

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

Inquiry into the 2007 election and related matters

*Chair: Daryl Melham**Deputy Chair: Scott Morrison*

Report on the 2007 federal election electronic voting trials

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee tabled a report on the 2007 federal election electronic voting trials in the House of Representatives yesterday evening.

The trials provided for electronically assisted voting for electors who are blind or vision impaired and remote electronic voting for selected Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel serving overseas.

"The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and its partners should be recognised for their work in delivering the trials", committee chair Daryl Melham said. "The committee acknowledges the sustained efforts over a short period of time to develop solutions to a range of technical, logistical, administrative and legislative issues."

The committee has recommended that electronically assisted voting for blind and vision impaired electors and remote electronic voting for ADF personnel serving overseas be discontinued.

The trial of remote electronic voting for selected ADF personnel serving overseas saw 2,012 personnel registered to participate in four areas of operation — Afghanistan, Iraq, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Of these, 1,511 personnel cast their votes electronically at an average cost of \$1,159.

"Defence force personnel should be provided with every possible opportunity to vote at federal elections, however remote electronic voting imposes a significant additional burden on personnel in operational areas", Mr Melham said. "An alternative model, jointly endorsed by Defence and the AEC, and involving AEC-trained defence personnel issuing pre-poll and postal votes should instead be used at future federal elections".

The trial of assisted electronic voting for electors who are blind or vision impaired saw a lower-than-expected 850 votes cast across 29 metropolitan and regional locations. The average cost per vote cast was \$2,597. This compares to an average cost per elector of \$8.36 at the 2007 federal election.

"The high cost of improving the quality of the voting experience for a limited number of voters is unsustainable given the low number of votes cast and limited opportunities to lift participation" Mr Melham said. "The committee is mindful that these electors will not be disenfranchised by discontinuing electronically assisted voting, with existing provisions in the Electoral Act facilitating assisted voting where required."

A copy of the report is available from

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/elect07/report.htm>.

For media comment: please contact the Committee Chair, Daryl Melham, on (02) 6277 2054 (Parliament House Office).

Further information: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 2374, email jscem@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee's webpage at <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>