

2017 State General Election STRATEGY and COMMITMENTS CHARTER



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Electoral Commission

FOREWORD

Western Australia's next State general election is scheduled for Saturday 11 March 2017. The Western Australian Electoral Commission is responsible for managing all aspects of the election.

Over the years the Commission has established an impeccable reputation for impartiality, efficiency and professionalism in electoral administration. It is important that we maintain and continue to build on that reputation. Every major electoral event presents fresh challenges and opportunities.

The election standards and deliverables for which the Commission is accountable are set out in this *Strategy and Commitments Charter*. We look forward to working productively and collaboratively with all staff and stakeholders to ensure public confidence in the conduct of this important event.



David Kerslake
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

INTRODUCTION



This strategy document outlines the Western Australian Electoral Commission's broad aims and expectations in conducting the 2017 State general election as well as key service level commitments and performance measures.

The document is intended to serve as an information and accountability tool, enhancing electoral transparency while also assisting voters, candidates, registered political parties and the media to prepare for the election and to interact openly with the Commission.

A number of legislative changes have been implemented since the last State general election. These are outlined on the following pages.

Enquiries can be made by email waec@waec.wa.gov.au or telephone (08) 9214 0400 or 13 63 06.

CHANGES SINCE THE LAST ELECTION

Boundaries for the 2017 general election will be significantly different from those which applied in 2013. For example, the boundaries of 53 out of the 59 Legislative Assembly districts have been altered since the last election, reflecting the high level of demographic change in that time.

There have also been significant changes to the Electoral Act, including:

- provision for the direct enrolment of electors when they reach the eligible age of 18 and direct update of enrolment details whenever electors change their address
- the availability of internet voting to enable secret voting for people with or some form of incapacity that would otherwise require them to seek assistance to fill out a ballot paper
- removal of the eligibility requirements for early voting, enabling electors to vote at an early voting centre as a matter of choice without having to declare a reason

- the provision of pens as well as pencils in polling places
- a revised format for upper house ballot papers, following an above and below the line arrangement similar to the Australian Senate, replacing the previous 'side by side' format.

These changes will modernise our electoral system and promote increased participation. They will also necessitate increased public awareness activities on the part of the Commission.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The following key performance indicators have been adopted to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of election operations.

Election Preparations

Indicator	Measure	Target
Every Returning Officer completes online training and attends face to face training	% of the total number	100%
Every Polling Place Manager completes online training	% of the total number	100%
Polling places and early voting centres receive their full allocation of election materials on time	% of the total number	100%
Every electoral district roll is produced and available for distribution to Returning Officers within 10 days of roll close	% available by specified date	100%
All early voting centres are open and ready to operate from Monday 20 February	% operational by specific date	100%

Election Conduct

Indicator	Measure	Target
Percentage of Legislative Assembly first preference count results received from ordinary polling places by 8.00 pm on polling day	% of the total number	70%
All complaints received and election enquiries are responded to or acknowledged within 24 hours or by the next business day	% of the total number	100%
All advertised polling places are open and ready for polling at 8.00 am and remain open until 6.00 pm on polling day	% of the total number	100%
Return of the Writs	Returned by date specified	By date on the Writ

Election Outcomes

Indicator	Measure	Target
Average State-wide elector participation rate – i.e. % of eligible electors on the roll	% of the total eligible	91%*
Elector participation rate for 18–25 year olds equals or better the national target of 80%	% of the total eligible	80%
Average State-wide voter turn-out – i.e. % of those on the roll who vote	% of the total enrolled	91%
Informality rate – Legislative Assembly	% of votes cast	4%
Informality rate – Legislative Council	% of votes cast	2%
The number of invalidity complaints stemming from WAEC processes that are upheld by a Court of Disputed Returns	Number of successful complaints	0

The Commission will also seek feedback through surveys of electors, candidates and political parties, returning officers, and polling place officials.

* This figure is drawn from Australian Electoral Commission estimates based on Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

SERVICE COMMITMENTS

Electors

Eligible electors can expect the following:

- Updating of enrolment details in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act
- Accurate and complete electoral rolls for each district and region
- A range of voting options to make it as easy as possible for every elector to cast their vote
- Expanded services for electors with particular requirements due to their location, cultural or linguistic background, or disability
- Accurate, user friendly and timely information about when, how and where to vote
- Make every effort to provide accessible polling places
- A helpful and responsive enquiry service
- Courteous, friendly and helpful polling staff
- Ballot papers, advertising, a website and other election materials that are easy to understand
- Accurate and timely reporting of election results via a user-friendly results website.

Candidates and Political Parties

Candidates and registered political parties contesting the election can expect the following:

- Clearly presented information about nomination requirements
- Accurate electoral roll data for the district or region they are contesting, available within 8 days of the Close of Rolls
- Helpful advice from Commission staff with a clear point of contact for enquiries and complaints
- Accurate, timely and easily accessible election results
- A clear Commission policy on recounts
- The opportunity to provide post-election feedback
- Prompt refund of nomination deposits and payment of election funding claims, where applicable.

Media

Media organisations and their representatives can expect the following:

- Comprehensive election information and timetables
- A regularly monitored and media specific email enquiry service with due regard to stated deadlines
- A live-feed of results data on election night, if required
- An up-to-date website containing useful background information with election results updated regularly as they become available
- The opportunity to provide post-election feedback.

Electoral Staff

At a State general election the Commission employs over 8,000 casual and contract staff, many for one day only and others for a period of weeks or months.

Staff engaged by the Commission can expect the following:

- Efficient and timely recruitment processes including prompt advice on the outcome of their application
- Accurate information about conditions of employment
- Appropriate and sufficient training for their role and responsibilities
- Timely payment (within 4 weeks of election day).

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

In making the commitments outlined in this document, the Commission acknowledges that its priorities and obligations may not always coincide with those of stakeholders. The Commission seeks the support of all stakeholders in recognising that there are steps and procedures that must be followed in accordance with statutory requirements. The Commission asks:

Candidates and Political Parties

- To respect each other's right to participate in the election campaign
- To ensure that Election Day volunteers act in an orderly manner observing polling place rules
- To ensure that scrutineers are correctly registered in a timely fashion and wear the ID provided
- To be vigilant in ensuring compliance with authorisation requirements for campaign literature and advertising.

The Media

- To check the online media guide first before lodging enquiries with the Commission
- To direct all enquiries/requests for interviews to the Commission's media email box
- To set reasonable deadlines recognising that the Commission also works under tight timeframes
- To acknowledge the Commission's policy (given our impartial role) not to comment on individual candidates.

Electors

- To check their enrolment details and keep them up to date
- To get out there and have their say!

VOTING SYSTEMS

Legislative Assembly Members are elected using a full preferential voting system, which requires electors to record a preference for every candidate (using the numbers 1, 2, 3 and so on). To be elected a candidate must receive an absolute majority (i.e. 50% + 1) of the formal votes cast in their district.

If no candidate has obtained an absolute majority after all first preference votes have been counted, the candidate with the fewest number of first preference votes is excluded and their second preference votes are distributed among the remaining candidates. This process of allocating preferences is continued until one candidate achieves an absolute majority of all formal votes.

Legislative Council Members are elected using a voting system known as Proportional Representation. Under this system parties, groups and independent candidates are elected to the Council in proportion to the number of votes they receive. To be elected, a candidate must receive a certain proportion (known as a quota) of the formal vote.

COUNTING AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

Votes must not be counted until after polling closes at 6.00 pm on election Saturday. After 6.00 pm, some 800 polling place managers and their casual staff from across Western Australia will open ballot boxes and commence counting. Each polling place will send through indicative first preference figures for each candidate contesting that Legislative Assembly seat, a two candidate preferred figure, and the ticket vote figures for the relevant Legislative Council region.

Early in person and postal votes received before polling day will also be counted after 6.00 pm on election night at the Commission's central processing and counting venue. Given the complexity of a proportional representation count, only the above the line ticket votes will be counted on election night.

While typically very reflective of the final result, votes counted on election night do not include absent votes cast at polling places across the State nor all postal votes, which can be accepted for the final count up to 9.00 am on the Thursday following election Saturday. The Commission will progressively update figures on the election results website in the days following polling day as various declaration votes become available for counting.

Importantly, the returning officer for each district and region will undertake the formal count or full distribution of preferences from about a week after polling day. The final outcome of very close seats may not be known until this full distribution of preferences count has been completed. Returning officers will also undertake a fresh scrutiny of ballot papers several days after election day to resolve any discrepancies in preparation for the full distribution count.

Candidates and political party agents will be able to appoint scrutineers to monitor vote counting and scrutiny activity. Typically candidates are restricted to one scrutineer per relevant count table in order to limit congestion, provide a safe work environment and ensure counting efficiency. No scrutineer may physically handle a ballot paper.

If, after the full distribution of preferences for a Legislative Assembly seat, the margin between the two highest scoring candidates is 100 votes or less, the returning officer will offer candidates another full distribution of preferences count before declaring the result.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Commission Objectives

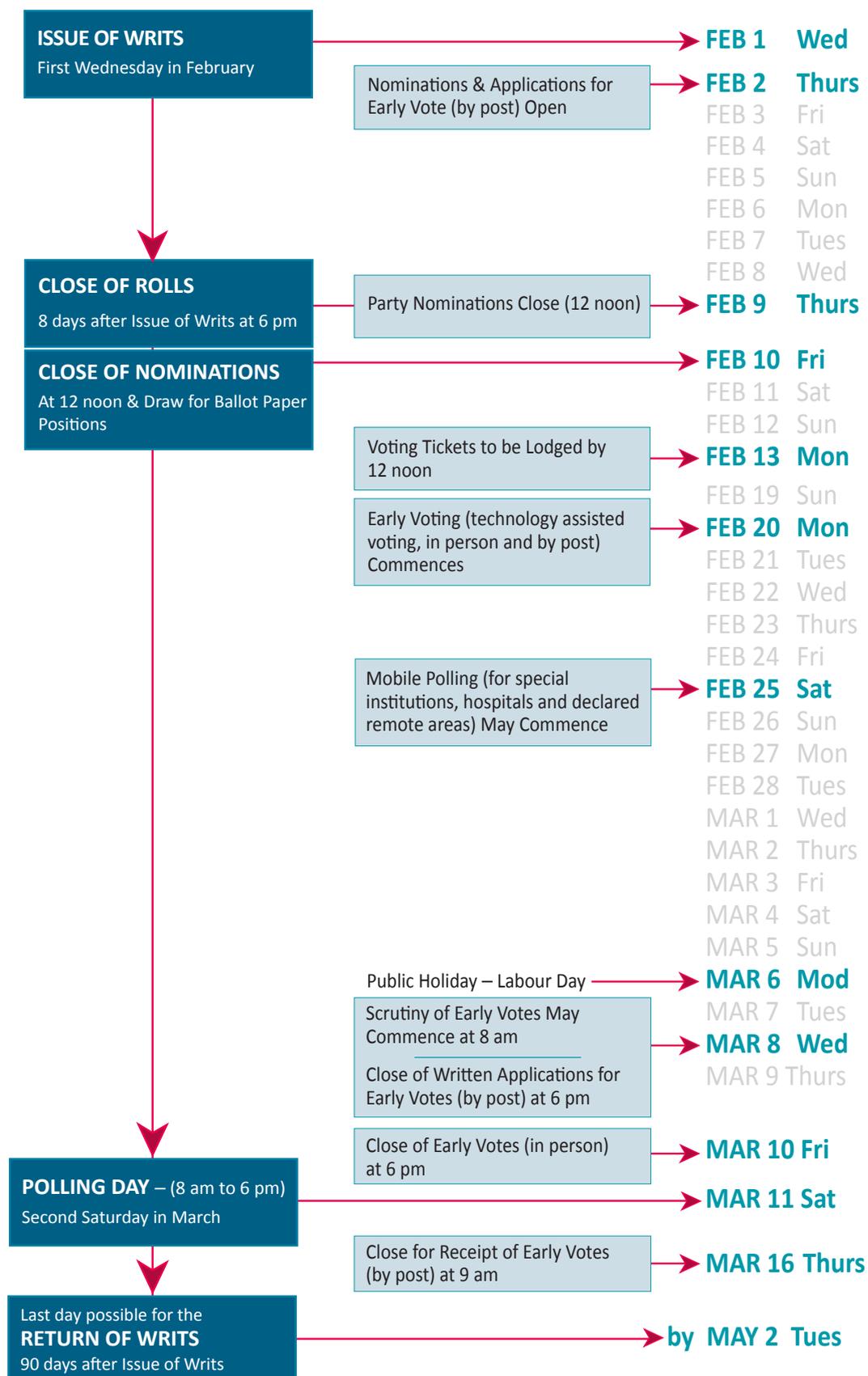
The Commission's overall objective is to conduct the 2017 State general election in such a way that our stakeholders consider it to be:

- independent, impartial and lawful
- accurate, secure and verifiable
- conducted with a high level of efficiency and professionalism
- open and accessible to all eligible participants.

More specifically the Commission aims to:

- promote a high level of voter turnout
- ensure that electoral rolls are accurate and available on time
- facilitate ease of nomination by candidates, registered political parties and groups
- maximise convenient elector access to all voting options
- promote awareness of the requirements for casting a formal vote
- promote awareness of recent boundary changes
- ensure all votes are counted promptly and accurately
- fully comply with all statutory requirements
- maximise public trust and confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.

2017 STATE GENERAL ELECTION TIMETABLE



* Anticipated timetable

2017 STATE GENERAL ELECTIONS FACTS

- Elections will be held for both the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) and the Legislative Council (Upper House). These elections are held on the second Saturday in March every four years.
- The Legislative Assembly has 59 electoral districts each returning a single member. The Legislative Council is divided into six different electoral regions with a total of 36 Members to be elected (six from each).
- The boundaries of the districts and regions are set by independent Electoral Distribution Commissioners.
- For the March 2017 State general election, Mount Lawley will be the smallest Legislative Assembly electorate with an area of only 18 square kilometres. In contrast, at 817,083 square kilometres, the largest Legislative Assembly electorate by area will be North West Central.
- For the 2017 State general election, the Commission will employ over 8,000 casual and contract staff and provide electors with the opportunity to vote at over 800 polling places and over 70 early voting (in person) centres in Western Australia, interstate and overseas.
- It is estimated that more than 1.5 million electors will be enrolled at the close of rolls for 2017 State general election.
- Typically, the number of State general election registered candidates would be expected to be in the range of 450 to 560.
- WAEC will conduct mobile polling at approximately 250 special institutions and 90 remote locations throughout Western Australia.

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