



Electoral Education Centre

Make your vote count on election day

Why should I vote?

The right to vote is a basic democratic freedom and is considered one of the most important responsibilities of citizens living in a democratic country.

Voting in a local, State or federal election is really important. It is your way to have a say in who is elected to represent you.

In Australia, voting is also secret. You do not have to tell anyone how you voted unless you want to.

How do I make my vote count?

For your vote to be counted, it must be formal. Formal means that you have completed your ballot paper correctly according to the instructions.

If you don't fill out your ballot paper correctly, it is informal. This means it can't be counted. A ballot paper is informal if it:

- is blank
- does not show preferences according to the instructions
- does not show the voter's intention clearly
- has any marks which can identify the voter.

How to vote at a State election

When you arrive at a polling place, you will be directed to the issuing officer who will ask you three questions before giving you your ballot papers. You will be given a white ballot paper for the Legislative Assembly and a coloured ballot paper for the Legislative Council. On the top of each ballot paper, you will see instructions on how to complete them. You can always ask a polling official to help.

To complete your ballot papers correctly:

On the white ballot paper, you must number **every** box, starting with the number '1' for your most preferred candidate, then '2' for your second preferred candidate and so on until all the boxes are filled in.

On the coloured ballot paper, you must choose if you want to complete the section above the line **or** the section below the line. If you choose above the line, you need to write the number '1' next to your preferred group or candidate and leave the other boxes blank. If you choose below the line, you must number ALL the boxes in order of your preference, like you would on the white ballot paper.

It's okay if you make a mistake. The issuing officer can give you a replacement ballot paper so you can make sure your vote gets counted.

For more information on how to complete your ballot papers or what happens at a polling place, see the factsheets "What happens in a polling place?" and "How to make your vote count".