing an uncertain and demand-driven environment.

Working arrangements

AEC enterprise agreement

The AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019 covers most AEC staff. Salary ranges for each classification are published in the agreement, which is available on the AEC website. The agreement took effect on 6 December 2016, replacing the AEC's Enterprise Agreement 2011–2014.

Section 24(1) determinations

In 2016–17, the terms and conditions of employment of eight employees, predominantly senior executive service and executive level officers, were set by individual determinations by the agency head (the Electoral Commissioner) under section 24(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Collective determination under the Commonwealth Electoral Act

The AEC has a collective determination for staff engaged under section 35(1) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. This covers temporary staff, such as polling officials, for the election period only and sets the terms and conditions, hourly rates of pay and other entitlements.

These terms and conditions are set by the Electoral Commissioner under section 35 of the Electoral Act. Updates to the collective determination are currently being considered in preparation for its use at the next federal election.

Individual flexibility arrangements

To meet the needs of the AEC, the Electoral Commissioner may agree to individual flexibility arrangements with employees, which can vary the effect of any of the terms of the AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019.

During 2016–17, the Commissioner agreed to 29 new individual flexibility arrangements. The majority of these reflected the ongoing need to recognise the particular requirements of both the individuals and the AEC. As at 30 June 2017, 26 individual flexibility arrangements were still active.

Employee non-salary benefits

AEC staff receive a range of non-salary benefits, consisting of leave arrangements, provision for separation and redundancy benefits, plus superannuation. This information is listed in the Notes to the Financial Statements section of this report.

Senior executive remuneration and statutory appointments

The Remuneration Tribunal determines the remuneration of the Electoral Commissioner under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*.

Other statutory appointees are part of the principal executive officer structure under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*. The Electoral Commissioner determines the remuneration and conditions afforded to these appointees, within parameters set by the tribunal. Details of executive remuneration are published on the AEC website.

Performance management

The AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019 requires all employees engaged under section 22(2) of the *Public Service Act 1999* to participate in the AEC's Performance Management Program.

Effective performance management in the AEC is a mechanism for:

- aligning employee performance with organisational requirements
- providing regular, constructive feedback to employees
- clearly articulating and managing expectations
- identifying developmental needs.

Eligible employees who meet the requirements set in the Performance Management Program will receive salary advancement.

Performance pay

The AEC does not offer performance bonuses.

AEC workforce statistics

As at 30 June 2017, the AEC workforce consisted of:

- a regular workforce of 831 ongoing and non-ongoing APS employees and six employees engaged under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (statutory office holders)
- a casual workforce of 783 irregular or intermittent employees.

Regular workforce

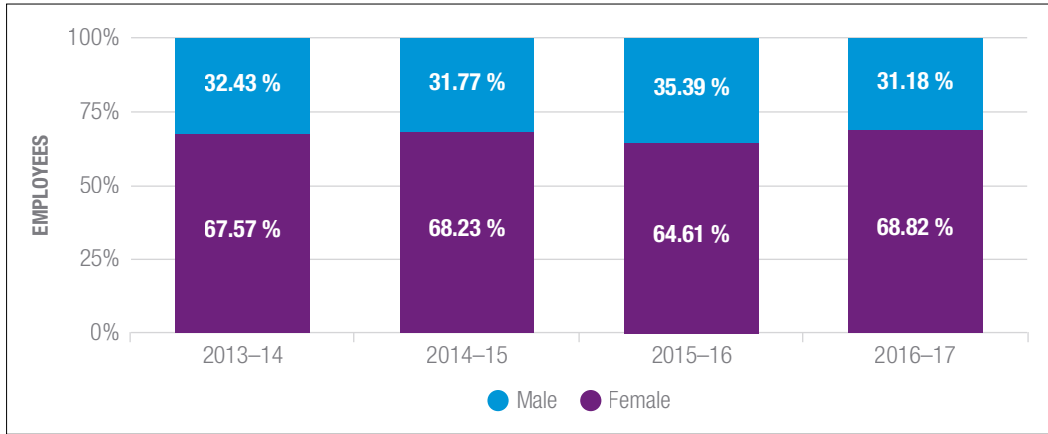
The AEC's regular workforce is spread across the AEC network of national, state, territory and divisional offices.

A range of tables and figures provide specific workforce information within this section of the report. Percentages of male and female staff, from 2013–14 to 2016–17, are shown in Figure 7. The age profile of AEC employees is shown in Figure 8.

Most staff in the AEC are female, with an increase from 64.6 per cent in 2015–16 to 68.8 per cent in 2016–17.

The largest segment of the AEC's regular workforce is in the range of 50 years to less than 55 years of age. The average age of the regular workforce has decreased slightly in the last 12 months, from 47.8 years down to 47.3 years.

Figure 7: AEC regular workforce by gender, 2013–14 to 2016–17



There are currently no staff recorded as Gender X.

Figure 8: AEC regular workforce by age group as at 30 June 2017

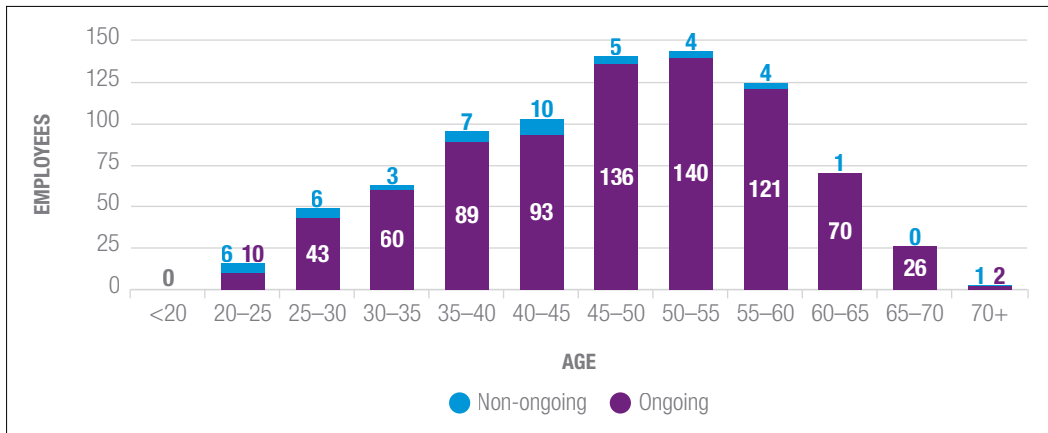


Figure 9: AEC regular workforce by diversity, 2013–14 to 2016–17

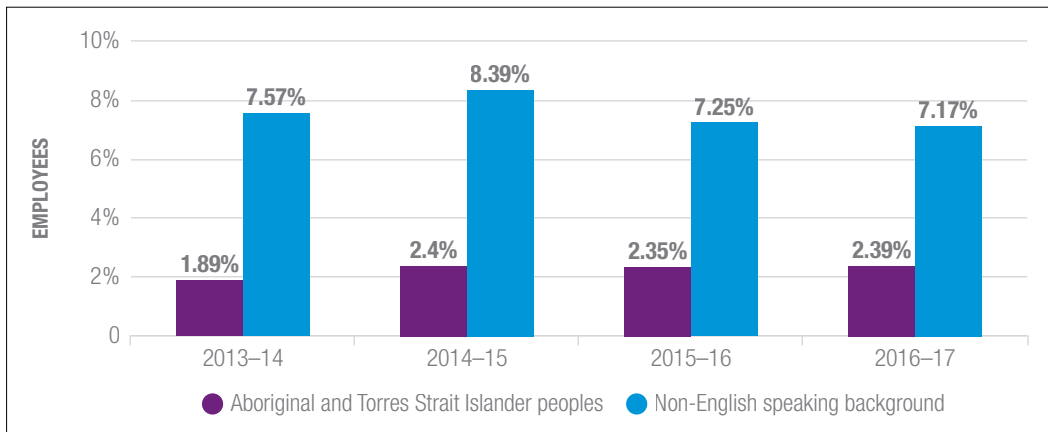


Table 19: AEC regular workforce profile as at 30 June 2017

AEC workforce segment	Workforce statistic
Full-time	80.6%
Linguistically diverse background	7.2%
Female	68.8%
Average age	47.3 years
45 years and over	60.9%
Staff turnover	12.9%
Average length of service for ongoing staff	8.5 years

Irregular or intermittent employees

At 30 June 2017, the AEC had an available casual workforce of 783 irregular or intermittent staff. Employed mostly at the APS 1 level, the casual employees were largely working in divisional offices. A breakdown of this workforce is provided in Table 20.

Election workforce

During elections, the AEC employs thousands of temporary staff as polling officials under section 35 of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*. In 2016–17, the AEC employed 74,893 temporary staff to conduct the 2016 federal election. Of these, 9,272 people worked in more than one position. The number of positions increased by 7.05 per cent compared to the 2013 federal election, to a total of 86,938 at the 2016 election.

Indigenous employees

In 2016–17, 2.4 per cent of the regular AEC workforce self-identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. A number of action items have been completed in the year to increase the focus on Indigenous employment in conjunction with the Reconciliation Action Plan.

The AEC is also committed to increasing the numbers of Indigenous polling place staff at elections.

Table 20: Irregular or intermittent employees by classification

Classification	Number of employees
APS 1	763
APS 2	1
APS 3	1
APS 4	10
APS 5	1
APS 6	6
EL 1	1
Total	783

APS = Australian Public Service, EL = Executive Level Election workforce

Indigenous election workforce

For the 2016 federal election, the AEC employed 1,364 staff who had identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This was a small increase from the 2013 election (1,340 staff), which was more than double the 2010 election (599 staff).

Figure 9 provides further information on AEC staff who self-identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Diversity and inclusion framework

The AEC embraces diversity and inclusion. There is a strong connection between diverse workforces and improved policy and program productivity, performance and resilience.

The AEC is currently developing a renewed approach to diversity and inclusion. This will include our current disability strategy, and reconciliation action plan, as well as continued support of flexible working arrangements, carer's responsibilities and ability to undertake higher education under the AEC's enterprise agreement. It will also increase awareness of gender equality, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning community, and people from non-English speaking, and other diverse backgrounds.

Disability reporting

As disability reporting to the Council of Australian Governments now occurs through the National Disability Strategy, within the State of the Service report, the specific requirement for disability reporting in individual Commonwealth agency annual reports has been discontinued. The State of the Service report is available at www.apsc.gov.au.

The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 sets out a 10-year national policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers. A high-level, two-yearly report now tracks progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy, and is available at www.dss.gov.au.

Recruitment and employee retention

We continue to review and optimise relevant recruitment guidelines, processes and procedures.

Job advertising

The AEC's total advertised vacancies (ongoing and non-ongoing positions) has reduced from 178 in 2015–16 to 91 in 2016–17. This is because of a decrease in staffed positions following the 2016 federal election, and the increased emphasis on managing internal mobility to fill vacant positions.

Graduate program

The AEC recruited five graduates to participate in the 2016 Graduate Program; three generalist graduates and two IT graduates. All five employees successfully completed the program. The graduates participated in the 2016 Australian Public Service Commission Graduate Development Program. As a team, they developed a project report for the APSC that was highly commended and were finalists for their digital media clip.

The AEC did not run the Graduate Program in 2017 but has committed to running a graduate intake for 2018.

Retention rate

The AEC's retention rate for ongoing staff in 2016–17 was 88.1 per cent, an increase from 85.6 per cent in 2015–16. The AEC's ongoing employee retention rate fluctuates each year but on average is around 90 per cent.

Support of the Carer Recognition Act

The AEC does not have any obligations under the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*, as the agency is not defined in the *Public Service Act 1999* as being responsible for the development, implementation, provision or evaluation of policies, programs or services directed to carers or the persons for whom they care.

As a public service agency, however, the AEC does support employees with caring responsibilities as outlined in the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*. Employees are eligible for Paid Personal Leave (Carer's), under Clause 66.4 of the AEC Enterprise Agreement 2016–2019, to provide care or support to those they are responsible for in the case of personal illness, injury or unexpected emergency.

Learning and development

The AEC provides staff with access to learning and development opportunities that aim to build and maintain a professional and agile workforce able to deliver consistently high-quality outcomes.

On 1 February 2017, the AEC introduced a new approach to mandatory training, with all new and existing APS employees (ongoing, non-ongoing, casuals and contractors) required to complete five mandatory eLearning modules via the Learning Management System by 1 May 2017. The selected eLearning modules provided employees with training appropriate and relative to their roles, as well as to the deliverables of the agency, and assisted the AEC in meeting employer and employee legislative requirements.

The AEC also implemented changes to strengthen the governance and coordination of learning and development within the agency under the direction of the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, and through establishing a Learning Governance Committee.

Workforce planning

In the AEC, workforce planning is an important element of delivering electoral events as it provides a basis for determining requirements, and anticipating and responding to challenges around attraction and recruitment. The agency undertakes workforce planning in three layers. The first two layers focus on the business operations in the divisional office workforce plans, and branch and state office workforce plans. These two layers are used to inform the third layer: the national strategy.

The AEC continues to build and embed consistent workforce planning methodology across all levels. While previous phases of workforce planning formalised the connection between divisional, state and national office workforce planning risks and strategies, the next phase involves redesigning current workforce planning processes and ongoing work to cement these processes with business planning and operational planning activities across the agency.

Key activities included:

- undertaking an evaluation of end-to-end workforce planning processes after the 2016 federal election
- working with the various networks to refine and re-develop workforce planning processes at all levels
- providing continued support for completing divisional, and state and territory workforce plans.

New HR metrics reporting

In late 2016, the AEC developed an HR Scorecard as a focus on core workforce characteristics, and this is presented to senior management each month.

HR reporting is a critical part of workforce analysis for the AEC as it helps the agency identify and understand workforce performance and risks. The HR Scorecard assists senior management monitor relevant workforce data, and identify workforce risks before they arise.

It also allows senior management to consider trends over time and plan appropriate workforce management strategies.

Work health and safety

The AEC recognises its responsibility to positively influence the work health and safety (WHS) of employees, and to provide a safe environment for members of the public who enter AEC premises, including leased premises used as polling places during an electoral event.

WHS outcomes

The AEC complies with its obligations under both the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* by ensuring there are appropriate systems that actively monitor, evaluate and maintain health, safety and welfare across all aspects of business. Table 21 provides a summary of ongoing AEC workplace health and safety outcomes during the year.

Claims management

The AEC's management of injury and illness claims during the year consisted of:

- 23 new cases for compensation (of which 22 were accepted by Comcare)
- 38 continuing cases for compensation
- 42 new cases of non-compensable injuries/illness
- 12 continuing cases of non-compensable injuries/illness.

Table 21: Work health and safety summary 2016–17

Work health safety information	AEC outcomes
Initiatives taken during the year to ensure the health, safety and welfare of workers	Continued enhancement of the AEC WHS management system.
Health and safety outcomes achieved as a result of the initiatives	Continued development of the WHS management arrangement structure. This provided a greater level of employee consultation and representation through an increased health and safety representative network, and revised work group structure.
Notifiable incidents	During 2016–17, eight incidents were reported to Comcare. Five were notifiable for serious injury or illness, and three notifiable for a dangerous occurrence.
Investigations conducted by the AEC	Three investigations were conducted during 2016–17.
Comcare investigations	One Comcare investigation was undertaken, and no improvement notices issued to the AEC.
Health and safety events reported	In all, 104 health and safety incidents were reported, compared with 160 for the previous year. An increase in incident reporting occurred in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election.
Number of liaison inspections	Nil.

Table 22: New claims for compensable and non-compensable injuries

Case management type	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Compensable	17	14	14	23
Non-compensable	32	19	41	42
Total	49	33	55	65

Health and wellbeing programs

The AEC encourages its employees to pursue healthy lifestyles with the following range of elective health and wellbeing programs:

- the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- annual influenza vaccinations
- quit smoking programs
- workstation assessments and provision of recommended ergonomic equipment
- eyesight testing reimbursements.

The EAP provides free, confidential support services that address a range of health and wellbeing issues. In 2016–17, the EAP utilisation rate for new AEC referrals was 6.6 per cent.

Physical assets

The physical assets of the AEC include equipment located at offices throughout Australia. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, machines, equipment and office fit-outs are managed on an ‘end of life’ or ‘end of lease’ schedule. Comprehensive service and maintenance agreements are used where they represent value for money, to ensure all assets are fully functional and perform at optimal levels.

SPOTLIGHT

Moving to the cloud

During 2016–17, the AEC successfully transitioned its web hosted systems from a physical presence to cloud-hosted infrastructure with Amazon Web Services.

Cloud-based services are becoming the infrastructure of choice for many organisations; the flexibility and scalability built into these solutions are of particular benefit to the AEC, where electoral events can be run within short timeframes and scaled up and down depending on demand for election services.



AEC web-hosted systems are now in the cloud

The AEC's investment in cloud computing ensures reliable disaster recovery and backup solutions. It also ensures regular system updates to meet IT security requirements, and improves system performance and reliability.

Office fit-outs

In 2016–17, one office fit-out was completed and two began. The Tasmanian state office was relocated within Hobart, and the Division of Riverina (Wagga Wagga, NSW) and the Division of Mallee (Mildura, Vic.) each commenced a fit-out, to be completed in July 2017.

Information assets

ICT technical support services and infrastructure are integral to the AEC's activities, and are provided through a combination of in-house and external resources.

The AEC provides many services in and out of an election period. Some of these include:

- the Tally Room – live results at election time
- media feed – live election results for consumption by the media
- polling place locator
- AEC employment – AEC's online recruitment system for staffing an election
- check my enrolment
- online enrolment and change of enrolment details
- Get Voting educational resource for school elections

- eReturns – portal used by political parties and associated entities for election funding and financial disclosure obligations.

ICT infrastructure management – refresh of key infrastructure

To enable the AEC to provide modern and scalable services, the AEC has invested time and money in a multi-layered infrastructure offering. This includes ensuring it can offer supportable and robust infrastructure, whether at the end-user's desktop or mobile service, within the AEC server and storage infrastructure, or engaging with commercial service providers to provide scalable commercial-grade, secure cloud-based offerings. This allows the AEC to conduct its business as usual, as well as scale up services to run an election within a short timeframe in a secure and supportable manner.

The AEC has recently upgraded, refreshed, or modernised:

- desktop and laptop devices across the network
- storage services, with capacity increased and updated equipment
- patching and image maintenance across virtual and on-premises equipment.

IT security (voting)

Reports of cyber attacks have been widespread over the past year. The AEC continues to work with external parties and stakeholders to maintain awareness of current attacks and trends, and implements appropriate mitigation strategies to protect the AEC network.

Procurement

Purchasing

The AEC's approach to procuring goods and services is consistent with the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. The AEC applies these rules through its accountable authority instructions and supporting operational guidelines.

The AEC has a centralised area of expertise, which provides procurement and contracting advice and manages panel arrangements for key election-related services. Information on procurement policy and practices is available to staff through an internal procurement and contract management register and the intranet.

The AEC continues to develop procurement skills, and implement processes to improve efficiency and value-for-money outcomes.

Information on procurements expected to be undertaken in 2017–18 is in the annual procurement plan, available from the AusTender website (www.tenders.gov.au).

Initiatives to support small business

The AEC supports small business participation in the Commonwealth Government procurement market. Participation statistics for small and medium enterprises, are available on the Department of Finance website.

The AEC recognises the importance of ensuring that small businesses are paid on time. The results of the survey of Australian Government payments to small business are available at www.treasury.gov.au.

Requests for tender

There were five open tender requests published electronically on AusTender in 2016–17.

Grants

The AEC did not administer any discretionary grant programs in 2016–17.

Consultancies

The AEC engages consultants when it requires either specialist expertise, or independent research, review or assessment on matters relating to the delivery of electoral events. Consultants are typically engaged to investigate or diagnose an identified issue or problem, carry out defined reviews or evaluations, or provide independent advice to assist in AEC decision-making.

Decisions to engage consultants during 2016–17 were made in accordance with section 35(2) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, the PGPA Act and related Regulations (including the Commonwealth Procurement Rules), and relevant internal policies.

During 2016–17, the AEC entered into 15 new consultancy contracts involving total actual expenditure of \$1,491,897 (GST inc.). In addition, 12 ongoing consultancy contracts were active during the period, involving an actual expenditure of \$617,149 (GST inc.).

Further information on the value of AEC contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website.

Table 23: Expenditure on consultancy contracts 2014–15 to 2016–17

	2014–15 \$ million	2015–16 \$ million	2016–17 \$ million
Total actual consultancy expenditure	2.5	2.9	2.1

Australian National Audit Office access provisions

All AEC contract templates include a standard clause providing for the Auditor-General to have access to the contractor's premises. The AEC did not have any contracts without the Australian National Audit Office access provisions.

Exempt contracts

No contracts or standing offers in excess of \$10,000 (GST incl.) in 2016–17 were exempt from publication on AusTender on the basis that they would disclose exempt information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Sustainability principles

In accordance with the Commonwealth procurement framework, the AEC aims to fulfil its responsibility to be an efficient, effective, economical, ethical and sustainable procurer. The AEC's procurement policy seeks to achieve sustainability through reducing energy consumption and minimising waste.

Environmental performance

We manage our environmental performance by minimising the impact of our operations on the environment, encouraging sustainable business practices, managing waste, and monitoring energy and resource use. The AEC's Environment Management Commitment is available on the AEC website.

An AEC Environmental and Sustainability Guide is available to all staff. It focuses on office-based operations and behaviours that align with legislative requirements. It also encourages environment-friendly and sustainable practices in the areas nominated above.

For the AEC, environmental performance also encompasses nationwide sustainable procurement practices, building operations, and the management of national, state/territory and divisional offices. It also includes the impact of state and federal elections, and management of the waste reduction program for the National Electoral Education Centre.

Sustainable development

Sustainable use of premises

In accordance with section 516A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the AEC reports on environmental performance and measures that minimise environmental impact, including:

- the recommendations of the Australian National Audit Office's Performance Audit Report No.47 of 1998–99
- Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Energy Efficiency in Government Operations Policy
- Fleet Monitoring Body guidelines for use of ethanol.

The AEC continues to take the following measures to minimise the effect of office operations on the environment:

- contracting service providers to collect and recycle paper, cardboard, plastics, aluminium and glass
- contracting service providers to remove spent toner cartridges
- using partly or wholly recyclable products wherever possible
- applying double-sided default printer settings to reduce paper consumption
- promoting use of E10 petrol in AEC vehicles
- considering environmental impacts in the design and layout of new and upgraded accommodation

- working with contracted property services providers to reduce energy consumption in state/territory and divisional offices.

Sustainable procurement practices

The AEC addresses sustainable procurement in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules; the Department of the Environment and Energy's Sustainable Procurement Guide; and the AEC Procurement Policy.

Value-for-money is a core principle of the AEC's Procurement Policy. As a result, the agency values goods and service providers that reduce:

- energy and consumption demand
- unnecessary consumption
- end-of-life disposal.

All tenders are evaluated with consideration of these principles.

Energy conservation

The AEC is committed to establishing standards, programs and innovative practices to improve energy efficiency across our property portfolio.

Energy efficient operations in the national office include:

- energy-efficient dishwashers and refrigerators
- automatic energy-saving mode for multifunction devices and machines
- automatic energy-saving mode for desktop computers and monitors
- motion-sensitive, task-based lighting.

For 2016–17, the use of light and power energy across all AEC premises was 8,836.14 megajoules per person, which represents an 8.21 per cent decrease on the previous year. Higher usage in the previous year was due to increased operations in the lead up to the 2016 federal election.

Water conservation

While opportunities to use water conservation strategies are sometimes limited across the entire AEC property portfolio, the AEC considers the capture and use of water wherever possible.

Water conservation measures at the national office include:

- low-flow sensor taps
- grey water recycling for flushing toilets
- dual-flush cisterns and waterless or low-flow urinals
- rainwater retention for use in cooling towers.

Responsible disposal of waste

The AEC's Environmental and Sustainability Guide provides staff with instructions on the responsible disposal of:

- cleaning chemicals
- volatile organic compounds in paints and solvents
- employee amenity paper products
- furniture
- kitchen supplies.

Vehicle use and travel reduction

AEC business vehicles are selected in accordance with the Department of Finance vehicle selection policy, with a focus on reduced CO₂ emissions when comparing suitable models.

National Electoral Education Centre waste reduction program

The ACTSmart Business Recycling Program assesses the waste reduction initiatives of businesses located in the Australian Capital Territory.

In December 2016, the National Electoral Education Centre was awarded its seventh ACTSmart accreditation. In the seven years that it has actively participated in the program, it has reduced annual landfill waste to 2.9 cubic metres per annum, representing an overall waste reduction of 83 per cent. This achievement has been maintained despite the centre maintaining annual visitor numbers of more than 87,500.

Compliance

Legal compliance

The AEC retains both in-house and external legal services. Activities encompass legal action, commercial law, responding to human rights matters, considering freedom of information requests and overseeing internal and external compliance processes related to enforcing compliance with the Electoral Act, privacy and administrative, judicial and parliamentary scrutiny. We also seek and provide advice on the operation and effect of provisions in the Electoral Act and the Referendum Act.

Internal audit

Internal audit provided a range of risk-based activities to assess the effectiveness of the AEC's operations and performance. In particular, the internal audit program focused on emerging risks and priorities following the 2016 federal election with topics including reviews of the election readiness framework, election contract management, IT security, election evaluation and business continuity.

Internal auditors

PricewaterhouseCoopers and McGrathNicol, appointed by the AEC in 2013, continued to provide audit and assurance services during 2016–17. The scope, responsibilities and independence requirements for audit functions are documented in the AEC Audit Charter endorsed by the Business Assurance Committee.

Fraud control

The AEC complies with the fraud control requirements under the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework, including section 10 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014, the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and associated Fraud Guidance.

The 2015–17 Fraud Control Plan highlights the AEC's zero tolerance approach to fraud with regard to the AEC's operation and services. The plan outlines the AEC's strategies to prevent, detect and respond to external and internal fraud. Prevention strategies for corporate and electoral fraud are the focus of the plan, and the AEC conducted regular fraud risk assessments during the year.

The AEC's fraud webpage identifies what is, and what is not, fraud and provides guidance for AEC staff and members of the public to report suspected fraud through an online portal, by telephone via a dedicated hotline, or by mail. In addition, mandatory fraud awareness training was completed by 98 per cent of AEC staff during 2016–17.

In 2016–17, the AEC took all reasonable measures to deal with fraud allegations. The AEC Fraud Unit received and examined 100 allegations of suspected fraud. Ninety-seven allegations were related to electoral matters, and three to corporate fraud. Investigations into corporate fraud matters found no evidence to substantiate the allegations.

Fraud Control Committee

The Fraud Control Committee is a sub committee of the Business Assurance Committee (see list of AEC management committees in Table 16). It oversees the appropriateness and effectiveness of the AEC's fraud control plans, policies, procedures and systems to identify and investigate fraud-related matters.

The Fraud Control Committee held four meetings in 2016–17 and provided reports to the Business Assurance Committee after each meeting.

Freedom of information

Agencies subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) are required to publish a broad range of information for the public on their websites as part of the Information Publication Scheme. This replaces a previous requirement to publish a statement in the agency's annual report.

In addition, agencies must publish information that has been released in response to each FOI access request, subject to certain exceptions. This publication is known as a disclosure log.

Information Publication Scheme and FOI Disclosure Log

The AEC's Information Publication Scheme (IPS) entry and FOI Disclosure Log are published on our website, highlighted with icons developed by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. In accordance with FOI Act requirements, the IPS page on the AEC website displays the following:

- an outline of the IPS and its requirements
- the AEC Agency Plan
- details of the AEC's structure and functions (including a link to the AEC's organisation chart and a list of statutory appointments under the Electoral Act)
- the AEC's reports and responses to the Australian Parliament

- annual reports dating back to 1998
- routinely requested information
- contact details for further queries.

The AEC website also features operational information to help the AEC make decisions or recommendations that affect members of the public, such as the AEC's rules, guidelines, practices and precedents relating to former decisions and recommendations. These include:

- enrolment requirements published at www.aec.gov.au/enrol
- special enrolment options published at www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Special_Category
- information for candidates and scrutineers published at www.aec.gov.au/Elections/candidates
- party registration guide published at www.aec.gov.au/Parties_and_Representatives/party_registration/guide
- financial disclosure guides published at www.aec.gov.au/Parties_and_Representatives/financial_disclosure.

INTERESTING FACT

24 electoral divisions contain islands off the coast of Australia, including the Division of Canberra, which has Norfolk Island

External scrutiny

Customer scrutiny

Service Charter

The AEC's Service Charter can be viewed on the AEC website.

The charter informs the public of the service they can expect to receive when interacting with the AEC. It reflects and supports the AEC values of electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism. As a high-level document, the charter also serves as a central link to the more detailed performance standards available in individual event or business area service plans.

Customer enquiries, issues and complaints

In 2016–17 (outside of the federal election period), the AEC received more than 80,000 phone calls, more than 16,000 emails and approximately 13,000 in-person contacts from the public.

During the election period, the AEC partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to deliver election contact centre services on behalf of the AEC. The DHS contact centre continued to operate for two weeks after election day, and in the period from 1 July 2016 received more than 69,000 telephone enquiries, approximately 4,900 emails and just under 1,200 product requests. Further information and statistics regarding 2016 federal election public enquiries was provided in the AEC's 2015–16 Annual Report.

National complaints management framework

The AEC complaints management policy is available on the AEC website and sets out the processes to be followed when managing a complaint.

The policy outlines the six principles of accessibility, responsiveness, confidentiality, fairness, transparency and efficiency as fundamental to the AEC's management of complaints. It is operationally supported by two internal procedure documents, on complaints management and internal review of complaints, respectively.

Administrative scrutiny

Guiding legislation

The administrative practices and decisions of the AEC are subject to a range of legislation, as outlined in Table 24.

Relevant reports and reviews

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

There was one matter before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal during this period.

Matter relating to a party logo

On 19 June 2017, the appeals tribunal notified the AEC about an application to review the AEC decision to affirm the decision of the delegate, under subsection 134(6) of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, to register the logo of the Australia First Party (NSW) Incorporated. This logo includes a representation of the Eureka flag.

Objections to the registration process for this logo were based on its reputed creation by the Ballarat Reform League as a symbol of defiance.

The widespread use of an image of the Eureka flag as a component of various registered trademarks supports the proposition that the image of the flag is not owned by anyone individual or organisation.

This matter has not yet been set down for hearing.

Table 24: Guiding legislation for AEC administrative decisions

Act	Governing body	Related matters
<i>Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975</i>	Administrative Appeals Tribunal	Certain administrative decisions made under the Electoral Act.
<i>Ombudsman Act 1976</i>	Commonwealth Ombudsman	Complaints about matters of administration relating to AEC functions.
<i>Privacy Act 1988</i>	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (the Privacy Commissioner)	Complaints about breaches of privacy rights.
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	Australian Information Commissioner Freedom of Information Commissioner	Complaints about, and delays in, the handling of requests for access to information.
<i>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986</i>	Australian Human Rights Commission	Complaints that claim the AEC has unlawfully discriminated against an individual.

Commonwealth Ombudsman

There were no investigations undertaken by the Ombudsman into the AEC’s administration during the reporting period.

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

There were no reports of privacy breaches to the Australian Information Commissioner during the reporting period.

However, the AEC did receive a notice from the Freedom of Information Commissioner under section 55E of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* relating to a complaint about the handling of a request for access to documents. The AEC complied with the notice on 15 June 2017.

INTERESTING FACT

Ballot papers and pencils are requirements of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission dismissed a complaint that the AEC’s assisted voting services were discriminatory to blind or visually impaired electors, and that the AEC was in breach of its obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The AEC was unable to enter a conciliation process because the AEC has little discretion to remedy the complaint in the manner sought by the complainant.

As part of the vetting process for senior polling officials, the AEC conducts criminal record checks. In June and July 2017, the AEC was notified of several complaints being lodged with the Human Rights Commission alleging criminal record discrimination under the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*. One complaint remains outstanding at the end of the reporting period. All other complaints have been resolved.

On 2 March 2017, the commission advised the AEC of a complaint from the father of a disabled person alleging disability discrimination under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* because the AEC had not agreed to permanently remove the disabled person from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll.

This matter was subsequently resolved by the father providing medical evidence that the disabled person was ‘incapable of understanding the nature and significance of enrolment and voting’ as required by sections 93(8)(a) and 116(4) of the Electoral Act.

Judicial scrutiny

High Court

There have not been any decisions of the High Court that directly involved decisions made by the AEC during the reporting period. The AEC did provide assistance concerning the process for re-counting Senate votes following the decisions in the matters of *Re Culleton [No 2] [2017] HCA 4* and *Re Day [No 2] [2017] HCA 14*, where both Mr Culleton and Mr Day were found to have been disqualified from nominating as candidates for the 2 July 2016 federal election due to the operation of section 44 of the Constitution.

Federal Court

Administrative decisions judicial review

There were no applications to the Federal Court under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* during the reporting period.

Industrial elections

There were no applications to the Federal Court involving the AEC’s conduct of industrial elections during the reporting period where the AEC was named as a party.

There was one application to the Federal Court for an inquiry in relation to the election for offices which the AEC conducted but was not named as a party. In *Clancy, in the matter of an application for an inquiry in relation to an election for offices in the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation [2017] FCA 460 (5 May 2017)*, the court held that the applicant failed to establish reasonable grounds for his application for an inquiry. The court also dismissed the application for the institution of an inquiry under section 201 of the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

Parliamentary scrutiny

Services to the Australian Parliament

The AEC is accountable to the Australian Parliament with responsibilities set out in the Electoral Act, the Referendum Act and related legislation. The AEC provides evidence, advice and other input to matters being considered by the Special Minister of State and to various parliamentary committees – but primarily to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

In 2016–17, the Special Minister of State referred 131 letters to the AEC for input.

Major themes included political donations and donation reform, compulsory voting, electronic voting, issues relating to polling places and enrolment. The AEC also provided 65 briefings to the Special Minister of State, and support for Question Time and Senate Estimates hearings.

Parliamentary inquiries

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters continues to be the central point for parliamentary consideration and debate on electoral law, administration and legislative reform. The AEC provides support to parliamentary inquiries by making submissions, appearing at hearings and providing information when requested.

Parliamentary inquiries conducted in 2016–17 are summarised in Table 25.

INTERESTING FACT

Compulsory enrolment was introduced in 1911 and it became compulsory to vote at federal elections in 1924

Table 25: Parliamentary inquiries and AEC involvement 2016–17

Inquiry	Committee	Date referred	AEC involvement	Status
Inquiry into the 2016 Federal Election and matters related thereto.	Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters	21 September 2016	The AEC made one primary submission and 18 supplementary submissions; appeared at 10 public hearings and four private meetings; and answered questions taken on notice.	The first interim report on the authorisation of voter communication was tabled on 9 December 2016. The second interim report: Foreign donations was tabled in March 2017. The third interim report: AEC modernisation was tabled on 21 June 2017.
Inquiry on the establishment of a National Integrity Commission	Select Committee on a National Integrity Commission	8 February 2017	The AEC appeared at a public hearing but did not make a submission.	The committee is to report by 15 August 2017.