

Delivering the 2025 Federal Election

SERVICE PLAN

16 January 2025

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Foreword

Federal elections are often described as one of the largest and most complex peacetime logistical events in Australia.

At the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), we are committed throughout each electoral cycle to meticulously planning and delivering electoral services with the highest possible level of electoral integrity. Ensuring the security and integrity of ballot papers is integral to the AEC maintaining an impartial and independent electoral system. As always, we also operate within the legislative framework of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act).

These standards ensure citizen trust in the election result and provide a level of service that maintains Australia's reputation as a world leader in electoral management. This service plan outlines our election service standards, which will underpin the delivery of the federal election.

As we do for every federal election, we have carefully assessed voting services available across all 150 electoral divisions with a view to providing access for all eligible voters, while balancing the need for safety of both voters and election staff. Some voting locations will have changed since the previous electoral event, with consideration given to prioritising areas of greatest need according to population and voting trends while balancing the practicalities of accessibility, venue availability and security. Since the previous federal election, redistributions have been undertaken in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia, and the redistribution for the Northern Territory will be finalised in March 2025, subject to the timing of the election. This election will be contested on the new gazetted boundaries.

The AEC remains committed to continuous improvement and has taken lessons from our experiences conducting recent electoral events. Should you have any comments on the Service Plan or the AEC's delivery of these commitments, let us know through our [online enquiry form](#), so we can consider your feedback as we continue to improve the delivery of electoral services.



A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, consisting of a large, looping 'J' and 'P' that are interconnected.

Jeff Pope

Acting Electoral Commissioner

Agency purpose

The AEC is the independent statutory authority responsible for the conduct of federal elections, referendums, and by-elections. Our purpose is to maintain an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services, and targeted education and public awareness programs.

In line with the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Electoral Act) and the *Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984* (Referendum Act), we do this by:

- conducting successful electoral events, including federal elections, by-elections and referendums, and industrial elections and ballots
- ensuring confidence in the commonwealth electoral roll
- regulating political party registrations and financial disclosure
- supporting electoral redistributions
- undertaking public awareness activities.

Compulsory voting maintains a high level of participation in electoral processes and the AEC works hard across the electoral cycle to increase opportunities to engage and enhance access for all eligible Australians.

More information on how we have designed elements of our service offering to meet the needs of voters during this election is outlined throughout this document.

AEC and APS values

The AEC values are an essential component of our operating environment and frame how AEC staff work. The AEC's focus is on electoral integrity through the values of **quality, agility, and professionalism**. These values work in tandem with the **Australian Public Service (APS) values**: impartial, committed to service, accountable, respectful, ethical and stewardship.



Supporting electoral participation

The AEC is committed to supporting electoral participation through active electoral roll management, efficient delivery of polling services, public awareness activities and targeted education and community engagement programs.

Australia has one of the most comprehensive election service offerings in the world – where eligible voters can access their vote in a range of ways: voting at a polling place on polling day, pre-poll voting, postal voting, mobile polling, voting overseas at an Australian Embassy or High Commission, or telephone voting for those who are blind or have low vision or are in Antarctica.

Some people need additional support to be able to equitably participate. The AEC takes a genuine approach to community engagement, and works throughout the electoral cycle to provide information, education and enrolment support for those who face barriers to participation.

This means we:

- ensure our information and education is available in language and is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- ensure we deliver accessible information and services for people with disability, including the provision of information in a range of formats, and where possible ensuring polling places are accessible including availability of assistive technology
- provide mobile polling for people experiencing homelessness, people in hospital, people in a mental health facility, people in residential aged care homes and people in prison
- tailor our engagement with young people through our active social media engagement, placement of ads on channels with high reach among young people, and our participation in community events and forums popular with young people.

More information on how we have designed elements of our service offering to meet the needs of people facing barriers to participation during the federal election is outlined throughout this document.



Election timetable

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

These steps, according to the Australian Constitution and the Electoral Act begin with the issue of the writs (documents commanding an electoral official to hold an election) and end with the return of the writs after the results are declared.

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

Activity	Timetable
01 Issue of the writs	Writs are issued within 10 days of the dissolution of Parliament (<i>Constitution</i> s.12, 32, <i>Electoral Act</i> s.151).
02 Close of rolls	Rolls close at 8pm, seven days after the issue of writs (<i>Electoral Act</i> s.155).
03 Close of candidate bulk nominations	Candidate bulk nominations for the House of Representatives close 48 hours prior to the close of candidate nominations.
04 Close of candidate nominations	Nominations close at 12 noon, between 10 and 27 days after the issue of writs (<i>Electoral Act</i> s.156).
05 Declaration of candidate nominations	Nominations are publicly declared 24 hours after nominations close (<i>Electoral Act</i> s.176).
06 Pre-poll voting commences	Pre-poll voting must not be earlier than 12 days before polling day. In addition, pre-poll voting must not take place on a public holiday in that state or territory.
07 Mobile polling commences	Mobile polling commences up to 12 days before polling day.
08 Last day for receipt of postal vote applications	Postal vote applications must be submitted by 6pm on the Wednesday prior to polling day.
09 Polling day	Polling day is fixed between 23 and 31 days after the date of nominations (<i>Electoral Act</i> s.157).
10 Last day for receipt of postal votes	Postal votes must be received by 13 days after polling day.
11 Return of the writs (latest date)	Writs must be returned within 100 days of their issue (<i>Electoral Act</i> s.159).

Note The election timetable will be made available on the AEC website after the issue of the writs.

Elections are large and complex events. This is a representation of the key activities.

1 FEDERAL ELECTION ANNOUNCED

2 ELECTION COMMUNICATION

3 VOTER ENROLMENT

4 NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

10 ELECTION NIGHT

11 COUNTING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES

6 VOTING COMMENCES

5 BALLOT PAPER PRODUCTION

9 POLLING DAY

12 COUNTING SENATE VOTES

14 DAY THIRTEEN

15 THE WRITS ARE RETURNED

16 ELECTION PACK-UP

AROUND 50 MILLION BALLOT PAPERS PRODUCED

OVER 18 MILLION ELIGIBLE ELECTORS EXPECTING MORE THAN 6,500,000 EARLY VOTES

OVER 2,000,000 POSTAL VOTES

AROUND 180 INTERSTATE VOTING CENTRES

AROUND 60,000 VOTES CAST AT 100+ OVERSEAS CENTRES

7 OVERSEAS VOTING

8 PREPARING FOR POLLING DAY

AROUND 40 REMOTE MOBILE TEAMS

13 SEAT DECLARATIONS COMMENCE

www.aec.gov.au/tallyroom

PARTY A	8	PARTY F	356
PARTY B	43	PARTY G	2
PARTY C	10	PARTY H	389
PARTY D	204	PARTY I	42
PARTY E	74	PARTY J	45

ABOUT 7000 POLLING PLACES

OVER 60 OUT-POSTED CENTRES

The federal election story

- 1 FEDERAL ELECTION ANNOUNCED**
Federal election announced and the writs are issued.
- 2 ELECTION COMMUNICATION**
Election information provided to all Australians through a range of mediums and languages.
- 3 VOTER ENROLMENT**
Eligible voters can enrol or update details before close of rolls. The certified list of voters is then prepared and distributed.
- 4 NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES**
24 hours after close of nominations, candidates are declared and randomly allocated a position on the ballot paper.
- 5 BALLOT PAPER PRODUCTION**
Ballot papers are designed, printed and delivered across Australia following the declaration of nominations in preparation for early voting.
- 6 VOTING COMMENCES**
A range of voting services commence 12 days before polling day.
- 7 OVERSEAS VOTING**
In-person overseas voting at over 100 posts, plus around 50,000 postal votes shipped overseas.
- 8 PREPARING FOR POLLING DAY**
About 7,000 polling places will be open on polling day, along with over 500 early voting centres and over 500 mobile polling teams. Over 100,000 temporary workers are recruited to deliver the election.
- 9 POLLING DAY**
Polling places are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm local time.
- 10 POLLING NIGHT**
After 6.00pm on polling day, ballot papers are counted, scrutinised, packaged and securely transported to central counting centres.
- 11 COUNTING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES**
Votes are counted and verified within each division with candidate appointed scrutineers observing.
- 12 COUNTING SENATE VOTES**
Votes are scanned, counted and verified in a Central Senate Scrutiny (CSS) centre in each capital city with candidate appointed scrutineers observing.
- 13 SEAT DECLARATIONS COMMENCE**
After polling day, polls will be progressively declared as candidates achieve a clear majority of first preference votes.
- 14 DAY THIRTEEN**
To be included in the count, ballot papers must be received by the 13th day after polling day.
- 15 THE WRITS ARE RETURNED**
Once all seats are declared and the Senate results finalised, all writs are returned and the new parliament can be formed.
- 16 ELECTION PACK UP**
All 50 million ballot papers (used and unused) are stored securely and all other material is either stored or recycled.



Election delivery

The AEC election delivery principles underpin delivery at the next election.

Integrity of the result

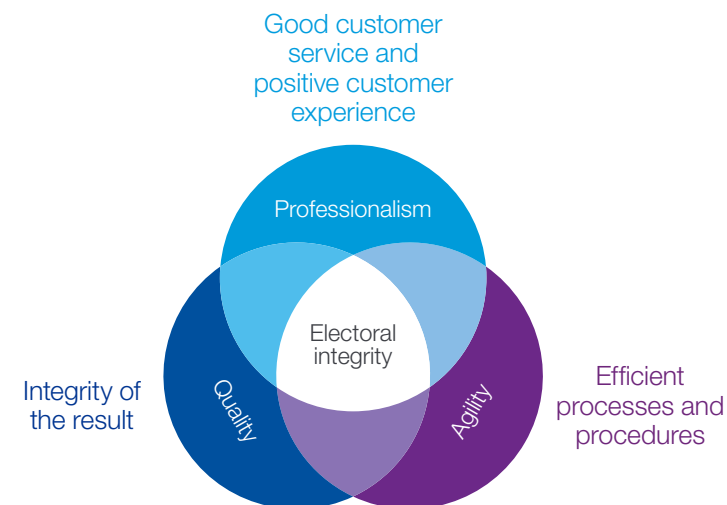
- safe custody and handling of ballot papers
- maintaining integrity of a person's lawful right to vote by providing a wide range of voting services nationally and internationally for all eligible Australians
- facilitating ballot paper formality
- all electoral processes undertaken in compliance with the Electoral Act
- all legislative changes implemented according to the requirements of the Electoral Act

Good customer service and positive customer experience

- provide a positive voter experience at the election
- voters and candidates receive timely and accurate information
- staff will be courteous and professional in all their dealings with the public and candidates

Efficient processes and procedures

- build staff capability and provide an efficient experience for AEC staff in delivering the election
- integrate planning across all levels of the AEC
- maintain the ability to mobilise and deliver electoral events whenever they are called



Summary of AEC service standards

The following four election service standards will guide the AEC in delivering the federal election.

Standard 1

Voters and candidates receive timely and accurate information

Achieved by:

The AEC will provide timely and accurate information using appropriate technology and channels.

Details of pre-poll voting centres and polling places will be published on the [AEC website](#) a minimum of 48 hours prior to being open to the public.

Information published on the [AEC website](#) about the location and accessibility of pre-poll voting centres and polling places will be accurate.

Preliminary results will be published as soon as they are available.

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.

Standard 2

The AEC delivers high-quality service

Achieved by:

Applications for enrolment and roll updates received by the close of roll deadline will be processed in time for the election.

AEC staff will be courteous and professional in all their dealings with the public and candidates.

Polling place accessibility ratings will be made available on the [AEC website](#).

Voting locations (including pre-poll centres and polling places) will open in accordance with advertised dates and times.

Standard 3

Votes are counted in accordance with the Electoral Act and the public and stakeholders have confidence in the result

Achieved by:

After the close of polls, up-to-date count information will be progressively published on the [AEC website](#).

Ballot papers (both used and unused) will be accounted for.¹

Appointed scrutineers observe electoral processes, including counting of votes, to ensure transparency and integrity in the conduct of the election.

Standard 4

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

Achieved by:

The writs for the federal election will be returned in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The AEC's conduct of the federal election will be upheld in the event of any challenges to results taken to the Court of Disputed Returns.

All instances of apparent multiple voting will be reviewed and dealt with in accordance with AEC policy and procedures and within statutory timeframes.

All instances of apparent non-voting will be reviewed and dealt with in accordance with AEC policy and procedures and within statutory timeframes.

Complaints will be managed in accordance with the [Complaints Management Policy](#).

¹ The AEC will follow the established process to account for ballot papers from the time they are printed, issued to a voter, 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. The AEC will also follow established processes to account for ballot papers that are not issued, from the time they are printed until statutorily authorised destruction.

Achieving the AEC service standards

1 Voters and candidates receive timely and accurate information

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

Communication

The AEC will conduct a national public information and education campaign in order to:

- 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, regardless of whether they are able to get to a polling place on polling day
- support voter participation by ensuring voters are advised how to cast a formal vote as instructed on the ballot papers and encouraging them to vote.

The advertising campaign will use a range of channels including television, radio, print, online, social, digital and out of home media. The campaign and other engagement activities will include tailored and translated materials to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, voters from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, and young people.

The AEC has online practise voting tools. These have been developed to explain the easiest way to make sure a voter's vote will count in federal election events. They are interactive with easy-to-follow instructions on how to complete your ballot papers correctly and cover voting for the House of Representatives, the Senate, and for referendums. They are available in 12 languages in addition to English. The tools are supported by easy-to-read guides. These can be accessed at aec.gov.au/Voting/How_to_vote/practice/.

An official guide will be delivered to households across Australia, coinciding with the early voting period. The guide will provide information on where and when to vote, what to do if you cannot get to a polling place on polling day, and how to complete your ballot papers correctly. This information will be translated into 34 languages and made available on the [AEC website](#).

During the election period, the AEC's national telephone number, 13 23 26, will operate from 8am to 8pm local time. A telephone interpreter service is available in more than 19 languages, and the National Relay Service is also available for voters (or any other person) who may need assistance contacting the AEC.

The AEC is committed to the provision of services through a range of channels. Members of the public can find information, ask a question, provide feedback, or make a complaint through several channels including online, by phone, or at an AEC office. The AEC's [online enquiry form](#) will be monitored in real time and any enquiries received via this form will be answered in an efficient and accurate manner.

Taking nominations

Prospective candidates will be provided with a range of information and services. The [AEC website](#) serves as a central information hub, providing [candidate nomination forms](#) (including the qualification checklist), the [Nomination Guide for Candidates](#), and the [Candidates Handbook](#), which all provide guidance on standing for election to the Australian Parliament.

EFTPOS machines will be available for payment.

2 The AEC delivers a high-quality service

The AEC aims to deliver a high-quality service which allows voters to ensure their enrolment is up to date and facilitates voting based on individual circumstances. Australian citizens, aged 18 years of age or older, are required by law to enrol and vote in the federal election.

Enrolment services

The electoral roll will close at 8pm, seven days after the issue of writ. Voters are able to **enrol, check their current electoral enrolment, update their enrolment details, or check the progress of their enrolment application** online. Enrolment applications are also available at any AEC office and on the **AEC website**. A full list of AEC offices is available on the **AEC website**.

Voting on polling day

On polling day, polling places across Australia will be open between 8am and 6pm local time. A list of polling places will be available at the **AEC website**. Voters can use the AEC's online tool to find nearby polling places and check accessibility.

Early voting services

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 they meet the **eligibility requirements** listed on the AEC website.

Pre-poll voting centres will be located in each electoral division and the details of these locations will be available on the **AEC website**.

Postal voting

Voters who are entitled to a postal vote can apply at the **AEC website** which is the preferred method of application or by using a paper application form available at AEC offices.

Postal vote applications must be received by the AEC before 6pm on the Wednesday before polling day.

Voters may also receive paper postal vote applications or a link to an online form from candidates and political parties. It is lawful under the Electoral Act for third parties to distribute postal vote applications, however the AEC receives questions and complaints each election about this practice. Political parties are exempt from the Privacy Act, and where applications for postal votes are submitted via parties, they may collect, retain and use applicants' data (e.g. to contact electors).

Interstate voting

Voters who are visiting interstate will be able to vote at a designated pre-poll voting centre operating on polling day. 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. Details regarding designated pre-poll voting centres operating on polling day will be available at the **AEC website**.

Mobile polling

AEC mobile polling teams will visit voters throughout Australia who are less able to get to a polling place. Mobile polling will occur at selected locations around Australia to deliver voting services catering for people experiencing homelessness, and those living in remote locations, non-remote discrete Indigenous communities, residential aged care homes, mental health facilities, hospitals and prisons. Mobile polling teams will also provide a service at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. Details regarding the locations that mobile polling teams will be visiting will be available at the **AEC website**.

Voters in remote locations

Remote mobile polling is the AEC's primary method for servicing voters in remote communities across Australia for the federal election. These communities often do not have timely postal services, and an in-person mobile polling service is the most effective way to cast a vote. Details regarding the locations that remote mobile polling teams will be visiting will be available on the **AEC website**.

Voting for people who are blind or have low vision and Antarctic voters

Telephone voting is available for people who are blind or have low vision and for voters in the Antarctic (or in transit to or from Antarctica). The service allows voters to register and vote in secret from any location without attending an AEC office or polling place.

The telephone voting service is available 8.30am to 5.30pm Australian Eastern Time Monday to Friday during the pre-poll voting period and 8am to 6pm Australian Eastern Time on polling day.

Overseas voting

Eligible voters who are living, working or holidaying overseas can vote in person at an overseas voting centre. Information on how to vote while overseas, including a list of overseas voting centres, is available on the [AEC website](#).

Postal voting will continue to be available to overseas voters, with communications and provisions in place – such as using an international courier to send postal votes overseas and supporting the return of postal votes via diplomatic posts – to maximise the ability to receive and return ballot papers in time.

Voting when overseas is not compulsory. Voters unable to vote should complete and submit an [Overseas Notification Form](#).

Australian Defence Force voting

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

Sustainability

The AEC is conscious of our environmental impact and has adopted several initiatives to proactively reduce waste. All AEC cardboard materials have been designed to be lighter, stronger, and easier to be recycled and reused.

Donations form a key part of the AEC's efforts to reduce waste for the next election, and useful items, such as first aid kits and stationery will be donated to a range of organisations and schools situated in rural and regional areas of Australia.

Diverse and inclusive workforce

The AEC is committed to having a temporary election workforce that reflects the community it serves. The AEC uses a data-driven approach to ensure polling officials with language skills are employed where there are higher numbers of voters with English as a second language and has recruited polling officials with a range of language skills. The AEC recruits across the community, including working with partners to promote employment opportunities to people who have previously been under-represented in the AEC's temporary workforce, including young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with disability.



3 Votes are 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.

Counting the votes

The count of ordinary votes cast at polling places begins at 6pm (local time) on polling day, when polling officials commence counting both House of Representatives and Senate ballot papers. After polling day, ballot papers are scrutinised multiple times at counting centres.

Some pre-poll ordinary House of Representatives ballot papers will be sorted into piles for each candidate and a pile for informal votes from 4pm on polling day. The piles of ballot papers will not be counted before 6pm. The process will be open to scrutineers; however, they are not allowed to challenge ballot papers until 6pm when counting starts.

A small number of postal votes will be counted in most electoral divisions on polling night, however, most declaration votes, which include postal votes, are counted in the days and weeks following polling day. The counting of these votes takes longer than the counting of ordinary votes, since the declaration envelopes need to be checked to ensure the votes are entitled to be admitted, and the ballot papers need to be extracted from the envelopes. The Electoral Act allows declaration votes to be returned up to 13 days after polling day. This means that the result in some House of Representatives divisions that have a small margin may not be able to become clear, or be formally declared, until two weeks after polling day.

The AEC website provides detailed information on [how the counting process operates](#).

Candidates are not permitted to observe the counting of votes for elections in which they are standing. Candidates have the right to appoint scrutineers as personal representatives to observe both the voting process and the counting of votes on their behalf at every polling place and counting centre. Scrutineers in an election must not wear or display any badge or emblem of a candidate or political party in a polling place. Scrutineers must not actively seek to interfere with or attempt to influence a voter or communicate with any person in the polling place except so far as is necessary in the discharge of the scrutineer's functions. The [AEC website](#) serves as a central information hub for scrutineers and includes a [Scrutineers Handbook](#) that is available to support the role of scrutineers.

Reporting the vote count

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 polling night and progressive results until the final outcome is declared.

The Tally Room can be accessed on polling night from when the first polling places close at 6pm in eastern states and will be updated as results from individual polling places are entered into AEC systems.

Counts conducted in polling places on polling night provide indicative results only. As counting continues in the weeks following polling night, updates are made to the Tally Room as re-checked results and results from declaration votes 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 upholds the sanctity of the ballot paper in all its forms and at all times.

- 1 All ballot papers remain 'live' from printing through to statutorily authorised destruction.
- 2 The security, integrity and accountability of ballot papers must be preserved at all times – including transit and storage by the AEC, contractors, or other third parties.

These two maxims of ballot paper handling must never be breached and must underpin AEC operations, culture and standards.

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

Ballot paper handling

The AEC has clear and established safeguards in place for the handling of ballot papers by AEC staff, temporary election staff and contractors, which will be demonstrated at the election. AEC staff, official visitors and scrutineers are required to wear badges and/or vests at polling places and counting centres so they can be easily identified.

Complaints

The AEC is committed to treating complaints seriously, promptly, and in line with the AEC's **Complaints Management Policy**.

Complaints can be lodged using the AEC's **online enquiry form** or by calling the AEC on 13 23 26. 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**.

Disinformation register

The AEC operates a Disinformation Register for federal electoral events as part of the AEC's responsibility to ensure voters have access to fact-based information about electoral processes. This is one of the tools used as part of the AEC's **Reputation Management System** to defend Australian elections from mis- and disinformation.

The Register will list prominent pieces of mis- and disinformation the AEC has encountered regarding the electoral process. It will also provide details of actions the AEC has taken in response. The AEC is not the arbiter of truth regarding political communication and does not seek to censor debate in any way. However, when it comes to the election process we conduct, we're the experts and we're active in defending Australia's democracy.

Further information

For more information on the 2025 federal election visit the **AEC website** or call 13 23 26.



aec.gov.au

