

1 November 2001

AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS HAVING THEIR SAY

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has begun the task of arranging for Australians who are overseas to cast their vote in the coming federal election.

More than 65,000 Australians are expected to vote at 100 overseas voting posts in the weeks leading up to polling day on 10 November 2001.

Australian Electoral Commission, Acting Director Parliamentary Elections, Tim Evans said that the overseas voting campaign was being co-ordinated with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Mr Evans said it was just one example of the efforts to which the AEC goes to ensure that every eligible elector has the opportunity to vote in the election.

"Not every country offers their citizens the opportunity to vote overseas, but Australia sees it as an important and expected part of a federal election," he said.

Australians overseas may vote in person at diplomatic missions or they can vote by post by arranging for ballot papers to be sent to them at their overseas address.

"With the new enhanced AEC website, www.aec.gov.au, overseas electors can access detailed information on the election, including postal vote application forms and a list of overseas voting posts," Mr Evans said.

Mr Evans said that in Election 1998, 20 690 Australians voted in London, making it not only the busiest overseas voting post, but handling more votes than any single polling place in Australia.

Overseas electors who are unable to visit any of the 100 voting posts, can apply for a postal vote through an Australian Diplomatic Mission or they can print an application form from the AEC website, www.aec.gov.au

"The completed ballot papers must be in the mail to the AEC before polling day," Mr Evans said.

Under electoral law, the AEC must wait up to 13 days after polling day for these votes to be received before it can finalise counting and in very close seats, these votes can be crucial to the final result.

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