

STOP and CONSIDER

information sheet

During an election period, there are laws about misleading electors. Misinformation and disinformation can be concerning and have the potential to undermine our democracy. There are a few simple ways you can check information that comes to you.

Ask yourself:

- Is it from a reliable source?
- Is it current? When was it published?
- Is it a scam?

STOP – Check the source

Authorising election material

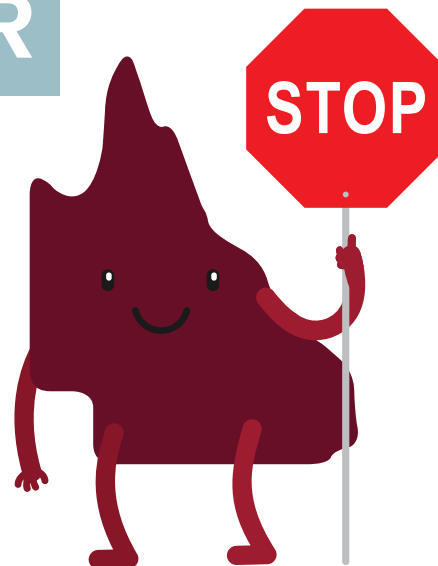
All election material must be authorised with a person's name and street address. This means that anyone can contact that person if the material is untrue or misleading. It is an offence in Queensland to mislead electors in the process of voting, or about candidate's character.

Campaigning at a polling booth

All campaign activities must take place at least six metres away from the entrance to the polling booth. Due to COVID-19 there are restrictions about what can be handed out. You do not have to take campaign material or how-to-vote cards. It is your choice.

How-to-vote cards

How-to-vote cards handed out on election day must be submitted to the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) for approval before they can be handed out. How-to-vote cards must also be authorised and must not contain anything that misleads electors.



Text messages and phone calls

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has previously advised that the SPAM Act and Do Not Call Register Act do not apply to registered political parties. They are also not subject to the requirements of the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) or the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#) (Qld). This means they can contact you with campaign messaging.

The ECQ does not disclose electors' telephone numbers.

Postal vote applications from parties

Political parties are able to contact electors about applying for a postal vote. If an elector chooses to use this service and returns the completed form to the party, the party will apply for the postal vote on the elector's behalf.

Electors have the choice whether or not to be involved in this process.

Electors who prefer to apply to the ECQ directly can do so at ecq.qld.gov.au or by phoning the ECQ call centre on 1300 881 665 during an election.

All postal ballots will be sent AFTER the close of candidate nominations, the ballot paper order draw, and the printing of ballot papers.

The information sheet [The journey of your postal vote](#) has further information.

STOP and CONSIDER

CONSIDER – Is this correct?

Election communication is an important part of the democratic process. It can help electors decide who to vote for by informing them about candidates and their policies. However, with this communication, comes the responsibility not to mislead electors.

Definition of electoral disinformation

Electoral disinformation is information designed to deceive voters – either by design or unintentionally. It may also be called misinformation or ‘fake news’.

Responsibilities of communicators

In Queensland, it is the responsibility of each candidate, party or other person or organisation making communications about local government or State elections to ensure their electoral communications comply with the relevant laws, including not misleading electors, and ensuring materials are appropriately authorised.

Broadcasters

Media representatives and social media organisations have a role to play in the appropriate creation and distribution of election communications. Television and radio broadcaster have obligations in relation to political communications under broadcasting laws.

Social media

Social media have powerful communication channels that can be used to spread electoral information quickly and widely. That also means the channels can be misused to spread disinformation designed to mislead or confuse electors.

Social media companies have platform policies, community guidelines and tools to help electors ask questions about electoral information on their platforms. More recently, social media companies have taken proactive steps to remove material and groups from their platforms when the information and posts were designed to mislead and misinform electors.



Broadcasting blackout periods

The broadcasting blackout period is a provision under the *Broadcasting Service Act 1992* (Cth), administered by the ACMA. Elections advertisements cannot be broadcast on television and radio from the end of the Wednesday before election day until the close of poll on election day.

This does not apply to election information advertisements from the ECQ.



STOP and CONSIDER

The ECQ's role

The ECQ is an independent statutory authority established under the [Electoral Act 1992](#) and is responsible for:

- the impartial conduct of State, local and industrial elections and referendums in Queensland
- the regulation of electoral funding and disclosure requirements, and
- the reviewing of state and local electoral boundaries.

The ECQ's responsibilities and functions are determined by the Act and the ECQ will respond to concerns that fall within its jurisdiction.

The ECQ's authority to act

Where the ECQ has no authority to act regarding an issue or concern, that matter can be directed to an appropriate body such as:

- police
- [Australian Communications and Media Authority](#)
- a political or third party
- an authoriser of electoral material – all electoral material during an election period should carry the name and address of an authoriser.

The Australian Electoral Commission which regulates federal elections, has produced a video that explores the STOP and CONSIDER message. Watch it [here](#).



Reference

Website: Australian Electoral Commission. *Electoral Communication STOP and CONSIDER*. https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/electoral-communication.htm. Accessed 17 September 2020.