Media Information Kit

For the 2024 local government elections

My local p

My local

LOCAL GOVER
ELECTIO

16 March

Electoral Commission QUEENSLAND

Electoral Commission QUEENSLAND

Message from the Electoral Commissioner

Members of the media,

Queensland electors will head to the polls in March 2024, to vote for the mayors and councillors they want to represent them in their local communities.

The Notice of Election for Queensland's 2024 local government elections will be issued by the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) on 29 January 2024, to signal the commencement of the election period.

Local government elections can be complex, so we've prepared this Media Kit to help you understand and navigate the electoral processes that will be in place for these elections.

In this Media Kit, you'll find information to assist you, such as a timetable of key election dates and links to resources on our website. We'll also provide information about how we deliver fair and transparent elections, in accordance with our responsibilities under the relevant Electoral Acts.

We acknowledge the important role media plays in promoting elections and ensuring Queenslanders have factual information that can support them to participate in our democracy.

We encourage you to reach out to our Media team at any time with any queries you might have during the election period. You can contact our team via media@ecq.qld.gov.au or by calling 0438 120 699 during office hours.

We're looking forward to working with you during the election period.

Thank you,

Pat Vidgen PSM
Electoral Commissioner of Queensland

About the ECQ

The ECQ is Queensland's trusted provider of fair and transparent elections.

An independent statutory authority established under the *Electoral Act 1992*, the ECQ will administer the 2024 local government elections under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* and the *City of Brisbane Act 2010*.

In addition to conducting state, local government and industrial elections and referendums, the ECQ also reviews state and local electoral boundaries and regulates and promotes compliance with electoral funding and disclosure requirements.

Helping all Queenslanders participate in elections is a key focus for the ECQ. We aim to deliver the most accessible elections possible in 2024 through carefully planned and considered voting services, voting locations and communication materials.

Our vision is to deliver open, accountable and accessible electoral services for all Queenslanders. We aim to achieve this through four key strategic objectives:

1   Trusted to deliver Queensland elections

2   Increase electoral awareness and participation

3   Maintain election readiness

4   Promote and enforce compliance with electoral laws.

You can learn more about the ECQ by visiting our website at www.ecq.qld.gov.au/about-us.

Media enquiries

The ECQ's media inbox is your primary point of contact for any enquiries during the elections.

Before you get in contact with us, we encourage you to visit our website at www.ecq.qld.gov.au to search for the information you are seeking. Our website is the central point for official information about the election and will always provide the latest and most up-to-date information, including on early voting numbers, counting and results.

If you do require a response from us on any questions you have, please email them to media@ecq.qld.gov.au so that we can respond to you as quickly as possible. Please remember to include a timeframe for the response.

You can also call us on 0438 120 699 for any urgent matters or to request permission to attend a polling place.

The ECQ's media inbox and phone are monitored **during standard business hours – 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday** (including public holidays) and between 7am and 11pm on election day.

Attending a polling place

Media representatives can attend polling places during the election period. Permission must be obtained in advance by contacting the ECQ media team via media@ecq.qld.gov.au or 0438 120 699.

When you arrive, please introduce yourself to the Returning Officer or Supervisor.

To attend after 6pm (to film the start of the count/emptying of the ballot box on election day), please obtain permission from the ECQ. When you arrive, let the Returning Officer or Supervisor know you have obtained permission to attend and they will confirm these arrangements.

Taking photos or capturing footage

The Returning Officer or Supervisor will confirm the arrangements and direct you to an area which does not impede electors or staff.

A few things to note:

- Respect the wishes of any staff or electors who refuse to be photographed or filmed.
- Respect the secrecy of the ballot. This means not filming, photographing or in any way recording the information that has been written on an individual ballot paper, a person's Voter Information Card or personal details that may be visible on an ePollbook screen.
- Refrain from speaking to an elector while they are completing their ballot paper or asking how an elector voted while they are still inside the polling place.
- Refrain from touching any ballot papers or ballot boxes.
- Refrain from 'recreating' any scenes for better effect or moving items within or outside the polling place.
- While inside the polling place, it's critical that you do not impede, inconvenience or disrespect the rights of electors, scrutineers or staff during voting or counting.

Election Facts

The ECQ has published a new Election Facts webpage, including a register to help Queensland electors to sort fact from fiction when it comes to electoral processes.

The media plays a critical role in supporting the delivery of transparent and factual information to the public and this new webpage will be a useful resource for media representatives looking for the facts about common mis and disinformation claims.

Contact information for the general public

Office: Level 20, 1 Eagle Street, Brisbane Queensland 4000

Postal address: GPO Box 1393, Brisbane Queensland 4001

General enquiries during the election period: **Phone** 1300 881 665
8am to 6pm   Monday to Friday
9am to 4pm   Saturday
8am to 6pm   election day, Saturday 16 March

Email ecq@ecq.qld.gov.au

Outside Australia: **Phone** +61 7 3035 8103

Our website at www.ecq.qld.gov.au is the central point for official information about the election, providing the latest and most up-to-date information, including on early voting numbers, counting and results.

Social media

The ECQ will publish regular updates and key messages on its social media channels during the elections. Facebook is our primary social media channel and we will also provide key updates via Instagram and X.

Hashtags for the local government elections are:

#ElectionsQld

#VoteLocal

#LGE2024

Accessing election results

Election results are posted on the ECQ website as they become available.

Declarations will not be made on election night as all votes need to be counted more than once, so it is important to prepare and plan for this.

Preliminary count results will be published first, and the count will start following the close of polls at 6pm on Saturday 16 March.

The **official count** begins the following day or as soon as practicable after the close of polls, and results will continue to be updated on the website until all the votes are counted.

Visit our resources page at www.ecq.qld.gov.au to view our short 'Counting the Votes' animation to help you understand the counting process.

An XML feed of election results will also be available through the ECQ results web page after the vote count commences. This feed will display results for all current elections while the count is ongoing and prior to declaration of the election result.

For more details about the XML results feed, and how to obtain a link, email media@ecq.qld.gov.au.

Declaration of results

The ECQ will not declare any result until it is certain. This means until mathematically, only one candidate can win.

Local government elections are complex, and there are a range of factors that influence the process of vote counting, including:

- the time required to count large undivided councils
- the complexity of multiple voting systems
- the need to wait for postal votes to be returned.

All election results will be published progressively on the ECQ website.

Results will continue to be updated on the website until all the votes are counted and declarations will be made when the result of the election is clear.

It may be necessary in some contests to await the deadline for the return of postal votes on 26 March 2024 before a declaration can be made.

At the conclusion of the elections, the ECQ will publish a report on the elections on the ECQ website.

Electronic Disclosure System (EDS)

Queensland has some of the most comprehensive funding and disclosure regulations in the country, including real-time disclosure obligations for local government election candidates.

Under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*, all participants involved in running or supporting a campaign for a local government election have obligations to disclose political donations (gifts or loans) and / or electoral expenditure.

These regulations ensure there is transparency in political campaigning and helps to maintain the integrity of the election process.

Electoral expenditure and donation disclosures are publicly available and can be viewed via the ECQ's Electronic Disclosure System (EDS).

The EDS is a real-time system for the lodgement of disclosures by donors, candidates, political parties, groups and third parties and is searchable by name, party, donor, electorate, date, gift value and more.

Candidates and parties have real-time disclosure obligations – which means gifts or loans and electoral expenditure must be disclosed within seven business days, or within 24 hours for the last week of the election campaign.

For tips on how to navigate the EDS, view this [fact sheet](#) on the ECQ website.

New legislation

New caps on local government electoral spending were also introduced for the first time following the commencement of the *Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (expenditure caps) Amendment Act 2023.*

The new requirements took effect from 14 August 2023 and the capped expenditure period for the local government elections will apply until 6pm on election day on 16 March 2024.

The new caps will affect councillors, candidates, groups of candidates, registered political parties and third parties.

The caps for all councils other than Brisbane City Council are based on enrolment figures as of 1 July 2023, while the caps for Brisbane City Council are set by legislation and are not based on enrolment figures. Caps can be found on the [ECQ website](#).

The changes also mean third parties (such as community organisations) will need to register if they plan to spend more than $6,000, and registered political parties and registered third parties will need to keep a dedicated bank account for the local government elections.

The ECQ takes a proactive approach to engaging with candidates and parties to ensure they are aware of their legislative responsibilities.

For the local government elections, the ECQ has held briefings with registered political parties and emailed all known announced candidates and every sitting councillor in Queensland to advise of the new requirements.

The new legislation also requires broadcasters and publishers to complete an election summary return following local government elections.

This return must detail all election advertising that was broadcast or published on the platform during the election's capped expenditure period. The ECQ has contacted broadcasters and publishers about this and more information can be found on the [ECQ website](#).

Disclosure
Following the election, every candidate, registered political party who endorsed a candidate, group and registered third party must submit a [disclosure return](#) to the ECQ outlining gifts, loans and electoral expenditure.

The due date for returns is **1 July 2024** and they will be published on the ECQ's Electronic Disclosure System (EDS).

Nominating as a candidate

To qualify as a candidate, a person must:
- be an Australian citizen enrolled on the Queensland electoral roll in the local government area they are contesting
- be nominated by six electors who are currently enrolled in the local government area ward or division that the person will be contesting, or be endorsed by a registered political party
- not be disqualified from nominating under the *Local Government Act 2009*
- pay a $250 deposit via cash, bank cheque or electronic funds transfer (EFT).

There are a number of steps prospective candidates will need to undertake before they nominate for the elections.

This includes completing the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning's mandatory *So you want to be a councillor?* training and opening a dedicated campaign bank account for all donations and expenditure transaction.

More information about nominating for elections is available on the [ECQ website](#).

2024 local government elections facts

Number of councils	77
Number of mayoral positions	77
Number of councillor positions	501
Electors	Approximately 3.7 million electors
Local government elections are held	Every four years, on the last Saturday in March, unless changed by regulation. NOTE: the date for the 2024 election was changed by regulation so it did not clash with Easter and school holidays.

Enrolment

Every eligible Queensland elector has the right and responsibility to vote in our democracy.

Voting is compulsory for all Australian citizens aged 18 or over and the ECQ proactively promotes enrolment to help ensure as many Queenslanders as possible can have their say in elections.

Queensland's electoral roll is maintained by the Australian Electoral Commission under a joint roll arrangement. Electors can check or update their enrolment details online at [www.aec.gov.au.](http://www.aec.gov.au)

Penalties apply for failing to vote unless you have a valid and sufficient reason as outlined in the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*. For the local government elections in March, the penalty for failing to vote is $154.80 (as at 1 July 2023).

The electoral roll for the 2024 local government elections will close on 5 February 2024.

Electors who do not enrol by the above date may still enrol or update their address details by 6pm on Friday 15 March (the day before election day) however, they will be required to cast a declaration vote. Election officials will need to assist electors with this process as they will be required to place their completed ballot papers into a declaration envelope.

When these envelopes are opened during the count, the ECQ will check the elector's details against the electoral roll as it stands on 16 March to see if their vote can be included.

Finding your local government area

Electors can confirm their enrolment details for the local government elections via the ECQ website. Interactive and PDF maps of all local government areas are also available.

Four divisional boundary reviews were undertaken in 2023 and the reports on these reviews can be found on the ECQ website.

Election timetable

The *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* establishes timeframes for the conduct of local government elections.

The below timetable is indicative only. The timetable will be confirmed when the Notice of Election is issued.

2024 local government elections	Date
Notice of election	29 January
Applications for postal votes commence	29 January
Candidate nominations open	29 January
Close of electoral roll	5 February
Close of candidate nominations	13 February at 12 noon
Ballot paper order draw	14 February at 10am
Early voting commences	4 March. Early voting times may vary from council to council
Postal vote applications close	4 March at 7pm
Early voting closes	15 March at 6pm. Early voting times may vary from council to council
Election day	16 March from 8am to 6pm
Last day for postal votes to be received	26 March at close of business
Election results	Results are published progressively as votes are counted and results declared
Final day for election results to be disputed	7 days after results are declared
Election summary returns due	1 July 2024. Returns must be lodged within 15 weeks of election day

Election Service Plan

The Election Service Plan outlines how the ECQ will deliver the 2024 local government elections on behalf of all Queenslanders. It details the key election milestones, voter services and post-election activities that will be undertaken.

The Service Plan is available on the ECQ website.

Boundaries

Divisional boundaries in some local government areas have changed since the last elections.

During 2023, the Local Government Change Commission reviewed the boundaries or electoral arrangements for four local government areas. The local government elections will be conducted using new divisional boundaries recommended during these reviews.

Boundary reviews are an important part of ensuring that enrolment is balanced across divisions and that each Queenslander's vote carries the same value.

Maps of boundaries for the elections will be available on the ECQ website at ecq.qld.gov.au/electoral-boundaries/local-government-area-boundaries.

Election advertising and signage

Election material such as signage is often a contentious issue in elections.

Under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*, candidates, groups of candidates, registered political parties and third parties and campaigns must adhere to specific provisions during an election period (noting that some provisions may also apply outside an election period).

The election period commences when the Notice of Election is published and ends when voting closes on election day.

The following items MUST show the name and address of the person who has authorised the material:

- advertisements
- handbills
- pamphlets
- or notices that are able or are intended to influence an elector about voting at an election, or affect the result of the election.

Another person can authorise election material on a candidate's behalf, but the authoriser's address must be a street address.

More details on this topic is available in Fact Sheet 3 – Authorisation of election material on the ECQ website.

Local government electoral arrangements

Voting for a mayor

Voters elect a single mayor to represent council. Candidates must run for either a mayor or councillor position but cannot run for both positions. All mayors are elected with the Optional Preferential Voting method.

Voting in a divided (single-member) council

These are local government areas that are divided internally into wards or divisions. Voters elect one councillor to represent their individual division. For example, the Brisbane City Council has 26 wards and voters elect one councillor to represent their ward. The Logan City Council has 12 divisions and voters elect one councillor to represent their division.

Divided councils in the 2024 local government elections

Banana	Isaac	South Burnett
Brisbane	Logan	Sunshine Coast
Bundaberg	Moreton Bay	Tablelands
Cairns	North Burnett	Torres Strait Island
Cassowary Coast	Northern Peninsula Area	Townsville
Fraser Coast	Redland	Whitsunday
Gold Coast	Rockhampton	
Gympie	Scenic Rim	

Voting in a divided (multi-member) council

These are local government areas that are divided internally but have more than one councillor. The Ipswich City Council is the only local government area in Queensland with multi-member divisions. It has four divisions with two councillors representing each one.

Divided (multi-member) councils in the 2024 local government elections

Ipswich

Voting in an undivided council

These are local government areas that have no internal boundaries. Voters elect all the councillors representing the entire local government area. For example, the Toowoomba Regional Council elects ten councillors who represent the entire local government area.

Undivided councils in the 2024 local government elections

Aurukun
Balonne
Barcaldine
Barcoo
Blackall-Tambo
Boulia
Bulloo
Burdekin
Burke
Carpentaria
Central Highlands
Charters Towers
Cherbourg Aboriginal
Cloncurry
Cook
Croydon
Diamantina
Doomadgee Aboriginal
Douglas
Etheridge
Flinders
Gladstone
Goondiwindi
Hinchinbrook
Hope Vale Aboriginal
Kowanyama Aboriginal
Livingstone
Lockhart River Aboriginal
Lockyer Valley
Longreach
Mackay
Mapoon Aboriginal
Maranoa
Mareeba
McKinlay
Mornington
Mount Isa
Murweh
Napranum Aboriginal
Noosa
Palm Island Aboriginal
Paroo
Pormpuraaw Aboriginal
Quilpie
Richmond
Somerset
Southern Downs

Toowoomba
Torres
Western Downs
Winton
Woorabinda Aboriginal
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal
Yarrabah Aboriginal

Voting in the 2024 local government elections

Most local governments will offer **attendance (in-person) voting** at around 1,000 physical polling booths. Early voting will be available and electors can apply for a postal vote before 4 March.

Fifteen local governments have received ministerial approval to offer a **postal vote election** only. This option is often requested in local government areas that are spread across a wide geographic area. In these locations, postal voting can help ensure the greatest participation of electors.

Two councils (Isaac and Maranoa) have received approval to offer **hybrid voting**. Hybrid voting is where attendance voting and postal voting are both offered to electors, depending on their council division.

Attendance voting

Attendance (in-person) voting is offered in the majority of Queensland's local government areas. Electors in these areas can attend polling booths to cast their vote but they must vote in their local government area. This is because the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* makes no provision for absentee voting.

Electors are encouraged to plan ahead if they will be away or unable to vote in person on election day and arrange to vote early or apply for a postal vote before 4 March 2024.

The opening times and locations of polling booths will be available on the ECQ's website following the issue of the Notice of Election on 29 January 2024.

Postal voting

In Queensland, all electors may apply for a postal vote. **The quickest and most direct way to apply for a postal vote is via the ECQ's website.** Applying to the ECQ directly by the deadline of 7pm on 4 March 2024 will ensure you receive your voting materials in time. The ECQ will post all voting materials after the ballot order draw on 14 February 2024.

While there have been recent changes to Australia Post's delivery arrangements, the ECQ does not expect any issues with the despatch of materials for the 2024 local government elections. It should be noted however, that the delivery of mail is ultimately outside of the ECQ's control once it has been lodged with Australia Post.

For those electors in the 15 local government areas offering full postal voting, there is no need to apply to the ECQ for a postal vote. Voting materials will be sent to all eligible electors automatically.

Councils with **postal voting only** at the 2024 local government elections are:

Council	Type	Voting system
Balonne Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Banana Shire Council	divided	OPV mayor and councillor
Barcaldine Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Barcoo Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Bulloo Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Diamantina Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Etheridge Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Goondiwindi Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Longreach Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
North Burnett Regional Council	divided	OPV mayor and councillor
Paroo Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Quilpie Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Richmond Shire Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor
Western Downs Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor

For electors in the two local government areas using a hybrid voting system, voting materials will be automatically sent to electors who are in the designated postal vote areas.

Councils with hybrid voting at the 2024 local government elections (both **postal** and **in person voting**) are:

Council	Type	Voting system
Isaac Regional Council	divided (postal divisions 1 and 8)	OPV mayor and councillor
Maranoa Regional Council	undivided	OPV mayor, FPTP councillor

All postal votes must be completed by 6pm on election day and received by the ECQ by 5pm on 26 March.

Early voting

Early voting will be offered during the local government elections at approximately 170 early voting centres across Queensland from 4 March 2024.

The voting times and locations of these early voting centres will be made available on the ECQ website after the Notice of Election is published on 29 January 2024.

Early voting will also be available at the Brisbane City Hall for residents who live in the local government areas of Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay, Redland, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast. This polling booth will remain open on election day.

It should be noted that in smaller council areas, there may be reduced early voting days.

Telephone voting

The ECQ will offer telephone voting to eligible electors during the local government elections. **To register for this service, electors should first check that they are eligible by visiting the ECQ website.**

Eligible electors include those with an impairment, an insufficient literacy level, a disability or if they are registered as a special postal voter, reside more than 20 kilometres from a polling place or are an out of state or overseas elector, including defence force personnel serving overseas.

Eligible electors can register for this service once early voting begins by calling 1300 881 665 before noon on election day Saturday 16 March.

Voting in aged care facilities (Declared Institutions)

The ECQ arranges for election officials to visit some aged care facilities (also known as Declared Institutions) before election day to take votes from residents who cannot attend a polling booth. Staff and visitors are not eligible for this service. Locations will be available on the ECQ website.

More information about how the ECQ helps all Queenslanders to participate in the elections is available on the ECQ website.

Voting systems in a local government election

Queensland electors may use two different systems of voting at the local government elections, depending on their council. These are optional preferential voting and first-past-the-post voting.

Optional preferential voting (OPV) is the system of voting for:

- councillors in **single-member divided councils** with wards or divisions
- **mayors** in local government elections.

NOTE: Ipswich City Council is a divided council but uses first-past-the-post voting because more than one councillor is being elected in each division.

OPV requires electors to mark the ballot paper to indicate their preferred candidate/s. Another way of describing OPV is 'vote for one, vote for some, or vote for all' – the elector can choose.

If the elector wishes to vote for only one candidate, this is done by marking their ballot paper with a one (1), in the square opposite the name of the candidate they choose.

The elector may then choose to indicate preferences by numbering in the squares, some, or all of the candidates remaining on their ballot paper.

A vote is **formal** if the elector has clearly indicated their first preference for one specific candidate. Electors do not have to indicate any additional preference, but if they do, these subsequent preferences will be counted if votes are to be distributed for preferences.

A vote is **informal** if it is unclear.

First-past-the-post voting (FPTP) is the system of voting for:

- **councillors** in undivided councils
- councillors in **multi-member divisions** in divided councils (currently only Ipswich City Council).

FPTP means the candidates who receive the most votes are elected. Electors are required to place a mark (tick, cross or number) in the square opposite the name of the candidate or candidates they support. The number of marks on the ballot paper must equal the number of candidates to be elected.

A ballot paper is **informal** if an elector has marked a vote (not using numerals) for a number of candidates that is more or less than the number of vacancies that need to be filled. For example, if an elector uses all crosses or ticks, selects one when required to select two, or uses a mixture of numbers and other marks that exceeds the number of candidates required.

A ballot paper is **formal** if the elector has marked a vote for the number of candidates equal to the number of vacancies that need to be filled.

If five candidates are to be elected, five boxes must be numbered in order of preference. If two are to be elected for example, in Ipswich City Council, then two boxes must be numbered in order of preference starting with 1.

The vote is formal if the elector's intention is clear.

The ECQ has developed a short animation to explain the different systems of voting in Queensland available on the [ECQ website](#).

Past local government elections

2020 local government elections – Saturday, 28 March 2020.

- 1,574 candidates nominated for 578 positions.
- 532 positions were contested and 46 were uncontested.
- Voter turnout was 77.71 per cent and significant changes in voting patterns were identified compared to previous elections, attributable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Almost 37,000 electors cast their vote by telephone compared to approximately 500 electors in 2016.
- There were 3,292,980 electors eligible to participate in the elections.

The 2020 Local Government Election Report is on the ECQ website.

2016 local government elections – Saturday 19 March 2016

- 1,767 candidates nominated for 579 positions.
- Mayoral elections were contested for the first time using OPV.
- Voter turnout was 83.04 per cent, representing a 2.71 per cent increase on the 2012 turnout of 80.33 per cent.
- There were 3,083,593 electors eligible to participate in the elections.

The 2016 Local Government Election Report is available on the ECQ website.

Past results for state and local elections, by-elections, referendums and polls can be found on the ECQ's website.

Media

Information

Kit

For the 2024 local government elections

Electoral
Commission
QUEENSLAND