

## NATIONAL TALLY ROOM

The National Tally Room (NTR) is set up to provide a central point for the display of results. Results are transmitted via the computerised TENIS from every Divisional Office around Australia and displayed on a manual tally board which dominates the room. The results are also displayed on computer terminals which are available to print and radio journalists, as well as directly fed to the television networks. The NTR is the main venue for television coverage of an election.

This election the venue for the NTR was the Australian Institute of Sport, in

Canberra, as the normal venue, Exhibition Park, was unavailable as a result of the Royal Canberra Show being held there shortly before polling day.

To ensure the smooth running of the NTR the AEC conducted a rehearsal on the Thursday before polling day to test the computer system and to provide training for the casual staff employed to work behind the tally board. Back-up procedures, in case the computers crashed, were also tested. A rehearsal for the television networks was held the following day.

THE NATIONAL TALLY ROOM ON ELECTION NIGHT



**National Tally Room logistics**

- the NTR took two weeks to construct - this included the construction of television studios - and one week to dismantle
- it took three days to "dress" the tally board with candidates' names, party affiliations and other signage
- two complete layers of chipboard were laid over the wooden parquet floor of the Indoor Sports Arena (usually a basketball court)
- it cost the AEC approximately \$869 000 to run - this included the hire of venue, communication facilities, equipment hire, casual staff wages, and security. (The television networks met the costs of constructing their own studios)
- throughout the week prior to polling day and on polling day itself security guards were employed by Telstra (at the AIS) and by the AEC (at its Central Office in Canberra) to protect the telecommunications network cables set up to transmit election results.

During the course of the evening approximately 2 300 people were in the NTR at any one time. This included:

- 238 AEC staff and staff of support organisations
- 871 members of the media (radio, print and television)
- 122 political party workers or Members of parliament
- 3 500 members of the public (a maximum of about 900 at any one time)
- 92 international and other official guests.

On the technical side there were:

- 40 terminals, 4 printers and 11 separate data feeds
- 4 kilometres of telephone cables
- 8 kilometres of computer cabling
- 2 mobile telephone repeater stations
- in excess of 300 mobile and 200 static telephones
- 55 peripherals off the AEC computer system
- up to 680 amps of electrical load (enough to power a small town).

A radio link was established between the NTR and the AEC's Central Office as a backup communications link.

The AEC provided the then Prime Minister, Mr Keating, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Howard, with computer terminals directly linked to the election results system.

Approximately 82 500 transactions were processed on election night, and over 440 terminals and printers were used across the country.