



THE ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS

Formal response to the Cabinet's Office consultation on the memorandum on the Electoral Administration Act 2006

1. Introduction

1.1. The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) was founded in 1987 and is the professional body representing the interests of electoral administrators in the United Kingdom. It is a non-governmental and non-partisan body and has over 1,800 members, the majority of whom are employed by local authorities to provide electoral registration and election services.

1.2. This paper sets out the AEA's comments on the issues raised in the Cabinet's Office consultation on the memorandum on the Electoral Administration Act 2006. In accordance with the AEA's non-partisan and neutral position, this paper does not offer any views on the political implications raised in the Call for Evidence.

2. General

2.1. The AEA welcomes the undertaking in paragraph 7 that the Government will continue to monitor and evaluate the provisions within the Act in terms of improvements to the delivery of electoral services.

3. Registration of Service Personnel (paragraph 2)

3.1. The summary provides information about the extension of service voter declarations by up to 5 years and the requirement of the Ministry of Defence to maintain a record of registration options of service personnel. The AEA believes that the new requirement on the Ministry of Defence has not worked as was intended and that more could and should be done to improve the registration of service personnel. We will make further representations to the Government on this issue.

4. Anonymous Registration (paragraphs 35-39)

4.1. The AEA believes that the assessment of the introduction of the provisions for anonymous registration does not go far enough. Firstly, there does not appear to have been any attempt by way of qualitative or quantitative research to identify:

- whether the number of people using the facility is representative of the number of persons who might need this “protection”. If it is not, such persons could well have chosen the route of deliberate disenfranchisement by not registering at all. This, of itself, has an impact on the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register
- how well the provision is advertised or known. For example, a Google search of the term provides information from the websites of the Electoral Commission and the Information Commissioner together with some local authorities. However, a search of the term on www.gov.uk only provides information about a consultation on introducing the provision in Northern Ireland.

4.2. Secondly, there does not appear to have been any attempt to review the workability of the current provisions, both from an administrative viewpoint and the ease of use for potential electors.

5. Postal Vote Identifiers (paragraph 63)

5.1. The AEA welcomes the introduction of the requirement for Electoral Registration Officers to advise voters of the fact that their postal vote has been rejected as a result of their personal identifiers not matching those provided on the postal vote statement.

5.2. However, the AEA understands that the Government is seeking to add a further requirement that a reminder about this issue is sent to electors two to three months prior to the next regular election.

5.3. The AEA is strongly opposed to such a requirement for the reasons set out in the representations made to the Government in response to the consultation on the draft secondary legislation. It is interesting to note that the above paragraph contains no reference to the second reminder proposal despite it being the declared intention of the Government.

John Turner
Chief Executive

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