



## MEDIA INFORMATION – 2019 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDINARY ELECTIONS

### Significant Dates

- Roll Close: 5:00 pm Friday 30 August 2019
  - Nominations Open: Thursday 5 September 2019
  - Nominations Close: 4:00 pm Thursday 12 September 2019
  - Lodgement of packages with Australia Post commences from –
    - Fri 20/9 for country LGs
    - Wed 25/9 for metro LGs
- \*Actual delivery dates will depend on the service selected by each LG and Australia Post's processing and local delivery arrangements
- Election Day: Saturday 19 October 2019.

### Election Numbers

- 90 local governments out of 139 have requested the WAEC to conduct their elections (86 as fully postal elections & 4 as in-person; 30 metro & 60 country)
- Most ever for the WAEC; increase of 1 over 2017
- The City of Perth and Town of Port Hedland will not be going to election this year
- 209 individual elections (12 Mayoral, 1 President & 196 Councillor) (albeit some candidates may be elected unopposed); 444 vacancies in total (as at 26.8.19)
- Approx. number of postal election packages to be dispatched if all wards go to election: 1.6 Million = >96% of WA electors
- 4 in-person elections: Broome; Halls Creek; Derby West Kimberley; Menzies (Why not postal ... mostly due to inadequate postal services in these locations and the existence of remote Aboriginal communities requiring mobile polling visits).
- At the 2017 WAEC run ordinary elections, there were a record 1,146 candidates for 450 vacancies and over 200 separate elections. These numbers won't be known for the 2019 elections until nominations have closed on 12 September.

### Eligibility Requirements to be a Candidate

- 18 years of age or over
- An elector of the Local Government District - either on the residents roll (State Electoral Roll) or on the owner/occupiers roll as an owner/occupier in their own right (not as a nominee of a body corporate)
- Completed the mandatory online candidate induction.

### Disqualifications

- Members of Parliament
- Insolvency: an insolvent under administration within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001* of the Commonwealth
- Convictions: has been –

- convicted of a crime and is in prison
- convicted in the preceding 5 years of a serious local gov. offence
- convicted of an offence for which the penalty was or included imprisonment for life or imprisonment for more than 5 years
- Membership of another council
- Misapplication of funds or property
- Not completing mandatory online candidate training.

### **Term in office**

- Elected members are elected for a 4 year term, with half the elected Councillors up for election every 2 years. Under current legislation, members voted in at these elections will be up for re-election in October 2023 (subject to any changes to the *Local Government Act 1995*).

### **Distribution of Postal Voting Packages**

- The WAEC ensures that the postal vote packages for remote and country locations are lodged with Australia Post first. Packages will start to be progressively delivered to country electors by Australia Post from Mon 23 Sept.
- Electors in metropolitan Perth should start to progressively receive their packages **from** Thu 26 Sept. All electors should have received their postal voting package by Friday 4 October.

### **Key Messages to Electors at a Fully Postal Election**

- Electors must sign the Elector Certificate declaration attached to the ballot paper envelope, otherwise their vote will **not** be counted.
- The signed Elector Certificate is removed from the ballot paper envelope when the package is scanned to mark the elector off the roll. The ballot paper envelopes are opened separately to ensure the secrecy of the ballot.
- To be counted, completed packages must be in the hands of the Returning Officer by 6.00pm Saturday 19 October.
- If you leave it till the last moment and don't believe it will make it in time through the mail, then electors can drop their package into the ballot box at their local government office up until 6.00pm on election Saturday.
- If the dog eats your package, you can apply for a replacement at your local government office during normal business hours or on polling day between 8.00 am and 6.00pm. It should be noted that this does take some time as the package containing ballot papers that was sent to you in the mail must first be cancelled and you then need to apply for a replacement.

### **How do Local Government Elections Differ to State and Federal Elections?**

- Voting at local government elections in WA is not compulsory, as is the case in some other states and at state and federal elections.
- A first past the post system of voting and counting is used as opposed to a system of preferential voting and proportional representation. Ticks are used rather than numbers.

- Councils may opt for a fully postal election run by the WAEC where every eligible elector is sent their ballot papers in the mail. They may also choose to conduct an in person election where most intending voters vote on election day at a single polling place.
- On election night, the counting of votes for local governments with thousands of electors will typically take longer than the counting of votes at an individual polling place at a state or federal election. At state and federal elections indicative counts of relatively small numbers of votes are conducted at numerous polling places across a district and the results flow into a tally centre progressively. At metropolitan councils the number of ballot papers being counted is often much larger than at a single polling place at a state or federal election, hence can take much longer. A local government election may also involve several separate elections, covering different wards for councillor vacancies and another election for the position of mayor.
- At local government elections, the full and final count takes place on election night at the one location and the result is formally declared that night. If a particular count is very close, an immediate recount may be required in order to allow the result to be declared that night. At state and federal elections the final count figures in a district election will not be known for a number of days after polling has closed and the final outcome may not be declared for a couple of weeks.

### **Election Material and Advertising Authorisation Requirements**

- Candidates and any other person who prints, publishes or distributes electoral material (or causes it to be printed, published or distributed) aimed at affecting the result of a local government election must comply with the authorisation provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* (s.4.87). Electoral material can include advertising as well as an article, letter, notice or pamphlet. Under the act, “to print” includes reproducing by any means.
- In the case of all electoral material, the name and physical address (not a PO Box) of the person authorising the material must appear at the end of the electoral material. In addition, unless printed in a newspaper, the name and address of the printer is also required.