

## Introduction

### Scope of the inquiry

- 1.1 It has been the practice of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, and its predecessors, to examine the conduct of each federal election and related matters since 1983.
- 1.2 A House of Representatives and half Senate election took place on 21 August 2010.
- 1.3 On 23 November 2010, the Special Minister of State, the Hon Gary Gray MP formally requested that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquire into the conduct of the 2010 federal election and matters related thereto.
- 1.4 The 2010 federal election differed in some respects from recent previous federal elections. A federal election had not been held in winter since 1987, and this created certain challenges for the conduct of this election. The decision in *Rowe v Electoral Commission* effectively restoring the close of rolls period to seven days following the issue of writs resulted in an unanticipated additional workload for the Australian Electoral Commission in the processing of almost 100 000 enrolment transactions.

## Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.5 On 30 November 2010, the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Mr Daryl Melham MP, announced the inquiry. It was advertised nationally in *The Australian* newspaper on 1 December 2010 and members of the public were invited to make submissions.
- 1.6 The Committee also wrote to all Members and Senators and Senators-elect; state premiers and chief ministers; the Australian Electoral Commission; state and territory electoral commissions; registered major political parties; and selected academics and interest groups.
- 1.7 During the course of the inquiry, the Committee received 119 written submissions (Appendix A). The Committee received further evidence at nine public hearings held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra (Appendix B).
- 1.8 The submissions and transcripts of evidence from the public hearings are available from the Committee's website: [www.aph.gov.au/em](http://www.aph.gov.au/em).

## Structure of the report

- 1.9 Chapter 2 provides an overview of the 2010 federal election, including administrative aspects of the conduct of the election, significant events and concerns raised. It flags key issues to be explored in the report.
- 1.10 In Chapter 3 the Committee addresses the issue of the state of the Commonwealth electoral roll, including the fact that the eligible population is growing faster than enrolments, and developments such as automatic enrolment at the state level. It considers how to address some of these issues and retain roll integrity. Government and opposition members disagree on these matters.
- 1.11 Chapter 4 covers the voting experience: when, where and how people voted, things that went well, and difficulties encountered. Matters discussed include the mishandling of ballot papers in the divisions of Boothby and Flynn, postal voting application procedures, services for electors who are blind or have low vision and Antarctic voters, and minimum font requirements for How-to-Vote cards.
- 1.12 Chapters 5, 6 and 7 cover enrolment and voting franchises.

- 
- 1.13 Chapter 5 outlines the cases *Rowe v Electoral Commission* and *Roach v Electoral Commissioner* and the impact of the court decisions.
- 1.14 In Chapter 6 the issue of reinstatement to the electoral roll is considered. The 2010 federal election saw the difference between the election roll and the close of rolls enrolment go into negative figures, with more people coming off the roll than going on in the period between the close of rolls and polling day.
- 1.15 Formality issues and the voter franchise are considered in Chapter 7. The Committee discusses the increasing level of informal voting in the House of Representatives and explores options to help reduce informality.
- 1.16 The redistribution of electoral boundaries process in Victoria coincided with the 2010 federal election. Chapter 8 considers the impact of the timing of this redistribution and explores options for dealing with this problem should it occur in the future.
- 1.17 The final chapter, Chapter 9, is a mixed bag of other issues not dealt with elsewhere in the report. It includes ballot paper complexity and handling, candidate nominations, overseas electors, and other administrative matters.