

North Sydney by-election Service Plan 2015

**NORTH SYDNEY
BY-ELECTION
2015**



AEC

Australian Electoral Commission

Foreword

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is committed to delivering trusted, reliable, high quality and high integrity electoral events and services.

The AEC has embarked on an important change journey since the last federal election, reforming its processes and systems to ensure it meets the expectations of the Australian people and the Australian Parliament in delivering safe, trusted electoral events.

This service plan outlines the key election services and standards that will underpin the AEC's delivery of the by-election in the federal electoral Division of North Sydney. This commitment to service embodies the AEC values, upholding electoral integrity through quality, agility and professionalism.

The AEC is committed to continuous evaluation and improvement, and will measure and report on its performance based on the standards in this plan. Should you have any comments on the service plan or feel the AEC isn't delivering on these commitments, I would ask you to take the time to let us know through our **online enquiry form** so we can use your feedback to continue improving the delivery of election services.

Tom Rogers
Electoral Commissioner

Overview

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is the independent statutory authority responsible for the conduct of federal by-elections.

A by-election must be held when a House of Representatives seat falls vacant; this may be for reasons such as the death, resignation, absence without leave, or other ineligibility of the sitting member.

The timing of a by-election is determined by the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the Australian Parliament.

By-election timetable

A number of essential steps are involved in conducting a by-election.

These steps, according to the Australian Constitution and the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (the Electoral Act), begin with the issue of the writ (a document commanding an electoral official to hold an election) and end with the return of the writ after the votes have been counted.

The North Sydney by-election will be conducted according to the following timetable.

Activity	Date
Issue of the writ	Monday 26 October 2015
Close of rolls	8pm Monday 2 November 2015
Close of candidate nominations	12 midday Thursday 12 November 2015
Declaration of candidate nominations	12 midday Friday 13 November 2015
Early voting commences	from Tuesday 17 November 2015
Mobile polling commences	from Monday 23 November 2015
Last day for receipt of postal vote applications	6pm Wednesday 2 December 2015
By-election day	Saturday 5 December 2015
Last day for receipt of postal votes	Friday 18 December 2015
Return of the writ (latest date)	on or before Wednesday 3 February 2016

AEC service standards

The AEC is committed to upholding four key service standards. The AEC will monitor and report on its performance against each of these standards.

1. Voters and candidates receive timely and accurate information

The AEC will support effective participation in the North Sydney by-election by ensuring information provided to the voting public and candidates is timely, accurate, comprehensive and easy to understand.

A range of public awareness materials will be produced to support North Sydney voters. These materials include newspaper advertisements, media releases, as well as key information available at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney and on the AEC's social media channels.

A personally addressed *Official guide to the 2015 North Sydney by-election* will be delivered to every North Sydney voter. The guide will provide information on where, how and when to vote, what to do if you can't get to a polling place on by-election day and how to complete your ballot paper correctly.

Prospective candidates will also be provided with a range of information and services. The **AEC website** will serve as a central information hub providing candidate nomination forms and the candidates handbook, which provides guidance on standing for election to the Australian Parliament. The AEC will also hold a face-to-face briefing for candidates to raise questions and be given assistance in accessing and understanding candidate information materials.

The AEC is committed to the provision of services through a range of channels. Should a member of the public be looking for information, wish to ask a question, provide feedback or make a complaint, they can do so online, on the phone or at an AEC office.

During the election period, the AEC's national 13 23 26 telephone number will provide a specific North Sydney by-election option which will operate from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm local NSW time.

The AEC's **online enquiry form**, which is always available, will be monitored and any enquiries received via this form will be answered in an efficient and accurate manner.

A **telephone interpreter service** is available in 16 languages, and the National Relay Service is also available for North Sydney voters (or any other person) who may need assistance contacting the AEC.

The AEC is committed to treating complaints seriously, promptly and in line with the AEC's **complaints management policy**. Complaints received during the by-election period will be managed according to the principles and processes set out in the policy. Complaints about possible electoral fraud will be managed according to the AEC's fraud control policy and procedures. Information on how to report any suspected fraud is available on the **AEC website**.

2. The AEC delivers a high quality service

Enrolment services

Australian citizens, aged 18 years of age or older, enrolled for the electoral Division of North Sydney are required by law to vote in the by-election.

The electoral roll for the North Sydney by-election will close to new enrolments and changes to enrolment details at 8pm, Monday 2 November 2015. North Sydney voters are able to enrol or update their enrolment details, or **check the progress of their enrolment application** online. Enrolment applications are also available at any AEC office, Australia Post outlet or visit a Centrelink or Medicare service centre.

North Sydney voters are able to **check their current electoral enrolment** online at any time during the election period.

Early voting services

North Sydney voters who are entitled to cast an early vote can do so in person or by post.

A person is entitled to an early vote if, on by-election day, they:

- are outside the electoral division where they are enrolled to vote
- are more than 8km from a polling place
- are travelling
- are unable to leave their workplace to vote
- are seriously ill, infirm or due to give birth shortly (or caring for someone who is)
- are a patient in hospital and can't vote at the hospital
- have religious beliefs that prevent them from attending a polling place
- are in prison serving a sentence of less than three years or otherwise detained
- are a **silent elector**
- have a reasonable fear for their safety.

Early voting centres will be located in the electoral Division of North Sydney and the details of these locations will be available at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney. North Sydney voters who are interstate will be able to cast an early vote at **any AEC office** across Australia during weekday business hours from Tuesday 17 November 2015.

Alternatively, North Sydney voters who are entitled to an early vote can apply for a postal vote at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney. Postal vote applications will also be available at Australia Post outlets in New South Wales and at AEC offices. Postal vote applications must be received by the AEC before 6pm Wednesday 2 December 2015.

Overseas

North Sydney voters who are living, working or holidaying overseas can apply online for a postal vote at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney.

Mobile polling

AEC mobile polling teams will visit North Sydney voters in hospitals and nursing homes who are not able to get to a polling place. The detail of the locations mobile polling teams will be visiting in the electoral Division of North Sydney will be available at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney.

Voting for people who are blind or have low vision

North Sydney voters who are blind or have low vision will be able to vote via telephone. This service is operated by the AEC and allows registered voters to cast a secret vote from any location, without attending an AEC office or polling place.

Voting services on by-election day

On by-election day, Saturday 5 December 2015, North Sydney voters will be able to vote between 8am and 6pm at any one of the 36 polling places that will be open across the electoral Division of North Sydney. A full list of polling places will be available at www.aec.gov.au/North-Sydney.

3. Votes will be counted in accordance with the Electoral Act and the public and stakeholders have confidence in the result

The AEC will ensure count processes produce a timely and accurate result and are managed in a transparent manner.

Candidates are not allowed to enter polling places, except in order to cast their own vote. They are not permitted to observe the counting of votes for elections in which they are candidates. They have the right to appoint scrutineers as personal representatives to observe both the voting and the counting of votes on their behalf at every polling place and scrutiny centre. A **scrutineers handbook** is available to support the role of scrutineers.

The by-election result will be communicated to the public in a clear and timely way. The AEC's official results centre, the Virtual Tally Room (VTR), enables the public, candidates and scrutineers to follow vote counting on by-election night and progressive results until the final outcome is declared.

The VTR can be accessed on by-election night from 6pm and will be updated as results from individual polling places are entered into AEC systems.

Counts conducted in polling places on by-election night provide indicative results only. As counting continues in the weeks following by-election night, and polling place results are re-checked, updates are made to the VTR as re-checked results become available.

4. The public and stakeholders have confidence that the electoral process is well managed

The Electoral Act prescribes how a federal electoral event, including a by-election, is to be conducted. All policies, processes and procedures implemented by the AEC during the by-election are designed to operate within the prescribed boundaries of the Electoral Act.

The AEC is committed to delivering processes that uphold electoral integrity and engender voter and stakeholder trust in the result and to ensuring the security and sanctity of the ballot paper at all times.

The AEC has in place, and will demonstrate at the by-election, clear and established safeguards for the handling of ballot papers by AEC staff, temporary election staff and contractors. This is supported by the introduction of visual identification requirements for AEC staff, visitors and scrutineers that provide for easy visual identification and consistency across polling places and counting centres during the by-election.

Evaluating the AEC's performance

Performance indicators have been developed to evaluate the AEC's delivery of the by-election and to determine if the standards in this service plan are met. They will assist the AEC in measuring its performance and identifying improvements in the future delivery of election services.

These performance indicators also contribute to the AEC's overall key performance indicator – *that federal electoral events are successfully delivered*.

Standard 1: Voters and candidates receive timely and accurate information

Indicators	Target
The AEC will provide timely and accurate information using appropriate technology and channels	Always
Details of voting centres (early voting centres and polling places) are published on the AEC website a minimum of 48 hours prior to being open to the public	100 per cent
Information published on the AEC website about the location and accessibility of voting centres (early voting centres and polling places) is accurate	100 per cent
By-election results are published as soon as they are available	100 per cent

Standard 2: the AEC delivers a high quality service

Indicators	Target
AEC staff are courteous and professional in all their dealings with the public and candidates	Always
Polling places are inspected and accurately assessed for accessibility	100 per cent
Enrolment claims received by the close of roll deadline are correctly processed	100 per cent
Postal vote packs are despatched within 3 business day of receipt of a valid and complete postal vote application (once ballot papers are available)	100 per cent
Voting locations (including early voting centres and polling places) open in accordance with advertised date/s and times	100 per cent

Standard 3: Votes will be counted in accordance with the Electoral Act and the public and stakeholders have confidence in the result

Indicators	Target
After election night, accurate count information is progressively updated on the AEC website	At least once per day (where counting activity has occurred)
Ballot papers (both used and unused) are accounted for	100 per cent

Standard 4: The public and stakeholders have confidence that the electoral process is well managed

Indicators	Target
The writ for the by-election is returned in accordance with the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918	returned within 100 days of being issued
The AEC's conduct of the by-election is upheld in the event of any challenge in the Court of Disputed Returns	All
All instances of apparent multiple voting are reviewed and dealt with in accordance with AEC policy and procedures and within statutory timeframes.	Always
All instances of apparent non-voting are reviewed and dealt with in accordance with AEC policy and procedures and within statutory timeframes.	Always

For more information

Visit [AEC website](#) or contact us on 13 23 26.