

Western Australian
Electoral Commission

Local Government Election

Candidate Information Guide

Version 3.0 (HO129) — January 2026



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Electoral Commission

Our purpose and values

The WA Electoral Commission's purpose is to provide Western Australians with an electoral experience that they understand, trust and can access easily and efficiently. The Commission is guided by its five core values:

Impartial

Our electoral outcomes will not be influenced by others.

Professional

Our work will be at the highest standards for ethics, accuracy and efficiency.

Respectful

Our relationships will be courteous, honest and fair with all.

Innovative

Our systems and processes will adapt to customers' needs.

Collaborative

As a team we will consult and test new ideas with customers.

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1. Timetable

An election timetable is prepared for each election and outlines the key milestones specific to that event. You can find the election timetable on the Commission's website at elections.wa.gov.au.

2. Eligibility

In order to nominate, a person must be enrolled as an elector for the local government district in which they are standing as a candidate. They do not need to be an elector of the particular ward for which they are standing.

Resident

The Western Australian Electoral Commission ["the Commission"; "WAEC"] maintains the residents roll. Individuals can confirm their enrolment status on the Commission's website at elections.wa.gov.au. If a person is on the residents roll and has changed address after the rolls have closed but remains in the district, then they will continue to be eligible to sit on council if elected.

Non-resident owners and occupiers

Non-resident owners and occupiers rolls are maintained by individual local governments. Prospective candidates in this category must check with their local government to confirm their eligibility and enrolment status.

3. Disqualifications

A candidate is disqualified for membership of a council if they:

- are a member of the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council, the House of Representatives or the Senate (or has been elected as such a member but has not yet taken office); or
- are a member of the council of another local government; or
- are a bankrupt or whose affairs are under insolvency laws; or
- are in prison serving a sentence for a crime; or
- have been convicted of a serious local government offence within the last 5 years (unless the court waived the disqualification); or
- have been convicted on indictment of an offence for which the indictable penalty was or included – imprisonment for life; or imprisonment for more than 5 years; or
- are subject to a court order disqualifying them from being a member of a council because they have misapplied local government funds or property.

A candidate cannot stand for two positions on council, unless one is for the position of mayor or shire president and the other is for councillor.

If a candidate currently holds office as a councillor, then they cannot nominate for a councillor vacancy unless the term of their current office expires on or before polling day.

4. Candidate general information

4.1. Voting system

All local elections in WA are conducted using the optional preferential voting system. This means that electors can choose whether to only vote for their first preference or rank any or all candidates in order of preference.

The candidates with the most votes that also meet the required quota are elected as a council member until all vacancies for the local government are filled. The number of vacancies will vary.

4.2. Election material

All election material, including material posted on social media, must have the correct name and physical address of the authorising person.

Any printed election material, other than in a newspaper, must also have the name and physical address of the printer.

The WAEC does not regulate the content of election material and has no role in deciding whether a political message is true or untrue.

The WAEC is responsible for ensuring that electors are aware of who is responsible for statements contained in election material.

4.3. Electoral rolls

The Returning Officer will provide candidates with access to relevant forms and information. A candidate may obtain a free copy of the owners and occupiers roll and the residents roll for the electorate (ward or district) for which they nominate, from the Returning Officer.

Candidates (for a councillor vacancy) are eligible for a ward roll. If there are no wards, they receive a district roll. Mayoral or presidential candidates are eligible for a district roll.

Rolls provided to candidates are only to be used for electioneering purposes. Candidates must sign the LG039 – *Receipt of Local Government Rolls Issued and Destruction of Rolls* provided by the Returning Officer to indicate they will use the rolls accordingly. Penalties apply to candidates for misuse.

These electoral rolls must be destroyed/deleted by the end of the relevant period.

The relevant period for **unsuccessful** candidates to destroy/delete rolls and complete a Statutory Declaration stating that this has occurred is within five business days of the declaration of results. The Statutory Declaration must be returned to the Electoral Commissioner. A Statutory Declaration template is available from the Returning Officer.

The relevant period for **successful** candidates to destroy/delete rolls and complete a Statutory Declaration stating that this has occurred is within five working days after the term of office ends. The Statutory Declaration must be returned to the Electoral Commissioner. A Statutory Declaration template is available from the Returning Officer.

5. Nominations

Nominations can only be made to the Returning Officer during the designated nomination period. The Returning Officer will receive your nomination at the nomination meeting; however, it cannot be formally accepted until all required checks have been completed and verified. These checks may not be finalised at the time your nomination is submitted. To help prevent delays, please ensure you lodge your nomination with the Returning Officer as early as possible.

When a candidate makes a declaration, they are attesting that they are an elector of the district and are not disqualified from holding office. The Returning Officer can witness a candidate's declaration.

An effective nomination consists of the following:

- a completed nomination form (if by proxy, this needs to then include a letter from the candidate)
- a profile of the candidate, prepared in accordance with the Regulations
- a nomination deposit of \$100
- a photograph (optional)
- completion of the current mandatory online induction course.

Prior to nomination, potential candidates must complete the free online course provided by the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety ["LGIRS"], so that they are fully aware of what to expect as an elected member and the rules relating to campaigning.

The course can be found on the LGIRS website titled [Local Government Candidate Induction](#):

- www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/local-governments/council-elections/induction-for-prospective-candidates

All candidates **MUST** complete the online induction course, with no exceptions allowable.

A candidate can nominate for both mayor/president and councillor. A candidate will need a separate online form, profile and \$100 nomination deposit for each nomination.

A nomination may be withdrawn at any stage up to the close of nominations, but not thereafter.

Withdrawal of a nomination must be in writing and received by the Returning Officer, either signed by the candidate or accompanied by evidence that the candidate has consented to the withdrawal of their nomination.

6. Nomination Builder

Candidates complete their nomination details, profile and additional information via *Nomination Builder* at elections.wa.gov.au. Access to the online nomination form is via the nomination ID number and password created by the candidate at their initial login.

You can watch the step-by-step video for [instructions on how to use Nomination Builder](https://www.elections.wa.gov.au/using-nomination-builder) at www.elections.wa.gov.au/using-nomination-builder.

The Nomination Builder does not process nominations.

Once you have completed your candidate profile you, or a properly appointed agent, must make an in-person appointment with the Returning Officer for your local government to submit your nomination during the nomination period. It is recommended that you book this appointment well before the nomination period ends and bring your printed and signed nomination form with you. (which must include your nomination ID number).

Candidates must keep a record of their nomination ID number and password.

7. Nomination form

The candidate should specify how they wish their name to appear on the ballot paper. This may be by:

- given name in full
- an initial for first name(s)
- a commonly accepted variation of their first name (eg. Bob in lieu of Robert).

The candidate's surname is automatically entered in upper case into the Nomination Builder. Names will appear exactly the same in the 'name on ballot paper' field. Candidates requiring the surname as anything other than full caps will need to make the change to the 'name on ballot paper' field. The Nomination Builder does not allow for superscript. A name like M^cKay will need to be entered as MCKAY, and then will appear as MCKAY on the ballot paper.

Some variations of a person's name are acceptable. For example, for William Ray Dally- Smith, variations could include:

- DALLY-SMITH, W R
- DALLY-SMITH, William
- DALLY-SMITH, Bill
- DALLY- SMITH, Ray.

The Returning Officer has discretion as to what is acceptable. A candidate's surname will always appear first on the ballot paper.

8. Candidate profile

Profiles must:

- be written in English and contain no more than 1,000 characters (includes spaces, commas and full stops)
- should not include the use of bold, italics or dot point formatting
- be able to be printed on a single A4 page
- stay confined to biographical information about a candidate and statements of their beliefs
- must not contain information that the RO considers to be false, misleading or defamatory
- include the candidate's name (in the form to which it is to be included on the ballot paper)
- include at least one means of contact (address, phone number, email, social media or web page address). Council-supplied phone and email are only able to be used with prior approval from the Local Government CEO .

Only candidate contact details provided on the profile will be published on the local government website. In the interests of privacy, this need not be a residential address or a telephone number. A post office box, email or social media address is also acceptable.

The local government and ward name, candidate's name and contact details will not be counted in the 1,000-character limit.

It is suggested that your profile be provided to the Returning Officer for review **prior to nomination**. If it is longer than the permitted limit, the Returning Officer may then amend the wording but will endeavour to consult with the candidate in the **time available**. Profiles are also published and posted out to all electors as part of the election package, as well as being published on the local government website.

All profiles for this purpose are printed as they appear on the final signed printed copy of the approved nomination form.

9. Deposit

A \$100 deposit must be paid to the Returning Officer. Cash, bank cheques and money orders (made payable to the local government) are acceptable but personal cheques cannot be accepted. The Returning Officer will only accept electronic payment of the deposit by bank transfer or other means (e.g. credit card), if proof can then be provided that the deposit has been credited to the local government's trust account before close of nominations. Arrangements for paying the deposit like this must be made in advance with the local government.

After the election, the Returning Officer will advise the local government to refund deposits under the following conditions:

- if a candidate is elected, or receives at least 5% of the total number of first preference votes included in the count
- the nomination is withdrawn not later than the close of nominations
- the successful candidate in a principal office election (e.g. for mayor) where an additional deposit was paid to nominate for election as a councillor for the same local government
- the election is declared invalid by a Court of Disputed Returns
- the death of the candidate occurring after the close of nominations but before the election.

10. Candidate photograph

The inclusion of a photograph with the profile is optional. If a photograph is supplied, it must be passport photo size, of the candidate's head or head and shoulders, have a clear background, and be not more than six months old or must be considered by the Returning Officer as an acceptable likeness. The use of a mayoral chain in a candidate photograph is at the discretion of the individual Council.

The Returning Officer may use their discretion and reject a photograph, if they believe it is not a true representation of the candidate.

11. Relevant additional information

A candidate may provide, for publication on the local government's official website, a written statement that contains information that the candidate considers to be relevant to their candidature in addition to any information included in their profile under section 4.49(ba) of the *Local Government Act 1995* ["the Act"].

The written statement must:

- accompany the nomination paper for the candidate
- be in the English language
- contain no more than 2,000 characters and spaces.

The written statement is not included in the material that is sent to all the electors in the election package.

12. Rejection of nomination

A nomination may be rejected if:

- it is incomplete — the deposit is unpaid, missing the nomination form or profile
- a candidate was not an elector of the district as at the close of enrolments
- a candidate is standing for office as councillor at another councillor election
- a candidate is the holder of an office or a member of the council whose term of office expires later than Election Day.

13. Declaration of nominations

As soon as possible after nominations have closed, the Returning Officer will publicly declare the nominations that have been accepted and have not been cancelled.

Please note that a number of checks must be completed before a nomination can be formally accepted. Consequently, if nominations are submitted at the last minute, there may be a small delay before the ballot draw can be conducted.

The declaration will be made at the designated nomination place in the presence of any candidates and other people who wish to attend.

If at the close of nominations, the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of vacancies to be filled, the candidate(s) are then elected unopposed. If the vacancies are for varied terms, then they are filled by the Returning Officer drawing lots. The first drawn will be appointed to the longer term.

If at the close of nominations there are more candidates than vacancies, the Returning Officer will then draw lots to decide the position in which each candidate's name will be placed on the ballot paper.

14. Draw for positions on ballot paper

The following is the method used by the Returning Officer to draw positions on the ballot paper:

Step 1 — Writes names of candidates on slips.

Step 2 — Places slips in separate opaque spheres.

Step 3 — Places spheres in a box and shakes well.

Step 4 — Removes a sphere and opens it.

Step 5 — Records name on list in descending order on the ballot paper and continues this until all names have been drawn and recorded.

The first drawn name will appear first on the ballot paper list of candidates.

15. Election campaign — postal elections

Electors will be sent an election package containing postal voting instructions, ballot papers with candidate profiles attached, a ballot paper envelope with an elector certificate attached and a reply-paid postage envelope. Replacement postal voting papers are available from the local government.

The Commission publishes daily statistics of postal election packages returned via Australia Post on its website. These figures are indicative only.

Approximately 50% of those who vote in local government elections return their ballot papers within a week of receiving them.

It is unlawful for a candidate (or a person acting on behalf of the candidate) to take custody of or deliver voting papers to the Returning Officer. The Act provides a severe penalty for this offence.

16. Election campaign — in-person elections (not postal elections)

Ordinary voting is the most common type of voting and occurs on Election Day when electors cast their vote at a polling place(s) within the district in which they are enrolled. Polling commences at 8am and closes at 6pm.

The Commission and local government websites will indicate the location of polling place(s).

A person may not do any of the following inside a polling place or within six (6) metres from the entrance to a polling place:

- canvass for votes
- solicit the vote of an elector
- induce an elector not to vote for a particular candidate
- induce an elector not to vote at the election.

It is unlawful for a candidate, or a person authorised to act on a candidate's behalf, to communicate with, assist or interfere with an elector while the elector is marking a ballot paper.

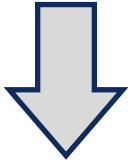
Early voting is a vote cast by an elector at a designated location before the day of the election at that local government. Postal voting requires a written application to that specific local government. It is also unlawful for a candidate to handle or collect electors' postal vote packages. The Act provides a severe penalty for any offence.

Electors also may cast an absent vote at any other local government district office before 4pm on the Tuesday before Election Day.

Please refer to the election timetables in the Appendices for specific start and end dates.

The processing of returned postal voting packages commences three weeks before Election Day, however there is no counting of votes until after 6pm on Election Day.

Election packages sent to all electors on the roll



Replacement postal voting papers may then be issued to electors on the roll who apply in person at their local government offices during business hours and at the polling place between the hours of 8am and 6pm on Election Day.

Provisional postal voting papers may then be issued to eligible electors who applied for enrolment before roll close, if their names have been omitted from the electoral roll in error.



Voters return reply paid envelopes containing ballot papers to the Returning Officer or to an electoral officer at the local government.

Reply paid envelopes are opened. Ballot paper envelopes are extracted.

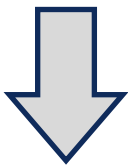


Electors' certificates are checked for signature of elector and completion in accordance with regulations.

If the elector's certificate has been removed or not completed in accordance with regulation 52(1)(b) of the *Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997*, the ballot paper envelope is stamped 'Rejected' and is put aside.



Elector barcodes printed on ballot paper envelopes are scanned to record receipt of returned voting package and mark the elector on the roll as having voted.



Certificates are detached from ballot paper envelopes. After this point, it is no longer possible to identify the voter who completed the ballot paper.



Ballot papers are removed from ballot paper envelopes without inspection and placed into sealed ballot boxes.

ELECTION DAY

6PM

Counting of votes commences after 6pm. Scrutineers can 'observe' the count.

17. Count of votes

- The votes will be counted at the place(s) notified in the election notice.
- The result of the election for a mayor/president will always be determined first.
- The Returning Officer's decision about the formality of a ballot paper is final.

18. Declaration of result

The result of a count is not final until the Returning Officer formally declares the result.

19. Disputed returns

An invalidity complaint challenging the result of an election must be made in writing within 28 days after notice is given of the result of the election, to a Court of Disputed Returns constituted by a Magistrate.

20. Electoral advertising and publications

Electoral material consists of any advertisement, handbill, pamphlet, notice, website, social media page, letter or article for the election, whether printed or in electronic form. Electoral material **must** have the name and address (not being a post office box) of the person who authorised its publication. In the case of electoral material that is printed other than in a newspaper, the name and business address of the printer **must** also appear at the end of the electoral material.

The name and address of the person authorising the electoral material and a printer does not have to appear on car stickers, clothing, lapel badges, pens, pencils, balloons, and other similar promotional material.

21. Websites and social media

Anyone (not just candidates) who establishes or utilises a website or social media page (e.g. Facebook, X, etc) that is intended or calculated to affect the result of a local government election is required to ensure its content is duly authorised. The courts have clearly reinforced that anonymity is unacceptable in electoral material; someone must take responsibility for the content and its publication and dissemination. It need not necessarily be the candidate themselves.

As with advertisements, posters, pamphlets and the like, the *Local Government Act 1995* requires that the name and physical address (not a PO Box number) of the authorising person be provided. This may be placed in the footer or landing page of a website (or under the "About" or "Contact" tabs) or in the "bio" or "About" space for a social media site. Subsequent posts or comments placed on that site do not need to be separately authorised.

22. Alleged false or misleading material

The Commission often receives complaints from candidates about material published by their opponents or in the media. Most of these complaints are unable to be acted upon by Commission personnel.

It is not the Returning Officer's responsibility to verify the accuracy or otherwise of content or comments posted on the internet or social media. An individual who believes that they have been defamed, or that comments made about them on social media are untrue, can refute such statements publicly and, if they think fit, is then able to seek their own legal advice and pursue the matter in the civil courts.

Offence provisions relating to misleading or deceptive material have been narrowly interpreted by the courts to mean misleading an elector in the act of completing their ballot paper (e.g. publishing material that might induce an elector to unknowingly cast an informal vote); as opposed to making allegations about which electors must form their own judgements.

Equivalent provisions in the Commonwealth and WA State Electoral Acts do not apply to local government elections. However, some federal broadcasting provisions and other laws may still apply.

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

23. Scrutineers

Candidates are entitled to appoint a scrutineer on their behalf. Only one scrutineer per candidate per count table will be allowed.

Further information on the rights and responsibilities of scrutineers can be found in the Scrutineer Information Guide available on the Commission's website.

24. Electoral donations and gifts

All enquiries referring to the disclosure of gifts and donations should be directed to the CEO of the local government district.

Western Australian Electoral Commission

Level 2, 66 St Georges Terrace, PERTH WA 6000

GPO Box F316, PERTH WA 6841

Phone (08) 9214 0400 or 13 63 06

Email waec@waec.wa.gov.au

Web elections.wa.gov.au

Translating & Interpreting Service (TIS)

13 14 50 and then ask for (08) 9214 0400

National Relay Service (NRS)

Speak & Listen number 1300 555 727

SMS Relay number 0423 677 767