ELECTION
2017

Local Government
Ordinary Elections

Information for Scrutineers

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Electoral Commission

INTRODUCTION

This guide is written for scrutineers participating in a Local government **postal** election.

Candidates are entitled to appoint scrutineers to represent their interests at particular stages of the election process. To do so they must complete form LG 18 Appointment of Scrutineer. These forms are included on the USB supplied to candidates or available on the Commission's website.

Each scrutineer must present a copy of this form to the Returning Officer prior to commencing duties and must carry it with them during any stage of the scrutiny process. Scrutineers must also wear an identifying badge which will be provided by electoral officials.

Each scrutineer must also sign a declaration. This must be signed before a Justice of the Peace or before the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning officer commences their duties.

THE SCRUTINY PROCESSES

The Commission's handling of postal votes takes place at three main stages:

1. The WAEC processing centre

During the approximately 3-week voting period completed postal votes are returned to a central processing centre. The location of the centre will be posted on the WAEC website.

As election packages are received the elector certificates are checked to ensure compliance with the regulations, for example that the elector has signed the certificate. Ballot papers are then placed in secure ballot boxes, to be transferred to the Local Government centre for counting on election night.

2. During election day

In the course of Election Day electors may decide to hand deliver their voting package to their local government office. Any packages received are processed during the day in readiness for counting.

3. Counting of votes on election night

On election night counting of votes will take place at each local counting centre. The Returning Officer will advise candidates of the precise location.

Scrutineers are entitled to be present at any or all of the above stages.

ROLE OF SCRUTINEERS

Scrutineers have the right to:

- attend the central processing centre;

- attend the place appointed for the counting of votes;

- observe all procedures to confirm compliance with legislative requirements;

- leave a centre at any time;

- be present at the preparation of postal voting papers for counting, but only at a sufficient distance that the markings on the ballot papers cannot be ascertained by the scrutineers; and

- be present after the close of the poll when ballot boxes are opened and during the counting of the votes so as to observe all proceedings at the count.

On election night scrutineers should arrive by 5.30 pm in order to be admitted for the start of the count at 6.00 pm. If a scrutineer arrives later than this they may not be admitted entry until it is convenient for the Returning Officer as there are many tasks to be undertaken at this time.

RESTRICTIONS ON SCRUTINEERS

A scrutineer:

- must comply with all directions given by the Returning Officer;

- may not interrupt the sorters and checkers at the processing centre;

- must not record the name of a person who attends a polling place to vote or any information given by a person to an electoral officer in order to receive a ballot paper;

- must wear identification at all time; and

- should direct all enquiries to the Returning Officer.

COUNT OF VOTES

As soon as is practicable after 6.00 p.m. on election night the Returning Officer will arrange for the votes to be counted and determine the result of the election. In the event of a common candidate for a mayoral and ward election, the result of the election for mayor is to be determined before counting the ward election.

First-Past-the-Post Counting System

The number of votes given for each candidate is decided using the first-past-the-post counting system. The candidate who receives the greater or greatest number of votes is elected.

Election for Two or More Offices of Councillor

If the election is to fill two or more offices of councillor, the candidates elected are:

- the candidate who receives the greatest number of votes;
- the candidate who receives the next highest number of votes; and so on up to the number of offices to be filled.

If two or more candidates receive the same number of votes, the Returning Officer must draw lots in the presence of any scrutineers who may be present to determine which candidate is elected.

Computer-Assisted Counting

The Electoral Commissioner may decide to use a computer-assisted counting system for a local government election in some circumstances. Where this system is in use:

- Ballot papers are first scrutinised and counted into batches for data entry.
- After all batches have been entered, the Returning Officer will generate an automated count of all the ballot papers.

Data entry operators are not to be questioned by scrutineers. Scrutineers must address questions to the Returning Officer or the table supervisor.

DECLARATION OF RESULT

The outcome of a count is not final until the Returning Officer formally declares the result. If the initial count indicates that two candidates are close, the Returning Officer may decide to conduct a recount before they declare the result.

ELECTORAL OFFENCES

Scrutineers should read Division 11 of Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 1995* relating to offences.