

Notification under the *Privacy Act 1988* Transparency Register – candidates' address

What has happened?

On 15 May 2024, the AEC became aware that some residential addresses of some election candidates were published on the AEC Transparency Register. Investigations identified that the Transparency Register had incorrectly and inadvertently drawn information listed in the address field from information previously supplied on candidate nomination forms. This internal process issue had been occurring since the Transparency Register went live on 15 October 2019.

AEC investigations revealed that:

- The internal process issue is only related to information previously supplied on candidate nomination forms being published on the Transparency Register.
- The publication of addresses for candidates on the Transparency Register included some residential addresses.
- Of the residential addresses that were published on the Transparency Register, approximately 71 were current residential addresses that are suppressed on the electoral roll.

Individuals can apply to the AEC to have their address suppressed on the roll if they believe having their address on the publicly available electoral roll could put their or their family's safety at risk. These individuals are referred to as silent electors and have been individually contacted by the AEC.

This incident related solely to candidate information from past federal elections that has been published on the Transparency Register. It does not impact the electoral roll.

This is not a cyber security breach. None of the AEC's systems have been compromised. There was no involvement of a third party outside the AEC. This incident was caused by an internal process issue that arose within the AEC's complex ICT environment.

Given the public profile of the affected individuals, the potential sensitivity of the personal information involved and the public nature of the disclosure, this incident will be formally reported to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) as an Eligible Data Breach under the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme. This follows the AEC's early and ongoing engagement with the OAIC to inform and update them on the incident.

What personal information was impacted?

The AEC is required by the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act) to publish some details to the Transparency Register. This includes the names and addresses of donors to parties and other political entities under Part XX of the Electoral Act. The only type of personal information that has been published erroneously as a result of the internal process issue is residential addresses that were drawn from candidate nomination forms. No passwords, financial, tax, Medicare or Centrelink details or any other identifying data were published as a result of this incident.

What action has the AEC taken?

The AEC has taken steps to reduce risk that individuals may experience because of this incident.

The Transparency Register was taken offline within hours of the AEC being notified of this internal process issue. The Transparency Register will not be made live until we are confident the impacting fields are removed and the updated solution to this issue has been fully and properly tested.

The AEC has contacted those individuals that either were or have since become a silent elector, who may be at greater risk due to this incident.

On 17 May 2024, we confirmed with the National Library of Australia that all snapshots of archived webpages from the Transparency Register were suppressed indefinitely on the Library's TROVE website.

The AEC has also advised the OAIC and the Australian Federal Police of the incident and the actions the AEC has taken. The Electoral Commissioner has initiated a fulsome external review led by an appropriately experienced person, and the review is underway. The results of this review will be made public on the AEC's website.

What can affected individuals do?

There are some steps that affected individuals can take to reduce potential risks due to this incident.

- Affected individuals should take care with emails and phone calls as you may be targeted by scammers. Do not share your personal information until you are certain about who you are sharing it with. To report a scam, please do so via [ScamWatch](#).
- If a person contacts you threatening to release your data unless payment is made, please report this immediately to ReportCyber via its [website](#) or on 1300 292 371.
- If there is an imminent threat to your safety call 000 for police attention in your state/territory.

How to contact us

The AEC takes enormous pride in its reputation as a world-leading electoral management body. Privacy is among our highest priorities. This is a deeply regrettable situation, for which we sincerely apologise.

Individuals who have concerns about their information on the Transparency Register can visit our website for [frequently asked questions and answers](#) or you can contact the AEC by emailing info@aec.gov.au. You can also call us on 13 23 26. We will do everything we can to try and answer your questions.

If you are not satisfied with the actions taken by the AEC, you can lodge a complaint with OAIC. The OAIC can be contacted via:

Phone: 1300 363 992

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

Post: GPO Box 5218; SYDNEY NSW 2001

Website: www.oaic.gov.au