

2024 local government elections

The Countdown



Message

FROM THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Welcome to the fourth edition of *The Countdown* – the ECQ’s regular update delivering valuable information to you in the lead up to the 2024 local government elections.

We now have only 156 days to go before election day on 16 March 2024.

With just over five months to go, there is a considerable amount of preparation work underway at the ECQ’s head office. In an important milestone, training for our first group of Returning Officers commenced in early October and these training sessions will continue for our full cohort of some 150 ROs through to the end of the year. Our procurement and preparation of the technological solutions that will support our ROs in the field are also well advanced. Collectively, this work is helping ensure we will have a well-equipped and professional and capable team delivering the 2024 Local Government elections.

As the elections draw closer, campaign activity is also increasing across the State. As this activity ramps up, the ECQ’s funding and disclosure team will continue to provide assistance to candidates to help them meet their obligations.

Next week, I’ll be in Gladstone at the Local Government Association of Queensland’s (LGAQ) annual conference. This will be an opportune time to engage with stakeholders across the sector, and for the ECQ’s team of election experts to answer questions about the upcoming elections.

Stakeholder engagement continues to be a priority for the ECQ team, even with the increasing pace and volume of election readiness work. Our First Nations Engagement Officer Quentin Barba recently travelled to Aurukun where he supported some of the AEC’s enrolment activities and engaged in some valuable conversations with both council staff and the community. The Local Government Election Advisory Committee also met for the third time in October.

Local government elections can be complex undertakings in Queensland because of the diverse electoral landscapes that exist. In this edition you’ll find an insightful article on this topic and

learn more about how the ECQ is considering these through our election delivery design.

As always, I encourage you to share the information in *The Countdown* through your communication networks.

Regards,

Pat Vidgen
Electoral Commissioner



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Campaign activity continues to increase

As the 2024 local government elections draw closer, the ECQ's Funding, Disclosure and Compliance team has observed an increase in campaign activity.

As of 5 October 2023, the ECQ has:

- contacted over 280 candidates who have announced their intention to nominate
- received disclosures of approximately \$400,000 in electoral expenditure
- received disclosures of over \$210,000 in electoral donations
- registered five local government groups throughout Queensland.

If you are engaging with any prospective candidates, please remember to refer them to the ECQ so we can inform them about their obligations.

You can also point them to the [ECQ's expectations of candidates](#) which is published on our website.



Meet our election experts at the LGAQ conference

Members of the ECQ's team of electoral experts will be in Gladstone next week for the LGAQ conference. The annual conference will be the LGAQ's 127th and will kick off on Monday 16 October.

Electoral Commissioner Pat Vidgen will be in attendance and participating in a session on the topic of *A CEO's guide to the local government election*. The conference is an opportunity for mayors, councillors and staff from across the local government sector in Queensland to come together and for the ECQ to connect with these important stakeholders.

It's particularly opportune with the 2024 elections on the horizon, so the ECQ will also have senior representatives from our Election Event Management and Funding, Disclosure and Compliance teams available to answer your questions. You can find us as part of the Department of Local Government's booth.



By-elections overview now available

Since the 2020 local government quadrennial elections, the ECQ has delivered 30 local government by-elections across Queensland, representing a significant body of work.

An overview of these events are now available to view in an aggregated report on the [ECQ's website](#).

The ECQ's delivery of local government by-elections is an essential service that ensures continuity of public administration. To deliver these events, the ECQ works closely with the relevant council, to promote by-elections and design and deliver services that best suit the council and the community.

These activities also provide the ECQ with an ongoing opportunity to tap into councils' local knowledge to refine our service delivery model between major elections. In turn, this helps us to better understand some of the election delivery constraints that exist, such as ballot paper security requirements and the need for accessible polling booths.

The ECQ hopes this report contributes to the community's understanding of our by-election delivery work and provides a valuable resource for the future analysis of voting data and trends.



Planning for extreme weather

With local government elections legislated to be conducted in March every four years, the increased risk of extreme weather events is an ever-present consideration, especially in the state's north.

To help manage this risk, the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* provides two options for election delivery, should extreme weather events impact voting.

1. Suspension of voting. This option means that voting in a polling booth on polling day can be suspended for up to four hours if there is a likelihood that voting would be temporarily interrupted or obstructed.

2. Adjournment of polling to another day if the ECQ is satisfied that the taking of votes at the polling booth cannot start or continue. During any election period, the ECQ maintains contact with emergency services and local authorities to monitor any emerging weather events and manage any potential impacts on election services.

While the ECQ will endeavour to ensure continuity in election services, we will use options available above if necessary to ensure the safety of staff and electors.



Local Government Election Advisory Committee meets

The Local Government Election Advisory Committee met for the third time on 5 October 2023.

At this meeting, the ECQ provided members with an update on preparations for the 2024 local government elections and welcomed feedback on a range of matters. This included an update on proposed awareness and engagement activities and election costs including how the ECQ is managing external factors such as the current high costs of short-term accommodation and increases in postage prices.

The ECQ will publish a communique regarding the outcomes of the meeting in the near future.

The Committee is expected to meet again in December 2023 for a further update before the commencement of the 2024 local government election period.



Equipping our Returning Officers for success

An 'office in a box' solution will be provided to Returning Officers to support delivery of the 2024 elections. Each of these remote office solutions contain the equipment needed to enable ROs to connect securely to the ECQ and undertake critical operational tasks.

Returning Officers will also be equipped with smart phones, and other equipment to help them keep in touch and complete their day-to-day duties using 24" monitors, rather than on smaller laptop screens.

A dedicated Event Support Team will further support our state-wide network of ROs with IT support, comprehensive user training and the comprehensive advice to support them, along with the provision of manuals and user guides. The support team will be on hand to provide timely advice to ROs, from business processes, systems and finance issues to human resource matters. A dedicated channel will also be available to ROs, ensuring two-way communication with the ECQ during the elections.

Collectively, these tools, resources and supports are helping to ensure that our Returning Officers are equipped for success during the 2024 local government elections.



ECQ visits Aurukun

First Nations Engagement Officer travels with AEC



ECQ First Nations Adviser Quentin Barba (right)

The ECQ's First Nations Engagement Officer, Quentin Barba, travelled to the Aurukun community in late August to meet with council and community members, and answer local government election enquiries.

Quentin travelled with staff from the Australian Electoral Commission's Indigenous enrolment program as part of their referendum engagement program with the Cape York community.

The visit provided an opportunity to learn more about the particular needs and questions in the community relating to the upcoming election with Quentin meeting with council staff to discuss a range of topics including polling locations, advertising, severe weather management and how the ECQ can help manage any language barriers for the community.

Opportunities for local partnerships to promote temporary election staff employment opportunities were also discussed.

"These conversations were very useful," Quentin said.

“The ability to hear from people on the ground was important so we can help make sure we are managing the issues that need to be managed ahead of the elections.

“We’re also very keen to work with council to boost communication to increase turnout, promote employment opportunities for temporary election staff, and support candidate participation.”

If you would like to get in touch with Quentin about First Nations engagement, please email first.nations@ecq.qld.gov.au.



Returning Officer training underway

The first group of Returning Officers for the 2024 local government elections attended their four-day face-to-face training program at the ECQ’s head office in the first week of October.

The training program covers important information including hiring temporary election staff, managing polling places, providing a positive voting experience to electors and ensuring best practice for counting ballot papers. Returning Officers play a critical role on the election delivery front line, and their attendance at face-to-face training is an essential part of the ECQ’s preparations.

Groups will continue to attend their training sessions at the ECQ until the end of the year.



Election delivery in different electoral landscapes

Share this information with your community

Individual councils in Queensland have unique voting landscapes which means a tailored approach to election delivery is needed for the 2024 local government elections.

Some of the factors which vary council-to-council include geographical location and size, whether they’re divided or undivided, voting systems, and voter service types. Each combination of these variables impacts processes such as logistics, resourcing and staffing requirements and the timeframe for counting.

Voting systems

The *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* sets out the type of voting system that must be used for different types of elections.

- **Optional preferential voting (OPV)** requires electors to mark at least one preference on the ballot paper. The OPV voting system is used for mayoral elections and councillor elections in single-member divided councils. A separate councillor ballot paper is required for each division of a divided council.
- **First-past-the-post (FPTP)** allows for multiple candidates to be elected on the one ballot paper to fill the number of vacant positions. The FPTP voting system is used for councillor elections in undivided councils and for divided councils with multi-member divisions.

There are two types of local governments in operation in Queensland.

An **undivided council** is a single area represented by a mayor and multiple councillors. Undivided councils use different voting systems for mayor (OPV) and councillor (FPTP).

Divided councils are separated into smaller areas of a relatively equal quota of electors. Generally, a divided council will be represented by a mayor and one councillor per division and will use the OPV voting system to elect both mayor and councillors to vacant positions. Councils with a multi-member arrangement within a division will have multiple councillor positions to represent a division and will use the FPTP voting system.

The main service delivery models for local government elections are attendance elections, full postal elections and remote polling.

Attendance voting provides in-person and other voting options for electors enrolled in that council area, including:

- **Early voting** – conducted over the two-week period leading up to election day, although the early voting period for a council area may vary depending on the number of electors and geographical location of the council.
- **Election day voting** – approximately 1,500 polling booth locations operate state-wide on election day to provide electors with in-person voting services.
- **Postal and electoral visitor voting** – any elector is able to apply for a postal vote. Electoral visitor voting is only available to eligible electors.
- **Telephone voting (for eligible electors)** – also known as electronically assisted voting, this is a two-step process for eligible electors providing the opportunity to vote over the phone.

Full postal ballots are only conducted when the Minister responsible for Local Government approves an application from the relevant local government. For councils that are approved to conduct their election by full postal ballot, electors are automatically sent ballot materials via the post. Electors must vote by 6pm on election day and have 10 days after election day to return their postal ballot materials to the ECQ. If there is no clear majority to declare an election outcome before the return date this can impact the timeframe for determining the final result.

For communities that receive **remote area polling**, ECQ staff visit remote communities to deliver culturally appropriate electoral services and ensure access to voting services.

Did You Know?

- There will be around 1,240 packs of rubber bands used during the 2024 local government elections, equating to around 123,800 individual rubber bands.
- There are more than 11,000 Queensland electors enrolled as special postal voters. These are electors who live more than 20 kilometres from a polling place.



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The Electoral Commission of Queensland acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country, and their connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

This email was sent by Electoral Commission of Queensland, Level 20, 1 Eagle Street, BRISBANE, QLD 4000, Australia to edrick.bamba@ecq.qld.gov.au

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