



Electoral Commission
QUEENSLAND



2020
STATE GENERAL ELECTION
Service Plan



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Content from this document should be attributed as the Electoral Commission of Queensland 2020 State general election service plan.

This service plan is available for downloading from the ECQ website www.ecq.qld.gov.au. Enquiries and requests for a paper copy of this document may be directed to:

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Foreword

In October 2020, the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) will conduct the first fixed term election for all 93 members of the Queensland Parliament. In accordance with the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*, the dissolution day for the 56th Parliament of Queensland and the issue of the writ by His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, the Governor of Queensland, is due to occur on 6 October 2020.

Preparation and delivery of the 2020 State general election is a significant logistical exercise, involving approximately 3.3 million voters, more than 1,300 election day polling booths, approximately 200 early voting centres and over 12,000 temporary election staff. The results will culminate in the election of the 93 members of the 57th Parliament of Queensland and the subsequent formation of the next State Government.

Due to the ongoing risk posed by COVID-19, the ECQ has significantly altered its election delivery model for the 2020 State general election so all eligible Queenslanders can be confident they can safely cast their ballot. On 15 July 2020, the ECQ released a *Statement of Intent* outlining the measures necessary to ensure all Queenslanders are enfranchised for this election while protecting public health and safety.

The election will be conducted over an election period rather than focussing on an election day. Building on the successful delivery of the COVID-safe March 2020 local government elections, the ECQ is planning on a predominantly attendance State general election, featuring expanded in-person voting options and increased capacity for postal voting. The telephone voting service will be available for eligible electors only and has increased capacity to ensure Queensland's vulnerable populations are able to cast a vote.

The ECQ is expanding early voting options, with extra centres across Queensland being established, and extended operating hours. These measures increase options for electors to safely cast a ballot in-person over the two-week early voting period and minimise the potential for queues during that period and on election day.

Electors were also, for the first time ever, able to apply for a postal vote before the issue of the writ with applications opening from 14 September 2020. The ECQ is expecting high demand for this service and is encouraging voters to apply early to facilitate the rapid printing and despatch of postal ballot materials following the close of candidate nominations.

To ensure we are responsive to latest advice, the ECQ is regularly consulting with Queensland's Chief Health Officer and this will continue until the election is complete. Preparations are in place to respond to any outbreaks of COVID-19 and enable the ECQ to quickly transition to alternative voting methods, if advised to do so.

This Election Service Plan provides further details about how the ECQ intends to deliver a COVID-safe 2020 State general election and includes information about key election milestones, voter services and post-election activities. A full report will be released following the election, providing a transparent and public account of the outcomes of the 2020 State general election.



Pat Vidgen PSM FGIA
Electoral Commissioner of Queensland

Overview

The ECQ is an independent statutory authority responsible for the impartial conduct of Queensland elections. In performing its functions, the ECQ seeks to uphold the integrity of the State's electoral processes through the delivery of accessible, fair and transparent elections.

For the conduct of the 2020 State general election, the ECQ will deliver services as prescribed by the *Electoral Act 1992*.

The ECQ's main functions include:

- the preparation, planning and delivery of the elections in an efficient, transparent and accountable manner
- the regulation of electoral funding and disclosure requirements and promotion of compliance activities, and
- maintaining equitable representation through the periodic review of State electoral boundaries by the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

In Queensland, State general elections will usually occur for all Members of Parliament every four years on the last Saturday in October. The 2020 State general election will be on Saturday, 31 October 2020, the first fixed term election in Queensland. Voting in the election is compulsory and is conducted using the full preferential voting system.

The election is being planned and delivered during the COVID-19 declared public health emergency. The ECQ's *Statement of Intent* released on 15 July 2020 established the following guiding principles for delivery of a COVID-safe election:

- implementing public health measures to protect the health and safety of Queensland voters based on the advice of Queensland's Chief Health Officer
- expanding voting services to ensure electors have a range of voting options
- planning for a large expected increase in early voting and postal voting
- implementing contingencies for an expanded or predominantly postal vote if required to maintain public health and safety, based on advice from Queensland's Chief Health Officer, and
- facilitating political participation through arrangements for distribution of how-to-vote cards and scrutineering of vote counting, while maintaining appropriate health protections for ECQ staff, voters, candidates and campaign volunteers.

The delivery of the election is supported by a special legislative framework enacted through passage of the [*Electoral and Other Legislation \(Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters\) Amendment Act 2020*](#) on 18 June 2020. This Act included amendments to the *Electoral Act 1992* providing extra flexibility in the statutory framework for the elections including:

- flexibility to change dates for election milestones contained in the writ
- ability for the ECQ to issue notices that change timeframes for postal vote applications and expand eligibility for telephone voting
- power for the ECQ to issue directions regulating the handing out of election materials or how-to-vote cards near polling place and the activity of scrutineers, and
- ability to declare certain classes of voters or electorates to automatically receive a postal vote by regulation.

The ECQ has considered the additional regulatory flexibility provided through this legislation and determined the ways in which these provisions should be operationalised to enhance service delivery for the election. Key changes, which will be implemented, include the early opening of postal vote applications, declaration of additional categories of electors eligible for telephone voting (while maintaining strict eligibility requirements) and special arrangements for postal voting in aged care and rehabilitation facilities which would usually receive a mobile polling service as a 'declared institution'.

Operationally, the ECQ is expanding early voting services, with more centres in operation which will be open for extended hours, procuring additional postal ballot materials and establishing expedited arrangements for receipt of returned postal ballots, and implementing COVID-safe arrangements at all polling places.

The ECQ will continue its preparations for the election on the basis of conducting an attendance ballot where early voting is expected to be the primary voting channel, with increases in postal voting. Contingency plans are being established, should changes to the election delivery model be necessitated by the public health situation. The ECQ has been working closely with Queensland Health in planning the election, and will seek the ongoing advice of Queensland's Chief Health Officer to ensure that appropriate health responses are implemented.

The impact of COVID-19 on voting patterns is also expected to affect the counting of votes and subsequent declaration of results. While all election day votes, early votes and postal votes received up until election day and available to count will be counted on election night, a large proportion of postal votes will potentially impact the declaration of individual seats, as the Returning Officers may need to wait the legislated 10 days for the return of postal votes before finalising results. This is particularly relevant to any contest where a distribution of preferences is required to determine a result.

Further details of election milestones, voter services, resources and technology, staff, communications and post-election activities are detailed in this service plan. However, the ECQ will remain responsive to the current health situation and will implement changes to the service delivery model and other election arrangements if required as the election period proceeds. The ECQ will openly and transparently communicate any such changes to its service delivery model and/or the regulatory framework for political participants through a variety of channels.

Election milestones

Election dates are set in accordance with provisions of the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*, the *Electoral Act 1992* and the writ for the election. Under special legislative arrangements to facilitate the safe conduct of the 2020 State general election, there is additional flexibility to change election arrangements, including key election dates. These dates will be finalised upon issuing of the writ for the election by the Governor of Queensland and a full election timetable published on the ECQ website.

1. Applications for postal votes open – 14 September 2020

For the first time ever, voters are able to apply for postal votes prior to the issue of the writ for the election, starting 14 September 2020. The early opening date for postal vote applications was set by a [notice](#) issued by the Electoral Commissioner under sections 119 and 392Q of the *Electoral Act 1992*. The earlier opening date provides additional time for electors to lodge an application and allow the ECQ to manage the higher demand anticipated for this service as a result of COVID-19.

2. Issue of the writ – 6 October 2020

Under section 19C of the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*, the Governor must dissolve the Legislative Assembly and issue a writ for a general election 26 days before the normal polling day. For the 2020 State general election, the normal polling day is 31 October 2020 and the normal dissolution day is 6 October 2020¹.

Under section 84 of the *Electoral Act 1992*, the writ will set out the dates for the:

- close of the electoral roll
- cut-off for candidates to nominate for election
- polling day, and
- day by which the ECQ must return the writ.

The ECQ must conduct the election in accordance with the writ.

3. Close of electoral roll

The ECQ must close the electoral roll on the date set out in the writ. Under section 84(1)(b) of the *Electoral Act 1992*, the cut-off day for the electoral roll must be between five and seven days from the issue of the writ. However, section 392N(2) of the *Electoral Act 1992* allows for an earlier day for the close of the electoral roll.

Eligible electors have until this date to update their enrolment details to a new name or address, or to enrol for the first time. Doing so will guarantee their eligibility to vote in this election. Eligible electors who update their details or enrol for the first time after this date may be required to cast a declaration vote.

¹ Under section 84(2) of the *Electoral Act 1992*, the day of the issue of the writ and polling day are both included in the specified number of days.

4. Candidate nominations

Nominations for candidates for each of Queensland's 93 electorates will open from the issue of the writ and will close on the date specified in the writ. Under section 84(1)(c) of the *Electoral Act 1992* the close of candidate nominations must be between eight and eighteen days from the issue of the writ. However, section 392N(3) of the *Electoral Act 1992* allows for an earlier day for the close of candidate nominations.

Details of nominated candidates will be published on the ECQ website following the close of nominations.

5. Ballot paper draw

Immediately following the close of candidate nominations, the ECQ will conduct random draws to determine the order in which candidates' names are to appear on the ballot papers for each electorate. Details of nominated candidates in ballot paper order will be published on the ECQ website following the ballot draws, and each Returning Officer must display a notice listing the names of nominated candidates.

6. How-to-vote card review – 5:00pm, 23 October 2020

All how-to-vote cards authorised for use by a registered political party, an endorsed candidate or an independent candidate that are to be distributed on polling day must be lodged with the ECQ for approval. The ECQ must receive all how-to-vote cards for review by no later than 5.00pm on 23 October 2020, in accordance with section 183(1) and (2) of the *Electoral Act 1992*. How-to-vote cards accepted by the ECQ will be available on the ECQ website.

7. Postal vote applications close – 7:00pm, 16 October 2020

Postal vote applications can be made from 14 September 2020 to 7:00pm, 16 October 2020 as set by a [notice](#) issued by the Electoral Commissioner. Section 392Q of the *Electoral Act 1992* authorises the ECQ to set this timeframe for applications to be open by notice published on its website. Any applications received after this date will not be accepted. Postal votes cannot be printed and distributed until after the close of candidate nominations and the ballot paper draws in mid-October.

8. Early voting – 19 to 30 October 2020

The early voting period will commence on Monday, 19 October 2020 and continue until Friday, 30 October 2020 in accordance with sections 112 and 392P of the *Electoral Act 1992*. Early voting will be available every day during the early voting period (excluding Sunday, 25 October 2020), with expanded hours offered in many polling places. Detailed information about operating hours and locations will be published on the ECQ website following the issue of the writ.

9. Election day – Saturday, 31 October 2020

Under the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*, election day will be on Saturday, 31 October 2020. All polling booths will be open from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Detailed information about polling booth locations will be published on the ECQ website following the issue of the writ.

After the close of polls, the ECQ will undertake an unofficial preliminary count before the official vote count commences from the Sunday after election day. Additionally, indicative counts may be undertaken to allocate preferences to the two candidates expected to receive the highest number of first preference counts. Results of these counts will be published on the ECQ website from election night progressively. Counts conducted on election night are not official results and further official counts are conducted to declare results.

10. Official count and declaration of results

After the preliminary counts are complete, the official count will be conducted under the supervision of the relevant Returning Officer. All ballots will be counted again and postal votes included in the count as they are returned. It may be necessary to await the return of postal votes to finalise official counts and the declaration of results.

11. Return of postal votes – 5:00pm, 10 November 2020

All postal votes must be received by the ECQ by 5.00pm on Tuesday, 10 November 2020 to be included in the official count, in accordance with section 125(2)(d) of the *Electoral Act 1992*. Any postal votes that do not arrive before this date will not be counted.

12. Return of the writ

The ECQ must declare all the results and return the writ to the Governor of Queensland with the names of the 93 successful candidates that will constitute the 57th Parliament of Queensland. The date for return of the writ will be specified in the writ and, under section 84(1)(e) of the *Electoral Act 1992*, must not be more than 84 days after the issue of the writ, which would be Tuesday, 29 December 2020.

13. Election summary returns due

Candidates, registered political parties, associated entities and registered third parties must give the ECQ an election summary return for the election period. Returns must be lodged within 15 weeks of election day.

14. Election funding claims due

Eligible candidates and registered political parties can apply to the ECQ to be paid election funding, based on the number of formal first preference votes they receive. Election funding claims must be submitted within 20 weeks of election day.

Voter Services

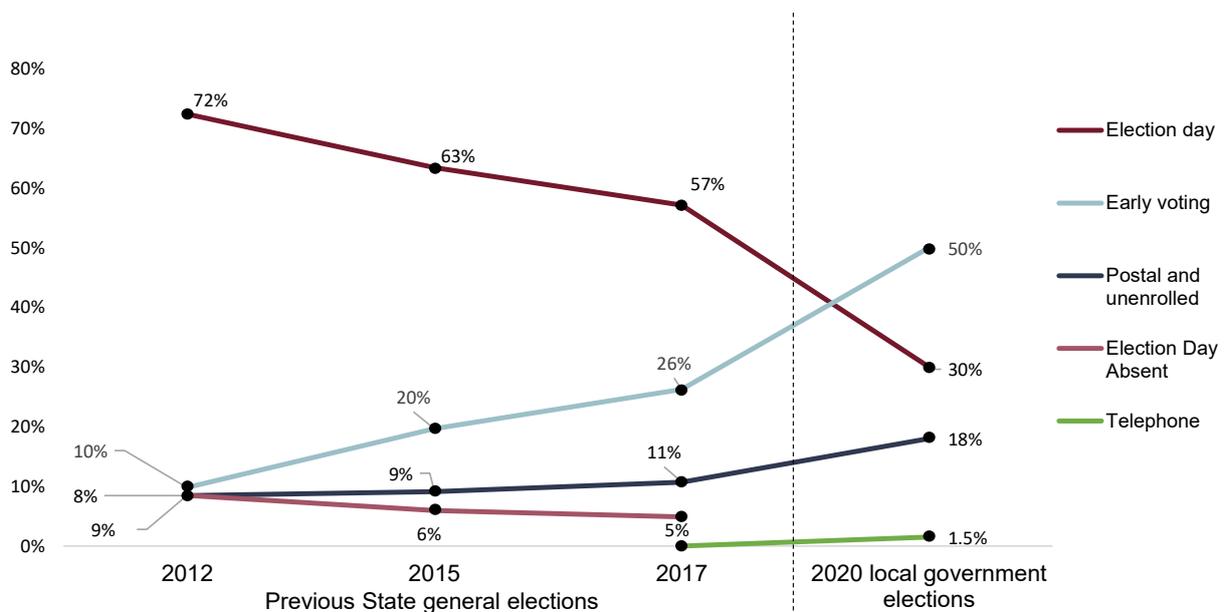
The ECQ delivers a range of services to ensure all eligible Queenslanders can enrol to vote, safely cast a formal ballot, and have confidence in the integrity of electoral process.

For the 2020 State general election, the ECQ has undertaken additional business continuity and contingency planning to maintain flexibility in the election delivery model in a COVID-19 environment. This has included developing additional contingency plans, procuring additional materials and working closely with key suppliers on agreed service delivery approaches.

This planning process is guided by the primary objectives of maximising opportunities for electors to cast their vote, through expanded early voting services and additional postal voting capacity, and maintaining appropriate health measures for all voters, election staff and political participants.

Based on voting patterns at the local government elections in March 2020 during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECQ expects early voting to be the primary voting channel in the State general election. At the local government elections, approximately 50 per cent of electors voted during the early voting period, 30 per cent on election day, 18 per cent by postal vote and 1.5 per cent by telephone vote. As illustrated in the graph below, this marked a significant change to voting patterns at previous elections where election day voting has historically been the predominant voting channel.

Voting behaviour over time



COVID-safe arrangements

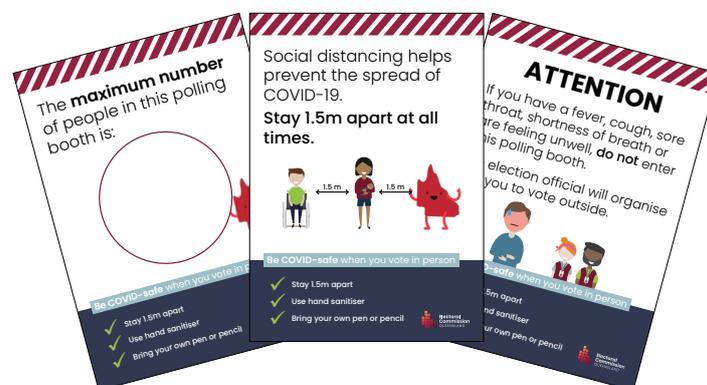
To support delivery of the election, the ECQ has undertaken election-focused business continuity planning to ensure ECQ staff, key suppliers and advisors are able to act consistently in responding to COVID-19 related delivery challenges or to change the service model if required. Under the special legislative framework applying to the election, the ECQ has adapted some aspects of the service delivery model, such as opening postal vote applications early, and ensuring eligibility for telephone voting for certain specified electors who may be affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

In consultation with health authorities, the ECQ is implementing a COVID-safe plan for all polling places. Returning Officers and supervisors are provided with guidance and resources to ensure all returning offices and polling places are setup to protect voters and election staff from exposure to COVID-19. Measures to be implemented at these locations include:

- training for election staff
- actively maintaining social distancing
- use of contact tracing registers
- frequent cleaning
- provision of hand sanitation facilities, and
- use of daily checklists to ensure measures are maintained for the entire election period.

In the instances of exposure in a returning office or polling place, the COVID-safe plan includes a range of contingencies to be implemented to limit the impact on election delivery.

These measures are intended to maximise voter enfranchisement while assuring the safety of voters, candidates, campaign volunteers and temporary election staff.



Enrolment

To vote at the 2020 State general election, eligible adults must be on the Queensland electoral roll. It is especially important for electors to ensure their correct details, especially address details, are up to date.

The electoral rolls will close on the date provided in the writ although it may be possible for eligible electors to update their details or enrol for the first time after this date. However, they may be required to cast a declaration vote, which will not be included in the count until their eligibility is verified by the ECQ.

As at 31 August 2020, the Queensland electoral roll includes 3,351,433 enrolled electors. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), in partnership with the ECQ, maintains the electoral roll and new enrolments and changes of details can be completed by contacting the AEC at aec.gov.au.

Early voting (pre-poll)

A key aspect of delivering a COVID-safe 2020 State general election is the expansion of services during the two-week early voting period from Monday, 19 October to Friday, 30 October 2020. As early voting is expected to be the predominant voting method for the election, the ECQ will establish more early voting centres; approximately 200 across Queensland. Additionally, opening hours at most early voting centres will be extended:

- 9.00am to 6.00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
- 9.00am to 9.00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and
- in a first for a State general election, early voting centres will also open from 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturday, 24 October, a week before the ordinary election day.

The ECQ takes several matters into consideration when selecting venues to be used as early voting centres, such as accessibility, security, workplace health and safety and adequate parking facilities. Wherever possible, suitable venues are used concurrently over many elections, including Federal electoral events. Each of the appointed 93 Returning Officers venues are appointed as early voting centres as well as being the administrative and counting centre for each State district.

The location and operating hours of early voting centres will be available on the ECQ website after the issue of the writ, with interactive functionality for electors to locate their closest early voting centre. Voters are encouraged to vote outside peak times to minimise the number of voters in attendance at polling places at one time and keep wait-times to a minimum. Peak voting times are often when polling places open in the morning, after work finishes in the afternoon, and during the lunch-time period. The extended opening hours until 9.00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays provide additional opportunity for electors to vote outside of peak times.

The ECQ is planning for over 50 per cent of votes to be cast during the early voting period; for the 2017 State general election, only 26 per cent of electors chose to vote during early voting.

Postal voting

The State general election is being planned as an attendance ballot, but any elector may apply for a postal vote and have their voting materials, including their ballot paper, a declaration envelope and reply-paid envelope, mailed to them. Demand for postal voting was high at the 2020 local government elections in March and the ECQ expects a similar, if not greater, demand for this service at the 2020 State general election. In anticipation, the ECQ has significantly increased capacity for postal voting by procuring additional stock and implementing new process efficiencies to meet this demand.

Additionally, the ECQ has exercised its ability under the special legislative framework for the election to open postal voting applications on Monday, 14 September 2020 – the first time postal vote applications have opened prior to the issue of the writ. This gives Queensland voters almost five weeks to submit their application to receive a postal vote. The ECQ has implemented arrangements to allow additional categories of electors registered with the Australian Electoral Commission as general postal voters to be automatically sent a postal vote without the need to submit an application. Electors can apply [online](#) on the ECQ website, by completing an [application form](#) and returning it to the ECQ, or by contacting the ECQ service centre on 1300 881 665.



Applications for postal votes close on Friday, 16 October 2020 to ensure adequate time for postal votes applications to be processed and materials despatched for delivery at the voters' designated address prior to election day. Although postal vote applications are opening early, ballot materials are unable to be despatched to electors until after the ballot draw and printing of ballot papers, which will occur in mid-October.

The ECQ has also redesigned ballot materials utilising advice from behavioural economists to ensure that voters are better able to understand how to correctly fill out their ballot and declarations. This is aimed at increasing the proportion of postal votes that are completed correctly, received by the ECQ before the cut-off date and, following scrutiny, be accepted for inclusion in the final count.

Once voters receive postal voting materials, they are required to complete the ballot papers on or before 6.00pm on election day. Due to current changes in postal delivery services as a result of COVID-19, the ECQ is encouraging all postal voters to complete their postal vote as soon as they receive it and mail it back straight away. To be included in the final election count, postal votes must be received by the ECQ prior to 5.00pm on Tuesday, 10 November 2020, 10 days following election day.

To address challenges with postal delivery timeframes, the ECQ is implementing a new model for receipt of postal votes to expedite the process and reduce the time taken for postal votes to be returned. In partnership with logistics and print suppliers, the ECQ will establish postal vote hubs in Brisbane and Townsville to collect all postal votes and deliver them directly to the relevant Returning Officers. This will allow the ECQ to expedite the processing of postal votes received at the hubs through Australia Post sorting centres and rapidly and securely transport them to Returning Officers for scrutiny and counting.

The two hubs will employ approximately 50 staff across three shifts and are resourced to process approximately 1.2 million postal votes with capacity to scale up if required. In the 2017 State general election, the ECQ processed and counted approximately 300,000 postal votes, or 11 per cent of all votes cast. In the 2020 local government elections, the ECQ issued approximately 570,000 postal votes, of which 450,000 were returned included in the final count.

Under the legislative provisions applying to the 2020 State general election, additional classes of electors or electoral districts may be declared as being required to cast a postal vote. This declaration can be made through a Regulation approved by the Governor in Council. These provisions allow additional ability to expand postal voting to designated areas should there be an outbreak of COVID-19 in certain areas. Any such expansion of postal voting would only be recommended by the ECQ upon the advice of Queensland's Chief Health Officer that it was necessary to do so to protect public health and safety.

Election day voting

Voting on election day, Saturday, 31 October 2020, will be available at approximately 1,300 polling booths across Queensland, from Coolangatta in the south, to the Islands of the Torres Strait in the north. Polling booths will be open between 8.00am and 6.00pm on election day. The location of polling booths will be available on the ECQ website, with interactive functionality to assist electors in locating their closest election day polling booth.

The ECQ expects fewer electors to vote on election day than in any other previous State election; at the 2017 State general election 57 per cent of all votes cast were on election day, compared to only 30 per cent at the 2020 local government elections.

Telephone voting

Electronically assisted (telephone) voting is a bespoke and resource-intensive service intended to enfranchise vulnerable members of the community who have limited voting options available to them. This includes people who cannot vote without assistance due to an impairment, an insufficient level of literacy or who live over 20 kilometres from a polling booth.

For this election, the ECQ is significantly expanding capacity to ensure all eligible voters can access the service. In addition, the ECQ is designating additional categories of eligible voters due to direct impacts of COVID-19, such as anyone diagnosed with COVID-19, subject to a quarantine order or located interstate or overseas.

This service is not available to everyone and there will be strict eligibility checks in place to ensure that this service is only utilised by eligible electors. Voters are requested **not** to attempt to register for the service if they do not meet the criteria. If many ineligible voters try to access this service, phone lines may become congested and prevent eligible voters, some of Queensland's most vulnerable citizens, from being able to access this vital service.

At the 2017 State general election, 1,200 votes were cast by telephone, while the 2020 local government elections saw 37,000, or 1.5 per cent of all votes, cast by telephone.

Accessibility services

Many Queenslanders face barriers in accessibility when voting. Other than telephone voting, the ECQ offers a range of voter services to ensure all Queensland voters have equitable opportunities to have their say at elections and participate in public life as enshrined by the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

Disability access is a key consideration in the selection of polling places and their locations. Access information will be available on the ECQ website following the publication of details of polling place locations. Other accessibility services are also available.

- Translation and interpreter services are available for people with English as a second language.
- The Multilingual Guide to Voting which provides voting information in 20 languages other than English is available at all polling places.
- Voters can request a person join them should they need help with casting their ballot. This person can act as an interpreter, read and explain the ballot paper instructions, complete the ballot paper according to the voter's instructions and place the ballot paper in the ballot box.
- The ECQ provides accessible voting services to electors in certain remote communities with services designed in consultation with community stakeholders and tailored to local needs.

Under usual circumstances, the ECQ delivers mobile polling to the residents of 'declared institutions', which are predominantly hospitals or aged care facilities, to allow residents and patients at these locations to cast a ballot. Eligible voters can also usually apply for an 'electoral visitor' vote, where an election official attends the voter's residence to allow them to cast a ballot. As these classes of voter are at significantly higher risk from COVID-19, the ECQ will not be delivering these services for the 2020 State general election. Instead, these electors will be directed to contactless voting services such as postal voting. The ECQ will implement special arrangements to streamline the postal vote application process in certain aged care facilities which would ordinarily receive a mobile polling service as a 'declared institution' to ensure it is easy for these electors to cast a postal vote.

ECQ service centre

The ECQ service centre is being delivered in partnership with Smart Service Queensland allowing service capacity to be scaled up in periods of high demand. This will be the same delivery model provided for the 2020 local government elections. The ECQ service centre will be in operation from 14 September at the commencement of postal vote applications and throughout the election period to support voters access the services they need, and respond to enquiries, feedback and complaints.

Voters are able to contact the service centre to receive advice and assistance on a range of election matters including:

- registration for telephone voting
- creating postal voting applications
- information about voting services depending on individual circumstances, and
- general enquiries and complaints.



Enquiries can be directed to 1300 881 665 or ecq@ecq.qld.gov.au. The call centre is currently open from 8.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). Following the issue of the writ, hours will be expanded to include:

- 9:00am to 4:00pm on Saturdays (excluding election day)
- 8:00am to 7:00pm on Friday, 16 October 2020 to coincide with the close of postal vote applications
- 8:00am to 6:00pm on Friday, 30 October 2020, and
- 8:00am to 6:00pm on election day, Saturday, 31 October 2020.

Election Resources and Technology

Logistics and materials

Prior to election day on Saturday, 31 October 2020, the ECQ central warehouse facilities will have packed and distributed approximately 650 pallets containing materials to supply every returning office, early voting centre and election day polling booth. This includes:

- 10,000 voting screens
- 26,500 pencils, and
- 7,200 bottles of hand sanitiser.

In addition to supplying hand sanitiser for all early voting centres, polling booths and returning offices, the ECQ has procured supplies of personal protective equipment as a contingency if health advice indicates that this will be required. Currently, the health advice does not require the use of this equipment.

In total, there are 140 different stock items that will leave the ECQ warehouse and distributed to Returning Officers up to 1,800 kilometres away.

Approximately seven million ballot papers will also be printed and distributed to ensure adequate numbers are available. Printing and distributing the ballot papers requires significant planning and testing, especially to ensure they arrive on time in remote areas.



Information Communication Technology (ICT)

A significant amount of ICT equipment is deployed to returning offices, early voting centres and election day polling booths to enable the delivery of election services and to improve the voting experience.

The ECQ configures and distributes an 'office in a box' to all Returning Officers, which contains all the necessary technology needed to complete their duties, including communications equipment, computers, screens, bar code readers and printers. Additionally, approximately 7,000 ePollbooks have been configured for use in polling places. These devices are used by election staff to electronically find and mark-off voters from the electoral roll when voting.

Returning Officers also have access to a dedicated ICT help desk service to support the deployment of these technologies.

Election Management System

During 2020, the ECQ has deployed a new Election Management System (EMS), an integrated and secure election administration and data management system supporting the administrative processes necessary to deliver an election. The EMS replaced several paper-based processes with an integrated system.

For the 2020 State general election, the EMS will deliver functionality for:

- improved digital voter mark-off with enhanced security
- polling place management
- online processes to employ temporary election staff, including online applications, recruitment, training and remuneration
- dedicated portals for candidates and registered political party representatives
- electors to access personal enrolment details and polling place locations
- website services supporting online postal vote applications, 'Find My Polling Booth' functionality and publication of candidate details, and
- the election results website.

Election Staff

The ECQ's ongoing establishment is made up of approximately 76 staff located in the Brisbane CBD and the ECQ's warehouse facility. These staff plan, prepare and oversee the delivery of Queensland elections involving a range of activities including:

- identifying and securing venues for polling places and returning offices
- recruiting and training temporary election staff
- preparing and delivering training and education to candidates and political parties
- increasing elector awareness of enrolment, voting options and election information
- processing candidate nominations
- ensuring compliance with funding and disclosure requirements
- ensuring adequate resourcing of returning offices and polling places
- acquiring, configuring, testing and deploying technology to deliver the election
- approving how-to-vote cards
- printing and distributing ballot papers
- planning and delivering postal voting and telephone voting services, and
- conducting post-event reviews to improve service delivery.

Recruitment of temporary election staff

The ECQ rapidly increases its staffing base for elections to include thousands of temporary staff that are dispersed across Queensland. To deliver the 2020 State general election, the ECQ will recruit approximately 12,000 temporary election staff.

Recruitment of 93 Returning Officers, responsible for the conduct of elections within each State electorate, was conducted from the experienced pool of Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers who delivered the 2020 local government elections. All Returning Officers receive face-to-face training for the State general election to enable them to deliver the election in their respective electorates. Returning Officers are responsible for:

- administering the returning office, early voting centres and election day polling booths in their respective electorates
- recruiting election staff and distributing election materials
- overseeing and managing the operation of voting across their electorate
- engaging with candidates during the nomination process and throughout the election period
- ensuring the conduct of the election complies with the ECQ's legislation, policies and procedures
- overseeing the final vote count, and
- packing and returning election materials to the ECQ warehouse.

To recruit other temporary election staff required to deliver the 2020 State general election, the ECQ is conducting an expression of interest process which commenced in August 2020 and will continue until the election is delivered. As at time of publication, approximately 10,000 applications had been received. The ECQ is actively promoting employment opportunities through a number of channels including targeted social media promotion.

These temporary election staff are vital to ensuring the smooth administration of election facilities and services, including the set-up and dismantling of booths, issuing of ballot papers, marking voters off the electoral roll and counting the millions of ballot papers to finalise the election.

These staff will also be vital for implementing the measures in the ECQ's COVID-safe plan. Facilities will be designed to maximise physical distancing and will be regularly cleaned. Returning Officers have received training on COVID-safe measures as part of their face-to-face training for the State general election.

For the 2020 local government elections, the ECQ employed approximately 4,000 additional staff for queue management and to assist with the social distancing measures. Additional queue control staff will also be employed for the State general election.

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Candidates and Parties

The ECQ works closely with candidates and political parties to facilitate the nomination process and support compliance with legislative obligations. The ECQ produces a range of resources, including handbooks, fact sheets and guides to explain the endorsement, nomination and disclosure requirements, which are available on the ECQ website.

For the 2020 State general election, briefings have been provided to Queensland's registered political parties and third parties to provide an overview of each stage of the election process such as nominations, the ballot draw, electoral roll products, the different voting options available, funding and disclosure requirements, as well as the requirements for campaign volunteers and scrutineers. Political party officials have also been provided the opportunity to meet with ECQ staff to discuss their obligations and the ECQ's expectations to assist in effective administration of the election.

COVID measures for political participants

The ECQ is consulting with candidates and political parties to set expectations on physical distancing measures for campaign volunteers and scrutineers in and near polling places. Prior to the election the ECQ will issue directions on:

- the distribution of how-to-vote cards and other election material, and
- scrutineering of vote counting on election and during the count process.

The directions will be based on the advice of the Chief Health Officer and will balance the protection of public's health and safety with allowing candidates and campaign volunteers to participate fully in the political process by distributing election materials to voters and scrutinise the election count.

Candidate nominations

At the issue of the writ, candidate nominations will be open for any eligible person to run for election as a Member of Parliament. Any candidate, including those who have already made public their intention to run for election or been endorsed by a registered political party prior to the issue of the writ, must formally nominate to be placed on the ballot paper.

Once nominations close, a ballot order draw will be conducted in each electorate. The Returning Officer, in the presence of witnesses, will randomly draw the names of each of the nominated candidates for that electorate to determine the order in which the candidates' names will appear on the ballot paper.

Electronic Disclosure System

The Electronic Disclosure System (EDS) enables the real-time reporting of political gifts and donations, allowing for greater transparency and increased public awareness around political funding and financial activity in Queensland.

All candidates, registered political parties, associated entities, third party campaigners and donors are required to submit a return in the EDS, disclosing details of any loans, donations, including gifts-in-kind given and/or received. The ECQ provides a range of information products on the ECQ website to assist with understanding and complying with these requirements.

Electoral expenditure disclosure and registration requirements

The ECQ is implementing a range of provisions arising from the *Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2020* passed by the Queensland Parliament on 18 June 2020.

Key provisions commencing on 1 August 2020 that will apply to the 2020 State general election include:

- caps on electoral expenditure
- a registration process for third party organisations or individuals who spend over \$6,000 campaigning during the election
- a requirement for all candidates, registered political parties and registered third parties to operate a dedicated State campaign bank account, in which campaign expenditure must be transacted
- increased record keeping obligations by all election participants
- amendment to key definitions in the legislation around political donations and electoral expenditure and increasing requirements for the disclosure of the original source of a gift and sponsorship arrangements, and
- changes relating to the number and size of election signage that may be displayed, and the timing of their placement, at early voting centres and election day polling booths.

The ECQ's approach to compliance is reliant on ensuring all affected stakeholders are provided enough information to comply with the new legislation. In the lead-up to the 2020 State general election, the ECQ has:

- developed an education program to provide stakeholders with access to fact sheets, handbooks and user guides to equip them with information to meet their obligations
- planned and delivered a series of webinars, videos and presentations for candidates, registered political parties and third parties prior to the election
- increased resources in the ECQ's Funding, Disclosure and Compliance Division to continue to provide direct support to all stakeholders and perform compliance activities, and
- published additional materials on the ECQ website so election participants and interested members of the public can obtain detailed information about the legislative changes and access additional support where needed.

How-to-vote cards

Material that could represent a ballot paper, lists the names of candidates indicating an order of voting preference or otherwise directs or encourages the making of a preference vote is known as a 'how-to-vote card'. Any how-to-vote cards that are to be distributed on election day must be submitted to the ECQ for approval and must comply with sections 182 and 183 of the *Electoral Act 1992*.

How-to-vote cards need to be submitted for approval by the ECQ prior to 5.00pm on Friday, 23 October 2020.

If, on election day, a member of the ECQ's staff reasonably suspects an unapproved how-to-vote card is being distributed, they may require the card to be produced for inspection, resulting in possible confiscation. Information on submitting compliant how-to-vote cards is available on the ECQ website.

Under the special legislative framework in the *Electoral Act 1992* for the ECQ to deliver a COVID-safe 2020 State general election, the ECQ will release directions on the distribution of how-to-vote cards and other election material.

Communications

Elections are complex undertakings and all participants, including voters, candidates, and political parties need access to relevant information to effectively participate in the election and comply with their legislative obligations. The ECQ delivers a range of communication, awareness and engagement activities to ensure its stakeholders have the information they need to participate in the election.

Communication and advertising

The ECQ will deliver a broad awareness-raising campaign aimed at ensuring voters are informed about the full range of options to vote, the date of the election, and the need to enrol to vote or update enrolment details. Communications and advertising messages for the 2020 State general election have been adapted to focus on voting in a COVID-19 environment including encouraging electors to plan the way they intend to vote in advance of the election. The key messages include:

- encouraging correct enrolment
- advising of the early opening of postal vote applications
- promoting extended early voting options
- communicating health and safety initiatives for a COVID-safe election
- encouraging electors to plan their vote, and
- providing information about how to cast a formal vote.

Additional communication materials are being developed to supplement campaign content to inform voters of the range of options to allow them to vote safely, the postal voting process and COVID-19 measures. The campaign will be delivered through a range of channels including television, radio, print and digital media to ensure broad reach to voters across Queensland.

The ECQ will also utilise social media channels to engage with the community and provide regular updates on election information and status to voters.

ECQ website

The ECQ website provides a range of information to the public, the media and other election participants regarding the conduct of the election, as well as publishing statutory notices, candidate nomination details, polling place locations and results.

A suite of fact sheets has been developed for the 2020 State general election, to provide information about key election processes. Content will be updated throughout the election period, to cover topics including:

- postal voting
- telephone voting
- voting options
- full preferential voting, and
- the vote counting process.

Additional information will display on the ECQ website during election time, and a re-designed election results website will interface with the EMS to publish results to the ECQ results website. Website functionality will enable voters to apply for postal votes online, candidates to nominate through a self-service portal, and voters to search for election information including voting services, polling place locations and operating hours.

Multilingual Guide to Voting

The ECQ has produced a [Multilingual Guide to Voting](#) which is designed to assist voters with limited English to participate in elections. The guide provides general information about the voting process, including step-by-step voting instructions, in 20 different languages as well as simplified English.

The translated languages were selected based on data regarding the languages other than English most commonly spoken at home, as well as levels of English proficiency, languages spoken by newly arrived peoples to Australia, and demand for interpreter services.

The *Multilingual Guide to Voting* includes an infographic page developed to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to understand the voting process. Using the guide as a template, 1,500 'easy to read' posters have been produced in key languages. Posters will be distributed to polling places where there is both a higher concentration of these key languages spoken as a first language, coupled with a lower level of English proficiency.

The guide is available on the [ECQ website](#) and will be distributed to all election day polling booths and early voting centres.

Voter Information Card – postal and email

The ECQ will be producing a Voter Information Card that will be sent to the postal addresses of all enrolled Queensland voters unless they are registered as a postal voter. The card lists the voter's electorate and features a QR code that polling officials can scan to facilitate quicker mark-off on the electoral roll and issuing of ballot papers. The ECQ will also email the card to electors who have opted to include an email address on the electoral roll.

The content of the Voter Information Card has been redesigned with the advice of behavioural economists to ensure the information is easily understood by electors, and to promote participation in the election. While the use of the card is encouraged as a means of expediting the voter mark-off process, its use is not mandatory for voting in the election.

Stakeholder engagement

The ECQ is working with a range of stakeholders to ensure they are provided with information required to participate in the election. As well as briefings provided to registered political parties and third parties, the ECQ is providing briefings to Queensland Government agencies and the media to promote understanding of the election process.

Additionally, in the past 12 months, the ECQ has engaged with a number of peak bodies representing groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, young people, older people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Meeting with these groups allows the ECQ to further disseminate critical information through community networks and allow opportunity for community representatives to provide feedback and input into the ECQ's service design and delivery.

Post-Election Activities

Following the close of polling booths at 6.00pm on election day, a variety of post-election activities commence including the election count, declaration of results and election reporting and evaluation tasks. While many activities are undertaken in the immediate days and weeks following the election, others occur over a period of months. Post-election reporting and evaluation activities are a critical source of information that is used to inform innovation and develop improvements for future elections and service delivery.

Counting the votes

The ECQ must undertake the counting of votes and declaration of results according to the provisions set out in the *Electoral Act 1992*.

Only formal ballot papers will be included in the count. For the State general election, conducted under the full preferential voting system, all formal ballot papers must show a first preference in the box next to the name of one candidate and then must rank all other candidates in order of preference. All the first preferences are then counted and if no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the votes, the candidate with the least number of votes is excluded and their second preference vote is distributed to the remaining candidates. This process is known as the full preference count or distribution of preferences and does not commence until the Returning Officer is assured that the number of outstanding votes will not affect the order in which candidates will be excluded. This process continues until a candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the votes and is declared as the elected candidate.

After the close of voting at 6.00pm on election day, a preliminary count of first preferences will be conducted of all ballot papers cast at an election day polling booth or early voting centre (noting some may be in transit at the time) and any postal votes the ECQ has available to count. An indicative count, which is an allocation of preferences to the two candidates most likely to receive the highest number of first preferences, may also be conducted on election night. In accordance with the *Electoral Act 1992*, these preliminary results are not official and the ECQ is unable to declare election results based on the outcome of these counts.

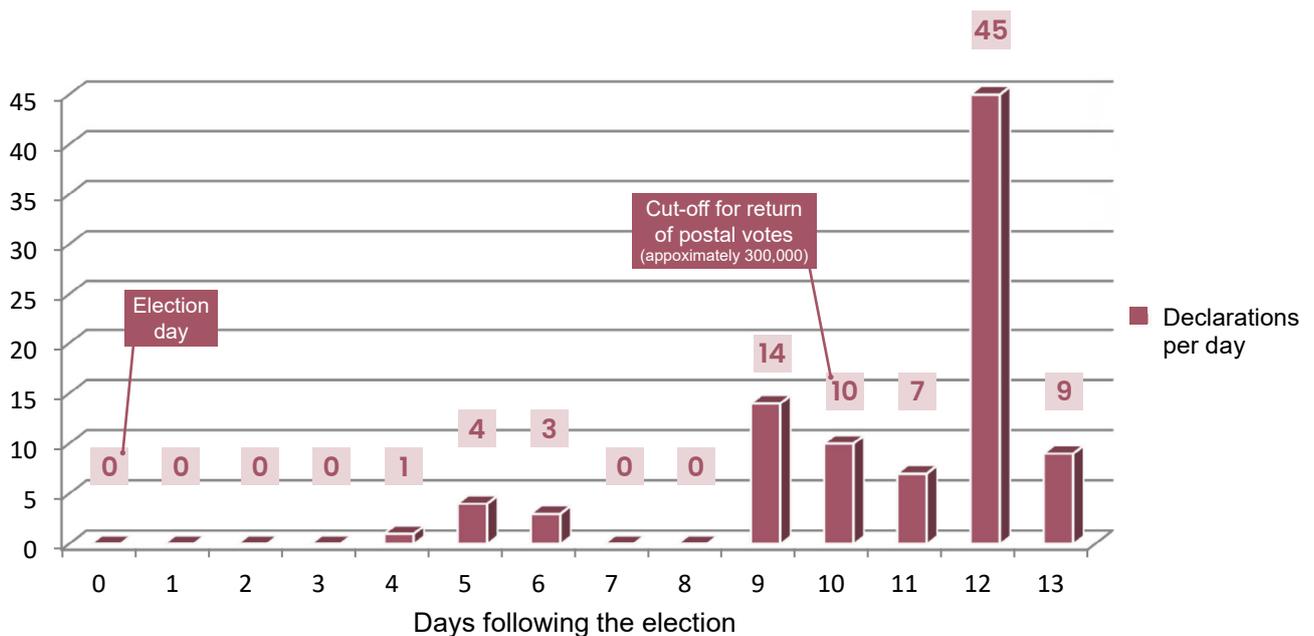
The official count commences under the control of the Returning Officers as soon as is practicable after the close of voting and the preliminary count. As counting is finalised over the proceeding days, declarations for each electorate will occur progressively. Once all electorates are declared, the writ will be returned to the Governor.



The ECQ cannot declare any results until the outcome is mathematically certain and any outstanding votes will not change the result. Due to the high number of postal votes expected to be issued in this election, it may not be possible for the Returning Officers to progress to the full preference count or for the ECQ to declare an election result until after the final cut-off for the return of postal votes on Tuesday, 10 November 2020. In addition to these factors, the progress of the count may be delayed by social distancing measures put in place under the ECQ COVID-safe plan for returning offices as the number of staff allowed to count at any one time will be limited.

In 2017, the ECQ declared all results and returned the writ in approximately two weeks after election day. As displayed in the following graph, most declarations in the 2017 State general election did not occur until after the cut-off for the return of 300,000 postal votes. While the ECQ aims to complete the count and declare results as quickly as possible, the impacts of COVID-19 on changing voting patterns, higher numbers of postal votes and workplace health and safety measures will necessarily impact the conduct and speed of the counting process.

Number of declarations per day following 2017 State general election



Release of results

As the count progresses, results data will be progressively posted to the ECQ results website. For the 2020 State general election, the results website will interface directly with the EMS and allow for rapid upload of vote counts occurring in polling places across Queensland. The results website is undergoing a range of technical tests to provide assurance it can manage peaks in traffic and cyber security threats. The ECQ will monitor the performance of the website on election night and has contingency plans in place to manage any technical issues which may arise.

Voter compliance

Voting at the 2020 State general election is compulsory, and in Queensland it is an offence for an elector to not cast a vote without a valid and sufficient reason. Following the election, the ECQ will commence a non-voter program to identify and communicate with individuals who appeared to have failed to vote at the 2020 State general election.

Non-voter programs involve multiple stages and do not necessarily result in the issuing of a penalty infringement notice. Voters who appear not to have voted will be given multiple opportunities to contact the ECQ and provide a valid and sufficient excuse for why they did not vote. The ECQ may accept the excuse and take no further action. However, if the voter fails to respond to the ECQ requests or if the excuse is not deemed valid and sufficient, further action, including the issuing of a penalty infringement notice may be taken.

Review and reporting

The ECQ will undertake an evaluation of the 2020 State general election, which includes identifying key improvements for future election service delivery and analysis that will inform business improvements.

Additionally, the ECQ will undertake a survey that measures voter satisfaction with the ECQ's services, while an informal ballot paper review will be conducted to assist the ECQ to better understand informal voting at the State general election and the reasons ballot papers were deemed informal.

The outcomes of these activities will be outlined in a report released to the public in the months following the election.



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