



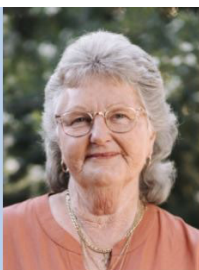
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
Electoral Commission

2021 State General Election ELECTION REPORT

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at the table.



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Foreword

Given the peculiarities of the past 18 months it is pleasing that the 2021 State General Election was conducted with minimal disruption or complaint and the citizens of Western Australia were provided with an electoral outcome that was impartial, safe, accurate and accountable. This is in no small part thanks to the efforts of all of the Commission's staff; the small but extremely dedicated permanent team as well as the huge and enthusiastic temporary workforce who help bring it all together. The election was described as the biggest single event in Western Australia in 2021 and this description oversimplifies the enormous planning and logistical effort that went into its success.

This does not mean there were not challenges or disappointments but before discussing those I did not want to forget or detract from a very successful electoral event for the Commission. As the reality of a global pandemic was assessed by Commission staff in March 2020, planning commenced on a COVID-safe election strategy. The strategy was designed to spread the usual concentration of electors from one day to fourteen possible voting days. The Commission received excellent support and advice from health and public safety experts to ensure Western Australians had as many options as possible to exercise their franchise.

With enrolment levels at an all-time high in Western Australia the average voter turnout rate was disappointingly down compared to recent elections. This was not unexpected given concerns over COVID and the unique nature of the political elements of the election campaign. The pandemic affected the Commission's ability to provide voting services to some traditional communities of electors including aged care facilities, hospitals, prisons, and remote communities. This occurred either by mutual agreement that Commission staff would not attend in person (to minimise infection risks) or through reduced numbers of electors presenting to vote at those institutions.

Pushed by the Commission's COVID-safe election strategy electors embraced early voting in person with an increase of 160% from 2017. In total 55% of eligible electors voted early either in person or by post. Postal voting similarly rose (+85.4%) although frustrations from rural, remote, overseas, interstate, and late electors remain, with the Commission receiving ballot papers after the legislated cut off for postal ballots.

In order to provide many options for electors the Commission leased or utilised over 800 early and polling day locations. This created additional costs but supported the Commission's approach to elector safety in the COVID-19 environment.

While COVID-19 forced some creative solutions it also highlighted the shortcomings of an outdated piece of legislation under which the Commission must conduct electoral operations. The ongoing challenge for past and present Electoral Commissioners has been to adapt or interpret provisions designed for a different time.

On a pleasing note informality rates continued their downward trend, particularly in districts with traditionally higher numbers. The success of the Commission's Electoral Ambassador program using representatives from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to educate and inform electors is clearly having a positive impact. In 2021 this was expanded to include Aboriginal Electoral Ambassadors which the Commission intends to continue and hopefully expand between elections.

My thanks once more to the proud, enthusiastic, and tired staff who helped deliver democracy to Western Australia in 2021 and now the work begins on making the experience even better in 2025.

Robert Kennedy
Electoral Commissioner



WA's future is yours to choose
Take your seat at the table.




2021 WA State election at a glance

The People

59
District
Returning Officers

6
Region
Returning Officers

4
Reserve/
Deputy ROs

6
Returning Officer
Liaison Officers

6,927
Polling
Staff

758
Early Voting
Centre Staff



1,680
Count Centre
Contractors

19
Other
contract staff

Enrolment

Enrolment
1,716,732

Enrolment Participation
96.6%

Voter Turnout

Voter Turnout Rate **85.5%**

Voted Early **55%**

Assisted Voting



1,847
Telephone Assisted Voting

36
Vote Assist

Formality

Informality - LA **3.76%**

Informality - LC **1.95%**

Voting

2017



2021

879,816 Ordinary votes cast **558,218** ↓

222,218 Early in person votes **585,234** ↑

116,729 Postal votes **216,457** ↑

155,319 Absent votes **102,152** ↓

Candidates



Registered Parties **19**

Candidates - LA **463**

Candidates - LC **325**

Locations



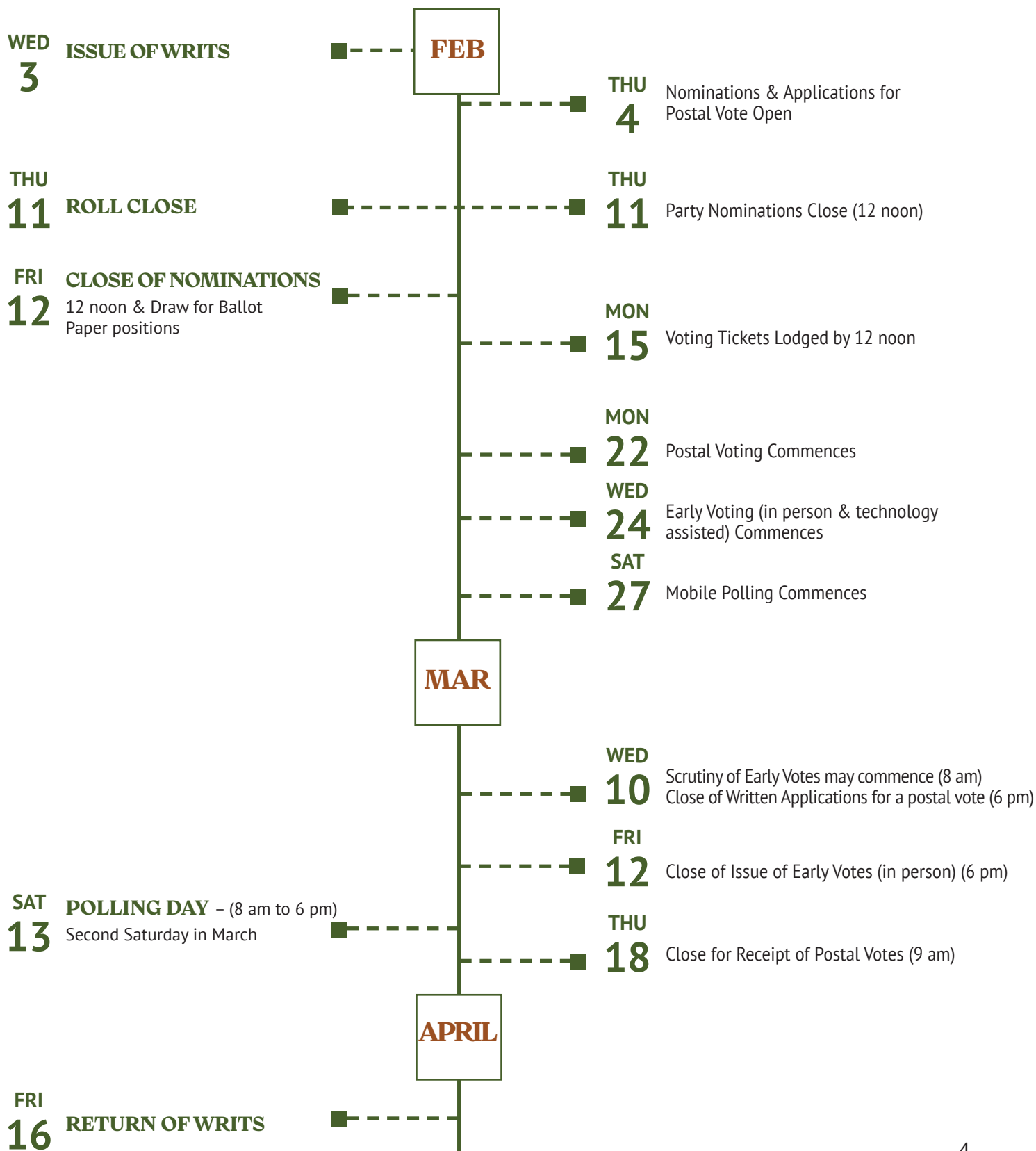
736
Polling places

70
Early Voting Centres

170
Special & Remotes



2021 State General Election Timetable





Electoral Environment

Electoral Boundaries

The *Electoral Act 1907* (the Act) requires that Western Australia's electoral boundaries are reviewed in between each State general election so that the number of electors within each electoral district remains within a permitted tolerance range, either side of an average district enrolment figure. The average district enrolment as at the close of the State electoral roll 11 March 2019, the date chosen for the 2019 review of the electoral boundaries, was 27,573.

The review, which included formalised open consultation, was undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Act by independent Electoral Distribution Commissioners Hon. Eric Heenan QC, retired Judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia (Chairperson); Mr Tom Joseph, Government Statistician; Mr David Kerlake, Electoral Commissioner (during the drafting of the proposed boundaries); and Mr Chris Avent, Acting Electoral Commissioner (for the final stage of the Distribution following Mr Kerlake's retirement).

The final boundaries were published 27 November 2019 and applied at the State general election held on 13 March 2021 to elect the 41st Western Australian Parliament. The Distribution Commissioners altered the boundaries of all but 10 of the State's 59 lower house districts. In the North Metropolitan Region, a reconfigured district formerly known as Girrawheen was named Landsdale. All other districts in the State retained existing names. The names of Legislative Council regions are as specified in the Act.

The report of the Distribution Commissioners, and the final maps of Western Australia's electoral region and district boundaries created under the authority of the Commissioners and lodged with Landgate as Deposited Plans 418163 – 418227, are available to view or download at www.boundaries.wa.gov.au.

Legislative Changes

A range of electoral reforms were proposed by the *Electoral Amendment Act 2020*.

This Bill proposed to amend the *Electoral Act 1907* and introduce:

- Quarterly reporting of donations instead of an annual report
- A reduction of the disclosure threshold for the reporting of donations from \$2,500 to \$1,000
- A reduction from 15 weeks to 12 weeks for the disclosure of electoral expenditure after a State election
- The introduction of expenditure caps for spending during State elections.

The Bill was deferred to the Standing Committee on Legislation and the Committee's report was tabled on 12 November 2020. Due to parliament being dissolved for the State election the legislation lapsed without having passed both houses.



Participation

A total of 1,716,732 electors were enrolled as at the Close of Rolls on 11 February 2021, an increase of 7.8% compared with the 2017 State General Election. The increase was driven by joint automatic enrolment provisions introduced in 2016 as well as increased electronic communication by the Commission via email, SMS and digital advertising.

Voter turnout at the 2021 State election was 85.5% (expressed as a proportion of the number of enrolled electors), a slight reduction when compared with 2017 (86.9%). Despite the lower turn out rate the number of actual voters increased to 1,467,173 compared to 1,384,500 in 2017 (Legislative Assembly).

Effective participation is measured not only by the number of voters, but by the proportion of votes actually admitted to the count, that is, the proportion of formal votes. Informal votes decreased from 4.5% in 2017 to 3.8% for the Legislative Assembly.

A total of 1,883 electors who require assistance to vote participated independently and cast their vote in secret using either Telephone Assisted Voting or Vote Assist. The internet voting system, iVote used in 2017 for this same cohort was not available for the 2021 State General Election.

Enrolment

As at the close of rolls on 11 February 2021, a total of 1,716,732 electors were enrolled on the State electoral roll, a higher percentage increase from previous elections, not withstanding the one-off increase just prior to the 2017 election due to the introduction of direct enrolment legislation in WA.

The figure represents an estimated enrolment participation rate of 96.6%, the highest it's ever been and higher than the national average of 96.3% for the same period. The average number of electors was 29,097 across all districts, an increase of just over 2,000 from 2017. Butler had the largest number of electors (32,711), while North West Central continued to have the fewest electors (10,993). The South Metropolitan Region was the largest by elector numbers (449,795) compared to Mining and Pastoral Region, the smallest (69,830).

Enrolment	2021	2017	% Change
Enrolment	1,716,732	1,593,222	7.75%
Largest District	32,711 (Butler)	32,573 (Swan Hills)	0.42%
Smallest District	10,993 (North West Central)	10,432 (North West Central)	5.38%
Largest Region	449,182 (South Metropolitan)	410,810 (South Metropolitan)	9.49%
Smallest Region	69,651 (Mining and Pastoral)	68,747 (Mining and Pastoral)	1.31%
Average District Enrolment	29,097	27,003	7.75%



Party Registration

Nineteen registered political parties contested the 2021 State General Election (Table 1), which is three more than the previous general election. Since the 2017 State General Election, four political parties were successfully registered prior to the issue of the writs on

3 February 2021, and the registration of one political party, Family First Party WA, was cancelled. There were also six successful applications from political parties to have their registered name and / or abbreviation amended prior to the 2021 election.

Table 1:
Registered Political Parties at 2021 State General Election

Political Party Name	Ballot Paper Abbreviation
Animal Justice Party*	Animal Justice Party
Australian Christians (WA)*	Australian Christians
Australian Labor Party (Western Australian Branch)*	WA Labor
Daylight Saving Party*	Daylight Saving Party
Great Australian Party	Great Australian Party
Health Australia Party^	Health Australia Party
LEGALISE CANNABIS WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY	Legalise Cannabis Western Australia Party
Liberal Democratic Party*	Liberal Democrats
Liberals For Climate - The Flux Network^	Liberals For Climate
National Party of Australia (WA) Inc*	THE NATIONALS
NO MANDATORY VACCINATION PARTY	NO MANDATORY VACCINATION
Pauline Hanson's One Nation*	Pauline Hanson's One Nation
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party (WA)*	Shooters, Fishers and Farmers
Socialist Alliance WA*	Socialist Alliance
SUSTAINABLE AUSTRALIA PARTY - STOP OVERDEVELOPMENT / CORRUPTION	SUSTAINABLE AUSTRALIA PARTY - STOP OVERDEVELOPMENT / CORRUPTION
The Greens (WA) Inc*	The Greens (WA)
The Liberal Party of Australia (Western Australia Division) Inc*	Liberal Party
WExit Party^	WExit
WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY^	WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY

* Contested the 2017 State General Election.

^ Contested the 2017 State General Election with a different party name.



Election Planning

Project Management Methodology

The Commission adopted project planning methodology as the basis for its election preparations with 104 distinct election projects. Every Commission officer was allocated at least one project with progress monitored by the Election Management Committee chaired by the Electoral Commissioner. An experienced election manager from outside the Commission was contracted by the Commission to undertake an independent assessment of election readiness.

A post-election review was conducted after the election with recommendations being included in this report and the generation of an internal operations review report identifying internal process and procedural improvements for consideration for the next election.

COVID-19 Pandemic Management

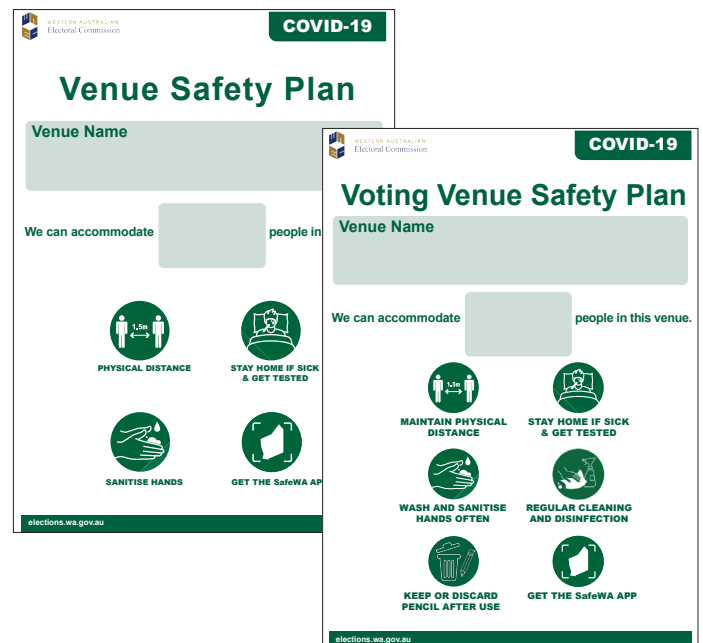
The 2021 State General Election took place during the COVID-19 global pandemic with the Western Australian (WA) Government declaring a State of Emergency under the *Emergency Management Act* and a *Public Health Emergency under the Public Health Act* in March 2020.

A small team were engaged at the Commission to oversee the development and implementation of strategies, management plans, and COVID-19 procedures across the entire election.

The WA Electoral Commission worked closely with WA Department of Health and WA Police Force to ensure public health and public safety requirements were met in relation to the global pandemic, and that strategies were in place to mitigate situations that may cause concern for the public and staff.

The Commission took advice from these key stakeholders and made changes where appropriate including spreading voting out as broadly as possible; ensuring COVID-Safe operations at all venues; identifying transmission risk issues, reduction or restraint on visits to vulnerable populations such as remote communities and aged care facilities; contact registration systems across the entirety of the election operations; a communications strategy based on 'Plan your vote'; and COVID-19 training for all staff.

In the lead up to the Election, a State Election COVID-19 Stakeholder Group was formed with its purpose to share status updates and any intelligence from the parties that may affect the State General Election. The stakeholders in this group were WA Electoral Commission, Department of Health, State Solicitors Office and WA Police Force.



COVID-19 Safety Plan posters at all voting venues



The Commission also worked with the following stakeholders specific to COVID-19: Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Department of Finance; Department of Education; Department of Justice and the WA Local Government Association.

The Commissioner provided WA's Chief Health Officer a detailed report on COVID-19 preparations for the WA State General Election in January 2021. The report was acknowledged by the Chief Health Officer advising that he was satisfied that the preparations would ensure that the public health requirements related to COVID-19 are met.

Within the State Election cycle, the Perth and Peel regions of WA went into lockdown on 1 February 2021. The Commission activated the COVID-19 Crisis and Issues Communications Plan and Chain of Command to provide clear communications directions to Commission staff and electors during this period and was led by the Electoral Commissioner. Operation of this plan continued in March 2021 to provide COVID-19 restrictions updates due to community transmission in other jurisdictions.

Recruitment and training

Returning Officers (RO) and polling staff were appointed for each of the State's 59 Legislative Assembly districts and six Legislative Council regions. Randstad was contracted for the State election, to recruit staffing for the count centres and early voting centres.

For 2021, recruitment was extended to include employing 16 to 17 year olds as Student Electoral Officers at polling places state-wide. 196 Student Electoral Officers were recruited for this election. This initiative proved popular and successful and will continue at future elections.

All casual polling officials were required to complete compulsory online training courses for their position. This included a COVID-19 course. Managers at early and election day venues received either face to face training or virtual sessions for some country locations.

All key position and tasks training videos were placed on the public website, electoral system portals and polling place tablets.

New Legislative Assembly ROs attended an induction workshop, then additional workshops were held at key milestones. These were a blend of face to face sessions, online content and virtual sessions. To support ROs, liaison officers were appointed throughout the election period. This initiative proved popular and successful and will continue at future elections.

Systems development

The 2021 State General Election was unique in comparison to previous elections due to the extra considerations for public safety stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission's approach for public safety and delivering the election was to reduce the number of electors in a single day and introduce a longer period for early voting, increase the number of early voting venues and offer Technology Assisted Voting to vote over the telephone for electors confined in quarantine or otherwise incapacitated. To accommodate the approach, 1,600 laptops were securely configured to streamline the roll mark off of electors at Early Voting Centres, 3,100 tablets issued to manage queues at over 800 venues and the Victorian Electoral Commission's Telephone Assisted Voting platform coding refined to align with the Western Australian legislation and regulations.

Challenges were faced for receiving ordered equipment as the Commission scaled up the offerings while global transport services were impacted by extra precautions at international borders. Time was an anticipated risk that was mitigated by prioritising orders and workload streams to maximise efficiencies.



Polling Place/ Early Voting Centre Allocation

As for 2017, determining suitable polling place locations was undertaken using Geographic Information System proximity analysis. The analysis included mapped population, geographic and socio considerations such as growth, density, topography, boundaries and public amenities. This analysis was also used to determine early voting centre locations.

While the number of polling places selected were similar to 2017, the number of early voting centres and size requirements increased significantly to mitigate community health risks associated with COVID-19. To facilitate securing the required number of early voting centres, external property consultants were engaged

to source suitable locations which included commercial premises, government properties and event facilities. The difficulties faced by the Commission included competing in the commercial property market while only able to lease premises for a short period. Some of the early voting centres locations were not secured until January 2021 as some property managers were reluctant to enter into short term agreements for the period of the election. This delayed advising stakeholders such as political parties of the early voting centre locations, who required this information for their election planning. In future it is likely the Commission will need to undertake longer leases in the lead up to a polling period in order to secure the most appropriate polling locations.



Issuing officers at polling places on election day and early voting centres



Electors and Candidate Services

Strategy and Service Commitments

The Commission's service standards and commitments to electors and other stakeholders were outlined in a Strategy and Commitments Charter published in July 2020. The Commission's customer base is both large and diverse, extending well beyond the more than 1.7 million eligible voters.

This document also outlined the various performance indicators by which the organisation and its stakeholders could assess the Commission's performance across a number of measures. Details of ultimate performance against the specified targets are included later in this report.

Electors Voting Options

The Commission provided nearly 1,000 polling venues where Western Australians could cast their vote in person. This included 736 polling places, 95 special institutions, 75 remote and 70 early voting centres. Seven interstate and New Zealand early voting locations were also available for Western Australian electors in these locations to cast their vote in person. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions the Commission's network of overseas locations was not available for the 2021 State general election. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 restrictions the Commission's network of overseas locations was not available for the 2021 SGE.

Electors were encouraged to reduce community health risks associated with COVID-19 by voting early either in person or by post before polling day. Electors could opt to vote by post by submitting an application directly through the Commission's website. Electors who registered as General Early Voters were automatically sent their ballot papers. Early voting centres hours

of operation were increased to provide electors with more convenient access. Where possible early voting centres were open from 8am to 6pm over 13 days between 24 February and 12 March. The number of special institution polling venues (ie nursing homes) visited by mobile polling teams reduced from 266 in 2017 to 95 because of COVID-19 requirements. Remote locations increased slightly from 72 in 2017 to 75.

Other Elector Services Electors with a Disability

As outlined elsewhere in this report, Telephone Assisted Voting and the Vote Assist system were the two technology assisted voting options for electors living with accessibility challenges. These systems allow an elector who otherwise may be unable to cast a secret ballot to do so.

With the Telephone Assisted Voting system the Commission contracted MSWA in Belmont to provide the voter application call centre operation. The Commission also used the services of other suppliers that operate within the disability sector and employ people living with accessibility challenges. For example, Westcare were contracted to compile 1,600 stationery packs for use at all voting venues across the State.

In addition to Telephone Assisted Voting and the Vote Assist system, the Commission selected and advertised 25 early voting centres and/or polling places that were set up with additional assistive devices to help electors with particular needs. These devices included: an electronic video magnifier screen; either a hearing loop device or audio amplifier; and a 'reader pen', which when moved over text on a ballot paper provided the voter with an audio reading. Every voting venue across the State was also provided with multiple handheld plastic magnifying sheets, better hearing cards, and triangular pencil grips.



In the lead up to the 2021 election the Commission established a Disability Reference Panel representing electors with a wide range of accessibility challenges. This group was active in providing advice on proposed service delivery issues, associated guidelines for staff, and in assisting the Commission to better communicate with their respective members and clients.

In preparing for the election, the Panel gave feedback on the polling venue assessment guidelines. The Commission makes every effort to select venues that facilitate ease of access, including for electors in wheelchairs. The advertising of voting venues, whether electronic or in the print media, utilises symbols to indicate accessibility suitability and where assistive devices are available. Nearly all polling venues were able to deploy disabled parking signage.

Polling staff at all voting venues are also instructed to ensure ease of access and how to provide assistance to electors with particular requirements. Where necessary, ballot papers can be taken to an elector in a vehicle within close proximity of the voting venue.

A short-animated video was created in partnership with media students from North Metropolitan TAFE targeting electors with mobility issues. A further video highlighting the various voting options available to electors was created. These were available on the WAEC website as well as being directly distributed to interested groups.

Services to CALD Electors

The Commission utilised a wide range of communication initiatives and channels to ensure Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) elector groups could more easily access and understand the voting system.

The advertising campaign targeting CALD groups was extensive, covering all phases of the election and utilising a diverse mix of communication channels. Research was conducted in-order to guide the advertising approach from both a media and communications perspective. According to

the 2016 CALD Census, the top ten languages spoken within homes in Western Australia includes nine non-English languages, equating to 6.4% of the WA population.

Advertising messages were generally translated into 10 non-English languages: Mandarin, Filipino, Hindi, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Japanese and Kriol. In addition to SBS television, a mix of different electronic and print mediums were used to reach CALD audiences – including 6 community radio stations, language translations on various streaming services, digital display placements, and 8 community publications.

A short-animated video targeting CALD electors and focusing on what to do once you arrive at a voting centre was created and translated into 10 commonly used languages other than English, as well as a version in Auslan. These were distributed to various CALD community groups, as well as being available on the WAEC website and replicated on the tablets available at every voting venue.

Every voting venue was supplied with a printed Multilingual Guide which provided simple voting instructions in the 26 most commonly spoken languages in Western Australia. These scripts were also replicated on the tablet devices available at every voting venue.

The Electoral Ambassadors program recruited and trained 41 CALD and nine indigenous representatives as Electoral Ambassadors. Subsequently the Electoral Ambassadors shared their electoral knowledge in their communities and were encouraged to work at polling places or Early Voting Centres.

Services to Indigenous Electors

Aboriginal people living in isolated regional communities are confronted with a range of service delivery challenges and given their isolation are often unable to easily access some of the voting options available to electors residing in urban areas and larger country towns. Access to a reliable, regular and timely postal service is one such problem, particularly during the wet season in the far north. For these reasons, the Commission endeavours to deliver a mobile polling service to all but the very smallest remote Aboriginal communities.



A total of 15 remote mobile polling teams were employed to deliver a voting service to remote Aboriginal communities across each of the four electoral districts in the Mining and Pastoral Region. These visits were conducted by either 4WD vehicle, light aircraft or helicopter. For the first time, each team carried a file containing how to vote material produced by political parties and candidates contesting elections in the four districts.

Commission personnel and the four Returning Officers liaised with community contacts in developing a schedule of visits. A poster advertising the planned visit date and times was sent to as many email addresses at each community as had been captured.

Visits commenced Saturday 27 February and continued through to election day on Saturday 13 March. Larger communities such as Beagle Bay, Bidadanga, Looma, Noonkanbah, Patjarr, Wangkatjunka and Warburton had visits that lasted for most of the day, while the smallest communities may have had a visit of just one or two hours. In total remote polling visits for planned for such 75 communities, with 46 of these being in the Kimberley district.

In terms of communications with indigenous electors in general, an advertising campaign covering all phases of the election cycle and utilising targeted media channels was implemented. For example, this included advertising on 16 indigenous radio stations to complement advertising on other radio stations such as RTR FM and Curtin FM which have a diverse and inclusive listenership. Media appearances were also made on Nonngara Radio based in Perth.

Many studies over the past decade have reported the increasing uptake of mobile phones within indigenous communities, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having access to mobile phones more than any other digital technology. Accordingly, the Commission leveraged these findings by sending SMS messages to indigenous and youth audiences, written in a format for greater authenticity and resonance. Two SMS messages were sent to 1,800

Aboriginal students at a click through rate of 6.5%, and 3,400 SMS's were sent to WA 18-19 year old students at a high click through rate of 9.2%.

A short-animated video focusing on what to do once you arrive at a voting centre and how to cast your vote was produced with the voice over translated into three indigenous languages, Kriol, Martu and Ngaanyatjarra.

Call Centre

COVID-19 provided an interesting overlay to the typical call centre operations for the election. The centre operated through the same business partner as in other recent elections, commencing operations on 1 February 2021 as WA entered another lockdown.

Cohorting, separation into two isolated teams, was undertaken to keep staff apart so that call centre services could still operate if one of the teams was affected by an outbreak. Fortunately, that didn't occur. In place for six weeks, the Call Centre was one of the more challenging areas to operate during COVID-19, with the need to keep operating during the whole period but with working from home a limited option.

With the Commission encouraging electors to 'Plan your Vote', the main focus areas for calls and emails were enrolment and early/postal voting.

The call centre operated during 3 February to 19 March across the election period. 29,036 calls were received by the call centre team this election, a modest increase of 2.5% from 2017. The increase is primarily attributable to the focus on early and postal voting in the COVID environment. Call numbers had otherwise been expected to fall.

The call centre team also processed all inbound email enquiries, accounting for more than 2,000 further interactions with electors.



Communications

Advertising

To ensure eligible West Australian electors are aware of the State Election, and subsequently their right and obligation to vote, a unique, broad-reaching advertising campaign is developed every 4 years. This advertising campaign was designed to have mass relevance and be seen by every elector.

For the 2020 State general election, in addition to the usual rigours associated with the planning and development for an election advertising, this year saw many unique challenges and obstacles due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this, the Commission developed a campaign that was agile and easily adaptable, to suit the myriad of potential environment changes due to COVID-19.

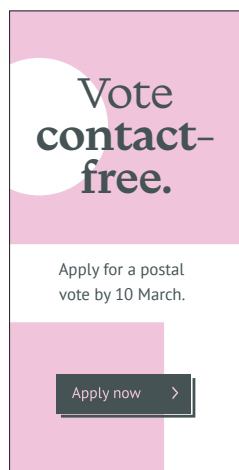
The creative strategy adopted for the campaign leveraged the idea that the world is in flux; the last 12 months have been unlike any in history. Democratic decision making is a power we no longer take for granted. West Australians have the opportunity and responsibility to shape a future that serves our collective good. In the election, every vote is equal; further enabling the campaign concept and line 'Take your seat at the table.'

The 'Take your seat at the table' concept spoke to all electors, with the ad depicting a realistic multi-cultural, diverse Australia, with vast research conducted on numerous personas to understand various audience attitudes. These personas gave the Commission insight into the drivers, barriers and opportunities to leverage when it came to communications that influence positive voting behaviour. Specific messaging phases of the campaign were 'Enrol to vote', 'Plan your vote' and 'Vote now'. Within these messaging phases, relevant, key information was shared. This included:

- Encouraging electors to check/update their enrolment and/or enrol to vote
- Encouraging electors to plan their vote
- Encouraging electors to apply for a postal vote
- Encouraging electors to early vote (postal and in person).



Example of digital banners - COVID-19 advertising



Example of press - COVID-19 advertising



Example of press display advertising



These key messages were delivered in a variety of formats to reach numerous electors. These included:

Out of home – billboards, posters, buses & bus shelters, shop, radio, lifts

Print – newspapers, posters, pamphlets

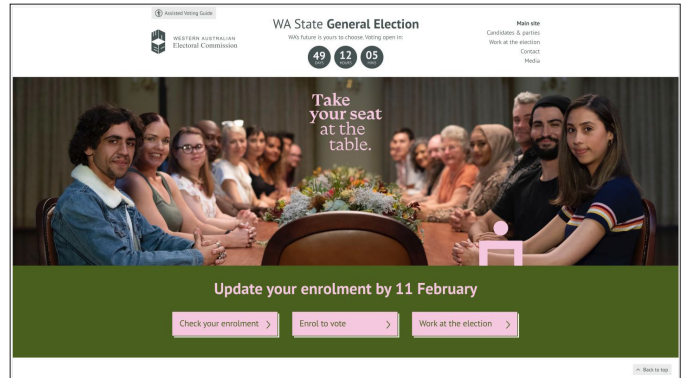
Digital – Facebook, Instagram, digital banners

Direct – emails, text messages

All advertisements drove electors to the Commission website. A new website landing page was created, to reflect the look and feel of the advertising campaign. The consistency in key visuals and design cemented a roadmap for electors, from all advertisements to the 'end point'. The redesigned and updated website acted as the 'information hub' in the broader campaign ecosystem as it housed further information on the Election as a whole, included but not limited to:

- WAEC's COVID Safe Plan
- COVID-19 FAQs
- General Election FAQs
- Options for electors with a disability
- Options for electors interstate and overseas
- Options for electors in hotel quarantine and home quarantine
- Early Voting Centre and Polling Day locations
- How to cast a formal vote
- Mis/disinformation, political advertising and vote counting fact sheets.

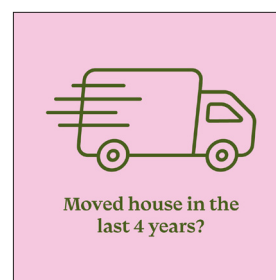
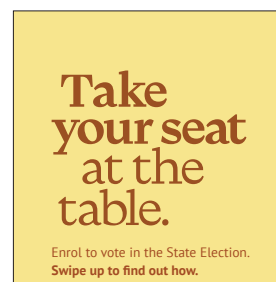
Alongside campaign activity, the Commission maintained an active media presence throughout the election. Media releases and interviews were aligned with campaign messaging phases and informed news sites and journalists of relevant key dates alongside daily statistics in relation to enrolment, postal voting and in-person early voting.



Campaign website landing page



CALD Community Newspapers display advertising



Digital banners – Social media



Email and SMS Elector Communications

Following trials during by-elections in 2018, the Commission used email addresses and mobile numbers for more direct communication with electors during the election period.

The Commission used electronic contact details from the electoral roll to advise electors about the close of rolls, ways to plan their vote (including the various early voting options) and voting reminders for those who hadn't voted prior to Election Day. Over 1.5 million emails and 200,000 text messages were sent across the various campaigns.

The activity proved to be a huge success with email response rates including over 50% open rates (the number of emails sent recorded as having been opened) and 20% click-to-open rates (those recipients who clicked on links in the emails compared to the number sent), well above industry averages that are typically in the single digits. Enrolment transactions increased 500% in the week prior to the close of roll, compared to 2017. The communications also contributed to significant increases in early voting activity, with noticeable linked increases in online postal vote applications and checking of early voting locations.

Electronic communication will continue to be used post-election to contact those electors who appear not to have voted, to allow them to respond by email if they have a reason for not voting. This will reduce the number of penalty notices sent out and also allow the Commission to reach those electors who may have moved from their physical address without updating their details.

Political and Candidate Liaison

Individual meetings were held with the majority of political parties in the last quarter of 2020 and again after the issue of the Writs. The Commissioner, or his delegate, outlined the election strategy and how it was shaped to mitigate COVID-19 risk for the community. Parties were provided with folders containing a variety of pertinent information to assist them in their preparations. Briefing sessions were also conducted by Returning Officers at the close of nominations.

Media Liaison

A full-time media officer was contracted to manage the Commission's interactions with the media in all aspects of the 2021 WA State Election. The media officer developed an election media guide, mailed regular 'media bulletins' and other information during the election process and was the 'one contact point' for the media. A total of 227 media enquiries were received between 1 December 2020 and 14 April 2021.

The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were readily accessible for media interviews at all times. The Commissioner was interviewed on radio and television on over 40 occasions in the lead-up to and after the election, on topics as diverse as employment opportunities, COVID-19 precautions, postal and early voting and Legislative Council results.

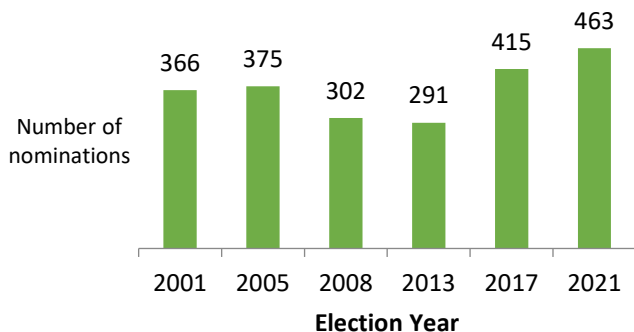


The Election

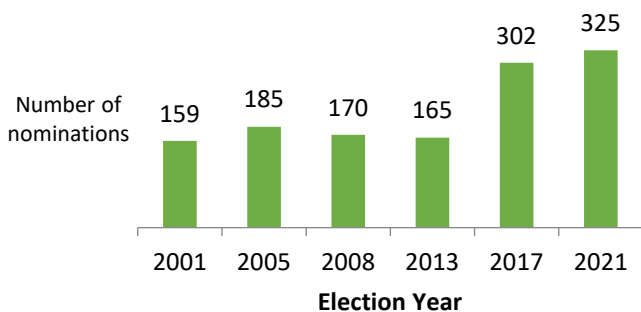
Nominations

Nominations for the 2021 State General Election opened on 4 February 2021 and closed at 12 noon on 12 February 2021. The Legislative Assembly nominations increased from 415 to 463, an average of 7.8 candidates per district. The district of Albany had the largest number of nominations with 12 and the districts of Carine, Perth and South Perth had the smallest number with 5. The number of Legislative Council candidates was 325, up from 302 in 2017.

Legislative Assembly Nominations

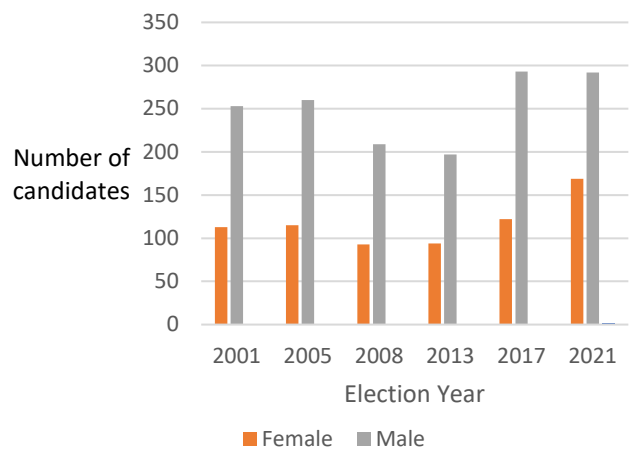


Legislative Council Nominations

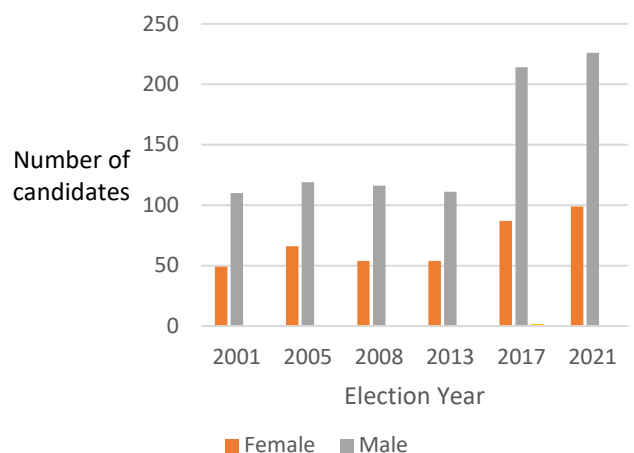


At 34%, the proportion of female candidates was higher than 2017 (29%) and 2013 (33%).

Legislative Assembly Candidate Gender



Legislative Council Candidate Gender



The average age of Legislative Assembly candidates was 48, the youngest being 19 years of age, while the oldest was 83. For the Legislative Council the average was 48, the youngest 19 years of age and the oldest was 81.



Political Party Representation

720 candidates represented 19 registered political parties at this election, compared to 620 candidates representing 16 registered political parties at the 2017 election.

Party	2001	2005	2008	2013	2017	2021
<i>Number of political parties</i>	7	14	10	7	16	19
Animal Justice Party					14	12
Australian Christians ¹	18	69	58	54	57	41
Citizens Electoral Council		13	21			
Community 1st		1				
Daylight Saving Party (2008) ²			5			
Daylight Saving Party (current) ²					12	12
Democrats	50	12				
Family First		44	45	28	15	
Great Australian Party						12
Health Australia Party ³					12	12
Legalise Cannabis WA						22
Liberals for Climate ⁴					24	14
NO MANDATORY VACCINATION						73
Forest Liberal		12				
Fremantle Hospital Support Group		2				
WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY ⁵					32	29
Liberal Democrats					15	40
Liberal Party	88	84	92	93	92	88
WAXit ⁶					60	61
New Country Party		12	3			
One Nation	69	58	6			
Pauline Hanson's One Nation					52	53
Public Hospital Support Group		12				
Shooters, Fishers and Farmers ⁷				12	35	29
Socialist Alliance					4	3
SUSTAINABLE AUSTRALIA PARTY - STOP OVERDEVELOPMENT / CORRUPTION						20
The Greens (WA)	65	70	73	74	74	75
THE NATIONALS	23	20	29	31	32	31
WA Labor	90	90	93	95	90	93
Independent	96	50	44	61	94	66
No designated affiliation	26	11	3	8	3	2
TOTALS	525	560	472	456	717	788

¹ Party name was the Christian Democratic Party until the 2013 election.

² Although these two parties have the same party name, they are not the same party administratively.

³ Party name was Fluoride Free WA Party prior to this election.

⁴ Party name was The Flux Party - WA prior to this election.

⁵ Party name was Julie Mathieson for Western Australia prior to this election.

⁶ Party contested the 2017 election as Micro Business Party.

⁷ Party name was Shooters and Fishers prior to the 2017 election.



Legislative Council Voting Tickets

2021 Legislative Council Voting Ticket Lodgement by Region and Percentage of Ticket Voting

Region	Registered Political Parties	Groups	Ungrouped Candidates	Total for Region	% Ticket Votes Cast by Electors
East Metropolitan	17	1	2	20	96.91%
North Metropolitan	17	5	1	23	97.41%
South Metropolitan	18	6	2	26	97.79%
Agricultural	18	1	6	25	97.70%
Mining & Pastoral	18	3	0	21	97.88%
South West	18	3	2	23	97.91%
TOTALS	106	19	13	138	

A voting ticket is a statement of a particular order of candidate preferences, provided by a party, group or candidate in a Legislative Council election. An elector may opt for a ticket vote (marking their ballot paper above the line), thereby voting in accordance with these preferences.

All groups and all but one candidate lodged a voting ticket in 2021, with a total of 137 voting ticket claims made across all six Legislative Council Regions. In 2021 over 97.6 percent of electors cast a ticket vote.

A complete list of voting tickets for all regions was made available on the Commission's website.

Ballot Paper Production

The Commission produced a total of 5,105,990 conjoined ballot papers for this election. As all ballot papers are conjoined there was an equal number of ballot papers produced for the Assembly and Council. Based on feedback following the 2017 election, the conjoined ballot papers and separated for postal packages,

The same security features and six distinctive colours, which were chosen for the 2017 State general election to differentiate each of the metropolitan and country regions, were used for the 2021 election. However, for this election the district name was also printed multiple times on the reverse side of the conjoined ballot paper to assist workers identify ballot papers in the processing area.

With the coronavirus lock down in March 2020 and the uncertain outlook that followed, the Commission made the deliberate decision to produce enough ballot papers to cover all potential scenarios. Consequentially the transfer of ballot papers between locations was minimal, except for transferring reserve ballot paper stocks to various metropolitan early voting centres due to the large increase in early voting in person.

Voting

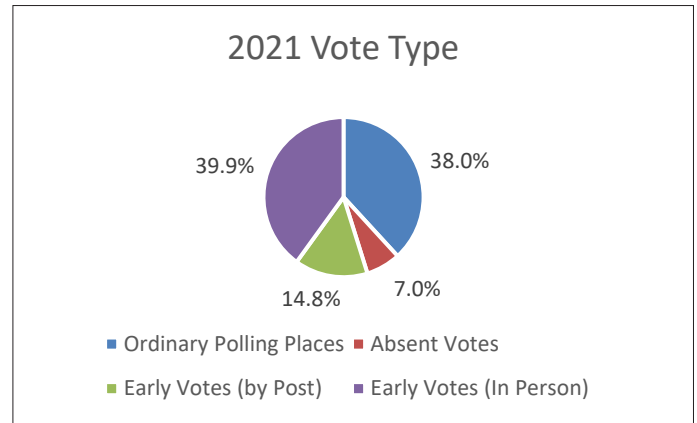
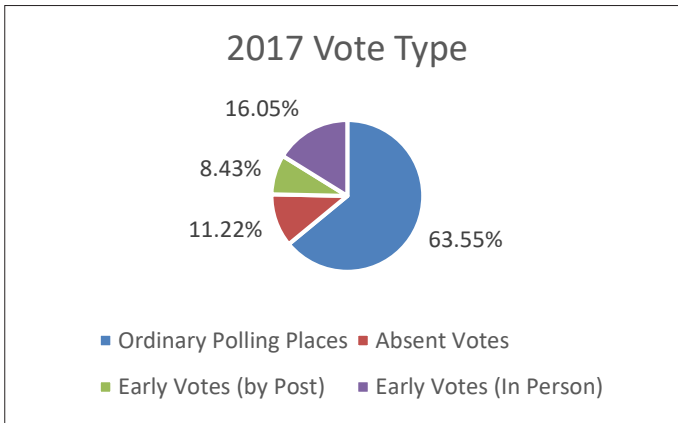
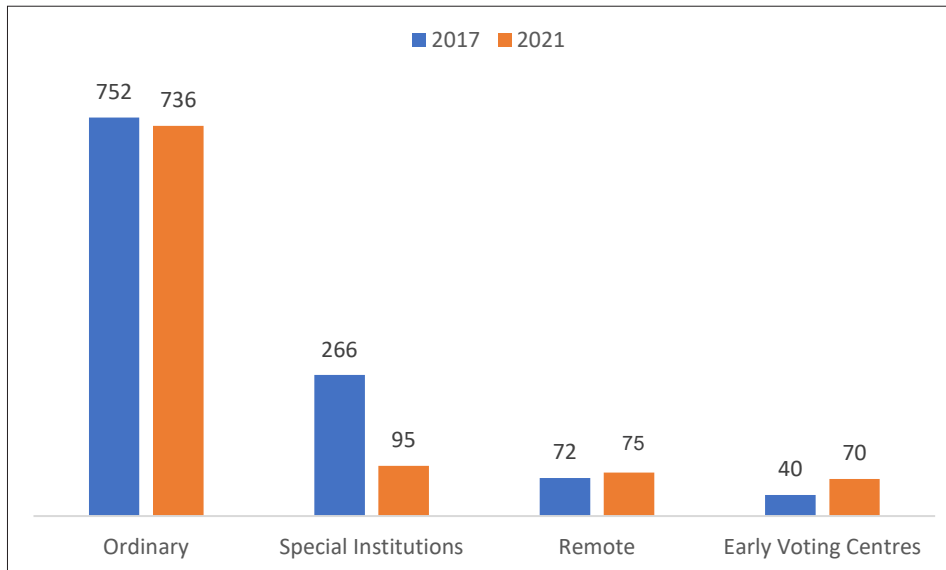
Traditionally, Western Australians have mostly voted on election day itself between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm. While this has gradually reduced over successive general elections, at the 2017 election it was still close to 70% of all electors.

For the 2021 election, owing to the uncertainties and community health risks associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Commission set-out to mitigate these risks by reducing the peak of voting that normally occurs on election day.

The number of early voting centres and their hours of operations were increased significantly and considerably more resources and communications activity was devoted to encouraging people to consider alternative voting options and where possible, to vote before election day. As a result, 55% of eligible electors voted before election day.



Allocation of Polling Locations and Early Voting Centres 2017–2021



Early Voting in Person

Early voting commenced Wednesday 24 February and ran for 2.5 weeks, including for the first time at a general election, on the Saturday before election day. Most venues also operated for longer hours (from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm) than at past elections with the exception of some court houses and libraries in country locations which operated normal business hours.

At the 2017 general election, excluding airport terminals and university campus ‘pop-ups’, the Commission operated 12 standard early voting centres (EVCs) in the Perth metropolitan area. At this election the number of standard EVCs in the Perth metropolitan area was increased to 45. In total, 70 EVCs operated across the State taking over 585,000 votes. Of these over 72% were cast in the Perth metropolitan area.

The COVID-19 global pandemic seriously impacted the Commission’s capacity to offer in person voting at embassies and trade offices overseas. The Commission was advised that voting would not be possible at the usual overseas locations, nor at the NSW Electoral Commission. As a result, outside of WA, in person voting was only available at the following electoral commission offices: Australian Capital Territory, New Zealand, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. COVID related restrictions at Perth Airport also resulted in the cancellation of planned voting services at selected terminals.



Mobile Polling

Under the *Electoral Act 1907*, mobile polling is able to commence two weeks prior to polling day. However, as outlined elsewhere in this report, the need to safeguard electors most at risk from the COVID-19 virus was a paramount consideration in planning the 2021 election. The Commission liaised closely with and took advice from relevant HealthWA authorities and WA Police. Eventually it was recommended that no mobile polling be conducted within hospitals and it should be limited in aged care facilities pending the status of the pandemic at the time and the nature of the facility.

The Commission communicated with aged care providers as to their wishes in respect of having a mobile polling team visit their venues. Communication in this regard did not prove to be an easy task and responses were at times inconsistent depending on the timing and respondent. Ultimately, the Commission only visited 95 special institutions and aged care facilities, taking 3,849 votes.

Obtaining consistent direction and approval regarding the conduct of remote mobile polling in Aboriginal communities also proved to be challenging due to the constantly changing pandemic environment. Ultimately, the Commissioner of Police and State Emergency Coordinator, designated the delivery of electoral services by the Commission to be an essential service under the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions No. 3) on 4 February 2021. Accordingly, remote mobile polling visits commenced on 27 February with a schedule of visits covering over 75 communities. Remote mobile polling teams took 2,138 votes.

Postal Voting

The promotion of the postal voting option commenced earlier than at previous elections and electors were encouraged to apply for a postal vote online at the Commission's website. However, many electors received a postal vote application form in the mail from a political party and hence returned a hard copy form

to the political party's nominated address before it was on-sent to the Commission. Unfortunately, this does cause a delay in the application being received and processed by the Commission and results in numerous electors contacting the Commission to enquire about their application and to express frustration with apparent delays.

In total, 333,377 postal vote applications were received; 139,046 via the Commission's website and 194,331 via other application sources, including political party mail outs. It is normal for the number of applications to exceed the number of actual postal votes, however given some delays with postal deliveries and the greater availability of EVCs, it is apparent that more postal vote applicants subsequently voted in person than at previous elections.

Nevertheless, a significant increase over the 168,228 applications received at the 2017 election, resulted in a total of 311,598 postal votes being sent to electors. Ultimately, 73.8% or 246,120 of these were returned.

A new initiative piloted at this election, was the placement of sealed ballot boxes at selected country post offices for the return of completed postal vote packages. These ballot boxes were returned direct to the Commission via courier rather than the packages having to go through Australia Post's processing system. 2,901 electors utilised this service and the Commission considers it to have been a successful trial.

In addition to election specific postal vote applications, eligible electors are able to register as a General Early Voter (GEV) in which case they are automatically sent their ballot papers in the mail at all applicable elections. At the 2021 election, 10.4% (34,544) of the total number of postal votes were cast by GEVs.



Telephone Assisted Voting/Vote Assist

Given the iVote internet voting system used in 2017 was not available for the 2021 election (no other suitable internet voting platform was available in the circumstances), the Commission determined that it would use two technology based voting systems to assist eligible electors who could not otherwise vote independently to cast a secret vote: Telephone Assisted Voting and Vote Assist.

Telephone Assisted Voting (TAV)

This voting system enables electors who are vision impaired, have insufficient literacy skills or are otherwise incapacitated to cast their vote over the telephone. The service uses two completely separate call centres to ensure elector anonymity. The first checks the electoral roll to determine eligibility, records the elector's chosen PIN and provides a Voter ID. The second call centre uses the PIN and Voter ID (with no access to the elector's name or the electoral roll) to verbally read the ballot paper information and mark the papers in accordance with the elector's instructions, before placing them in a sealed ballot box.

The total number of incoming calls taken by Call Centre Number 1 was 2,310 from which 2,072 voter IDs were sent. The total number of calls taken by Call Centre Number 2 was 2,000 and the number of votes cast via TAV was 1,847. The post-election survey of TAV users indicated an overall satisfaction rating of 93.5%; 91% of respondents indicated that TAV was 'very easy' or 'easy' to use.

Vote Assist (VA)

A technology-based system developed by the WAEC to primarily enable electors who are blind or have a vision impairment to cast a secret vote independently. With Vote Assist, pre-recorded voting instructions and the candidate/party details are delivered verbally. Voters indicate their voting preferences using a numeric keypad and then have their completed ballot papers self-printed before placing them into a ballot box.

Vote assist was only available at two voting venues, VisAbility in Victoria Park and in the Perth CBD. The total number of votes cast using the system was 36. Respondents to the post-election survey indicated 100% satisfaction with the level of venue convenience and accessibility, as well as the ease with which VA enabled them to cast their vote.

Legislative Council Count

For this election a separate processing centre was set up for the Legislative Council count as part of the Commission's COVID-19 management plan. An electronic scanning process that scanned 36,815 Legislative Council ballot papers, where voters voted below the line, was introduced successfully for this election as part of the Legislative Council count.

WA State Election 2021
Vote Assist

The Western Australian Electoral Commission is providing Vote Assist at this election to allow electors with vision impairments to cast a secret vote.

A key feature of any democracy is the ability to cast a secret vote.

In previous elections, people with vision impairments have cast their vote with the assistance of a carer, friend, relative or polling official. With Vote Assist, the elector can listen to voting instructions, select their voting preferences using a numeric keypad and then have their completed ballot papers self-printed, face down and in private, before placing into a ballot box.

When can I use Vote Assist?

- Throughout the Early Voting period: Wednesday 24 February – Friday 12 March (8am-6pm)
- Election Day: Saturday 13 March (8am-6pm)

Where can I use Vote Assist?

- Victoria Park – (8am-6pm)
- Perth CBD – (8am-6pm)

For further information contact the Election Line on 13 63 06 or +61 8 9214 0400 (overseas callers).

Take your seat at the table.

WA State Election 2021
Telephone Assisted Voting

The WA Electoral Commission is providing a Telephone Assisted Voting service to eligible electors who are unable to vote by traditional means without assistance.

Electors who have reading difficulties, are blind or have low vision, or have some other incapacity will be able to vote over the telephone. Telephone Assisted Voting is a two-stage process ensuring your vote remains secret.

When can I use Telephone Assisted Voting?

- Throughout the Early Voting (in person) period: Wednesday 24 February – Friday 12 March (8am-6pm)
- Election Day: Saturday 13 March (8am-6pm)

How do I use Telephone Assisted Voting?

1. Call **13 68 00** (or +61 8 9214 7290 for overseas callers) and select option **[1]** to **Apply for Telephone Assisted Voting**. After you are found on the roll, you will be asked to select a secret PIN and you will later receive a Voting ID via email, SMS or a phone call – you get to decide.
2. Call **13 68 00** (or +61 8 9214 7290 for overseas callers) and select option **[2]** to **Vote**. Do not provide your name, instead you only provide your PIN and Voting ID. A voting assistant will then record your vote preferences on a ballot paper. Your vote will be secret and a second voting assistant will make sure your vote is correctly recorded. Once your vote is complete, your ballot papers will be placed in a secure ballot box.

Need further information?

Please visit www.elections.wa.gov.au/vote/elector-assistance or contact the Election Line on 13 63 06 or +61 8 9214 0400 (overseas callers).

Take your seat at the table.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN Electoral Commission

TAV and VA posters at venues and doctor's surgery



Results

Centralised Results Reporting

The Commission established a processing centre where early and postal votes were counted on election night and from where the flow of results from polling places were monitored. Results were then disseminated directly to the public via the Commission's dedicated election website and to certain media organisations that had arranged direct data feeds of the results. ABC Television, for example, hosted a comprehensive televised election night special from their studios, utilising a regularly updated data feed from the Commission.

Election Night Results Transmission

Legislative Assembly progressive first preference count results, two candidate preferred count results and first preference results for the Legislative Council were transmitted directly to the results team by Returning Officers, using an encrypted remote connection to the Commission's results system. First preference results and two candidate preferred count results for early and postal votes were also entered into the results system from the processing centre. Contingency provisions were put in place in the event that Returning Officers experienced connectivity and/or transmission problems on the night.

A secure on-line portal was updated as part of the Commission's election management system (EMSWA) to allow Returning Officers to input all results directly. This enabled a more seamless integration of results and direct data feeds to media organisations. Returning Officers directly entered their results with no reportable operational deficiencies observed.

Results Website

The Commission's website acted as a virtual tally room. The website provided results in real-time over the course of the evening and enabled interested members of the public, media organisations and candidates to view the same results information.

The website was linked to EMSWA, providing results updates every two minutes on election night and every hour in the following days until each seat was declared. Additional information was also available on the website, including close seats, enrolment details for each district and region, an election timeline, location of polling places, ticket vote references, candidate details, daily statistics on postal votes issued and returned and early votes issued by location.



Counting votes at the Count Centre



Legislative Assembly

Of the 59 Legislative Assembly electoral districts, 46 candidates were elected with an absolute majority of first preference votes.

Electoral District	Number of Candidates	Electoral District	Number of Candidates
Albany	12	Kimberley	8
Armadale	8	Kingsley	6
Balcatta	7	Kwinana	8
Baldivis	8	Landsdale	6
Bassendean	7	Mandurah	11
Belmont	7	Maylands	7
Bicton	7	Midland	8
Bunbury	11	Mirrabooka	9
Burns Beach	6	Morley	7
Butler	6	Mount Lawley	8
Cannington	7	Murray-Wellington	11
Cockburn	7	Perth	5
Collie-Preston	11	Pilbara	9
Darling Range	10	Rockingham	6
Dawesville	11	Scarborough	8
Forrestfield	8	Southern River	9
Fremantle	8	Swan Hills	6
Geraldton	9	Thornlie	6
Hillarys	7	Victoria Park	7
Jandakot	8	Wanneroo	6
Joondalup	10	Warnbro	7
Kalamunda	9	West Swan	6
Kalgoorlie	9	Willagee	6

For thoroughness, and psephological reasons, a full distribution of preferences count was conducted in all districts, however the remaining 13 districts required a distribution of preferences to determine the final result.

Districts where candidate elected following a Distribution of Preferences

Electoral District	Number of Candidates	Electoral District	Number of Candidates
Bateman	9	North West Central	9
Carine	5	Riverton	7
Central Wheatbelt	9	Roe	9
Churchlands	7	South Perth	5
Cottesloe	6	Vasse	10
Moore	8	Warren-Blackwood	9
Nedlands	7		

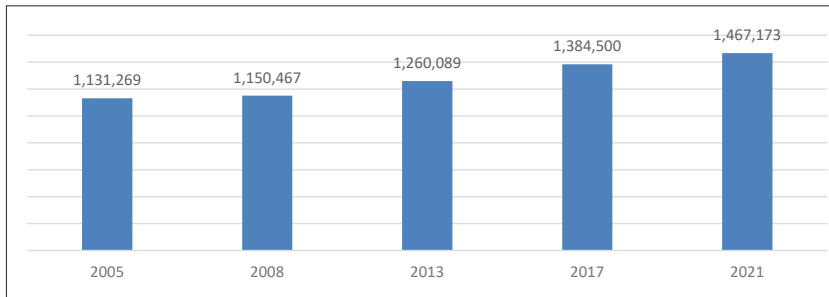
A total of 19 new members were elected to the Legislative Assembly.



Total Votes Counted

The number of votes accepted for the 2021 election increased by 6.15% when compared with the 2017 election.

Total Votes Legislative Assembly 2005–2021



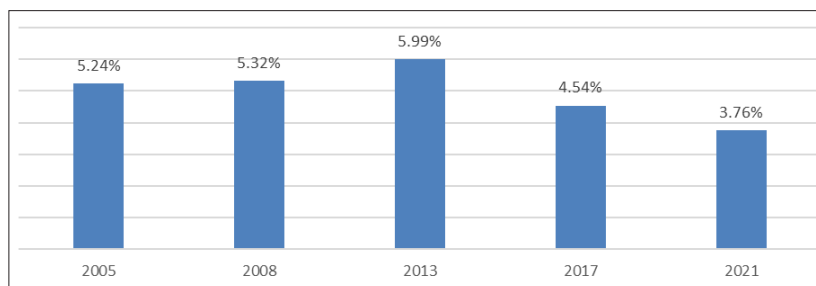
Ballot Paper Formality

Ballot papers that are blank, do not show preferences in accordance with instructions and/or legislative requirements, or do not make the voter’s intention clear, are classified as informal. A ballot paper is also regarded as informal if the voter can be identified through a marking on it. Informal ballot papers do not contribute to the election of a candidate and are not included in calculating the quota or absolute majority required for election.

Legislative Assembly

The percentage of informal votes for the Legislative Assembly in the 2021 election was 3.76%, an impressive decrease from the 2017 figure of 4.54% and 2013 figure of almost 6%. This decrease was attributed to the dedicated efforts of many to reduce informality through better-focused community education, improved instructions on ballot papers and voting screens and the continuation of the CALD Ambassador program focused on supporting electors in communities from different cultural backgrounds where English is often not the first language.

Legislative Assembly Informality Levels 2005–2021

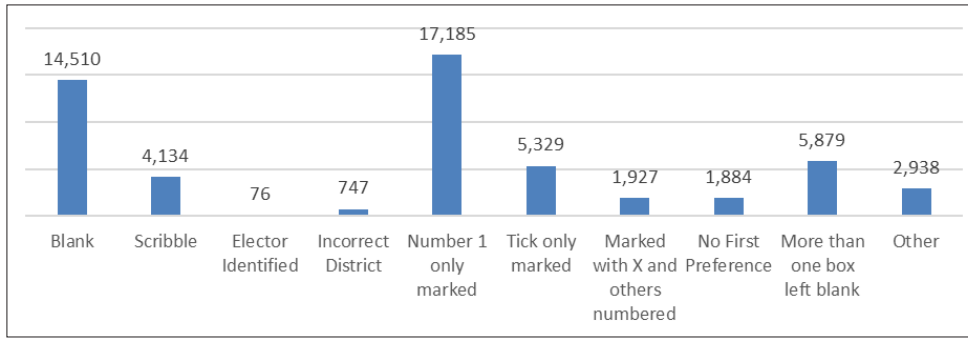


Over 34% of informal ballot papers were blank or only contained scribble, suggesting a level of deliberate action on the part of the elector, however this was down 11% from 2017.

Unfortunately, over 41% of ballot papers were marked with only a one or a tick, up from 36% in 2017, suggesting increased ongoing confusion about the full preferential voting system in place in Western Australian State elections.



Legislative Assembly Statewide Informal Ballot Categories 2021

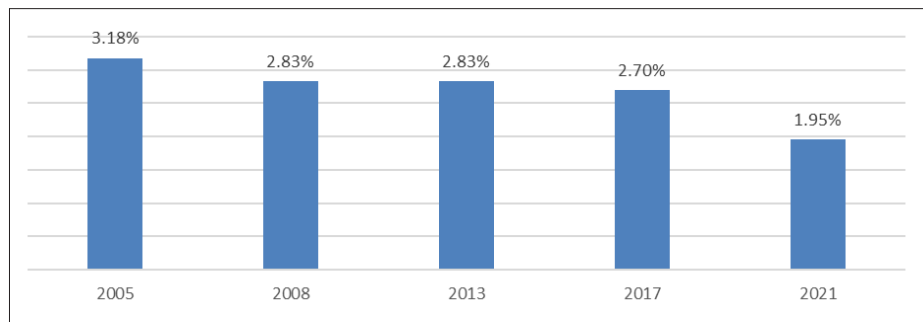


Legislative Council

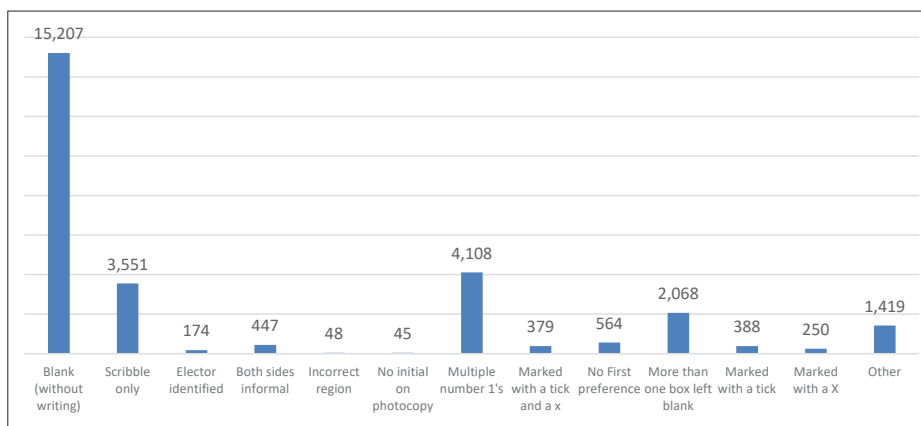
In line with the improvements that resulted in a lower informal vote in the Assembly, informality in the Legislative Council also

declined, dropping from 2.7% at the last two elections to 1.95% in 2021, an unprecedented improvement in the last two decades.

Legislative Council Informality Levels 2005–2021



State-wide Breakdown of Legislative Council Informal Ballot Papers Cast at the 2021 State Election



A closer analysis of the informal ballot papers reveals that over half of all informal ballot papers in the Legislative Council were blank. This is despite a single 1 above the line being a valid vote in the Legislative Council. Over 12%

of informal ballot papers were due to scribble and over 14% were had multiple number 1's. These figures suggest that almost two-thirds of informal ballot papers cast for the Legislative Council were intentional.



Post Election Procedures

Return of the Writ

On 16 April 2021, the Electoral Commissioner returned the writs to the Governor and advised the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and the Clerk of the Legislative Council of the names of the elected members and gave each of them a copy of the relevant certified writ.

Apparent Non-Voters and Multiple Voters

Following each election, all electoral rolls are scanned and data recorded from the Elector Recording System machines used for electronic mark-off in early voting centres and polling places. A list is then prepared of all electors who appear not to have voted. This forms the basis for non-voter processing after the election.

Another list is prepared of electors whose names appear to have been marked off the roll more than once, for further follow-up as part of what is referred to as multiple voter processing. Each instance is investigated to determine the reason why the multiple marking occurred. As has been the case with previous elections, there has not been evidence of concerted attempts at multiple voting. For this election, the most common cases were for one of two main reasons.

There were occasions where the same elector was marked off different rolls, in error. This can happen on the paper rolls with electors with similar names voting separately but having the first name on the list marked off more than once and the name below it not marked. Search errors can also occur when trying to match electors to the electronic roll, where details are matched to an incorrect elector.

Further instances occurred with people turning up to vote on Election Day out of concern that their postal vote would not arrive in time for them to be marked as having voted. This concern was heightened with the COVID overlay for the election creating a focus on voting ahead of Election Day.

Political Finance

Under Part VI of the *Electoral Act 1907*, all political parties, associated entities, candidates, Legislative Council groups and other persons are required to provide the Electoral Commissioner with details of gifts received and expenditure incurred for electoral purposes.

General information regarding financial disclosure was included in the candidate guides produced for Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council candidates. More specific information was provided in the Funding and Disclosure in Western Australia Guidelines

Agents

All political parties must have a party agent, who acts on behalf of the party and party nominated candidates with respect to financial disclosure. A party nominated candidate can nominate an agent, other than the party agent, to meet their financial disclosure obligations. Independent candidates and Legislative Council groups may appoint an agent or remain responsible for lodging their own return. Those wishing to appoint an agent must do so before 6pm on the day before polling day.



Election-related disclosure

Political parties are required to disclose electoral expenditure incurred during the election period. Candidates and Legislative Council groups are required to disclose all gifts received and electoral expenditure incurred during the relevant disclosure period for their circumstances, which is determined by whether they had previously contested an election.

Persons other than political parties, associated entities, candidates and Legislative Council groups, who incur expenditure for political purposes are required to disclose all gifts received and expenditure incurred during the disclosure period for the election. If the total amount of expenditure does not exceed \$500, a return is not required.

Election returns are required to be lodged within 15 weeks after polling day, or Monday 28 June 2021 for election returns relating to the 2021 State election. Returns are publicly available 4 weeks after this lodgement date (Monday, 26 July 2021) on the Commission's website at www.elections.wa.gov.au.

Annual disclosure

All political parties and associated entities are required to lodge a return annually by 30 November, disclosing all gifts, gifts in kind and other income received for the preceding financial year. Copies of all returns received may be viewed online at www.elections.wa.gov.au.

Public funding

Candidates who receive a minimum of four per cent of valid first preference votes in an election are eligible to submit a claim for the reimbursement of electoral expenditure, and in doing so are entitled to be paid a maximum of \$1,966,999 for each valid vote received.

Registered political parties, whose candidates achieve four per cent on a State-wide basis, are also entitled to the reimbursement of electoral expenditure for all of their candidates based on the same calculation.

Funding is not automatically provided to either candidates or political parties; they must

first provide evidence of incurring electoral expenditure as defined under Part VI of the *Electoral Act 1907*. If electoral expenditure incurred by the candidate or political party is less than the amount that would be paid under the above calculation, then the lesser amount is the amount paid to the candidate or party. Eligible candidates and political parties have up until 20 weeks after polling day (Monday, 2 August 2021) to lodge a claim for public funding.

Resource Allocation

The State election was conducted at an estimated cost of approximately \$26.3 million, within the planned funding limitation, including an expected Non-Voter Project of \$0.6 million.

The State election budget exceeded the recurrent funding of \$18.5 million due to the Commission's commitment to conduct the 2021 State General Election in a COVID-19 safe manner.

Categories	Total
Staffing (including contract staff)	15,399,398.22
Communication	1,914,608.79
Advertising	1,730,502.51
Accommodation (Election)	1,386,850.16
Contracts & Consumables	3,802,370.12
Other Expenses	1,161,226.02
Asset	865,076.33
	26,260,032.15





Performance Review

Key Performance Indicators

The following KPIs were developed and published prior to the 2021 State General Election and provide both the Commission and our stakeholders with one means of evaluating organisation performance across a range of measures.

Election Preparations

Indicator	Measure	Target	Actuals	Notes
Every Returning Officer (RO) completes online training and attends face to face training	% of the total number	100%	100%	All ROs attended both in person and virtual training sessions, in addition to completing mandatory online training modules
Every Polling Place Manager (PPM) completes online training	% of the total number	100%	Est. 94%	Further appointments required due to last-minute withdrawals; plus internet access issues in some instances
Polling places and early voting centres receive sufficient ballot papers, election materials and health and safety equipment to commence operations on time	% of the total number	100%	100%	Sufficient election material was available to all 813 such voting venues in time for service commencement
Every electoral official view the training video relating to maintaining health and safety at polling venues	% of the total number	100%	Est. 83%	Late appointments of some early voting staff or due in other cases due to last-minute withdrawals; plus internet access issues in some instances
Every electoral district roll is produced and available for distribution to Returning Officers within 10 days of roll close	100% by specific date	100% by 21 February 2021	100%	All district rolls available and distributed by 14 February 2021
All early voting centres (70) are open and ready to operate from Wednesday 24 February	100% by specific date	100% by 21 February 2021	97%	Two country EVCs did not open at the scheduled start date or time owing to staff absences or operational issues



Election Conduct

Indicator	Measure	Target	Actuals	Notes
Percentage of Legislative Assembly first preference count results received from ordinary polling places by 8.00 pm on polling day	% of the total number (736)	70%	77.6%	COVID-19 limitations and the large number of parties and candidates on ballot papers at this election contributed to slower counting, however there were often fewer ballot papers to count due to higher early voting rates
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%	94.6%	A total of 750 queries and complaints received
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%	100%	All 736 polling places opened and closed on time
Return of the Writs	% Returned by date specified	By date specified – 4 May 2021	Yes	The Writs were returned to the Governor on 16 April 2021

Election Outcomes

Indicator	Measure	Target	Actuals	Notes
Average State-wide elector participation rate – i.e. % of eligible electors on the roll	% of the total eligible	97%	Est. 96.6%	This figure is derived from the AEC's estimate of the number of eligible Western Australians as at the 2021 March quarter. The introduction of direct enrolment has continued to improve the participation rate
Elector participation rate for 18–25 year olds equals or betters the national target of 80%	% of the total eligible	85%	Est. 87.8%	This figure is derived from the AEC's estimate of the number of eligible Western Australians as at the 2021 March quarter. The introduction of direct enrolment has continued to improve the participation rate
Average State-wide voter turnout – i.e. % of those on the roll who vote	% of the total enrolled (2017 – 86.9%)	90%	85.5%	A disappointing outcome; potentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of opinion polls leading up to the election
Informality rate – Legislative Assembly	% of votes cast (2017 – 4.54%)	4%	3.76%	A pleasing improvement on the rate in 2017
Informality rate – Legislative Council	% of votes cast (2017 – 2.74%)	2%	1.95%	An improvement on the rate in 2017
The number of invalidity complaints stemming from WAEC processes that are upheld by a Court of Disputed Returns	Number of successful complaints (2017 – 0)	0	0	Invalidity complaints can be lodged at any time till 14.6.21 – 40 days from the specified return of the writs date. None have been received by the Commission



Post-Election Review

In line with the Commission's commitment to continuous improvement the Commissioner initiated a post election review following the completion of the 2021 State General election. The review included externally facilitated workshops; team and individual debriefs; internal and external surveys; and reports. The review will look at election process and procedures as well as operational structure and funding. With more than 1500 observations and suggested changes made as part of the initial data gathering exercise the review will transition into improvement projects that will keep Commission staff busy until the next state election in 2025.

The review outcomes which are yet to be finalised at the time of this report are also aligned to the Commission's strategic plan for the next four years. An important element of the review will be providing feedback to all those who contributed so that they understand what improvements have been identified and are progressing. This was a common complaint from those providing input to the review about previous exercises undertaken in the past.

It is hoped the review will be able to connect with Government priorities during the coming parliamentary term as the Commission seeks to keep its operations in line with elector expectations and also developments in electoral processes around the world. Central to this goal will be modernisation of processes underpinned by a modern and workable legislative framework. The next four years will be an exciting and hopefully transformational time to work with the Commission.



Issuing officers at polling places on election day and early voting centres



Future Priorities

A New Electoral Act

It should be no surprise to readers that a new Electoral Commissioner is repeating the request made by previous Commissioners that a new Electoral Act is proclaimed. It was evident in the 2021 State general election that the Act is outdated and Commission staff find it increasingly frustrating in the 21st Century. This is particularly the case where the Act continues to hold concepts and instructions favoured by legislators over 110 years ago. Attempts to improve have been made consistently over time but recent experience suggests this has led to confusing and in some cases contradictory sections within the one piece of legislation. This was evident in the Commission's struggle to find workable solutions for the possibility of a COVID-19 related lockdown during the voting period.

One simple example should suffice in this argument for modernisation. While Western Australian electors embraced the convenience of early voting in person at the 2021 election, the Commission was stuck with an outmoded requirement that these type of ballot papers be treated as declaration votes and therefore enclosed in an envelope before depositing in the ballot box. Despite careful instruction to electors some still managed to leave one or both ballot papers out of the provided envelope. At the conclusion of polling these votes could not be counted until all envelopes had been opened by hand and prepared for counting. The additional delay for a significant proportion of the overall ballots cast is unnecessary and these early in person ballots should be treated as ordinary ballots are treated on polling day, simply being placed in ballot boxes by the elector and able to counted immediately polling concludes.

Amendments to deal with this specific issue might fix the problem this time but a more comprehensive overhaul of the prescriptive portions of the Act would allow the Commission to respond more easily to changing electoral trends and the demands of electors for ease, transparency and accountability.

A Pivot to an Election Period

While uncomfortable for the traditionalists, 2021 proved that the popularity of a voting or election period as opposed to a single election day is here to stay. The Commission will need to shift its approach to election planning accordingly, removing the previous focus on the second Saturday in March and adopting an agile response to an extended period of service delivery for electors but also for key stakeholders including political parties and our commercial election partners.

The longer election period will necessarily entail greater cost with more staff required to ensure that workplace safety is maintained from a fatigue perspective but also to provide more polling locations that will not all be able to be located in government schools, as per the old model. It will not be possible, nor preferable to fade out the traditional Saturday polling places but it is likely that 2025 will require the Commission to reduce more polling locations on the last polling day (Saturday) as the number of electors using this option drops dramatically.

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[Western Australian Electoral Commission](#)

Level 2, 111 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
WEBSITE www.elections.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
13 14 50 and then ask for (08) 9214 0400

National Relay Service (NRS)
Speak and Listen number 1300 555 727
SMS Relay number 0423 677 767

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