



Electoral Commission

QUEENSLAND

Dear Registered Officer or candidate

Clarifications are offered below on the Electoral Commission of Queensland's (ECQ) [Distribution & Display of How-to-Vote Cards and Other Election Material at Polling Booths](#) issued on 20 March 2020.

For the purposes of the Direction's application and to other signage and campaign workers' presence, what is the limit of the *polling place* versus the *polling booth*? What is the intention of the word 'canvassing' in the Direction?

The Direction applies to the entirety of the polling place, which is defined as the location of the venue that the polling booth is situated within. This is consistent with the intent of the *Public Health and Other Legislation (Public Health Emergency) Amendment Act 2020*.

As the Explanatory Notes to the related Bill explain, these powers:

- For the 2020 quadrennial local government election: "allow the electoral commission to give a direction about how, where and when how-to-vote cards may be distributed/displayed at a polling booth, prohibiting the distribution/display of how-to-vote cards or other election material at a polling booth, prohibiting a person from canvassing for votes in or near polling booths and permitting the display of political statements inside, or within 6 metres of the entrance to, a polling booth".
- For the state by-elections held before the next general election: "allow the Electoral Commission of Queensland to give a direction about the distribution or display of how-to-vote cards or other election material at a polling booth and canvassing for votes in or near a polling booth for a by-election, with an offence applying to persons who contravene such a direction".

Signage

The usual permissions or restrictions that relate to other signage (such as A-Frames) continue to apply. For example, it is permissible for a campaign worker to erect an A-Frame sign and leave it

unattended outside of the 6 metres exclusion zone (or a shorter distance if one is approved) that applies to the entrance to a building which is, or is part of, a polling booth. The person must not remain at the polling place.

In addition, the usual rules that apply to state-controlled roads or roads subject to local laws continue to apply, and the ECQ requests that the safety and free-flow of electors be considered when placing any such signs.

Canvassing

Canvassing is prohibited throughout the entirety of the polling place. This extends the existing prohibition under section 185 of the *Local Government Electoral Act 2001* beyond the prohibitions that it currently contains. It means that no person should hand out how-to-vote cards, election material, or approach electors in or near polling booths.

What size restrictions apply to how-to-vote cards or election material that may be displayed?

The intention of the displayed material is that it replaces material which would otherwise have normally been prepared for distribution at a polling booth under usual arrangements.

For example, if a how-to-vote card has been, or was intended to be, printed in a postcard format, that is the format that would be accepted for display.

Returning Officers and Polling Booth Supervisors are empowered under the Direction to reject the display of any material which they have a reasonable suspicion does meet this criterion.

Will how-to-vote card and/or election material be displayed in ballot paper order?

Yes. However, please note that in some councils due to the number of candidates and/or the volume of material that the display may be subject to operational constraints which means that the order, for example, may need to be spread across several rows rather than a sequential list.

Returning Officers and Polling Booth Supervisors are empowered under the Direction to adapt the display to the operational requirements of individual booths.

Where will material be displayed, inside the polling booth or within 6 metres of the polling booth?

It may be either situation depending on the nature of each booth, though the ECQ's preference is for display outside of the polling booth but clearly visible within the 6 metre zone.

Returning Officers and Polling Booth Supervisors are empowered under the Direction to adapt the location of the display to the operational requirements of individual booths.

What time should party workers turn up to hand material over to polling booths, and how many? What if they are front and back?

After 8.30am to allow the Returning Officer and/or the Polling Booth Supervisor time to establish and open the polling booth. Each booth will have at least one display of material, larger booths may have more, and so it is reasonable to hand over two copies to the Polling Booth Supervisor if there are multiple displays – if only one display, then only one copy, or two if the material is double-sided (and was always intended to be so). Extra copies received will not be displayed.

Can a party worker go inside a polling booth during the day to ensure material is being displayed? What if it is torn down during the day?

The usual rules apply to political statements in polling booths that are not otherwise expressly catered for through this Direction. For example, a party worker could not enter a polling booth wearing any t-shirts that display political slogans.

The Direction explicitly states that “Candidates, political parties or other electoral participants must not interfere or remove how-to-vote cards or election material once they are displayed by the booth supervisor or other ECQ staff.” It is an offence to contravene the Direction.

Regards

Electoral Commission of Queensland



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