

MARCH 2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

COVID-19 is a unique situation that will impact Queensland's elections

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that COVID-19 is a global pandemic.
- Understanding of COVID-19, its impacts, and health advice is very dynamic and changing daily.
- The National Cabinet is meeting weekly and has made decisions based on health authorities' advice which will affect public events, mass gatherings, and interpersonal interactions. These measures could be in place for the next 6 months. In summary:
 - Organised, non-essential static gatherings of more than 100 people where people are together for more than approximately two hours should be cancelled.
 - Social distancing is encouraged – e.g. no hand shaking, staying 1.5 metres away from other people, discouraging gatherings in enclosed places.
 - Practicing very good personal hygiene is essential.

The ECQ's new plan for the March 2020 elections

- The continuity of administration of 77 local governments and democratic representation in the two vacant state districts is essential. There is nothing to suggest that participating in the elections poses any greater risk than any other recommended daily activity.
- The 2020 Queensland elections will therefore be proceeding, and the ECQ is taking measures to ensure the elections can be delivered to account for these unique circumstances. ECQ's service delivery model for 2020 local government elections and state by-elections was based on the following: 60 per cent election day votes, 30 per cent early voting, and 10 per cent postal. Now it will be based on 40 per cent election day votes, 40-50 per cent early voting, and 10-20 per cent postal.
- ECQ will be implementing extra hygiene measures in polling booths aimed at ensuring a safe and timely experience (e.g. where available the use of hand sanitiser, social distancing, a 'bring your own pen' campaign and additional cleaning of polling booths). These will be based on the latest advice available from health authorities.

More information

If you need more information relating to the 2020 elections, please contact ECQ on 1300 881 665 or by emailing ecq@ecq.qld.gov.au.

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- 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.
 - Crowd numbers in any polling booth at any one time will be monitored in keeping with guidance and direction from relevant authorities, noting the '100 people' trigger for mass gatherings.
 - Extra voting screens are being deployed to booths so voters can move with minimal delays.
 - 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
 - Most other electoral arrangements and milestones remain the same:
 - Early voting centres and polling booths are largely unchanged.
 - Election day for all elections is Saturday, 28 March 2020; booths open from 8am-6pm.
 - 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.
 - Postal voting applications closed at 7pm, Monday 16 March 2020. This deadline is set in accordance with electoral legislation and cannot be changed by ECQ.
 - Telephone voting registrations start at 9am on Monday, 16 March 2020 and end at 12pm on Saturday, 28 March. Not everyone is eligible, so check first.
 - Voting remains compulsory in Queensland.
 - There may be some impacts on remote council elections due to the National Cabinet's decisions about travel to and from such communities. These are being clarified as soon as possible.
 - The experience of voting and campaigning will be very different to what people are used to.
 - Vote counting and results declarations may occur differently or take longer than normal.

More information

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