

Public Information Campaign

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The AEC conducted an extensive, integrated public information campaign for the 2001 federal election to increase awareness, public understanding of, and participation, in the election.

The campaign aimed to ensure all eligible electors were informed and understood what was required of them to fully participate in the election and the range of services available. The major messages conveyed in the campaign were:

- how, when and where to enrol and vote
- how and when to vote using services such as pre-poll and postal voting
- how to correctly complete the two ballot papers, and
- the role of the AEC in the election

The AEC developed and implemented a set of integrated strategies to communicate to electors including advertising, public relations, publications, national telephone enquiry service and the website. There were also a number of specific activities directed at the key target groups of electors from non-English speaking backgrounds, electors with a disability, young electors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors.



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Advertising

The AEC's advertising campaign for the 2001 federal election consisted of national and State and Territory based advertising. The advertising campaign which ran throughout the election period was designed to reach all eligible electors.

The national advertising campaign involved the use of television, radio and press advertisements and was in three main phases:

- Informing Australians of their obligations whilst encouraging enrolment
- Explanation of voting services, and
- Explanation of how to vote formally

The national campaign consisted of fifteen television commercials, fourteen radio commercials and ten press advertisements.

An AEC enrolment advertisement appeared on television in every major capital city from 4pm in the closing stages of Bathurst 1000 (Motor Race) on Sunday, 7th October 2001. The final AEC advertisements appeared in the press and were

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broadcast on radio on polling day, concluding at 5pm. The final television commercial aired before 4pm on polling day.



A still from a television advertisement reminding electors that if they move house they need to re-enrol for their new address.

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Advertising (continued)

The State and Territory based advertising was designed to support the national advertising by providing local information. It included the press advertising of pre-poll voting arrangements and polling places in State, regional and local press.

The national advertising was translated into eighteen languages in the ethnic press, twenty-six languages on ethnic radio and eight languages for ethnic television. In addition, radio advertisements were translated into 14 indigenous languages and advertisements were broadcast on Radio for the Print Handicapped.

Of the total media budget, 66 per cent was spent on mainstream television, 5 per cent on mainstream radio and 21 per cent on mainstream press

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advertising. Expenditure in ethnic and indigenous media accounted for approximately 8 per cent of total advertising costs.



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Advertising (continued)

Translation of advertisements for the 2001 federal election

Press advertisements were translated into 18 languages:

Chinese
Vietnamese
Italian
Greek
Arabic
Spanish
Macedonian
Turkish
Korean
Croatian
Polish
Serbian
Russian
Portuguese
Persian
Maltese
German
Hungarian

Radio advertisements were translated into 26 languages:

Cantonese	Hungarian
Mandarin	Japanese
Vietnamese	Indonesian
Italian	Thai
Greek	Tagalog
Arabic	Khmer
Spanish	Bosnian
Macedonian	Lao
Turkish	
Korean	
Croatian	
Polish	
Serbian	
Russian	
Portuguese	
Persian	
Maltese	
German	

Televisions advertisements were translated into eight languages:

Cantonese
Mandarin
Vietnamese
Italian
Greek
Arabic
Spanish
Macedonian

Radio advertisements were translated into 14 indigenous languages:

Kala Kawa Ya
Yumbla Tok
Walpiri
Pitjantjatjarra
Kalkadoon
Western Kriol
Murriwong
Yawuru
Naja Kajarri
Anindilyakwa
Gapapuyingu
Dhalwangu
Dhumbarpyungu
Northern Creole

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Public Relations

The AEC planned and implemented a large scale public relations campaign for the election to complement the advertising and other elements of the public information campaign.

Public relations activities included:

Media releases: the AEC released over 200 national, State and Territory and localised media releases during the election period. A series of media backgrounders detailing key aspects of the election were also distributed. Several key media releases were translated into community languages and distributed to the ethnic media.

Media interviews: AEC staff were interviewed on national, metropolitan, local and ethnic radio and television on numerous occasions during the election.

Information briefings: information briefings for candidates and the media were held by several AEOs in their State or Territory either just before or following the announcement of the election.

Federal election 2001 information kits containing election the information were distributed to attendees.

Monitoring of electronic media spots directly related to AEC activities and messages showed over 1000 radio hits and over 200 television hits were achieved during the election. Press hits achieved during the election were also extensive.

Photo opportunities

Many photo stories provided to the media gained national and international coverage, including an elephant reminding people to vote and various photos of members of the Australian Antarctic Expedition voting 'under ice'. These photos were used extensively throughout the Australian media.

Other national coverage included NSW AEC staff featuring on the popular humourous television program, the 'Monday Dump' with Roy and HG prior to the close of rolls and a guest appearance by the AEO NSW on polling night on the 'Nation Dumps' (Roy and HG show).

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Public Relations (continued)



As part of the AEC public relations campaign, Abu the elephant reminded people to vote on her 68th birthday!

Other PR initiatives

There were a number of other new initiatives used to communicate key messages to target AEC audiences including:

- the use of ribbon messages about voting which were delivered to screens in more than 5,000 licensed clubs and hotels over the 10 days preceding the election
- a reminder-to-vote message attached to the campaign logo which was posted on the White Pages website (the site attracted about 600,000 'hits' the day it appeared), and

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- the placement of a five metre banner with the words 'Enrol to Vote' displayed on the top of the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (attracting two news helicopters plus on the ground camera crews and photographers)



Roy and HG broadcasting live on election night from the National Tally Room.

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Publications

The AEC produced a series of publications for the 2001 federal election including:

- *Nominations Pamphlet*
- *Candidates' Handbook*
- *Scrutineers' Handbook*
- *National Electoral Divisional Profiles*
- *Electoral Backgrounders*
- *2001 Federal Electoral Boundaries Map*
- *National List of Candidates*
- *Electoral Newsfile editions*
- *2001 Election Night Guide*
- *Fact sheets*
- *Information leaflet; Your guide to the 2001 federal election*

A description of these and other publications produced for, or following the election are outlined in [Appendix D](#).

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Elector Leaflet

The AEC distributed a multi-page election information leaflet, *Your guide to the 2001 federal election*, to more than 7.5 million households throughout Australia before polling day.

A different version of the leaflet was produced for each State and Territory containing electoral information on how and when to vote, how votes are counted and important AEC contact details. Delivery of over 7.5 million leaflets began three weeks before polling day with households in remote communities receiving the first copies. Delivery was extensive, covering urban, rural and remote households. The leaflets were wrapped in plastic to protect them and keep them separate from party political and other advertising material being delivered.

A summarised version of the elector leaflet was translated into 15 languages and made available on the website and in hardcopy on request.

A version of the leaflet was produced on audio cassette, braille, large print and computer disc and distributed to blind and other print handicapped electors. This information was also available for the first time in audio format from the AEC website.

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Election 2001 Information Inquiry Service

The Information Inquiry Service was outsourced for the first time and was managed from two sites operating as one virtual call centre, the primary site being in Canberra and the second site in Melbourne. The national '13 23 26' number operated from both sites from 8.00am to 8.00pm local time seven days a week to provide information and assistance to the public.

The Information Inquiry Service answered 513,347 calls nationally during the election period. Up to four hundred trained consultants were logged on to telephones at any one time to answer calls from around Australia.

The call centre network provided consultants with an electronic interactive question and answer information system that incorporated electoral roll data. Using this system, consultants were able to access information on their computer screens ensuring that all telephone inquiries were answered promptly, accurately and consistently.

Telephone Interpreting Service

A telephone interpreting service for electors from non-English speaking backgrounds was also provided throughout the 2001 federal election period.

The service had 15 language specific telephone lines and one line for electors who did not speak any of the 15 specific languages available. A caller to one of the 15 language specific lines was greeted by a recorded electoral message in their own language and could be connected to an operator speaking their language if they required further information.

During the election period, a total of 11,109 calls were made to the interpreting service with almost half of these callers choosing to speak further to an operator. The language lines that received the most calls during the period were the Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese lines. The graph on the following page illustrates the number of calls each of the language lines received during the 2001 election period.

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Telephone Interpreting Service (continued)

Language		Calls	Interpreter Requests		
Arabic	376		Polish	142	
	122			54	
Cambodian	28		Portuguese	28	
	10			9	
Cantonese	2103		Russian	191	
	1119			85	
Croatian	156		Serbian	130	
	38			54	
Greek	288		Spanish	360	
	111			140	
Italian	217		Turkish	86	
	68			37	
Macedonian	61		Vietnamese	738	
	25			390	
Mandarin	2270		Other	446	
	1080			147	

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Internet

The AEC website consisted of large amounts of current and historical electoral information with extensive cross-referencing to make it easy for users. The web site at www.aec.gov.au was first launched at the 1996 federal election.

The website proved to be an important way for the AEC to provide information on the 2001 election to many people including the media, Australians overseas, candidates and parties and members of the public. During the election period, the website received over 140,000 visits, comprising 10 million hits and 2,120,000 page views with the average visitor spending over half an hour looking around the site.

Internet Virtual Tally Room

On election night the AEC hosted a website election results system known as the 'Virtual Tally Room'. This provided people with up to the minute election results. The site was updated almost instantly as votes were telephoned in from the polling place and entered into the AEC's election management system. People visiting the site on election night could access

progressive House of Representatives results for all divisions, state party summaries and national totals. Early figures from the Senate count for all States and Territories were also available.



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Internet Virtual Tally Room (continued)

The site was updated every three minutes on election night and on a regular basis in the weeks following.

The software and technology necessary to host the 'Virtual Tally Room' was developed especially for the AEC. An electronic feed was taken from the AEC's computerised election management system database and distributed simultaneously to two web centres located in Sydney and Melbourne.

On election day the election specific website received over 4 million hits, which corresponds to over 15,000 visits and 830,000 page views with the average visit exceeding half an hour.

Special Target Groups

The AEC's public information campaign included a number of specific activities to meet the needs of particular target groups. These activities were aimed at minimising any impediments these electors had to receiving and understanding information, and in participating in the election.

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Electors from non-English speaking backgrounds

In addition to advertising in the ethnic media and the telephone interpreting service, key election information was sent to ethnic media, community organisations and groups throughout the election period. Election information was also available in 15 different languages from the AEC website or by calling the information enquiry service.

Videos explaining how to vote formally were played in selected languages (including English) in polling places with high populations of electors from Non-English speaking backgrounds and past high informality rates in the divisions of Blaxland, Fowler, Prospect and Reid. Languages included Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

In the lead up to the 2001 federal election the AEC undertook a pre-election Remote Area Information Program in the remote areas of all states except Tasmania. The program employed mainly indigenous people for a period of six weeks to visit remote indigenous communities to explain our electoral system and how to fully participate. Posters, pamphlets and pocket books were used to support the program.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (continued)

Radio advertising in 14 indigenous languages was also broadcast on indigenous media during the 2001 election.

Electors with a disability

In consultation with the Royal Blind Society and Vision Australia the AEC undertook a number of activities to assist electors with a print disability during the 2001 election. Audio cassettes, ASCII computer discs, braille and large print versions of the information contained in the elector leaflet were distributed to disability organisations and agencies, libraries and individuals. This information was also made available on the AEC website in audio format. The availability of these products was advertised through the Radio for the Print Handicapped network, other disability media and in AEC publications.

Young electors

The AEC conducted a number of activities to encourage young people to participate in the 2001 election. A youth television advertisement designed to encourage young people to enrol was placed during youth programming in the close of rolls

week. Four youth radio commercials were also broadcast throughout the election period.

As part of the public relations campaign, information, stories and photo opportunities were developed specifically for youth media outlets and the AEC website was heavily promoted.

To raise awareness about enrolment amongst young people a short essay, web based competition was jointly conducted by the AEC in partnership with the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Young people were invited to express why they thought enrolling to vote made a difference. The competition which was hosted on the government youth communication website (www.thesource.gov.au), attracted more entries than any other competition previously hosted by the 'source'.