

Opening Statement: NSW JSCEM - 27 Oct 2024

Chair and Committee members,

Thank you for the invitation to appear today. I do wish to make some brief opening remarks.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), along with our fellow state and territory election management bodies, are committed to **maintaining confidence** in the integrity of electoral processes and **maintaining trust** in our democratic systems. Our leadership on work to combat threats to electoral integrity, and in leading internationally admired education and engagement programs, makes an important contribution to global best practice.

By necessity, our mechanisms to safeguard electoral integrity have evolved to meet the changing electoral environment and new challenges, including more recent developments with generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).

- We've developed a **Reputation Management System**, which guides our internal processes and capabilities in maintaining public trust. The System puts operational excellence in service delivery at its foundation, while also enhancing focus on our subject matter expertise in elections, and our clear and transparent communication.
- As an example of this, since the 2022 federal election, we have operated an online **Disinformation Register** which lists prominent disinformation going specifically to aspects of the electoral process. I understand the NSW Electoral Commission has adopted this for their most recent local and state elections. Adding to this, our **AEC TV** YouTube channel produces short informational video content that educates voters about electoral processes and addresses disinformation.
- As subject matter experts, we **actively engage** on social media and regularly conduct media interviews and briefings. Each electoral event we run campaigns to

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explain why to vote, where to vote, and how to correctly complete a ballot paper. At the referendum, we had **over 1 billion impressions** of these campaigns through video, display, audio and social media.

- We also have a long-standing election-specific **national digital literacy campaign, Stop and Consider**, running at each event since 2019. This campaign has been picked up and adapted by our state and territory EMB colleagues, including New South Wales. Global research indicates that effective digital media literacy for citizens is one of the most significant actions we can take to combat mis- and disinformation and we continue to support any efforts for a broader national campaign.

A critical part of our role as an election management body is engaging communities and delivering education services, to help Australians understand the process and responsibilities of voting.

- Our National Electoral Education Centre is our flagship school education program at Old Parliament House. We hosted **just over 76,000 visitors in 2023-24**, running at near full capacity with **18 sessions held most days**, with many of those coming from NSW.
- The AEC's long-standing Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) works with many Indigenous partners and directly engages with communities to encourage electoral participation and education in ways that are culturally suitable. At the referendum last year, we delivered **266 education sessions** with First Nations communities and had information available in **up to 25 First Nations languages**.
- We will be further building on our engagement with multicultural communities, where in 2023 we met with **226 community leaders** representing **136 organisations** to promote actively sharing AEC electoral education materials. This includes our **Multicultural Community Electoral Participation Officer (CEPO) pilot** where the

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focus will be in areas with high multicultural populations and persistently low formality, including several areas of Western Sydney.

Building Australians' understanding of electoral processes and maintaining public trust in our democratic systems is a role shared by all electoral management bodies in Australia. Our observations show that across Australia and internationally we face similar issues and it is critical that we continue to share our experiences.

I welcome any questions that the Committee might have on our work.