

2016 Federal Election Service Plan



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, delivering a series of improvements to ensure it meets the expectations of the Australian people and the Australian Parliament in delivering safe, trusted electoral events.

The AEC has conducted four federal electoral events over the course of 2014 and 2015, which provided opportunities to test and refine improvements to:

- election planning and preparation
- policies, materials and procedures, particularly in relation to ballot paper security
- recruitment and training of permanent and temporary staff
- procurement processes
- compliance and quality assurance.

The AEC has also revised processes, policies and procedures following the passage of the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act 2016* which introduced (amongst other things), changes to the Senate voting system.

The 2016 federal election will be contested on redistributed electoral boundaries in Western Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. A redistribution process is underway in the Northern Territory and is scheduled to be completed early next year; the Northern Territory will therefore be contested on the boundaries that were in effect for the 2013 federal election.

This service plan outlines the key election services and standards that will underpin the AEC's delivery of the 2016 federal election. The 2016 federal election is a way point in the AEC's change journey. 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 the AEC know through the [online enquiry form](#); your feedback will be an important input into the continuous improvement to the AEC's 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 elections.

Election timetable

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

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

The 2016 federal election will be conducted according to the following timetable.

Activity	Date
Issue of the writs	6pm Monday 16 May 2016
Close of rolls	8pm Monday 23 May 2016
Close of candidate bulk (House of Representatives) nominations	12 midday Tuesday 7 June 2016
Close of candidate nominations	12 midday Thursday 9 June 2016
Declaration of candidate nominations	12 midday Friday 10 June 2016
Early voting commences	from Tuesday 14 June 2016
Mobile polling commences	from Monday 20 June 2016
Last day for receipt of postal vote applications	6pm Wednesday 29 June 2016
Election day	Saturday 2 July 2016
Last day for receipt of declaration votes	6pm Friday 15 July 2016
Return of the writs (latest date)	on or before Monday 8 August 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 2016 federal election by ensuring information provided to the voting public and candidates is timely, accurate, comprehensive and easy to understand.

The AEC will conduct a national public information and education campaign, across four phases, to:

- publicise the changes to the Senate voting system
- provide eligible voters with a final reminder to enrol or change their details on the electoral roll
- ensure voters are aware of their voting options if they are unable to get to a polling place on election day, and
- ensure voters are advised how to cast a formal vote as instructed on the ballot papers.

The campaign will utilise a range of channels including television, radio, press, online and social media. The campaign also includes information formats for Australians with a disability, Indigenous Australians and Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The AEC has written to households affected by the redistribution of electoral boundaries in New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory to advise them of the electoral division they will vote in at the 2016 federal election.

An *Official guide to the 2016 federal election* will be delivered to every household across Australia coinciding with the early voting period. 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 election day and how to complete your ballot papers correctly. The guide will be translated and made available on the AEC website in 27 languages and will also be available upon request to voters who are blind or have low vision in a range of accessible formats including Braille, large print, e-text and audio files. 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 operate from 8:00am to 8:00pm local 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 voters (or any other person) who may need assistance contacting the AEC.

Prospective candidates will also be provided with a range of information and services. The [AEC website](#) serves 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 treating complaints seriously, promptly and in line with the AEC's [complaints management policy](#). Complaints received during the 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, are required by law to enrol and vote in the federal election.

The electoral roll will close at **8pm, Monday 23 May 2016**. 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 at an election service centre. A full list of election service centres is available on the [AEC website](#).

All voters are able to [check their current electoral enrolment](#) online at any time during the election period.

Early voting services

Voters who are entitled to cast an early vote can do so in person or by post from **Tuesday 14 June 2016**. A person is entitled to an early vote if, on election day, they:

- are outside the electoral division where they are enrolled
- 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 each electoral division and the details of these locations will be available at www.aec.gov.au/vote-early.

Alternatively, voters who are entitled to an early vote can apply for a postal vote at www.aec.gov.au/pva. Postal vote applications will also be available at Australia Post outlets across Australia and at AEC offices. Postal vote applications must be received by the AEC before **6pm, Wednesday 29 June 2016**.

Overseas

Eligible voters who are living, working or holidaying overseas can vote in person at an overseas voting centre or by post. Information on how to vote while overseas, including a full list of overseas voting centres, is available at www.aec.gov.au/overseas.

The AEC will be providing postal voting services to Australian Defence Force personnel serving overseas at the time of the federal election.

Mobile polling

AEC mobile polling teams throughout Australia will visit voters in rural and remote areas, 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 will be available at www.aec.gov.au. Mobile polling will occur at selected locations around Australia to deliver voting services catering for homeless and other marginalised elector groups. Mobile polling will also occur in prisons in a number of states and territories.

Voting for people who are blind or have low vision

Any 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. The blind or low vision telephone voting service is available between 8:30am and 5:30pm AEST Monday to Friday during the early voting period and 8am to 6pm on election day by calling 1800 913 993.

Antarctic voters

Voters working in Antarctica, or in transit on election day, are eligible to register and vote as Antarctic voters.

Fly-in, fly-out workers

Early voting will be available at selected airport departure terminals in Western Australia and postal voting services will be available to fly-in, fly-out workers.

Voting services on election day

On election day, Saturday 2 July 2016, voters will be able to vote between 8am and 6pm at any one of over 6 800 polling places that will be open across Australia.

Voters who are outside their enrolled division, but still within their home state/territory, can cast an absent vote at any polling place within their home state/territory. Voters who are visiting interstate will be able to vote at an interstate voting centre on election day.

A full list of polling places and interstate voting centres will be available at www.aec.gov.au.

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

The Tally Room can be accessed on 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 election night provide indicative results only. As counting continues in the weeks following the election night, updates are made to the Tally Room 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 election is to be conducted. All policies, processes and procedures implemented by the AEC during the federal 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 federal 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 election.

Evaluating the AEC's performance

Performance indicators have been developed to evaluate the AEC's delivery of the federal 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. The indicators are detailed below against each of the standards outlined above.

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
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 ¹	100 per cent

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

Indicators	Target
The writs for the federal election are returned in accordance with the relevant legislation.	returned by the date specified in the writs
The AEC's conduct of the federal 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

1. The AEC can account for ballot papers from the time they are printed, issued to an elector, placed in a ballot box (or discovered as discarded or returned as spoilt). Counted and then placed in long term storage prior to statutorily authorised destruction. For ballot papers that are not issued the AEC can account from them from the time they are printed until statutorily authorised destruction.

www.aec.gov.au 13 23 26

