

## 2020 ELECTIONS – COVID-19 PROTECTION MEASURES

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The Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) has carefully considered the impact of COVID-19 on the conduct of the 2020 local government elections and Currumbin and Bundamba by-elections. This includes the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic and the decision of the National Cabinet on 18 March 2020 to ban non-essential static gatherings of more than 100 people.

After considering this decision and taking advice from Queensland Health, the ECQ has determined that, based on current advice available, the elections should proceed. This is on the basis that: the elections facilitate an essential service by providing for continuity of democratic representation for Queenslanders; and measures will be put in place at polling places to limit the number of people inside the building to fewer than 100.

The ECQ acknowledges that this is a unique situation for Queensland electors and will be enhancing its service delivery approach for these elections to promote public health and confidence in participating in the electoral process. This includes additional personal hygiene precautions and people management measures for both electors and polling officials at polling booths.

Remember, **voting is compulsory**.

### What personal hygiene measures will be in place?

- Queensland Health's personal hygiene guidelines are to be followed by all people at polling booths including voters and polling officials. Copies of these guidelines will be distributed to and available at early voting centres and polling booths.



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### More information

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- Where available, hand sanitiser will be provided for voters and polling officials at early voting centres and polling booths.
  - Additional cleaning of polling booth areas will be undertaken to ensure that hard surfaces are regularly disinfected.
  - All people in polling booths should follow social distancing guidelines including maintaining distances of 1.5 metres where possible and avoiding handshakes. The ECQ has written to candidates encouraging them to support these measures while handing out how-to-vote cards and other election materials.
  - Voters are encouraged to bring their own pen or pencil with them to vote, although pencils will still be available to all voters.

### **How will the numbers and proximity of people be managed during voting?**

- Early voting will be open from Monday 16 March until Friday 27 March. Voters are encouraged to vote during the early voting period at a time convenient to them, where possible outside of peak periods. Voters should note that numbers are usually higher at lunch time or the end of the day.
- Early voting centres are generally open from 9am to 5pm during the first week of early voting, and from 9am to 6pm during the second week. ECQ has extended voting hours at most early voting centres between 9am and 9pm on Wednesday and Thursday this week and next week, and on Saturday 21 March between 9am and 5pm.
- Polling officials will be monitoring the number of people in attendance at polling booths to make sure there are fewer than 100 people present at any one time. This has been revised down from 500 following the decision of the National Cabinet.
- Additional measures such as queue control will be put in place where voters will need to wait to enter booths.
- Vote issuing tables and polling screens will be positioned to maximise distance between all people in attendance, based on the space constraints of the polling booths.
- ECQ will be employing additional staff to assist with managing queues and to help people cast their vote in the most efficient manner. This includes ensuring that high risk members of the public, such as elderly people, receive additional assistance.

### **What can voters do?**

Voters can play their part during the elections by:

- ✓ Practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene
- ✓ Social distancing
- ✓ Bringing your Voter Information Card with you to help mark you off the roll more quickly
- ✓ Voting before election day at an early voting centre
- ✓ Bringing your own pen or pencil

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- ✓ If you are postal voting, completing and returning your ballot as soon as you receive it.

### **What can voters do if they are unwell?**

- Telephone voting is available for certain eligible voters, including anyone who has been advised by a medical practitioner to remain in isolation during the election period due to exposure to COVID-19. Call 1300 912 782 to check eligibility for telephone voting.
- Follow Queensland Health and medical advice regarding contact with other people and consider your capacity to vote during the two-week early voting period.
- Call the ECQ on 1300 881 665 before election day if you are unable to vote due to medical reasons.

### **What further information is available?**

- Visit the ECQ website at [www.ecq.qld.gov.au](http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au), call us on 1300 881 665 or follow us on social media for election updates or to check locations of early voting centres or polling booths.
- Visit the Queensland Health website for updates and recommendations about COVID-19 at <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Check our [daily updates](#) for more information about the progress of election delivery.
- Visit the Commonwealth Department of Health's website for health alert information about novel coronavirus (COVID-19) at <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

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