

REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES**How-to-vote cards**

Unless otherwise stated, all references to legislation are to the *Electoral Act 1992 (EA)*. The information in this fact sheet does not replace legislation. If you are concerned about your circumstances, you should seek independent legal advice.

This fact sheet relates to candidates and registered political parties intending to distribute how-to-vote cards for a State election or by-election.

What is a how-to-vote card?

How-to-vote cards have a specific definition under Schedule 1 to the EA for state government elections and by-elections.

A how-to-vote card is a card, handbill or pamphlet that does any of the following:

- contains a representation or intended representation of a ballot paper, or part of a ballot paper
- lists the names of any or all candidates with numbers indicating an order of voting preference against the names of any or all of the candidates
- directs or encourages the casting of preference votes, other than a first preference vote, in a particular way.

A how-to-vote card that is to be distributed during the **authorisation period** must meet specific legislative requirements set by the EA – the card’s authorisation must be compliant, the card must not mislead voters, and it must not induce the casting of an informal vote.

When is the authorisation period?

The authorisation period starts:

- for the **2028 State general election** – on 28 October 2027
- for a **by-election** – the day after the writ for the by-election is issued.

The authorisation period ends at 6pm on election day.

What is the distribution of a how-to-vote card for election purposes?

Distribution of how-to-vote cards is defined by the EA. A person distributes a how-to-vote card if they make the card available for people to take away. A how-to-vote card is not considered distributed if it is only displayed publicly.

Examples of distribution include:

- handing out cards outside a polling booth
- leaving a stack of cards in a shop for people to pick up
- including a how-to-vote card in a mail-out to electors.

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More information

If you need more information relating to Funding, Disclosure and Compliance, please contact ECQ on 1300 881 665 or by emailing fad@ecq.qld.gov.au.



**Electoral
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QUEENSLAND

Do how-to-vote cards need to be lodged with the ECQ?

A how-to-vote card that will be distributed on **election day** must be lodged with the ECQ for acceptance prior to its distribution on election day.

How-to-vote cards may be distributed at any other time during the authorisation period without being lodged with the ECQ, but they must still meet the legislative requirements for how-to-vote cards (see below).

While all how-to-vote cards must comply with the requirements under the EA, only those that will be distributed on election day need to be lodged to the ECQ for acceptance.

How must a how-to-vote card be authorised?

If an election participant intends to distribute a how-to-vote card during the authorisation period, section 182 of the EA requires an authorisation to appear at the end of each side of the card that contains print.

The authorisation must state the **name and address** of the person who authorised the card, **and** –

If the card is authorised for:	The authorisation must state:	Example given in section 182 of the EA:
A registered political party or their endorsed candidate	The party's full name or their registered abbreviation, as they appear on the ECQ's register of political parties	Authorised P. Smith, 100 Green Street Brisbane for [name of registered political party]
A candidate who is not endorsed by a registered political party	The candidate's name, and the word candidate next to it.	Authorised R. Jones, 1 Green Street Brisbane for R. Jones (candidate)

Section 182 also sets out the required font size for each authorisation, depending on the size of the how-to-vote card. The authorisation must appear in prominent and legible characters, in print of at least:

- 10-point font if the card is A6 or smaller
- 14-point font if the card is larger than A6 up to A3 size (DL, A5 and A4 cards are in this range)
- 20-point font if the card is larger than A3

It is common for text to reduce in size during printing. To avoid any issues with the authorisation, the ECQ strongly recommends using a font size that is larger than the minimum requirements.

A double-sided how-to-vote card must have an authorisation on each side of the card containing print. There should be distinct contrast between the colour of the authorisation text and the background.

More information on state government elections

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Cards, pamphlets or other materials that do not meet the EA's specific definition of a how-to-vote card may still be election matter. Election matter does not need to be lodged with and accepted by the ECQ prior to distribution on election day but must still be properly authorised. Please refer to [Fact sheet 1 – Authorisation of election matter](#) for details.

How-to-vote card content

How-to-vote cards must not mislead voters in relation to the way of voting at an election, as set out in section 185 of the EA. During its scrutiny of how-to-vote cards, the ECQ will consider the ways in which a how-to-vote card may mislead voters, including whether by inducing a voter to cast an informal vote, or by some other means.

Accepted cards are published to the ECQ's website which is also considered during the scrutiny of how-to-vote cards – for example, cards must not contain obscene or offensive content.

Care should also be taken with the spelling of candidate and party names to ensure they are correct and as they will appear on the ballot paper. If a how-to-vote card includes a representation of a ballot paper or part thereof, listed names should appear in ballot paper order. Once a ballot draw is completed, the correct name and spelling of each candidate in the order they will appear on the ballot paper, will be published on the [ECQ's website](#).

The ECQ's [How-to-vote card policy – state government elections](#) provides further information about the scrutiny of how-to-vote cards.

Lodging a how-to-vote card to the ECQ for acceptance

A how-to-vote card that will be distributed on election day must be lodged with and accepted by the ECQ prior to its distribution on election day. The card must be lodged with the ECQ by **no later than 5pm on the Friday that is 7 days before election day** for the election.

For example, if election day is Saturday 26 October, the how-to-vote card must be lodged no later than 5pm on Friday 20 October.

The lodgement must include:

- either a hard copy or high-resolution soft copy of the card which accurately reflects the size at which the card will be distributed

and

- a completed Form 53 – Lodgement of how-to-vote cards, which includes the statutory declaration required for lodgement (section 183 of the EA) and an optional checklist for compliance guidance.

Note: how-to-vote cards in languages other than English must be lodged with a written translation.

How-to-vote cards from endorsed candidates and registered political parties must be lodged with the ECQ's head office. How-to-vote cards from non-endorsed candidates can either be lodged with the ECQ's head office or to the candidate's local Returning Officer. Lodgement to head office can be made in person or via email to HTVCards@ecq.qld.gov.au.

More information on state government elections

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The EA does not set a specific timeframe for the ECQ to accept or reject a lodged how-to-vote card. An outcome will generally be provided within a few business days, but timeframes may vary during the election period. The ECQ will advise the card's authoriser and candidate (if different) of their decision to accept or reject a how-to-vote card via email (including reasons for rejection).

Accepted cards will immediately be made available by the ECQ for public inspection on the ECQ website.

If a rejection is issued, the card can be revised and resubmitted by no later than 5pm on the Wednesday before election day. The ECQ will inform the card's authoriser of their decision about the resubmitted card with reasons via email as soon as possible (again, timeframes may vary).

If a how-to-vote card will be distributed both during early voting **and** on election day, the ECQ recommends lodging the card for approval prior to any distribution.

Any printing costs incurred before the ECQ accepts a how-to-vote card will be at the candidate or registered political party's risk.

Only how-to-vote cards that are authorised for candidates and registered political parties, and that will be distributed on election day, are required to be lodged with the ECQ.

How-to-vote cards produced by third parties do not need to be lodged with ECQ but must still meet legislative requirements for how-to-vote cards: the card's authorisation must be compliant, the card must not mislead voters, and it must not induce the casting of an informal vote. Please see [Fact sheet 3A – How-to-vote cards for third parties](#) for more details.

'Vote 1' and 'Put them last' materials

A card, handbill or pamphlet containing the phrase 'Vote 1 [candidate's name]' or 'Put [candidate's name] last' meets the definition of a how-to-vote card in state government elections and by-elections, as a how-to-vote card's definition includes a card, handbill or pamphlet that:

- lists the names of **any** or all candidates with numbers indicating an order of voting preference against the names of **any** or all of the candidates.

If the card associates a preference with a political party (e.g. 'Put [party's name] last'), it will also be a how-to-vote card as it 'directs or encourages the making of preference votes, other than first preference votes, in a particular way'.

Any such material must be authorised as a how-to-vote card and submitted to the ECQ for approval if it is to be distributed on election day.

Using phrasing like 'Just vote 1' in a how-to-vote card would be an offence under section 185(1) of the EA as it instructs voters to cast an informal vote.

More information on state government elections

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Materials which say 'Vote for [candidate's name]' are not considered how-to-vote cards as they do not indicate a 'voting preference' or 'direct or encourage the making of preference votes', and therefore are not required to be lodged for approval.

'Vote 1' and 'Put them last' materials for candidates and political parties are considered how-to-vote cards and must be approved by the ECQ for distribution on election day.

Compliance

Under the EA, electoral staff on election day may require a person to produce a how-to-vote card for inspection and may confiscate cards which have not been lodged with and accepted by the ECQ.

It is an offence to publish or distribute election matter during an authorisation period that does not carry a proper authorisation. It is also an offence to publish or distribute election matter during an election period that is likely to mislead an elector about the ways of voting. Penalties for non-compliance apply.

Please see [Fact sheet 1 – Authorisation of election matter](#) or [Fact sheet 30 – Offences relating to electoral advertising](#) for further information.

For further information

This fact sheet mainly refers to part 10 of the EA. The Act is available in full at legislation.qld.gov.au. Participants in the electoral process should ensure they understand their obligations under the EA.



RELATED FACT SHEETS AND RESOURCES

Fact sheet 1 – Authorisation of election matter
Fact sheet 3A – How-to-vote cards for third parties
Fact sheet 30 – Offences relating to electoral advertising
Form 53 – Lodgement of how-to-vote cards
ECQ's [How-to-vote card policy – state government elections](#)

Fact sheets and forms can be found on the [ECQ website](#).

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