Fact Sheet: 2021 State General Election – Vote Counting Arrangements

Counting at Polling Places

Indicative vote counting of ordinary ballot papers (those cast by electors within their enrolled district) will occur at over 700 polling places across the State after voting finishes at 6.00pm on election day, Saturday 13 March 2021.

Polling place staff will undertake the following three indicative counts:

1. Legislative Assembly first preference count
2. Legislative Assembly 2CP count (i.e. 2 candidate preferred or notional distribution of preferences)
3. Legislative Council Above the Line preference count

Polling Place Managers will telephone through to the results from each count progressively to the 59 district Returning Officers, who will in turn enter the results into the Commission’s results portal. The figures will automatically be updated to the Commission’s results web page at [www.elections.wa.gov.au](http://www.elections.wa.gov.au) every few minutes.

Counting at the Beaufort Street Processing Centre

After 6.00pm on election Saturday, staff at the Beaufort Street Processing Centre in Northbridge will commence the long process of counting the numerous early votes (postal and in person) received and processed up to that time.

On Saturday night, only Legislative Assembly (LA) early votes will be counted at the Beaufort St site. As with polling place counts, results will be published progressively on the Commission’s website as they become available.

The next day, Sunday 14 March, staff at Beaufort St will focus on counting Legislative Council (LC) early votes (Above the Line preference count). Once again, count figures will be progressively published on the Commission’s website.

The counting of both LA and LC early and absent ballot papers will then proceed progressively over the following week or so. All LA votes will be processed and counted at Beaufort St.

At this election, some new arrangements will apply to the subsequent counting of LC ballot papers – partly in order to accommodate physical distancing and COVID contingency planning.
LC ballot papers marked Above the Line (i.e. ticket votes) will be counted from the evening of Monday 15 March at a second processing centre between Murray and Wellington Streets in the Perth CBD.

LC ballot papers marked Below the Line will be optically scanned and counted electronically at Fuji Xerox, Jackson Street, Bassendean from Wednesday 17 March.

Counting to take longer than at previous elections

It is important to note that vote counting, and thus the declaration of final results, is likely to take longer than at previous State elections.

A number of factors have contributed to this longer timeframe, including:

- The sheer volume of early postal and in person votes at this election. At the 2017 election about 30% of electors voted early, whereas at this election it is estimated that the figure will be around 50% or more. Early votes, particularly postals, require considerable processing before they can be counted.
- The Commission has committed to making counting venues as safe as possible for staff and scrutineers. COVID-19 related considerations such as physical distancing have impacted on venue layout and processes.
- A record number of parties and candidates contesting the 2021 election will contribute to slower counts, with more candidates on ballot papers and increased preference distributions.