

## Electoral Commissioner

### Senate ballot paper sampling outcomes statement – 2025 federal election

The Senate ballot paper assurance process for the 2025 federal election was conducted in accordance with section 273AC of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) arranged for an independent provider to conduct a statistically significant sample of Senate ballot papers throughout the scrutiny of each Australian Senate election. The purpose of the sampling process was to provide assurance that the electronic data used in counting the votes reflects the preference data recorded on the physical ballot papers. Sampling volumes advised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics were designed to give the AEC 95% confidence in the statistical outcome.

In statistical terms, the Australian Electoral Commission can have 95% confidence that between 99.42% and 99.67% of Australian Senate 2025 ballot papers had matching electronic data used in the vote counting process at the national level.

The results of the independent assurance process did not suggest any systematic bias (political, logistical, or otherwise) that influenced the likelihood of an exception being identified.

A total of 44 exceptions were observed from the 11,408 ballot papers randomly sampled across all Central Senate Scrutiny locations. Of those 44 exceptions:

- ▶ seven related to the process of scanning a ballot paper, where the nominated image did not exactly reflect the physical ballot paper (Stage 1 Exceptions). Of these, four ballot papers followed the defined process and all preferences were captured correctly.
- ▶ 37 related to the interpretation of some of the handwritten numbers on the ballot papers including a judgement of the voter's intent for some of their preferences (Stage 2 Exceptions). Most of the matters resulted from the need for interpretation where voters did not follow numbering instructions or where numbering sequences for some preferences were not clearly handwritten. Of these, nine exceptions had no impact on either the formality or preferences that were used in the count.

The assurance testing process observed the following proportion of exceptions in the sample for each state and territory, and nationally, as shown in Table 1. The table includes 95% confidence ranges for the true exception rate for each stratum (state or territory, national).

**Table 1: Proportion of exceptions identified in the tested sample**

Central Senate Scrutiny location	Actual number of ballot papers	Assurance sample size	Number of Stage 1 Exceptions	Number of Stage 2 Exceptions	Observed exception rate (%) and 95% confidence interval
<b>NSW</b>	5,219,341	1,781	0	11	0.62% (0.35% to 1.10%)
<b>VIC</b>	4,232,062	1,579	3	5	0.51% (0.26% to 1.00%)
<b>QLD</b>	3,326,040	1,532	0	1	0.07% (0.02% to 0.36%)
<b>WA</b>	1,665,347	1,533	1	7	0.52% (0.27% to 1.03%)
<b>SA</b>	1,202,114	1,353	2	4	0.44% (0.21% to 0.96%)
<b>TAS</b>	384,460	1,242	1	5	0.48% (0.23% to 1.05%)
<b>ACT</b>	298,737	1,202	0	1	0.08% (0.02% to 0.46%)
<b>NT</b>	110,393	1,186	0	3	0.25% (0.09% to 0.74%)
<b>National</b>	16,438,494	11,408	7	37	0.44% (0.33% to 0.58%)

The assurance process, and the full Senate scanning process, including data entry, for the 2025 federal election was open to candidate-appointed scrutineers. A complete dataset from each of the Senate counts can be accessed on the Australian Electoral Commission website.

EY conducted this assurance under contract SRC003421. The process was conducted in line with the methodology ([section 273AC Senate assurance methodology \(FE2025\)](#)) approved by AEC, which was informed by Australian Bureau of Statistics advice and published on the AEC's website in November 2024.

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